

The Message of Jesus to the
Church of Sardis
Revelation 3:1-6

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Background/History

CROSSING THE HERMENEUTICAL BRIDGES

Reputation:

- One of the oldest and most storied cities of Asia Minor
- One of the most powerful cities of the world in the 6th century
- Capital city of the ancient kingdom of Lydia

Reputation:

- Taken in Battle by the Persian King, Cyrus in 546 B.C. and was the seat of the Persian governor
- Was one of the most obstinate foreign powers encountered by Alexander the Great
- Became part of the Seleucid Kingdom upon Alexander's death

Reputation:

- 133 BC - Became part of the Roman Empire
- AD 17 – largely destroyed by an earthquake
- AD 26 – Rebuilding of the city was completed and now rivaled Ephesus and Smyrna in importance

Reputation:

- Was known for its notoriously loose living – a place of luxury and pleasure
- It was a city of decadence and in moral and ethical decay

Reputation:

- Referred to as a place of lazy, drunken, pleasure seeking people who had lost any kind of work ethic
- Was a byword for slack and effeminate living
- “Tender-footed Lydians who can only play on the cithara, strike the guitar, and sell by retail” - Heroditus

Setting:

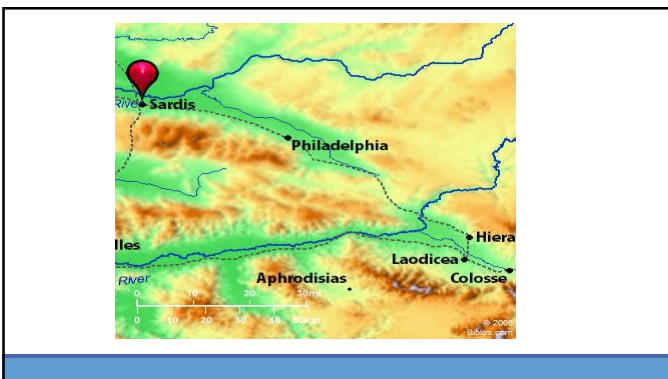
- 30 Miles southeast of Thyatira
- 50 Miles East of Smyrna
- Built on the northern spur of Mount Tmolous
- A natural fortress – a gigantic watchtower overlooking the Hermus Valley

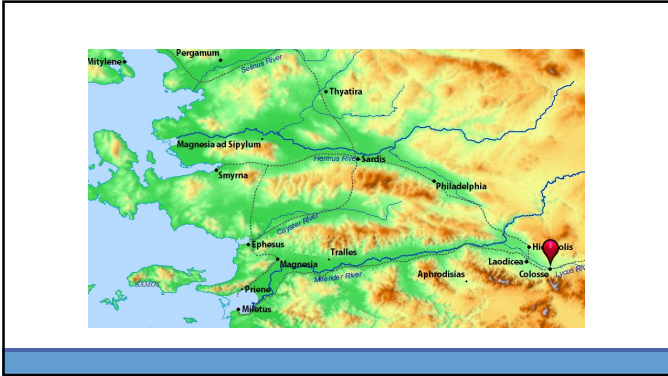
Setting:

- The lower city was added, down the mountain on the banks of the Pactolus River
- The Hermus Valley was a large fertile plain.
- The Name “sardis” is plural, indicating the two cities – on the mountain and in the valley











Economics:

- A city of extreme wealth and fame
- One of the World's greatest trading centers
- It was at the center of a knot of five different roads

Economics:

- The Pactolus River flowed through the lower town which was, in the early days, filled with gold – which brought great wealth
- Croesus, the greatest of its kings, became a proverb – “rich as Croesus”
- During his time, Sardis was at its zenith of wealth and importance – 560-546 B.C.

Economics:

- Jewelry found in the local cemeteries indicated its wealth
- Minted the first ever gold and silver coinage in Asia minor during the time of Croesus

Economics:

- First discovered the process of dying wool

- The greatest distributing center of woolen trade as well as costly dyes

Politics:

- An Assize city – justice was dispensed for the district at Sardis
- Well acquainted with the Roman pomp of the coming of governors and officials

Religion:

- Not a center of Emperor worship, though after the earthquake they put in a bid to build a temple to the emperor. They lost out to Sardis
- Temple of Artemis was constructed in the lower city – the goddess of fertility of Ephesus
 - An exceptionally large temple – 160'x300' and had 78 columns 58' high

Religion:

- Local goddess was cybele – an associate of artemis
- The special power of cybele was the power to restore the dead to life

Christianity:

- No real threat to Christianity here
- Not from the emperor, false doctrine, or Judaism
- Its threat came from within

The Message of Jesus

Person of Jesus

- He holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars
- Question: Why is this description apt for Sardis?

Rebuke of Jesus:

- According to their deeds, they are dead! They think they are alive but are really not
 - To be dead means that there is no life what they do; in their actions
 - Their deeds are not flowing from the life of Christ
 - They are incomplete – without the Spirit of God

Warning of Jesus:

- Wake up!!! – the picture of king Croesus and the lessons from the past
- Jesus tells them that what little life they have, their life in Jesus, is about to die also! See Lk 6:20-26
- They do have some life of Christ remaining

Warning of Jesus:

- Strengthen what remains of the life you have!
- Question: How does the life of Christ become stronger in you?

Warning of Jesus:

- Answer:
 - Remember** the words of Christ
 - Read, study, learn, renew, refresh
 - Obey** the words of Christ
 - Put into action the words of Christ
 - Repent** of the disobedience against Christ
 - Turn away from sin, turn toward Christ and his ways

Judgement of Jesus:

- Without repentance there is judgement and fear
- Jesus is coming back like a thief – Lk 12:35-48; Mt 24:36-51
 - We do not know when
 - Now is the time to be ready, not then, never then, always now
 - The deeds we do are important- who do our deeds reflect? Mt 25:31-46

Encouragement of Jesus:

- There is still hope! A few have not soiled their clothes
 - They are true to Christ, they are watchful, awake
- There is still some life in this church
- Question: how hard is it to remain true to Christ when others are not? Even Christians

Reward of Jesus:

- They will walk with Jesus, clothed in white
 - Their walk on earth with Christ caused them to be worthy to walk with Jesus in heaven
- Their names will be confirmed in the book of life
 - Rev 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27 Also Ex32:32; Duet 29:20; Ps69:28; Dan 12:1; Mal 3:16; Lk10:20; Phil 4:3

Reward of Jesus:

- Jesus will confess their names before the Father in heaven and His angels – Mt 10:32-33
- We will hear Jesus proclaim our name (introduce us to the Father maybe?) before all of the angels in heaven

Summary/Conclusion:

- The church of Sardis has become complacent and worldly
- They enjoy the things of the world and follow them more than the things of God and following Jesus
- They are dead in deeds and barely alive with Christ

Summary/Conclusion:

- They are pretend Christ followers. Not willing to bear the cost of following Him, but desiring all the “benefits”
- They are in love with their reputation, not Christ.
