

## #5 Sardis (published version)

### THE DISPERSION OF THE JEWS

#### In Christ We Are All One

Good morning and God bless you from [Sardis](#), where I'm standing in front of the ancient gymnasium.

Sardis is mentioned in the Book of [Revelation](#). One of the letters to the [seven churches](#) was written to Sardis. This was a community that had a significant population of the [dispersed Jews](#), also called the [dispersion](#) or the [diaspora](#).

The other day we read 1 Peter 1, where that particular epistle was addressed to the elect exiles of the dispersion in various places including Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

There were many places that the Jews ended up outside of Israel, starting with the time after Solomon when some of the people in the area of Samaria were captured and sent over to Assyria, and then came back and married some Assyrians. The offspring of those Jews were considered half-breeds, half-Gentile, half-Jewish. They lived in the Samaria area.

Later you had the Babylonian captivity, where the children of Judah were captured and exiled to Babylon. There were multiple waves at various times when the [Jews were taken out of their homeland and dispersed](#). That is the meaning of [diaspora](#): basically, to send the seed out, the seed going out across the world.

Ancient [Asia Minor](#), today called Turkey, was one of the most significant areas that many of the Jews had moved to by the time of Paul. That's why when he came to Turkey and later to Greece, he found [synagogues](#).

Over to my right-hand side here, we have a very huge synagogue complex that goes from that first roof all the way to that other roof over by the mountain. Initially it was not a normal synagogue, but it was repurposed for that use. Some rich Jew under the Romans was able to build this out and make it into a synagogue.

With this dynamic of the [Jews spreading out](#), you had different opportunities. One thing that's important to understand is about the difference between the [Eastern and the Western Dispersion](#). The [Eastern Dispersion](#) was actually considered to be [more a part of Judaism](#) — the people that were dispersed in the direction of Babylon. [Babylon](#) was [part of the Eastern Dispersion](#).

We know that in Ezra and Nehemiah, the children of Israel moved back to Israel. Most of us have this idea, I think, that in the times of Jesus Christ, Jerusalem and Palestine were the centers of all the Jews at that time. Actually, numerically, that's not true. There were maybe about 50,000, that's all, that moved back from Iraq, Babylon, to Jerusalem and the area of Israel. The [Jews in Palestine](#) were [smaller numerically](#), because there were [millions of Jews](#) that [stayed in Babylon](#).

[Most of the Jews in the time of Jesus Christ did not live in Israel](#). They lived in Babylon. The [Babylonian Jews](#) were also [more influential](#) than the Jews that lived in Jerusalem. We have the Babylonian Talmud, which established a lot of their religious practices. That was not out of Jerusalem, that was out of Babylon.

Why was Babylon so important? Abraham was from that area. If you can imagine a superimposed wishbone on a map. Over here you have Iraq, and over here you've got Israel, and then you've got a wishbone coming up towards Turkey. Abraham started over here in the area of Babylon, the city of Ur of the Chaldees. He moved up to Haran, which is in southeastern Turkey. From there he went back down to Israel. So that was really in the perception of the Jews of that time, that [the Eastern Dispersion from Israel](#) arcing over all the way down [to Babylon](#), those were the people that [were considered to be "of the land."](#)

In Joshua, you've got the definition of [the land](#) that God would give them, and it goes up by the [Euphrates River](#), which gets up here [towards southeastern Turkey](#), and then back [down into Iraq](#). That was the [heart of the land](#). That's the [Eastern Dispersion](#). So not everybody was in Jerusalem. There were people over in Babylon. There were people up in Haran, which is in Turkey. Jacob's wife came out of Haran up there in the Carchemish area of Turkey.

In addition to the Eastern Dispersion, there was the Western Dispersion. That's where we are now, in Turkey, going on to Greece and Rome and also down to Alexandria in Egypt. The dividing line between the two on a map, basically if you go through the Mediterranean Sea and you go right down the western coast of the Mediterranean Sea by Israel, [everything from Israel east was Eastern Dispersion, everything from the coast of the Mediterranean west](#) was the [Western Dispersion](#).

The [Western Dispersion](#) was also important because out of the Western dispersion, you had all that [Greek-speaking culture](#) and leading Greek-speaking cities like Alexandria in Egypt.

[Alexandria](#) was the city from which the [Septuagint](#) came — the [Greek Old Testament](#). Did you know that in the time of Christ, the [most widespread version](#) of the Torah, the Old Testament, [the one that Christ used most often](#), based on his quotes, was not the Hebrew Old Testament? What Christ used and what was most popular in that day was the Greek Old Testament which had been translated in the Greek city of Alexandria in Egypt. [Alexandria](#) also had its famous library, the [greatest library in the world](#). We'll be visiting Pergamum in a few days. Pergamum was the second biggest library, but Alexandria was the biggest. So you've got all of that learning coming out of Alexandria. Who was from Alexandria in the Book of Acts? [Apollon](#), right? He had all that great schooling of the Old Testament and that Greek learning that he brought over here.

So then all these areas, [Turkey, Greece, and Rome](#) were part of the [Western Dispersion](#). This was the context in which the Apostle Paul moved.

Another thing we've been learning about today is about the [Hellenists](#). The [Hellenists](#) were people with a [Greek worldview](#). On the other hand, there were Jews who had an Asian worldview, more like the Eastern Dispersion, Babylon, the Talmud, all that.

So you had the [traditional Jews](#). They were the ones who were not Hellenists. They felt like the Greek culture demanded loyalty, it demanded all your attention and it took you away from the things of God. But there were a lot of Jews that were part of the Western Dispersion, the Greek-speaking part. Those Jews came at things differently.

Remember in [Acts 6](#), they had a disagreement between the [Greek-speakers](#) and the [Aramaic-speakers](#) with regard to the distribution to the widows? They appointed seven men to take care of it. If you look at the names of those seven Christian men in Acts 6, they're all Greek names. They were themselves Hellenists. They were the ones that were put in there to mend that division. This was the dynamic going on in the early Church, where some people didn't think you were quite as good if you were Hellenist because you were buying into the "world" culture of the time, and others said, "We don't want that, we want the God culture, you've got the world culture." But all these things were happening at this time.

Paul bridged the gap with people like Timothy. [Timothy](#) came out of a family from the [Western Dispersion](#). His [father](#) was [not a Jew](#). The Aramaic says his father was a Syrian. The Greek says his father was a Greek. (But it doesn't matter whether he had a Greek or Syrian father, since both of them would have been non-Jewish.) His mother and his grandmother were Jewish, but likely they were Hellenists. His mother's name was Eunice. [Eunice](#) is a [Greek](#) name. She may well have been a proselyte, but she at any case was part of that dispersion culture of [Hellenists](#).

By the way, if you're reading in the Greek, if you're reading in the King James Bible, if you encounter the word "Greek" in the book of Acts, it's talking about [people of Greek culture](#). But "Grecian" would instead indicate a [Hellenist](#).

A "Greek" would be a [true Greek](#), and then a "Grecian" in King James would be a [Hellenist](#). Therefore, if you're trying to trace it in the English, you can use that as a clue.

But as we saw yesterday, [in Christ](#), there's [neither Jew nor Greek](#). There's neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian (those are the people in the Ukraine on the other side of the Black Sea, that in the biblical world were considered very barbaric) neither slave nor free, but [Christ is all and in all](#).

The Apostle Paul, with his great teaching, pulled all these disparate elements of the Eastern Dispersion, the Western Dispersion, the Gentiles, master, slave, all were pulled together into one family, one household. [In Christ, we are all one](#).