Sardis
City of the Dead Church

- Modern city of Saliki in Turkey.
- Location:
  - Chief city of Lydia.
  - Located near the junction of roads leading to central Asia Minor, Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos.
  - Some 50 miles inland from the Aegean Sea.
  - Built on the banks of the Pectolos river in the Hermus river basin, the most fertile plain in Asia.
- Description:
  - The name Sardis ("Sardeis" in Greek) is plural as there were actually two cities:
    - One on the plateau.
    - One in the valley.
  - Built on a hill surrounded on three side by precipitous almost inaccessible cliffs.
  - The summit on which the original walled city was built was some 1,500 feet high.
  - Ramsay wrote that the city was "more like a robber’s stronghold than an abode of civilized men.
  - About two miles from the city were hot springs believed to have healing powers. The hot springs are still in use today.
- Brief history:
  - Founded about 1200 B.C.
  - Sardis became the capital of Lydia under Croesus in 560 B.C.
  - Became the headquarters of Xerxes in his campaign against Greece.
  - According to Herodotus, the Persian conqueror Cyrus captured the city in 546 B.C.
- It was at Sardis that Cyrus assembled an army of revolt against his brother, Artaxerxes, in 410 B.C.
- A band of Cyrus’ soldiers climbed a cliff they had seen a Lydian soldier scale to retrieve a helmet and took the city by night.
- The Greek king Antiochus repeated the feat two hundred years later, once again scaling the cliffs and taking the city by night.
- Sardis was willed to Rome by Attalus II in 133 B.C.
- In 17 A.D., during the reign of Tiberias (12-37 A.D.), the city was destroyed by an earthquake.
  - The quake damaged 12 important cities of Asia Minor.
  - Sardis suffered the most damage.
  - Though the city was rebuilt by Tiberias, it never regained its former glory.
- Became the center of Roman judicial authority.

**Political status in New Testament times:**
- Sardis remained under Roman rule through the time that the Revelation letter was written.

**Commerce:**
- It is believed that Sardis was the first city in history to mint coins of gold and silver. In 1968 excavators found nearly 300 crucibles for refining gold and silver.
- Sardis is credited with being the birthplace of the art of wool dying. According to the writings of Josephus, Sardis had a strong and privileged Jewish population.
  - Free to live according to their law.
  - Free to meet for worship on their holy days and worship as they chose.
  - Free to send money to Jerusalem.
  - Held jobs as goldsmiths, shopkeepers, etc.
  - Nine Jews were listed as members of the city’s council.
- In modern times the city is famous for its tobacco, grapes, and cotton.

**Architecture:**
- Theater that seated some 20,000 people.
- Stadium
- Gymnasium
- Temple of Artemis (never completed).
  - Built by Croesus.
  - Fourth largest Ionic-style temple.
  - 300ft. x 160ft.
  - Two of its 78 columns (each column stood 58 feet high) still stand.
- The largest synagogue ever found has been found at Sardis.
- The building was renovated and expanded in the fourth century A.D.
- The main hall was extended to 197 ft. x 59 ft.
- The porch extended 131 feet.

**Religion:**
- The main deities at Sardis were Cybele and Artemis.
- Zeus was also worshipped in Sardis.

**The Church at Sardis:**
- Mentioned only in:
  - Revelation 1:11
  - Revelation 3:1-6

**The Letter to the Church at Sardis — Revelation 3:1-6**

1 “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."

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

3 Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. 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.

4 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.

5 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.

6 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’"