

## 1. Overview of Sardis

- Hermus river valley is Southwestern Turkey
- Tmolus Mountains: an ancient city built on a spur jutting out of the Tmolus mountains.
- Main gods:
  - Cybele – a mother earth goddess, mediator of life and death
  - Zeus
  - Heracles
  - Dionysus – god of wine
- Harvard University excavated Sardis<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Sardis consisted of two mountains and a polis, or lower city:

- Acropolis (upper city) - originally 25 – 30 acres
- Polis – 100 acres by the 1<sup>st</sup> century
- Necropolis (dead city)

## 3. 17 A.D. a Sardis was hit by a massive earthquake

- Acropolis (upper city) collapsed from 25 acres down to 5 acres.

“The greatest earthquake in human memory” Pliny the Elder

- Eventually, the city was rebuilt on top of the collapsed earth – a middle city.
- Rev. 16: 18-19

## 4. Sardis was obsessed with Death, Resurrection, Renewal, and Afterlife:

- Necropolis –
- Cybele – a mediator between life and death, brings life to the dead.
- Sardi's burial mounds – tumulus.
- The similarity of Acropolis and Necropolis post-earthquake

## Rev. 3: 1-2

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sardisexpedition.org/>

5. History of Sardis

- In ancient times, the Acropolis of Sardis was considered impregnable.
- The king put his palace and government upon the acropolis for defense

<b>Herodotus, <i>The Histories</i> 1.84<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Polybius <i>The Histories</i>, book 7 15-18<sup>3</sup></b>
Lydian Empire – King Croesus	Antiochus III (the Great)
Persian Empire – King Cyrus	Achaeus
Siege of Sardis – 547 B.C.	Siege of Sardis – 213 B.C.
Hyrocaedes	Lagoras the Cretan
Sardis falls overnight	Sardis falls overnight

- Rev. 3:3

6. Where does John get his material?

- Obadiah 1: 3-5

7. The only book of the Old Testament to mention Sardis is Obadiah

- Obadiah 1:20 “*Sepharad*” is a Persian/Aramaic word for Sardis<sup>4</sup>

8. Lessons from Sardis apply to all times:

- Don’t become complacent
- “pride before the fall”
- Don’t rely on your riches
- Don’t be boastful in time of prosperity
- Wake up! Pay Attention! Or you will quickly fall into sin.

9. Was Sardis a “dead church?”

- Sardis became a thriving Christian community in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Melito of Sardis)
- Harvard excavations discovered many Christian artifacts

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Hdt.%201.84&lang=original>

<sup>3</sup> [https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Polybius/7\\*.html](https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Polybius/7*.html)

<sup>4</sup> Hemer, Colin. *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, pp. 134-135. Sheffield Academic Press, 1989