

PERGAMUM - THE CITY

- Also known as Pergamos
- Less than 100 miles from Ephesus – Smyrna about halfway between them
- Small city located there today, Bergama, Turkey
- Legend says that Pergamum was built by a son of Hercules
- The capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor at the time John wrote this letter
- “Pergamos” literally means **parchment**. Parchment was developed from animal skin which was made in the area.
- Important religious center. It was a center of worship for:
 - The emperor of Rome
 - Athena – Greek goddess of war, civilization, wisdom, strength, strategy, the arts.
 - Asklepios – Greek god of medicine and healing.
 - Dionysius – Greek god of the grape harvest, winemaking and wine, ritual madness and ecstasy.
 - Zeus – the Greek father of gods and men, god of the sky and thunder.
- There existed a large university and a large library that held 200,000 volumes. Keep in mind that there were no printing presses in that day so each volume was copied by hand. The library was so significant that it was later sent to Egypt as a gift from Antony to Cleopatra!
- The Altar of Zeus
The largest altar to Zeus was located in Pergamum. It was shaped like a huge throne and set on the acropolis (highest point in the city).
- Asklepios (Asclepius, Asklepius)
There was very bizarre worship of the Greek god Asklepios (god of medicine and healing) in Pergamum. Galen, the 2nd most famous medical person in the ancient world came from Pergamum. 1st most famous – Hippocrates. Galen contributed to understanding anatomy, physiology, pathology, pharmacology, neurology, and logic.
- In Pergamos was a famous medical school. The practice of medicine was mingled with a lot of superstition.
- The symbol or emblem for the god Asklepios was a snake. People went to the temple of Asklepios in Pergamum to be healed... non-poisonous snakes slithered all over the temple floor and in order to be healed, one had to lie down on the floor and stay there all night allowing the snakes to slither all over you. The belief was while you laid there, the defused multiplicity of the deity of Asklepios crawled over your body and infused you with his healing power.
- In the United States, approximately 76% of commercial healthcare organizations use a logo for medical care of a staff entwined by two serpents in the form of a double helix with a pair of wings mounted at the top. This is called the Caduceus. For 62% of healthcare professionals in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world, the

emblem or logo is a staff with a single snake wrapped around it known as the Rod of Asklepios (Asclepius).

Emperor Worship

Worship of the Roman emperor was very big in Pergamum and had reached cultic form by John's time.. This was the first city in the ancient Roman world to build a temple to Caesar. As a result, Pergamum had become the capital of Caesar worship. As long as one worshipped Caesar, then you could worship something else. One day a year it was required that all citizens burn incense to Caesar otherwise you would lose your citizenry rights and possibly your life!

PERGAMUM - THE CHURCH

No one is sure who founded this church....according to the 16th Chapter of Acts we know that Paul passed through there but there's nothing in the book of Acts stating that he founded this church. All we know is what is said in **Acts 19:8-10** (Paul I in Ephesus):

⁸ And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

⁹ But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

*¹⁰ This took place for two years, so that **all who lived in Asia** heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.*