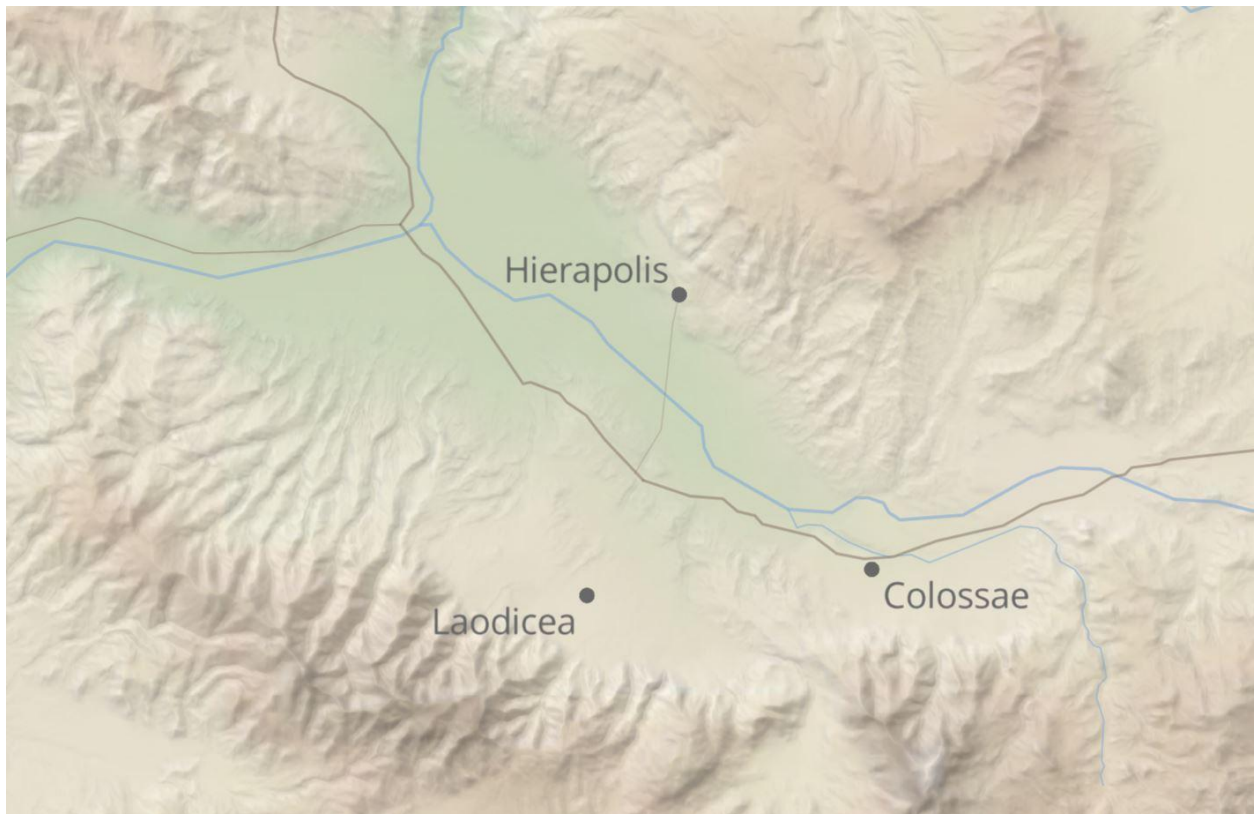


# Background of Colossians



## The Tri-City Area



### A. Hierapolis - lit. a city of priests

1. god and goddess served
  - a. Apollo (sun god)

- b. Cybele (goddess of fertility)
2. Health Center - water baths
  - a. Water came from hot springs
  - b. Putrid tasting
  - c. Left snow-white deposits on mountains
3. Had a 1 sq. mile necropolis (graveyard or city of the dead)

## B. Laodicea

1. Very wealthy - the upper crust lived here
2. After a severe natural disaster, they refused Roman aid and rebuilt the city for themselves
3. Medical center - famed for eye salves
4. Water came from the aqueduct was totally lukewarm by the time it came from Hierapolis
5. Had a church there that was utterly self-sufficient even of the Lord

C. Colossae: once a great city and river port, but at the time of Paul, it was a washed-up little town

1. Industry
  - a. The mineral water was used in dyes
  - b. Sheep and goats in the local area were famous for their wool and hair used in tents and Roman uniforms
2. Philosophy
  - a. Epictetus “the noble pagan” or the “greatest of the pagans” who taught a moral philosophy akin to Christianity would have been a young man at this time
  - b. Gnosticism and the liberal Jews were starting to intertwine
  - c. Paul had never been to Colossae but had come near to Hierapolis on his 3rd missionary journey
  - d. Paul’s connection was Epaphras who had been saved under his ministry in Ephesus (Colossians 1:7; Colossians 4:12, 13, 16)
3. Population
  - a. Many Jews came because of the business opportunities and low taxes - they brought extreme legalism
  - b. The Gentile population was:
    1. Steeped in Mystery Religions
      - a) All promised eternal life

- b) All had a great secret or mystery known only to their membership
- c) All centered on a man\* who died and was resurrected (clever counterfeits of Satan)
- d) One Example: Mithraism
  - 1) learned a catechism
  - 2) Initiates were clothed in white robes
  - 3) Stood in a cellar or cave under a grate
  - 4) A bull or ox was slain above, and its blood ran down over them so that they were “washed in the blood”
  - 5) They were pronounced “born again”

\*Example: Ishtar and Tammuz - Tammuz was killed and “resurrected” - their symbol was an I with a T overlaid forming a “cross” ...Ishtar was the mother of Tammuz and was called the Queen of Heaven

- 2. Steeped in Gnosticism - see my paper on Gnosticism for fuller understanding
  - a. Basically - all things spiritual are good and all things material are bad - Dualism
- 4. Areas of Paul’s concentration with the letter
  - A. Exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ and the correct teaching concerning Christ
  - B. Exposure and correction concerning
    - 1. Philosophy
    - 2. Legalism
    - 3. Mysticism
    - 4. Asceticism
- 5. Date: Paul wrote this epistle about the same time he wrote Ephesians and Philemon - in late 61 AD or early 62 AD.