

#7 Pergamum (published version)

THE PRESERVATION OF THE WORD

Authors, Letter Carriers, Copyists, Translators and Archivists

Welcome to the ancient city of [Pergamum](#), which we are visiting this morning on our tour. And this is [one of the seven churches](#) that was addressed [in the Book of Revelation](#). We're up on the [Acropolis](#), which is really the highest hill we have been on in our entire tour of Greece and Turkey. Quite an amazing site. This was a great city. [Prior to Ephesus, this was the most important city in Asia](#), and then Ephesus gradually supplanted it.

This city was also [known for its library and for](#) its use of animal skins as writing material. What we today call [parchment](#) is derived from the name *Pergamum*, and it also in Greek is μεμβράνα *membrana*. But it's basically, you take animal skins, you stretch them, you dry them, then you clean them with pumice and then you write on them. It's a much more durable product, the animal writing material with the animal skins is much more [durable than the papyrus](#) product which came out of Egypt.

In 2 Timothy 4:13, Paul, in writing at the end of his life to Timothy, exhorts him to get the cloak that he left with Carpus and [the books and the parchments](#). The word [books in Greek](#), is βιβλίον *biblion* — the word from which we get *Bible*. But it's a [reference to papyrus](#). Scripts that were [written on paper](#) — a vegetable product, from papyrus — [were the books](#). Those that were [written on parchment or animal skins](#) (like vellum, which is calfskin, or sheepskin or goatskin, which were also animal products) were [more durable for documents](#) that you needed to [keep for a longer time](#).

I wanted to talk to you today a little bit about [the preservation of the Word](#). We don't have much of a record of what actually transpired in terms of taking all [the circular letters that Paul wrote](#) and preserving

them for future generations, but this gives us a clue: [he wanted both the books and the parchments](#). In this whole process of [getting the Word down in writing](#) so that it could survive for generations, you had [multiple people involved](#). You had [authors](#), you had [copyists](#), you had [letter carriers](#), you had [translators](#), and you had [archivists](#).

Now, again, the Bible doesn't give us a lot of information about how it was done for the succeeding generations. But I think it's interesting that Paul asks Timothy to get [the cloak](#) that he left with Carpus at [Troas](#).

We're here in biblical Mysia today. [Pergamum was the capital of Mysia](#), and so Carpus is not that far away in [Troas \(which was also in Mysia\)](#). Troas was [the place where Luke is first recorded](#) in the Book of Acts with the "we" sections. He goes from Troas to Philippi with Paul as part of the Macedonian call. Later, he's coming the other way from Philippi to Troas.

AUTHORS

[Luke](#) was one of those people that were faithful to Paul right up till the end of his life when he was imprisoned in Rome. Luke is probably the [only Gentile writer of Scripture](#), and we learned this morning that Paul was the author of one-third of the New Testament. Well, if you're counting chapters, Luke has the exact same number of chapters, 52, [Luke and Acts](#). But if you're counting words, actually, Luke is the [most prolific writer of the New Testament](#). But Luke was [one of those authors](#) that traveled with Paul, and he had that Gentile background.

Then you have also people like [Timothy](#), who's mentioned in many of the [salutations](#) for the various epistles, indicating his involvement with the respective audiences at the time they were written.

You have people like [John Mark](#), who left [Paul and Barnabas](#) when they were going on their first missionary journey before they got up to Pisidian Antioch. He left them there on the coast. Yet Mark came around and, in the end, he was able to minister in a lot of different contexts. He was the one in Acts 12 at whose home they were staying.

The believers that were believing for Peter to get out of prison were staying at John Mark's mother's house. Later in life, in 1 Peter, John Mark is mentioned as being right [by Peter's side in Babylon ministering to the circumcision](#). Yet he's also mentioned [at the end of Paul's life in Rome](#). John Mark really got around and he's the one to whom we owe the [gospel of Mark](#). So [various writers](#) were involved.

LETTER CARRIERS

We looked as we visited these different spots at the [different letter carriers](#), like the wonderful [Phoebe](#) who was from the Corinth area and delivered the letter to Rome. She was [from Cenchraea](#) (which is the port city of Corinth), and she was the one that [took the Book of Romans and delivered it](#) to the believers there.

[Silvanus](#) was another [letter carrier](#), also called [Silas](#). He [delivered 1 Peter](#).

[Titus](#) likely was the one who [delivered 1 and 2 Corinthians](#).

Although we can't say for 100 % sure, [Epaphroditus](#) probably [delivered](#) the letter to the [Philippians](#).

[Onesimus](#), the slave that was freed and received by his master, [together with Tychicus, delivered the letter to the Colossians](#), and then personally [delivered the letter to his former master, Philemon](#). So you've got the authors, you've got the letter carriers.

COPYISTS

You've got [copyists](#). At the end of [Romans](#), there's a mention of I, [Tertius, who wrote this epistle](#). That was not Paul, that was a copyist who was writing it down, capturing it so that they would have it and that they could have multiple copies. So all of these people were involved.

TRANSLATORS

You also had [translation](#) that had to occur. Not everybody was as good in [Greek](#). There were some people that knew [Aramaic](#). The area around [Antioch](#), even though it [was a Greek city](#), it was [also an Asian city](#). And Antioch was in Syria, and that was where they [spoke Aramaic](#). So you had different translations going on of these letters.

ARCHIVISTS AND LIBRARIANS

Then thinking about Pergamum, we learned today that [after the library of Alexandria](#) which was the greatest of the ancient world, [Pergamum was number two](#). And the way that they would store these scripts, they would use a cross piece like this and then they would stick the scroll down to the bottom and it was just cubby holes all the way through like that. (That's how they did it in Alexandria anyway; I don't know about here at Pergamum.)

PRESERVATION OF THE WORD

But just thinking about [this part of the world](#) where they [had parchment](#), where they [had the tradition of a library](#). And that whole idea of a library, I think God was probably involved in getting that going, because that is something that was going to be needed for the [preservation of the Word](#) for future generations.

So it's exciting to think about the role that we can play and the things that we can do as individuals. It [takes all of us in order to minister God's Word](#), not just one person, not just the author, not just the copyist, not just the letter carrier, not just the translator, not just the librarian. It takes all of us. Thank God that those epistles, those Gospels were preserved for us to read and for us to get the true doctrine today and be a part of the family of God.

God bless you.