

LIFE IN PERGAMOS

A CITY OF WEALTH, KNOWLEDGE, AND PAGAN INFLUENCE



"And unto the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is..."

— Revelation 2:12-13



STRATEGIC LOCATION

Pergamos stood 20 miles inland from the Aegean Sea on a river bank, approximately 50 miles north of Smyrna. [1]



WEALTH & INNOVATION

In the first century, Pergamos was a wealthy city. [1] Its prosperity rooted in intellectual and economic innovation.

When an Egyptian pharaoh banned papyrus exports, King Eumenes II is traditionally associated with the development and large-scale production of parchment—a durable writing material made by preparing animal skins, not wood. The name parchment is derived from Pergamum (Latin *pergamenum*), reflecting the city's importance as a manufacturing center.



LIBRARY & PRIDE

This prosperity bred cultural pride. The city was filled with arrogant, self-centered people obsessed with knowledge through books, and its library contained more than 200,000 volumes, making it one of the largest of its day. [1] Egypt's concern over this rival library led to the development of parchment as an alternative writing material. [2]

During Roman dominance, Pergamos became the capital of the Roman province of Asia. [2]



RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

- Seleucus likely settled Jews in Thyatira, and Lydia had come within the synagogue's circle, possibly in her native city. [1]

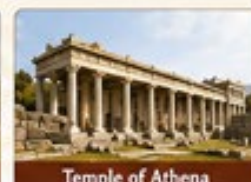


A MAJOR CENTER OF PAGAN RELIGION

- The acropolis featured an immense altar to **Zeus**, serving as the city's religious focal point, with the beautiful temple of Athena nearby. [3]



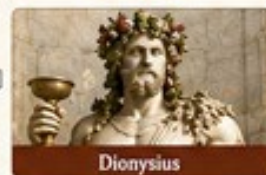
Altar of Zeus



Temple of Athena



- The people also worshipped **Dionysius** and **Asclepius**, the Greek god of medicine. [1]



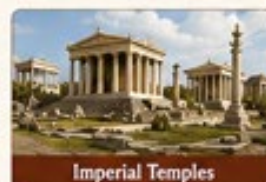
Dionysius



Asclepius



- Pergamos was not only a government center with three imperial temples but also the site of the temple of **Asklepios** and a medical center where the physician **Galen** worked around AD 160. [2]



Imperial Temples



Asclepion (Medical Center)



- Pergamos was a center where emperor worship—a form of loyalty pledged to the Roman emperor—was practiced. [2]



Emperor Worship



A SPIRITUALLY HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT

This religious landscape made the city spiritually hostile to Christian faith, explaining why Christ identified it as the place "where Satan dwells."

[1] John MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2004). [2] Nelson's *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Thomas Nelson, 1995. [3] William Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, 1875.