

Philippians - Introduction



Philippi, the City

- Excavation of Philippi took place from 1914-1937 by the French Archaeological School of Athens. From 1937-2016 the Greek Archaeological Service has continued the excavation of Philippi. Of all the NT cities Philippi has the most complete historical and archaeological research available to scholars.
 - Many coins
 - Many inscriptions
 - Uncovered ruins include the forum, agora, gymnasiums baths, library, acropolis
 - Three folders of photos of archaeological sites here → <http://www.holylandphotos.org/browse.asp?s=1,4,13,31,329>
- One of the Roman's most traveled roads, Via Egnatia, served as Philippi's main street (photo here → <http://holylandphotos.org/browse.asp?s=1,4,13,31,124&img=GNMTVE01>) Via Egnatia, running a total of 493 miles from the coast of the Adriatic Sea in the west (from the coastal cities of Apollonia or Dyrrhachium) to Byzantium in the east.





- Philippi was 800 miles from Rome.
- Located in the Roman province of Macedonia in the NE section.
- Philippi was located between two rivers: Strymon and Nestos. And, was 9 miles from the seaport of Neapolis to the south on the north coast of the Aegean Sea.
- The early names for the city were Tasibasta, Datus and Crenides (which means “springs” or “fountains” because of the abundant water supply).
- The original city on a steep hillside with abundant water, timber and metals including an prominent gold mine close to the town. This location became the center of the Greek armies.
- Philippi became the capital of the Greek empire, but in 359 BC the Greeks called Philip II (Alexander the Great’s father) to help them against the Thracians. Philip II delivered the Greeks, united the Macedonians and the Greeks into one nation and renamed the city of Crenides after himself, Philippi.
- Philip II of Macedonia planned to attack the Persians and conquer the world, but was assassinated. His son Alexander, at the age of nineteen, picked up his dad’s vision and left Philippi to attack and defeat the Persians.
- Because of Alexander’s success Philippi became the center of Greek culture and was highly developed as a city.
- In 168 BC Rome conquered Macedonia and organized it into four districts and the significance of Philippi was diminished.
- In 44 BC Julius Caesar was assassinated and the civil war that broke out between the armies of Antony/Octavian and Brutus /Cassius resulted in two battles on the plains near Philippi. Antony defeated Cassius’ army and Octavian defeated the troops of Brutus. The two victors eventually dismissed their armies and established a Roman colony at Philippi for their Roman soldiers in 42 BC (Antony) and 30 BC (Octavian). With this influx of Roman soldiers and the city’s new standing as a recognized Roman colony the ancient city was revived, but this time the historical Greek city took on new Italian flavor which was more familiar to its new citizens, the Roman soldiers.
- Octavian, upon becoming, Caesar Augustus, took the honor of revived Philippi a step further by giving it the honor of ius Italicum, which means the citizens in Philippi of Macedonia had the same privileges and the same rights as the citizens back home in Italy, even though Philippi was 800 miles from Rome.

Historical Context of Philippians

- Philippian church started by Paul in 50 AD on his second missionary journey (49-52 AD) when Paul had decided to leave Asia and enter Europe in response to a vision/dream. Paul originally entered Philippi with Silas, Timothy and Luke.
- Philippi was an important Roman colony.
- Paul first met with a group of faithful Jewish women and shared his message of salvation through Jesus. The women named include:
 - Lydia
 - Euodia
 - Syntyche
- The early church in Philippi included:
 - Clement
 - Paul's Philippian jailer and his family
 - The slave girl (formerly demon possessed)
- Paul was asked to leave Philippi, but left behind Luke with the new believers. Paul spent the next three weeks in Thessalonica along with Timothy and Silas and several times received financial assistance from the Philippians. The Philippians sent financial assistance to Paul while he stayed in Corinth for eighteen months after he had traveled to Berea and Athens.
- During Paul's third missionary journey Paul continued to be harassed by Judaizers who not only tried to undercut Paul's ministry, but also tried to kill him. During the fall of 56 AD and the spring of 57 AD Paul traveled through Philippi to reach Corinth and then back through Philippi on his way to Jerusalem with an offering from the Gentile churches to the Jewish Christians. During these visits to Philippi in 56 and 57 AD Paul would have warned the Philippians of the Jews they were surrounded by that would try to infiltrate their doctrinal positions (Philippians 3:1). The Philippians also wanted to participate in the offering for the Jewish Christians even though they had already given much to Paul and were at that time facing financial difficulties.
- When Paul went to Jerusalem with the financial offering in 57 AD he was arrested and placed in prison for 2-3 years (57-59 AD). The Philippians heard of Paul's arrest and imprisonment, but because of their lack of certainty concerning his condition and location they did not send a representative with financial assistance to Paul. (Philippians 4:10)
- Then in 59 AD Paul appealed to Governor Felix in Caesarea (and, King Agrippa II) to stand before the Emperor in Rome to present his case. The Philippians (along with other churches) would have eventually heard the news that Paul was headed to Rome for a court date. But, the Philippians were still short on details and information.
- In Rome, Paul stayed in his own rented apartment along with the oversight of a guard, but with visitors free to visit and support him. Many Roman Christians came to hear Paul, but also the Jews came to debate Paul. The result of this setting:
 - Paul had financial needs to pay his rent and daily needs. Support would have come from the Roman Christians, but also the Philippians are going to send a gift.
 - It was a time of freely proclaiming the Gospel to believers, Jews and Gentiles (including members of Caesar's Praetorian Guard)
 - Paul was confined from travel. Other preachers, teachers and apostles were doing the work of spreading the Gospel.

- Some were taking advantage of Paul's being "out-of-commission" to take over some of his territory. But, they were still preaching his message.
- Jews continued to undermine Paul's doctrine.
- This letter to the Philippians was written by Paul in 61 AD from Rome while he was under house arrest in Rome from 60-62 AD.
- At the time of writing this letter to the Philippians Paul had just received a financial gift from the Philippian believers. The donation was brought to Paul by Epaphroditus.

Location of Writing Philippians

Evidence in letter:

- Paul was in prison (Phil. 1:7, 13, 17; 2:17; 4:14)
 - Paul was facing a trial that could result in death (1:19-20; 2:17) or he could be released (1:25; 2:24)
 - There was a praetorium (1:13) and "those who belonged to Caesar's household" (4:22) where Paul wrote the letter
 - Timothy was with Paul (1:1; 2:19-23)
 - There was extensive evangelistic work taking place around Paul (1:14-17)
 - Paul planned on visiting Philippi upon release (2:24)
 - There had been several trips in and out of Philippi and Rome between the two locations that had kept communication open while Paul had been in prison
 - News of Paul's arrest reached Philippi
 - Philippians sent Epaphroditus with a gift
 - News of Epaphroditus' illness went back to Philippi
 - Response that the Philippians were concerned about Epaphroditus reached Paul
 - Paul hoped to send Timothy to the Philippians and get news back before he left for Philippi
1. Rome - earliest and traditional view
 2. Ephesus - suggested in 1900
 3. Corinth - suggested in 1731
 4. Caesarea - suggested in 1799

Opponents

1. Philippians 1:28-30 - the world, unbelievers
2. Philippians 1:14-17 - these were believers or “brothers” who were preaching Christ. But, with impure motives and selfish ambition. Yet, they preached the truth.
3. Philippians 3:1-4 - “dogs”, “evildoers” who were false teachers perverting the truth who were some form of Judaizers

Reason for the Letter

The letter includes some common elements of contemporary letters:

1. Friendship
 - a. Epaphroditus update
 - b. Paul's personal update
 - c. Thank the Philippians for their gift/support
2. Exhortation
 - a. Suffering because of local opposition in Philippi, thus the focus on the ultimate eschatological victory
 - a. Internal conflicts in the church due to self-promotion (though, not as serious as the Corinthians' “division” and “strife”). Thus, the need for the example of Christ in 2:6-11

Summary and Organization of the Letter

1. Opens with Epaphroditus' arrival with a gift for Paul from the Philippians and information from Philippi.
2. Paul reports about his situation (which includes the advancement of the Gospel) and his anticipation of his court case.
3. Paul's real concern is with their situation, which might actually be hindering the advance of the Gospel. Christ is used as an example of service and ministry.
4. Paul is writing with the view of two chronologies:
 - a. His chronology with Timothy and Epaphroditus present
 - b. Their chronology when they read the letter
5. Timothy will be sent soon to update the Philippians on Paul's trial and return to inform Paul if his letter (Philippians) was helpful. Then, Paul will come to Philippi.
6. Epaphroditus is coming home to Philippi
7. Imperative mood that includes commands and warnings
8. Thanks the Philippians for their gift and closes the letter