

*The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, Sir William Ramsay, 1904.

*The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, Colin J. Hemer, 1986.

1. Rev. 3:1-6

2. Review of last week:

- "a reputation of being alive, but you are dead" – Sardis' obsession with death, resurrection, renewal, and the afterlife
- History of the Acropolis being considered impregnable by the enemy yet falling overnight
- John's use of Obadiah, the only book of the OT to mention Sardis – as "*Sepharad*."
- The Sardis church was not dead. Following John's letter, they boldly proclaimed their faith

3. Today:

- "seven stars"
- The goddess Cybele
- Bold Christians of Sardis

4. "seven stars" – Who holds the power of the "seven stars?"

- Astral Immortality - the cosmological idea that when a soul leaves the body, it travels up to become a star within the Milky Way.
- "seven" planetary spheres (considered wandering stars)

Wandering Star	Roman 7-day week	Modern Names (mostly Germanic god names)
Sun	Sun-day	Sunday
Moon	Moon-day	Monday
Mars	Mars-day	Tuesday ( <i>Tiw</i> = god Mars)
Mercury	Mercury-day	Wednesday ( <i>Woden</i> = god Mercury)
Jupiter	Jupiter-day	Thursday ( <i>Thor</i> = Jupiter)
Venus	Venus-day	Friday ( <i>Frigg</i> = goddess Venus)
Saturn	Saturn-day	Saturday ( <i>Saturn</i> -day)

- Who has the power to get you through the "seven stars?"
- Philippians 2:15 - Philippi was a Roman colony.
- Rev. 1:16 – the "double-edged sword" is the Roman sword (see also Rev. 2:12)
- Rev. 3: 1-2

5. Cybele<sup>1</sup>: goddess of the city

- Mother Earth goddess
- "Mother of the gods"
- She was said to have resurrected her grandson, Attis<sup>2</sup>.
- If you followed "Attis," you were promised resurrection as well.

6. Temple of Cybele – location is directly in between the **Acropolis** (life) and **Necropolis** (death)

7. Cybele Cult<sup>3</sup>

- Galli Priests<sup>4</sup> - castrated (eunuch) priests. Often self-castrated.
- The cultic celebration is marked by self-flagellation by worshipers and self-castration by initiate priests.
- Cultic celebrations later half of March with Cybele day either April 1 or April 4 (may vary based on location)
- The celebration included a procession of male worshipers – led by eunuch priests – dressed in white. Self-flagellation with sword, knives, whips, stones – blood was considered as a blessing from Cybele. The crowd would encourage more blood, and even the crowd would be covered with the worshipers' blood.
  - 1 Kings 18: 27-28
  - The Muslim festival of Ashura – includes a procession of men dressed in white, cutting their heads with knives, machetes, etc.

At the council of Nicaea (325 AD), the council enacted 20 canons or rules. The number one rule was:

- a prohibition of self-castration for clergy.

- Rev. 3:4-6 –
- "white robes" – the worshipers of Cybele wore white robes. A second thought is a Roman Triumph. Those in procession wore white robes (Ramsay).
- "book of life" – Exodus 32:32 (see also, Ps. 56:9, 69:28, 139:16; Dan. 12:1; Mal. 3:16)

8. Sardis Christians, "dead?"

- Church built inside Cybele temple

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theoi.com/Phrygios/Kybele.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theoi.com/Phrygios/Attis.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theoi.com/Cult/KybeleCult.html>

<sup>4</sup> [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/secondary/SMIGRA\\*/Galli.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/secondary/SMIGRA*/Galli.html)