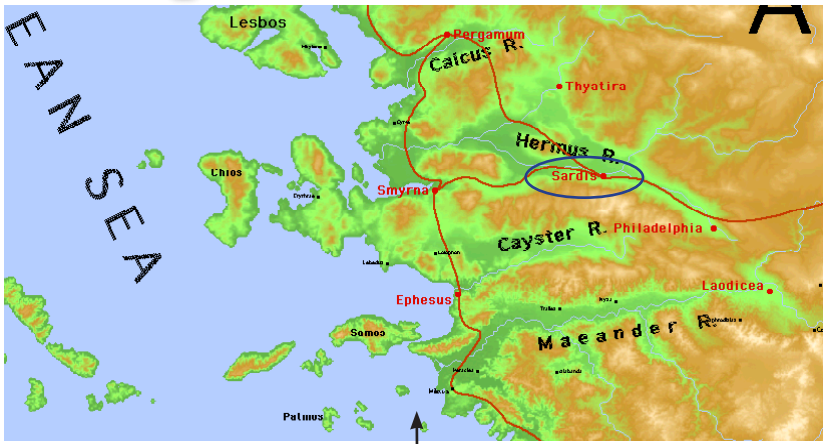


Maps & Pictures Of Sardis



Map of the seven churches of Revelation (Revelation 2:1-3:22). The book of revelation was written by John from the island of Patmos (southern island on the map to which John was exiled) to seven churches which may have been under his previous leadership. Sardis is circled on the map.



The steep rock face which surrounded Sardis on three sides as seen from below. Due to erosion, the present summit is roughly one-third the size it would have been during the time of Cyrus (around 546 B.C., when the city originally fell to invaders).



Ruins from the temple of Artemis/Diana in Sardis. Remarkably, two Ionic columns (58 feet high each, can you see the man standing at the base of the left-side column?) still stand. Originally there were 78 standing columns in a 160' x 300' temple complex. In Sardis, Artemis was worshipped for her ability to bring the dead back to life (cf. Revelation 3:1?).

Sardis was home to a large and wealthy Jewish community (as many as two-thousand Jewish citizens). This was the entrance to an ornate and elaborate synagogue in Sardis. The large bowl in the center of the picture was probably for ritual cleaning.



Vigilance

Long Beach Alliance Church • January 8th, 2008 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**WAKE UP, AND STRENGTHEN THE THINGS THAT REMAIN, WHICH WERE ABOUT TO DIE; FOR I HAVE NOT FOUND YOUR DEEDS COMPLETED IN THE SIGHT OF MY GOD.
~REVELATION 3:2 (NASB)**

1) The City Of Sardis

- A) Sardis was one of the most glorious cities in all of Asia Minor, with a rich history of wealth and military strength.
 - i. Legend stated that Midas washed himself of his golden touch in the spring which ran through the city, giving explanation for the wealth of gold in the local springs.
 - ii. Sardis was located at the top of a fifteen-hundred-foot precipice on three sides and the entrance to the city followed a steep approach. From ancient times, the city was an almost impregnable fortress.

- B) Despite this rich history of wealth and power, Sardis fell prey to military conquest when the "unscalable" cliffs which surrounded the city were breached. In the Greek world "capturing Sardis" was idiomatic for achieving the impossible.

C) Sardis, in all of her wealth, was also the home of an incredible temple complex built to the cult worship of Artemis/Diana (see picture on back panel). The region experienced a catastrophic earthquake in 17 A.D. (during the time of Christ) which Pliny called "the greatest disaster in human history."

D) The wealth of Sardis reached deep into the local church and Jewish synagogue (see picture on back panel). The local synagogue was built into a large gymnasium complex, indicating a laissez-faire attitude of accommodation to the local culture and practices.

2) Characteristics Of Jesus Christ For His Church

- A) In writing to Sardis, Jesus Christ is described with two key characteristics which have particular impact for the church at Sardis (Revelation 3:1, cf. 1:4, 2:1).
- i. First, Christ is described as having the "seven Spirits of God" (3:1). Here, "seven" clearly is in reference to the "complete" Spirit of God (cf. Revelation 1:4), a desperately needed feature of the church in Sardis.
 - ii. Second, Christ is described as having "the seven stars" (3:1, cf. Revelation 2:1). The church, which was looking more like a spiritual social club in Sardis, needed the One who holds the church in His hand (He is in control).

3) A Staggeringly Ironic Compliment

- A) Rather than follow the pattern of complimenting from previous churches, Jesus ironically compliments Sardis for their "name" (identity) "alive," but qualifies this external label with the reality that they are actually "dead" (Revelation 3:1).

B) What could bring the church back from the dead in Sardis? Only the One who had conquered death! In Sardis, this would have been a sharp rebuke to those who believed that Artemis/Diana had influence over resurrection.

4) Passionate And Prophetic Warnings For Sardis

- A) Jesus calls the church to "WAKE UP" (3:2) and strengthen that which is near-death -- because God has a purpose for the church, even in the midst of their failure (3:2)
- B) Christ calls on the church to LISTEN to Him with an exclusive ear (3:3), and to repent for their lack of passion, their lack of vigilance in keeping watch for His return (3:3).
- C) While many in the church are "soiled" (unwashed, impure, dirtied with impure practices -- 3:4), there are some who Jesus finds FAITHFUL, worthy of wearing white (symbolic for purity in Christ, here in contrast to being contaminated).

5) Perseverance & Passion For Christ!

- A) The picture in Sardis is one of a church whose people have been slowly lulled to sleep, assimilating into the local culture to the extent they have become anesthetized to the effects of sin in their midst. Jesus calls for passion and perseverance!
- B) For those who overcome (3:5 -- all believers), Christ promises garments of white (clothed with purity of Christ), a secure "name" for salvation (Lamb's Book of Life -- 21:27), and an advocate in Jesus Christ with God and the angels (no fear of judgment) for those who will listen and act (3:6).