

8 Hierapolis

Names (also known as)

It was also known as:

Pambouk Kelessi (Eusebius AD 326).

Pambuck Kulasi (Thayers)

Pamukkale (current Turkish name for neighbouring town).

Etymology

Hiera was the name of a mythical Amazon queen (Ungers).

Hiera aka Laodice or Astyoche, was daughter of Priam, king of Troy, wife of Telephus son of Herakles (Graves: The Greek Myths).

Alternately - Hiero' = holy; 'polis = city.

Location/Description

Hierapolis was a Hellenistic spa town founded by the Attalid kings of Pergamum (who claim their lineage through Hiera – refer etymology) at the end of the 2nd century BC. Situated in the Lycus River valley near Colossae and Laodicea.



The city today is known as Pamukkale ("the cotton castle" of white travertine terraces). The beautiful white cliffs around Hierapolis were formed by the calcium-oxide mixing with calcium in the hot water springs which flow to the Maeander River below. The water temperature of the spring is 95 degrees F. This hot water brought about the worship of Heracles (refer etymology), the god of health and hot waters.

Brief History

The famous hot springs were used for scouring and drying wool and its lukewarm waters were transported to Laodicea by underground pipes.



Around 200 BC the Seleucid king, Antiochus the Great sent 2,000 Jewish families there from Babylon and Mesopotamia. More came from Judaea. The Jewish community grew in Hierapolis and were estimated to number 50,000 in 62 BC.

Hierapolis reached the peak of its importance in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. It was destroyed by an earthquake in 60 AD and rebuilt. Remains of the Greco-Roman period include baths, temple ruins, a monumental arch, a nymphaeum, a necropolis and a theatre.

When Constantine established Constantinople as the 'new Rome' in 330 AD the town was made a bishopric.



In the 5th century, Hierapolis became an important religious centre for the Eastern Roman Empire.

A cave nearby called Ploutonion (the gate of Hades/Pluto) attracted a cult. It is a small cave just large enough for one person to enter through a fenced entrance, beyond which stairs go down and from which emerges suffocating carbon dioxide gas caused by subterranean geologic activity from the reaction of water on the limestone.

It had its own priesthood who sold birds and other animals to tourists, to try out how deadly

the fumes were from the gate of Hades. Visitors could also, for a fee, ask questions of Pluto's oracle. This provided a considerable source of income for the temple.

In the early 7th century, the town was devastated first by Persian armies and then by another destructive earthquake, from which it took a long time to recover.

In the 12th century, the area came under the control of the Seljuk sultanate of Konya before falling to crusaders under Frederick Barbarossa in 1190.

About thirty years later, the town was abandoned before the Seljuks built a castle in the 13th century. The new settlement was abandoned in the late 14th century.

In 1354, the great Thracian Earthquake toppled the remains of the ancient city. The ruins were slowly covered with a thick layer of limestone.



Scriptural references

New Testament

Colossians 4:13 – “For I bear him [Epaphras] record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in **Hierapolis.**”

Famous characters

Paul

Epaphras

Phillip the Evangelist was crucified in Hierapolis around 80 AD and buried with two of his 4 daughters (Eusebius).

Paul and Epaphras

Epaphras (meaning: devoted to Aphrodite) was a faithful brother trying his utmost to correct serious doctrinal issues at Colossae. Epaphras journeyed to Rome and sought out Paul for his advice and instruction. This

association may have been the cause of his own imprisonment (Philemon 23). To support his cause, Paul wrote the letter to the Colossians.

Epaphras was prayerful and practical and described by Paul as a dear fellow-servant, fellow-prisoner and faithful minister. How many of the ecclesia in Hierapolis will owe their place in the Kingdom to his concern the Judgement Seat will reveal. His place seems assured.

Sources:

Wikipedia - various

Eusebius Ecclesiastical History

(Compiler – John Tierney)

