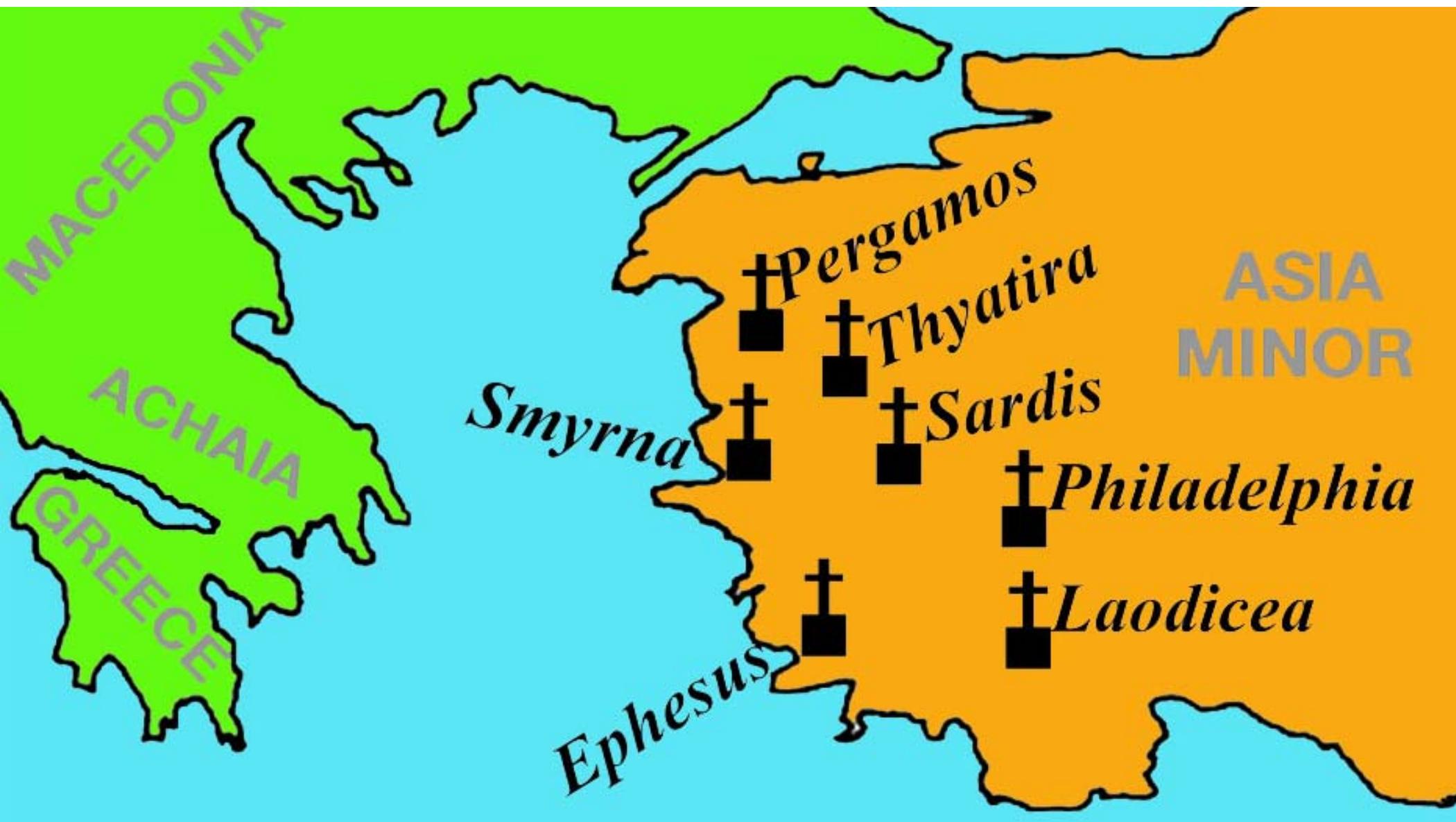




Sardis



MACEDONIA

ACHAIA

GREECE

ASIA
MINOR

Pergamos

Thyatira

Smyrna

Sardis

Philadelphia

Laodicea

Ephesus

5: Sardis

BACKGROUND ON SARDIS

- Very well established city, considered one of oldest in the world
- 60 miles inland from Ephesus
- “Heyday” in 6th century BC, **capital of kingdom of Lydia**. A glorious city, mentioned in many Greek writings
- Built on a mountain, extremely well fortified on a hill 1000 feet above the valley.
- Seemed to defy any kind of military assault, appeared impregnable.
- A **false sense of security** here, people believed they were safe when they were not (*so did this church!*)

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BACKGROUND ON SARDIS

- Stories of how **King Cyrus of Persia** eventually took Sardis, stories well known in this city.
- Commander of Cyrus' army told his soldiers there was great reward for anyone who could figure out how to successfully attack this great mountain stronghold. Appeared impossible.
- However, one soldier watching Sardis guards on top of the mountain saw guard accidentally drop his helmet over the side, and watched as soldier picked his way down the mountain and back up again to retrieve the helmet.
- Continual erosion of cliffs had left large cracks which could be maneuvered, now exposed by soldier watching

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BACKGROUND ON SARDIS

- Persian soldier told his commander, and that night Persian army climbed the so-called "unassailable" mountain the same way the soldier had seen the guard do it.
- When they got to the top, no one there! **No guards.**
- Guards assumed no one could climb their way to the top. They didn't think they needed to guard it.
- **Did not think they even needed to watch for the enemy.**

WRONG!

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BACKGROUND ON SARDIS

- Sardis was taken, not just this first time, but several times after as well. Sardis fell on several occasions with surprise attacks the same way.
- Seems people there didn't learn from their own history. The word **"WATCH!"** was a key word for Sardis and the world knew of her mistakes in this regard.
- When letter was written to Sardis, everyone was aware of this, and understood letter's command about being watchful.
- Eventually became part of Roman empire.



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BACKGROUND ON SARDIS

- Great trading center, like Thyatira was a center for woolen goods and dyeing industry (also like Laodicea).
- Sardis had a river very rich in gold deposits. Modern money, minted gold and silver coins, was born in Sardis.
- Roman "assize" town, where justice was dispensed, plenty of Roman pomp and circumstance.
- Would have liked to have been a center for Caesar worship, but lost a bid to Smyrna in that regard.
- Did become very involved in worship of Cybele (*son was fabled Midas, the one who had "gold" touch*) with frenzied rites involving sexual immorality and mutilation

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BACKGROUND ON SARDIS

- Because no Caesar worship, Sardis was not a particularly dangerous place for Christians, at least not *physically* dangerous.

There was a far greater
problem here for the “Church”

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BACKGROUND ON SARDIS

- 17 AD huge earthquake hit area, pretty much devastated Sardis.
- Romans poured lots of manpower and money into rebuilding this ancient city, but former glory was gone.
- Now Sardis became known as a center for moral decadence.
- Even rest of pagan world considered Sardis notorious for loose living, pleasure seeking, and luxury loving (*sound familiar?*) **Life was far too easy here**. Incredible wealth, and no persecution.
- Spiritually deadly condition took hold - **COMPLACENCY**. One commentator made this observation: "The Church at Sardis was at peace, but it was the peace of the dead."

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BACKGROUND ON SARDIS

- *Sardis* can literally mean "that which remains" or "remnant."
- After earthquake devastated region, city of Sardis remained, but merely a remnant of its former self.
- **This is also true for the church here.**
- Sardis known as the **unwatchful, "sleeping" church in which only a remnant of true believers remained.**



5: Sardis

DESCRIPTION OF SPEAKER

"He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars..."

The Seven Spirits...

And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. Revelation 4:5

And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Revelation 5:6

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DESCRIPTION OF SPEAKER

"He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars..."

The Seven Spirits...

**The Spirit of *ADONAI* will rest on him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and power,
the Spirit of knowledge and fearing *ADONAI* —**

(Isaiah 11:2, CJV)

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DESCRIPTION OF SPEAKER

"He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars..."

The **seven Spirits of God** is an idiom for the Holy Spirit. The Speaker indicates He is in their midst, and knows everything about them.



5: Sardis

DESCRIPTION OF SPEAKER

"He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars..."

- Explained in 1:20: ***"The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches."***
- ***"Angel"*** (Greek) literally ***messenger***. May be human messengers (*pastors, "shepherds" of flocks*) or heavenly messengers assigned to churches.



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COMMENDATION (What they did well)

“I know your works...”

(but none are listed!) **NONE!**

This church is in serious trouble.
It is one of two letters with no commendation.



5: Sardis

CRITICISM (What they didn't do well)

"...that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."

- "Name" = *onoma* used several times here. Means having a certain reputation, being called something that describes you.
- Church at Sardis, and entire city, had reputation for immorality and loose living. Wore a label "Christian" and were called by that name, but apparently were not living their faith.
- Reputation of being "alive" but spiritually dead inside.

SOUND FAMILIAR??

5: Sardis

EXHORTATION (What they NEED to do)

(1) *"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God."*

- A slap in the face for complacent Christians in Sardis. Were being lulled to "sleep." **Christians in name only.**
- Like Persian soldier watching and waiting for way to attack, enemy also watching and waiting to attack. Already had. Almost lost faith.
- "Works" were inadequate. Doesn't mean they didn't do enough good works. Their **lives were not living testaments of their faith** (*book of James*). If they didn't wake up, work on what remained (*the grace of God, their flickering faith, some attempts to live to please God*), **it would die forever.** (*"the things which remain" is a deliberate pun on the meaning of the city's name.*)

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EXHORTATION (What they NEED to do)

(2) *"Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent..."*

- Just like church at Ephesus people reminded to **remember their first love**, to think back to when they first believed and hold fast to that.
- Holding fast here is a continuous action. Don't let go for a minute, keep holding.
- AND, repent of spiritual stupor, become watchful and alive again. Unlike church at Ephesus, this church apparently had no redeeming qualities. **They sank into the worldly ways of this city.**

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"Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you."

- Using city's reputation of being unwatchful, Yeshua warns if they don't wake up and watch for His coming, they just might miss it.

"You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy."

- Apparently a few in Sardis (*a remnant*) had not "defiled" their Christian walk. Their robes of righteousness weren't soiled.
- Beautiful promise for these...**they will walk with Jesus, in white!**
(*righteousness...HIS!*)

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- Don't misunderstand "***they are worthy.***" **None of us is worthy in our own strength.** The only way these people could become "worthy" is by continuing their daily walk with Jesus, and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit. They had maintained their relationship with Him. The others had not.



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PROMISE

"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."

- Mention again of white garments, symbol of righteousness, given us by Jesus. Living like rest of world will defile and soil our robes.
- Here overcomer promised white garment, one not soiled. We (and they) receive the incorruption of Jesus.
- Also reference to pagan worship of day. Considered sacrilege to approach "the gods" in stained or soiled clothing. Sardis Christians in danger of approaching the One True God in soiled robes. *For a rich lesson in this, read Zechariah 3*

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- White garments also symbol of redeemed. Roll call of truly alive called by Jesus Himself before the Father.

- **Book of Life:** All cities in that day kept registers of its citizens. When they died, their names were "blotted out."

Book of Life is God's registry of heaven.

God writes every name here, but some will be blotted out (*"second death," separation from God*). Our genealogy is either the family of Adam, *which is to death*, or the family of Jesus (the **Lamb's Book of Life**) *which is one of eternal life*. Only way to keep from being blotted out is to live in Yeshua our Messiah.



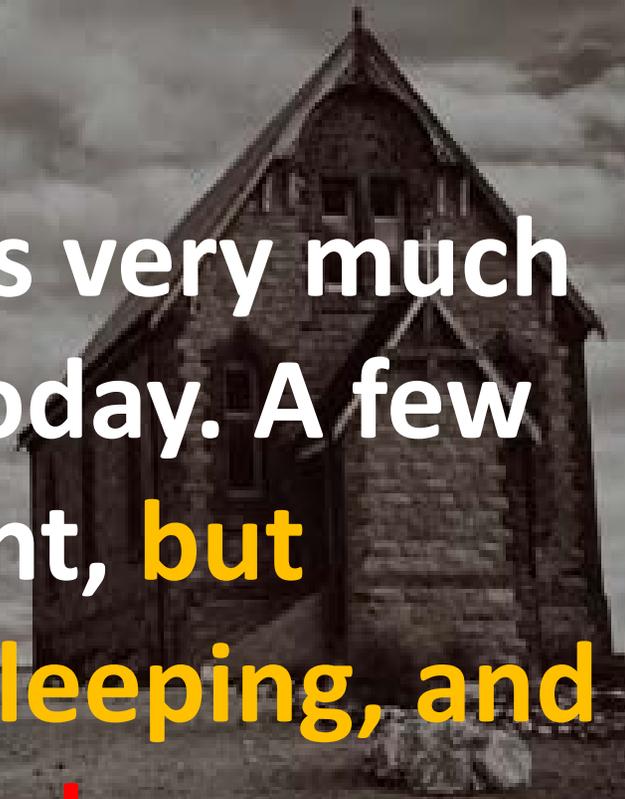
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- Church at Sardis thought to **prophetically represent the Reformation and the start of the protestant denominational church, 1517-1750 AD** in an historical timeline.
- Church at beginning of this era woke up out its spiritual sleep and reminded Christians of the original great truths (*justification by faith alone, the inerrancy of the Word of God, depravity of man, etc.*) of the Word of God. However, with denominationalism, those truths were once again in danger of being lost.
- Sadly, church at Sardis **very much like liberal church today**. A few true believers, **a remnant**, but church as a whole is sleeping, and many spiritually dead.

5: Sardis

DEATH OF THE

Sadly, church at Sardis is very much like the liberal church today. A few true believers, a remnant, **but** “church” as a whole is sleeping, and many are spiritually **dead**.



5: Sardis

Symbolic Age	Reformation Era 1518 -1750 AD
Speaker	<i>"He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars."</i>
Praise	NONE! (some had not "soiled their clothes" and they would walk with Him in white)
Problem	Reputation for being alive, but they were dead. "Works" not complete or perfect before God.
Counsel Or Warning	<u>Be watchful, strengthen what remains</u> (is about to die!) Remember what you heard, hold fast to it, repent OR ELSE I will come as a thief (suddenly) to take away what remains.
Promise	White garments, will not blot name from Book of Life, will confess name before Father and angels. (covered/righteousness of Jesus, remain in Book of Life, right to be with God)
Nutshell	Complacency, spiritually dead, more interested in material riches