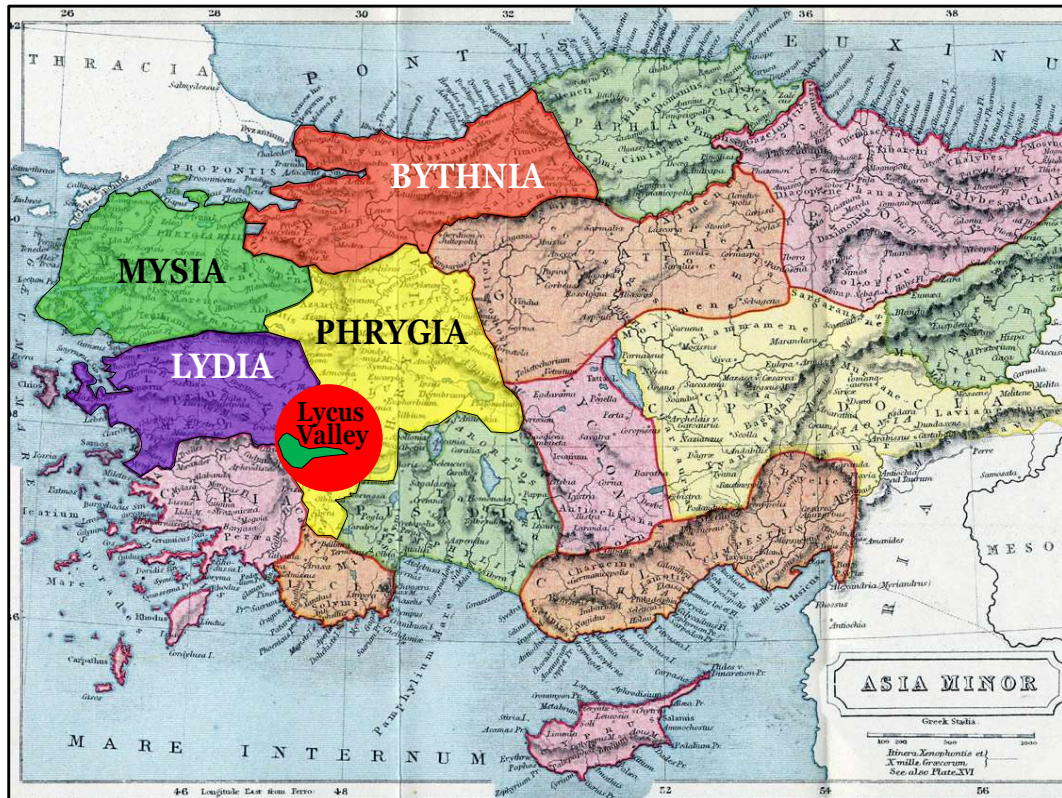


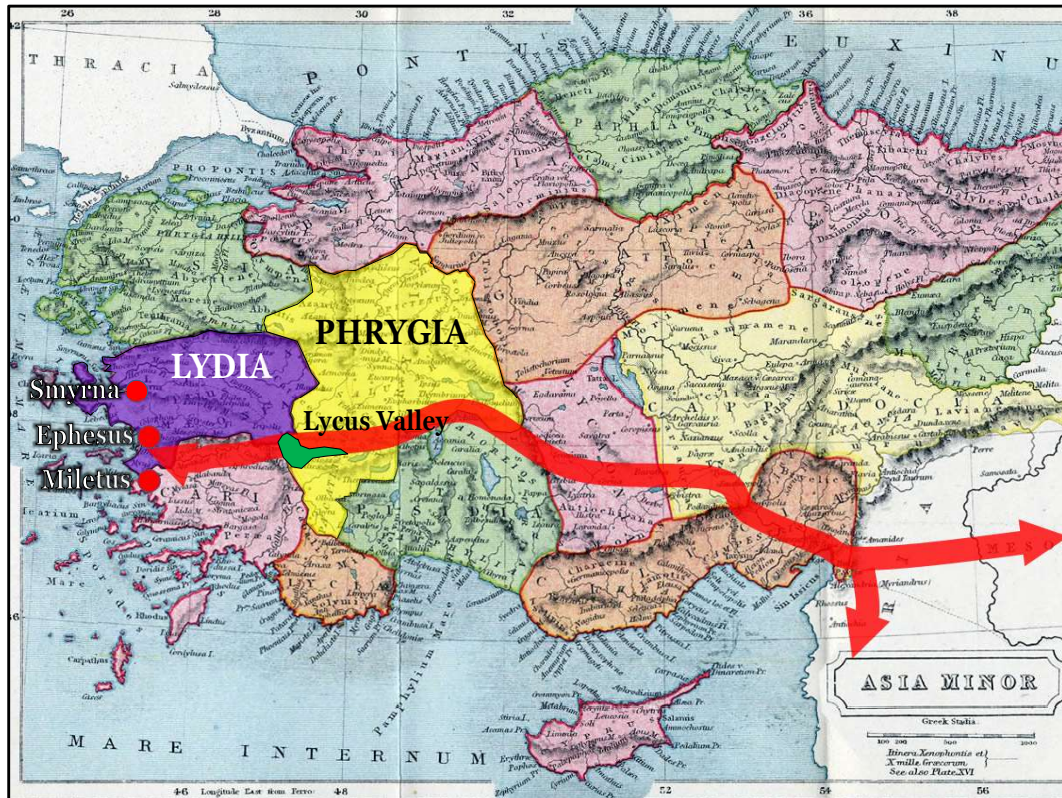
In western Turkey, about 100 miles east of Ephesus, is a fertile valley where the Lycus River flows into the Maeander River. The Lycus River Valley lies astride the principal land route between Asia and the Aegean Sea. The valley is surrounded by major mountains, some snow-capped year-round like the Honaz Mountains shown on this slide.



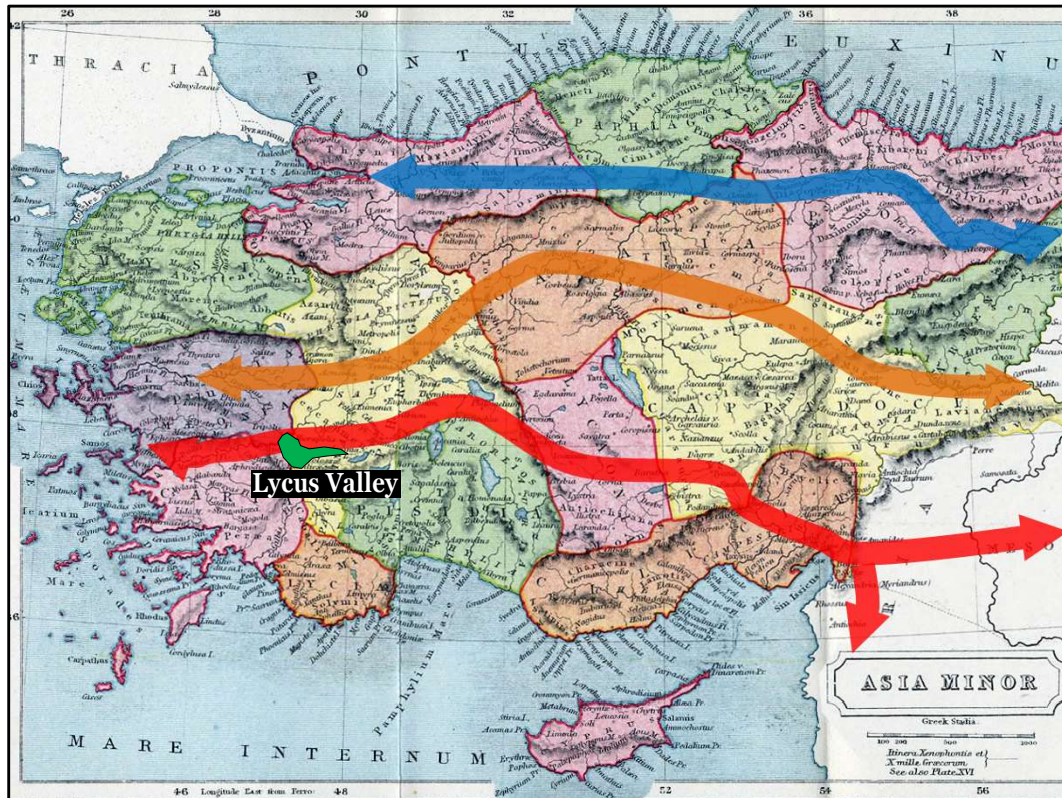
The 40 mile (64 km) long fertile valley is up to 10 miles (16 km) wide in places.



When the Phrygians destroyed the Hittite Empire around 1200 BC, the valley was on the edge of Phrygia [\[CLICK\]](#), bordering on the kingdom of Lydia [\[CLICK\]](#).



The Lycus River Valley [\[CLICK\]](#) was a hub on the chief land route [\[CLICK\]](#) for travel and commerce from Asia Minor to the major Aegean seaports of Smyrna [\[CLICK\]](#), Ephesus [\[CLICK\]](#) and Miletus [\[CLICK\]](#). What with kings fighting kings and armies marching to and fro, the region remained politically unstable until Rome conquered all Asia Minor between 129 and 63 BC. Under the Peace of Rome, Pax Romana, borders were stabilized, roads were built, and city infrastructures were improved.

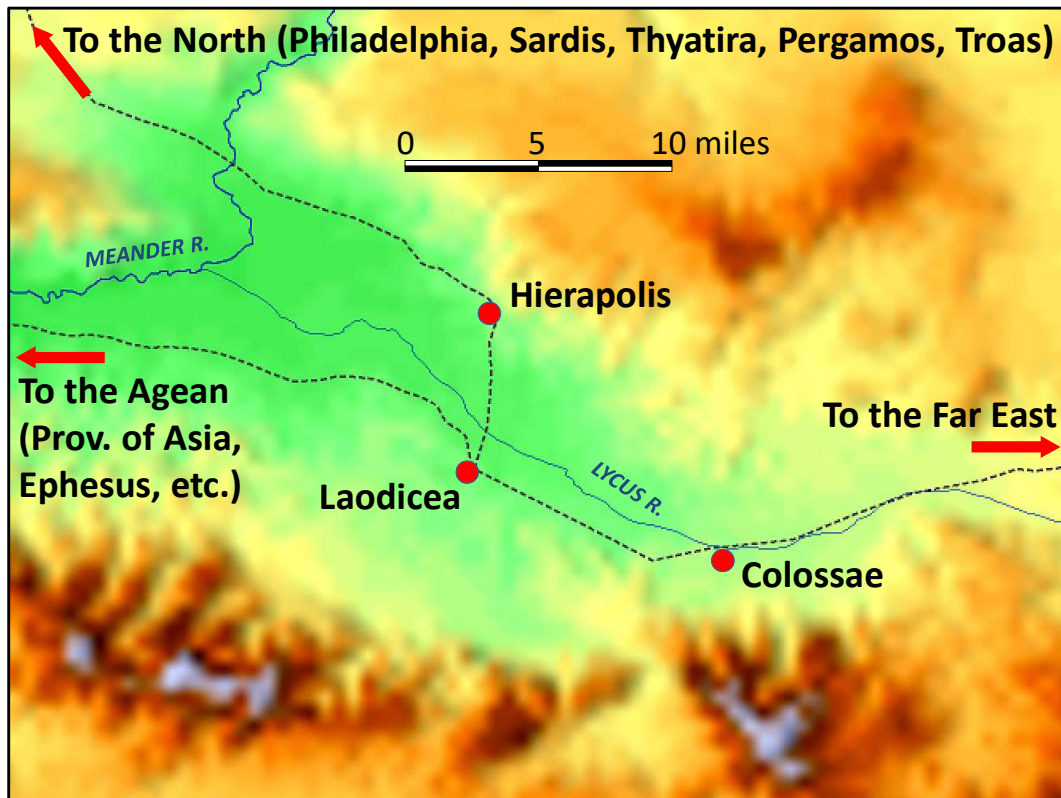


Rome developed three main east-west highways through the Roman Province of Asia Minor.

[CLICK] 1. The South Road west from Ephesus to Magnesia and up the Maeander Valley to Laodicea. From Laodicea it went to Apamea, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Tyana, and finally Tarsus, connecting it to trade routes from Antioch of Syria to the north, south, and east. Many of these names are familiar from the book of Acts. The south road was the primary commercial route.

[CLICK] 2. The Central Road from **Sardis** northward to Ancyra and then to Melitene on the Euphrates was somewhat longer and went through more mountainous and sparsely populated country.

[CLICK] 3. The North Road from Nicomedia to Satala and then into Armenia was the primary military highway.



Three large cities flourished in the Lycus River Valley: Laodicea [\[CLICK\]](#) at the intersection and on the [\[CLICK\]](#) main road to the Aegean, Colossae [\[CLICK\]](#) along the [\[CLICK\]](#) main road to the Far East, and Hierapolis [\[CLICK\]](#) along the [\[CLICK\]](#) road to the north. Originally Phrygian cities, in the New Testament age they were part of the Roman Province of Asia.

Hierapolis and Laodicea stood six miles apart on opposite sides of a valley with the Lycus River flowing between them. Colosse was located ten miles upriver, on the same side as Laodicea.

The strategic position of these cities also drew Christianity to Colossae, Laodicea, Hierapolis and Tripolis in the middle of the first century. The allure of wealth caused problems among Christians who were instructed to store up treasure in heaven, rather than upon earth. The issue became a particular dilemma for the churches of the Lycus River Valley near the end of the first century when Christians were forced to choose between wealth and their faith.



The area around these cities was very wealthy. The neighboring uplands provided excellent pastures for great flocks of sheep noted for the high quality of their wool. The area was possibly the greatest center of the wool industry in the world. The chalky water of the Lycus River was ideal for the manufacture of dyes. Their markets were celebrated for fine woolen cloth and garments. Laodicea in particular was known for its glossy black wool cloth which was greatly valued by the wealthy Romans.



Of the three cities, Colossae was the earliest to achieve city status, probably because of the unlimited year-round supply of cool pure crystal clear water flowing down from the nearby Cadmus Mountains. Fifth Century BC Greek historian Herodotus called Colossae the largest city of Phrygia. Colossae is also mentioned as a large and prosperous city by another Greek historian Xenophon some 50 years later as he followed the military campaign of the Persian Cyrus in 401 BC.



Colossae was so highly regarded that a purple dye drawn from the cyclamen flower was named Colossinus, which enabled the Colossians to manufacture a beautiful dark red wool cloth (colossinum) for which the city became famous, and which is a feature of world class Turkish carpets manufactured today. The photo on left shows the carpets handwoven onto a pure silk base. The carpet on the right incorporated a Navajo Indian motif that reminded me of where I grew up... so we bought it.



But the area was world-renown for its medical schools as well, with Laodicea famous for both its doctors and a special eye salve. Thousands of people visited Hierapolis to bathe in the spas and drink the water which remains geothermally heated to just under human body temperature at 36 degrees C (96.8 F) year-round. Many believe that the hot water has medicinal benefits.



Even today, people flock to bathe in the geothermally heated “champagne waters” among the ruins of the Cleopatra Pool, the most famous of Marc Anthony’s gifts to Egyptian Queen Cleopatra. An earthquake in 692 AD collapsed the ancient structures around the pool, and people can now wade and swim among Doric columns that once held up the ornate roof of a Roman Temple to Apollo.



Seventeen natural hot springs also feed extensive pristine white circular basins that cascade down the hillside from Hierapolis. When the water, supersaturated with calcium carbonate, reaches the surface, carbon dioxide de-gasses from it, and calcium carbonate is deposited as a soft gel that eventually crystalizes into a form of limestone called travertine.



These travertine terraces are visible throughout the Lycus River Valley, and give the area the Turkish name Pamukkale, or “Cotton Castle”. The ancient city of Hierapolis and the Pamukkale travertines are on both the



At the foot of the Hierapolis Archaeological Site and the travertine cliffs is the small tourist town of Pamukkale, a nice place to stay when visiting the Lycus River Valley. My favourite tourist souvenir shop there had a large sign advertising “Genuine Fake Rolex's”.



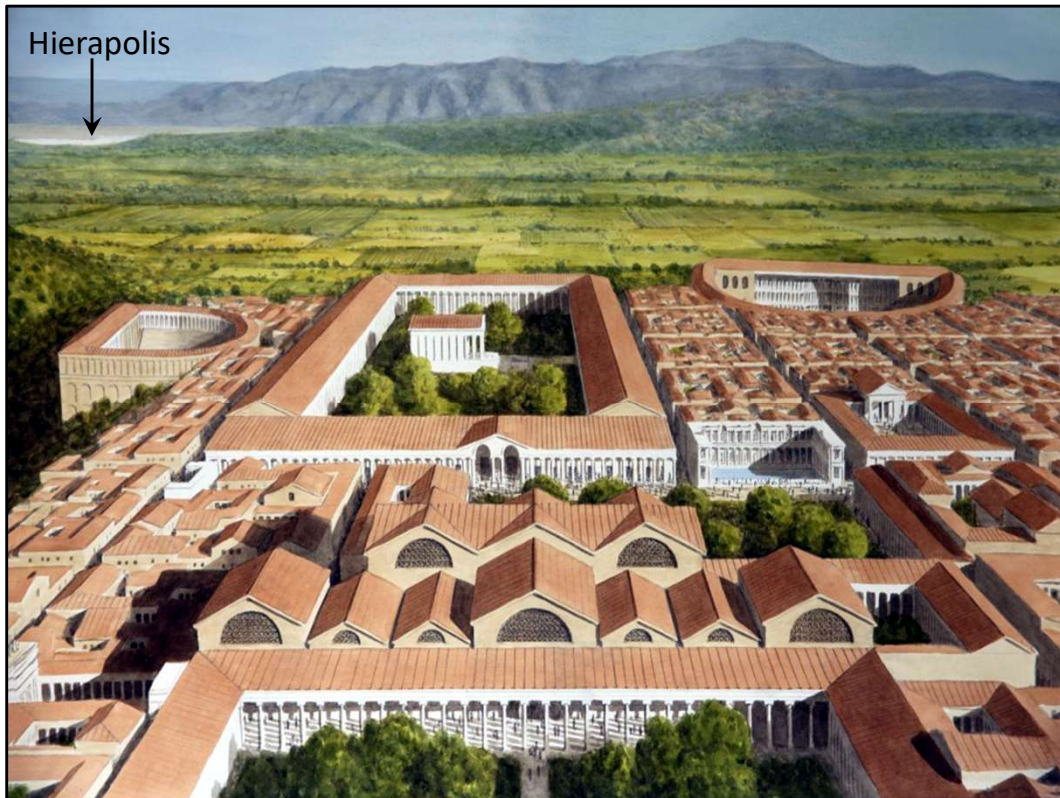
Hierapolis also became a great trade center catering to the extremely wealthy who made it a notable health resort due to the medicinal quality of its waters, continually heated by geothermal activity. **[CLICK]** While Hierapolis was six miles off the main trade route, it offered many services to entice weary travellers to break their journeys.



Hierapolis was an early Christian city, with a church there founded through Paul's influence while he was at Ephesus. 2nd Century tradition claims that the Apostle Philip was the first evangelist to preach there, and also that he and his two unmarried daughters were buried there. After years of searching for his tomb, the Italian Archaeological Mission to Hierapolis announced its discovery in 2011. It wasn't discovered where expected, but was inside a newly excavated 4th or 5th century church built to protect the first century tomb. The find explains a 6th century bronze seal from Hierapolis about 10 centimeters (four inches) in diameter **[CLICK]**, which was pressed into a Eucharistic wafer to authenticate St. Philip's bread to be distributed to pilgrims at the shrine. The design had confused modern scientists for decades. The structures on either side of the saint have now been identified as **[CLICK]** the domed martyrium (on the right) and **[CLICK]** the church in which it was found.



Six miles across the Lycus Valley from Hierapolis was an even larger and wealthier Roman city, Laodicea, the Roman district capitol.



It was the strategically located city of Laodicea that benefitted most of all. *Diospolis* ('The City of Zeus'), was not an important urban centre until 261-253 BC, when Antiochus II Theos of the Seleucid dynasty developed it in honor of his wife Laodice. By the 2nd century BC, Laodicea was a thriving metropolis administered by the Kingdom of Pergamon, which passed under Roman control in 133 AD. Astride the main Roman east-west road, the Romans immediately saw its strategic location in the expanding Roman Empire and made it the political center for the district, and a major international financial center for all major East-West trade.



It was known as a commercial Roman city attuned to large money transactions. Noted for gold sales and manufacture, the powerful city even minted its own coins, the inscriptions of which show evidence of the worship of Zeus, Æsculapius, Apollo, and the emperors. It didn't hurt that around 200 BC, Antiochus the Great resettled some 2,000 Jewish families from Babylon and Mesopotamia into the region. The area attracted Jews from Palestine, and by 62 BC the Jewish population was estimated to be as high as 50,000.

Laodicea was so wealthy that when a major earthquake devastated it and twelve other Asian cities in 60 AD, Laodicea alone refused to accept reconstruction funds from the Emperor Nero. "You say you are rich and in need of nothing".



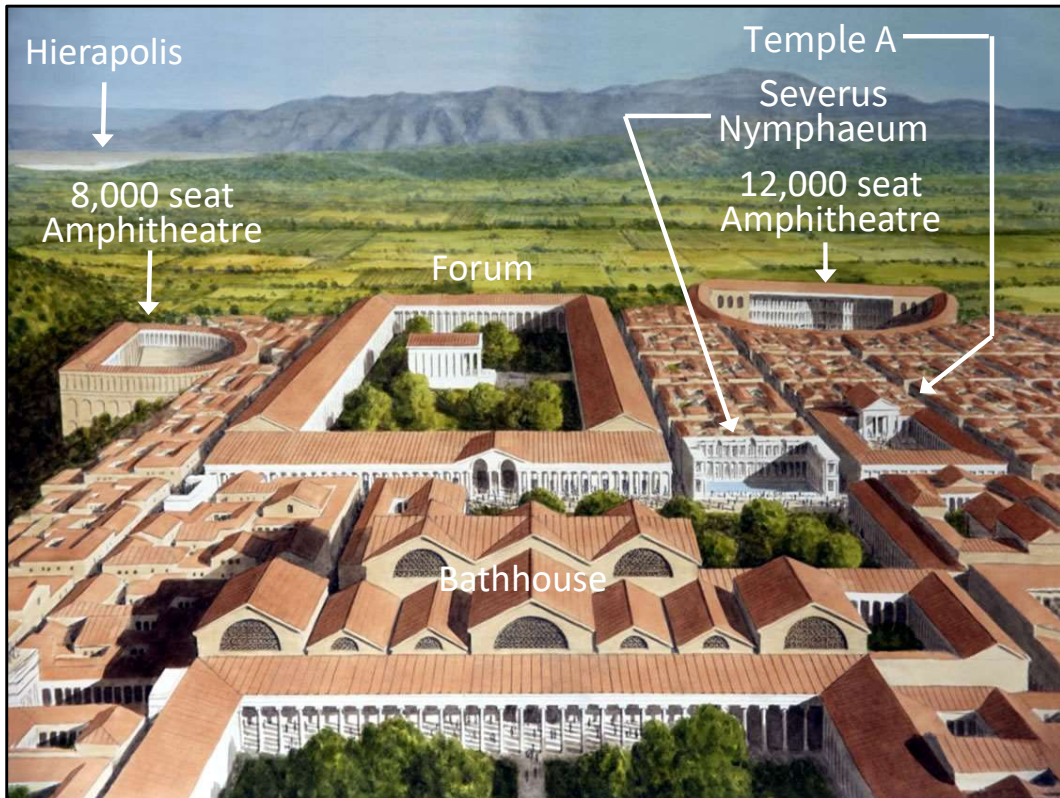
In the Roman world, amphitheatres were a prominent symbol of an imperial city. Laodicea outgrew its older 8,000 seat Hellenistic amphitheatre to the west and the Romans added a 12,000 seat Roman amphitheatre to the north. This shows the reconstruction of the smaller 94 meter diameter Hellenistic western theatre, completed just three months ago. **[CLICK]** It will soon be ready to once again hold events.



Aerial view of Laodicea in 2011, from the main Syria Gate down the ancient double colonnaded street to the Forum at the end. **[CLICK]** Here our tour guide enters the ancient city.



Syria Street was lined with covered shops. As with most Roman cities, the city benefitted from many engineering innovations. For example Syria Street and the shops had excellent drainage. . . **[CLICK]**
This is just one of the feats of Roman engineering genius in Laodicea.



The Forum was a central location used for legal, political, religious, and social functions, and a place for citizens to mingle freely. It was surrounded by shops and offices.

The massive central bathhouse and gymnasium was a social hub in the city, but was only one of four gymnasium complexes in affluent Laodicea.

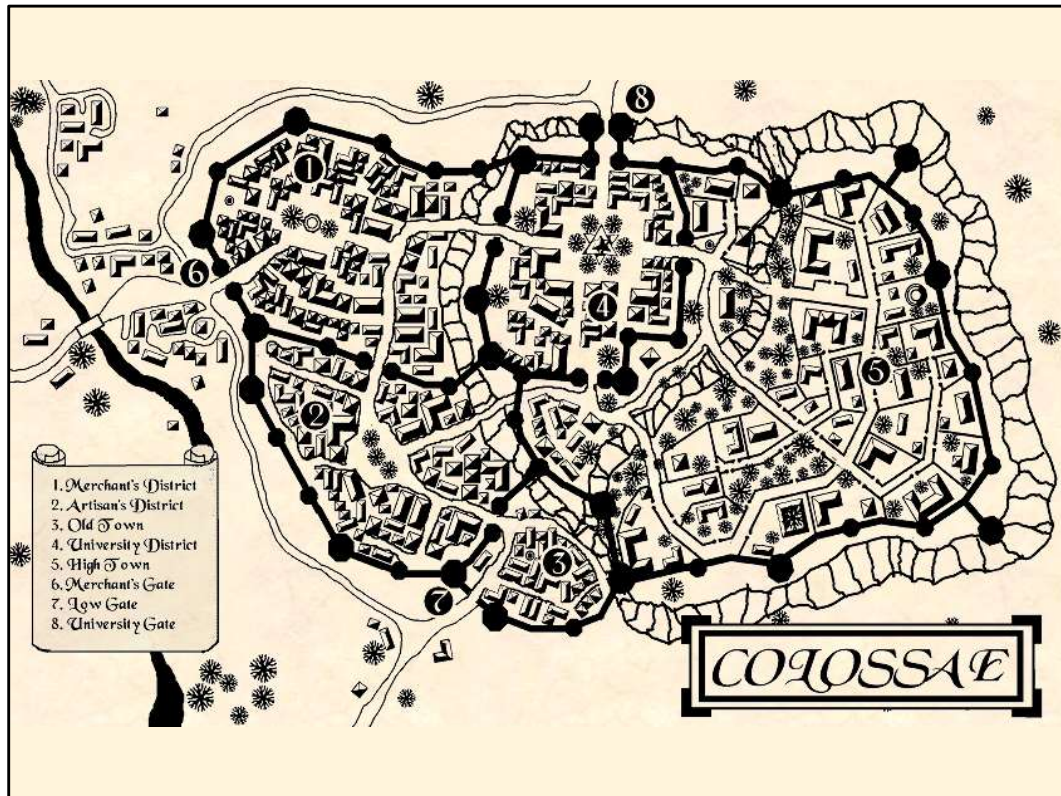
The end is nigh

- It's hard to be a fish out of water.
- Around 600 AD, an earthquake during the reign of Byzantine emperor Phocas (r. 602–610) damaged Laodicea, and many of the people moved near the Baspinar spring, now the 600,000 person city of Denizli.



Christian inscription

- Over time, once wealthy and powerful Laodicea was pilfered for building materials, then covered by earth and forgotten.
- Now its glorious past is being slowly uncovered (actually, quite rapidly in archeologically time). Professor Celal Şimşek estimated that 600 years of work is left to recapture its full glory.



Nearby Colossae was occupied on and off from 3600 BC to 1100 BC. A permanent settlement by at least 700 BC, Colossae was once more important than Laodicea and Hierapolis. Fifth century B.C. historian Herodotus mentions it as a "great city" visited by the Persian king Xerxes on his military campaign to Greece. Its amphitheater indicates a population of as much as 100,000. But by the time Paul wrote to Colossae it was in the shade of neighboring Laodicea. When Laodicea was developed as the Roman district power, Many Colossae inhabitants moved to Laodicea for better jobs and living conditions. Savaged during the great earthquake of Nero's time, the city continued to decline until it was destroyed during the persecution of Christians by Diocletian around 300 AD.

Ruins of Colossae today



It did recover somewhat and became an important Christian center after the 7th Century AD earthquake destroyed Laodicea. Colossae had one of the largest churches in the Near East in Byzantine times, the Church of St Michael, which once was a Metropolitan See (archdiocese). But Colossae never recovered its greatness and struggled along until the church was destroyed by the Turks around 1200 AD and Colossae disappeared.

Today, Colossae is the only one of the cities mentioned in the New Testament that has not been at least partially excavated. In this picture, the outline of the city walls, the amphitheatre, and the acropolis can be seen. Imagine the archaeological treasures that lie waiting in ancient Colossae.



This view from the ancient acropolis of Colossae shows the modern town of Honaz that replaced it nestled on the northern slope of Honaz Mountain, the highest mountain of the Aegean Region with a height of 2,571 meters (8,435 feet). Mt. Honaz is capped by snow year-round. About 40,000 people live in the area, which is now noted for two crops: cherries and oiled Turkish wrestlers.



So that's a quick overview of the Lycus Valley, a truly memorable place mentioned in four books of the New Testament, Acts, Philemon, Colossians, and Revelation. Over the next few weeks, we'll cover each of these references in detail.