

Revelation

The Churches

CHURCH 3: PERGAMOS

Revelation 2:12-17



BACKGROUND

The church at Pergamos is third along the route following the Roman postal road. It was 80 miles north of Smyrna. It was once the official capital of the Roman province of Asia, but Ephesus eventually overtook it in importance because of its more favourable location for trade and transport. It became famous for developing parchment (pergamena).



INTRODUCTION

Roman culture often saw the blending of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought into a single system. Pergamos was a "melting pot" of Greek, Roman, and local Anatolian traditions. The city didn't force people to abandon their gods; it encouraged them to add new ones - Jesus is just one of many.

1. According to research 33% of US Christians believe in astrology and 29% in reincarnation. Why do you think this is?
2. Do you think modern syncretism is fuelled by social media?

THOUGHTS

1. Why do you think the church is commended?
2. Read Numbers 25:1-3. Do you think this sheds any light on what was happening at Pergamos?
3. According to commentators the Nicolaitans argued for adapting to the surrounding culture to avoid persecution. What do you think of this compromise?
4. What do you think it means that "I...will fight against them with the sword of my mouth"?
5. Read John 6:49-50. What do you think John means by the "hidden manna" and how does this contrast to the food sacrificed to idols?

PERGAMOS

Pergamos had an enormous library of over 200,000 books rivalled only by the library at Alexandria. The reading room was adorned with a 3.5-meter-high statue of Athena, the goddess of wisdom. It had a world famous healing centre dedicated to Asklepios, the god of medicine and was the first city to build a temple to a living Roman emperor (Augustus) in 29 BC. It also had a massive, ornate altar to Zeus on the city's acropolis that looked from a distance like a giant throne.

APPLICATION

1. Do you think it can be risky to become too "open-minded"?
2. What do you think is the main message of Pergamos for Christians today?
3. It has been suggested that "A church with such a great past may assume that it is meeting the challenge of the present." Do you believe this to be true?



Revelation



THE CHURCH AT PERGAMOS

In modern day Bergama in Turkey we can see the remains of Pergamos, a place that was once nicknamed "the city of temples".



PERGAMOS

Location: Situated roughly 15-16 miles inland from the Aegean Sea, it was built on a steep hill. Known as a major cultural, intellectual, and religious centre.

Kingdom of Pergamon: After Alexander the Great's death, it became the capital of the Attalid dynasty (281–133 BC), growing into a major cultural city.

The Library: The city possessed a library of roughly 200,000 volumes. It was so significant that Mark Antony reportedly gifted the entire collection to Cleopatra.

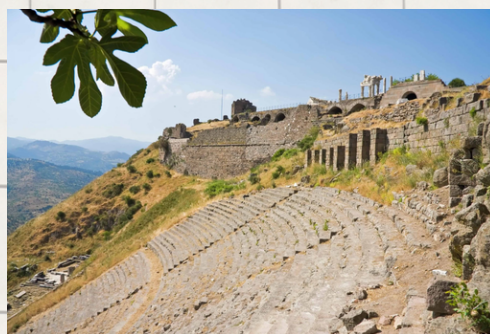
Parchment Invention: Due to shortages in papyrus, the city refined the production of writing materials from animal skins.

Key Structures: The Temple of Zeus (one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World), Temples of Athena, Dionysus, and the Asclepieion (a sanctuary dedicated to the god of medicine).

Today, visitors can see the remains of the Acropolis, the Library, the Temple of Trajan, and the Red Basilica (originally a temple for Isis that was later converted into a Christian church).



Temple of Zeus



Acropolis



Red Basilica

Antipas: Tradition, specifically from the Orthodox Church and historical accounts, suggests he was martyred by being roasted inside a brazen bull-shaped altar during the reign of Roman Emperor Domitian (81–96 AD) or Emperor Nero.