

Philippi

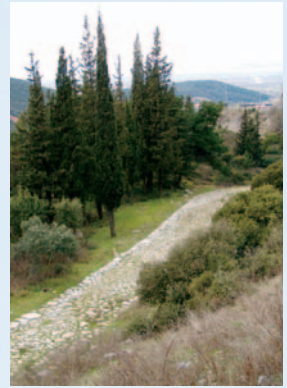
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A Place of Conflict, Culture, and Conversion

by Jim Pitts

*S*ignificant in Scripture and an important archeological site, Philippi is in the Macedonian province of northern Greece. It lies near the port of Neopolis (modern Kavala), and on an ancient Roman trade route (the Via Egnatia). Near major rivers, Philippi presents a view of the Plain of Drama and overlooks a strategic mountain pass. This city was the scene of one of the most decisive battles in history and one of the first European cities to embrace the Christian faith.

Established in the fourth century BC by Philip II and named after him, Philippi gained population with the construction of the Via Egnatia. Gold mining in the nearby mountains enhanced the city's growth. The development of a large-scale drainage system opened the plain to agriculture. In 42 BC, not far from the



VIA EGNATIA



city, the forces of Mark Anthony and Octavian defeated the armies of Brutus and Cassius. Philippi was granted the status of a Roman colony in 27 BC.

Upon the arrival of the Apostle Paul, apparently the Jewish population was insignificant since there is no mention of a synagogue in Acts 16. Therefore, Paul went to a special place of prayer adjacent to the **Krenides River**. Speaking to the women who had gathered there, Paul shared the gospel with Lydia, a successful businesswoman. She became a believer and the first European Christian convert. Along with her household, Lydia was baptized and invited Paul and Silas to be guests in her home.

A conflict prompted by the exorcism of a slave girl resulted in Paul's arrest. He and Silas were beaten and locked in jail, but an earthquake that night opened their cell. Instead of fleeing, Paul remained and witnessed to the jailer, who became a Christian. When he realized Paul was a Roman citizen, the magistrate offered him an apology and encouraged him to leave. Some six years later, Paul returned to Philippi and continued his apostolic mission. His letter to the Philippians conveys his care and concern for them.



THE TRADITIONAL SITE ASSOCIATED WITH PAUL'S IMPRISONMENT.

Over the centuries, Philippi has waxed and waned. By the fourth century AD, Philippi had become a metropolis of Christianity with magnificent Byzantine churches. Today monumental ruins of the Hellenistic, Roman, and Early Christian periods awe visitors.

PLACE OF PRAYER ADJACENT TO KRENIDES RIVER



A defensive wall spanning over 2 miles was built in two phases: the first by Philip II and the second by Justinian I in AD 527–565. The line of the wall begins at the top of the hill, surrounds the foot of the hill, and encircles part of the valley below.



THE THEATRE, BUILT BY PHILIP II

The theater is the best-preserved structure in the town and hosts the annual Philippi Summer Festival. It was built by Philip II around the middle of the fourth century BC and altered in the Roman period (2nd–3rd centuries AD) to accommodate performances involving gladiatorial combat and wild animals.

Sanctuaries devoted to various deities, often no more than small recesses dug out of rock, were built on the road leading up the hill to the Acropolis during the Roman period. One was dedicated to Artemis, and a bas-relief shows the goddess hunting a deer.

The Agora (Forum) is a vast square paved with marble and has steps and porticoes on three sides. It was built under the direction of Marcus Aurelius in the second century AD, and was the administrative heart of the city.



THE AGORA (FORUM)

Dominating the site is the **Pillared basilica**. Unfortunately, this cathedral, with a magnificent dome ceiling, was top-heavy. It collapsed before construction could be completed. In the tenth century, the surviving narthex was turned into the main sanctuary. The Palaestra, used for athletic training in the second century, was comprised of a central court, small rooms, a small amphitheatre, and fifty marble latrines.



The beauty of the city lies not in its present condition, but in its rich history. The once proud city of Philippi lies in grand ruins, though many of its monuments have been restored. The importance of the historical and biblical events that took place within Philippi not only shaped our past, but also inform our present. ❖



APOSTLE PAUL



REMAINS OF PILLARED BASILICA
SIXTH CENTURY A.D