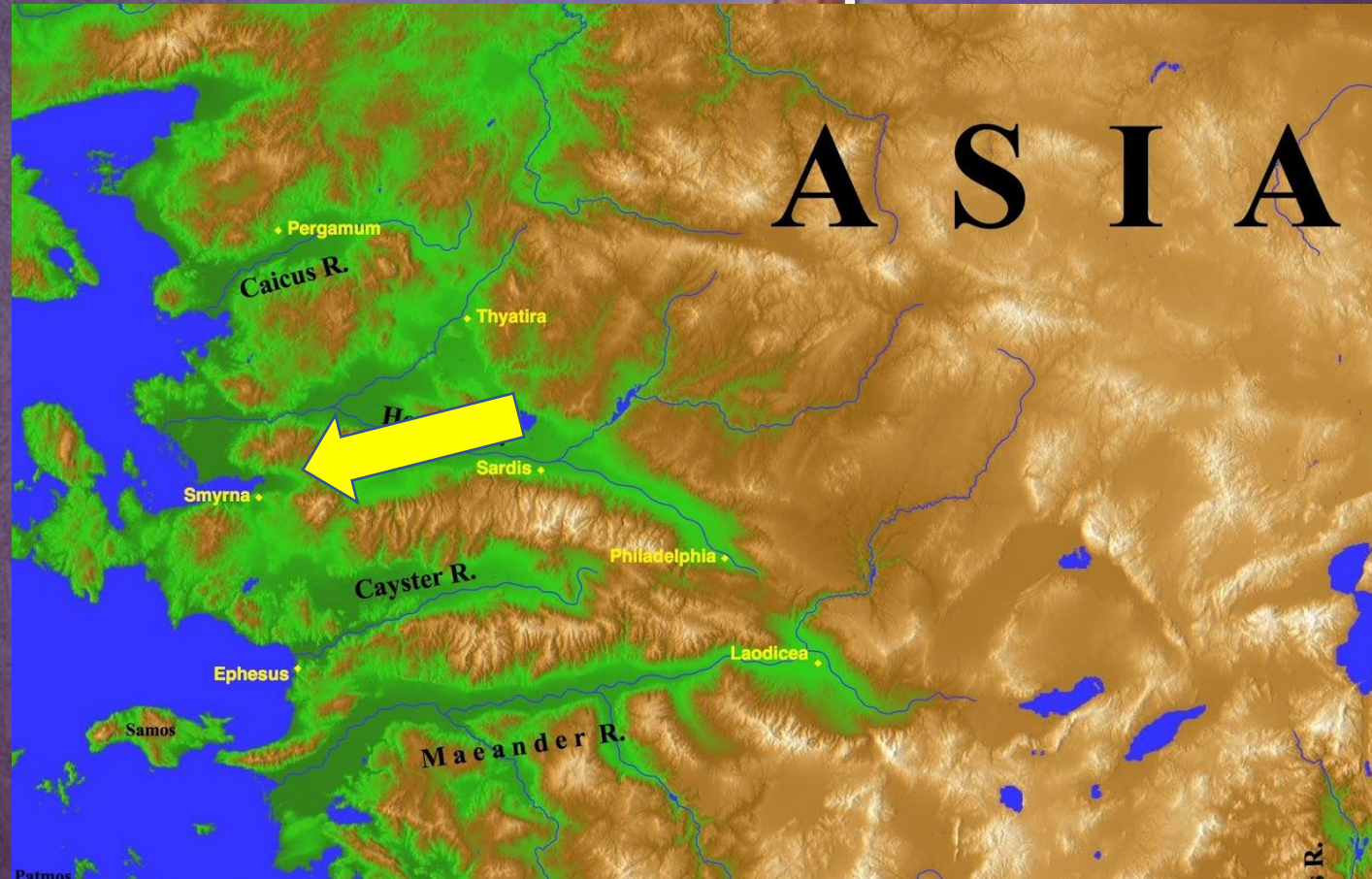


A Tale of Seven Churches: Smyrna

Revelation 2:8-11



Seven Churches Map



It was the second of the Seven, perhaps that was simply an accident of geography that it was the next city on the route the messenger was to take, or perhaps it was by design.

Smyrna - Today



The city had actually been destroyed around 590BC and for the next three hundred years existed as simply a collection of villages. In 290BC, Lysimachus rebuilt the city as one of the few planned cities in Asia, it's streets were wide and straight, and the entire city had been designed to be aesthetically pleasing.

Church Period



- The church age represented by the Smyrnian church was the age of persecution which lasted from approximately 95AD until 311AD.
- In the New Testament, the word persecution is used over thirty times in relation to Christians.
- Jesus did not promise that there would never be any problems.
- What are we, the church, doing wrong to be so accepted by society?
- Jesus had no criticism of this church.

Faithfulness



- The church in Smyrna has been faithful in the face of suffering.
- The Roman government had been a friend of the early church since Christianity was seen as a sect of Judaism which was a recognized religion.
- In the initial growth of the church, the Government protected the church.
- When Domitian became Emperor, he took Caesar worship seriously and demanded it of everyone.
- The church in Smyrna was under constant threat of persecution.

Poverty



- The church in Smyrna was faithful in the face of poverty.
- There are two distinct words used for poverty in the Greek:
 - One meant that you had nothing extra.
 - The other meant that you had nothing at all.
- The believers in Smyrna may have been on the bottom of the economic ladder.
- Jesus reassures them that while they may be poor in material things, they are rich in spiritual things.

Slander



- The problem with the church in Smyrna was that the critics fabricated faults.
- The very best lies these were all partly based on truth:
 - On the basis of the words spoken during the communion, Christians were accused of cannibalism.
 - Their common meal was known as the “Love Feast” so Christians were accused of practicing sexual immorality.
 - Because Christians refused to call Caesar “Lord,” they were considered to be unpatriotic.
 - They were also accused of being arsonists because of the talk of the fires at end times.

Conclusion

- Jesus tells the church at Smyrna: Remain faithful even when facing death, and I will give you the crown of life.
- This promise is not just for those believers who lived in a city in Asia Minor 2000 years ago; this promise is for us today,
- Whatever happens God is still in control.

