

Philippi

Names (also known as)

Philippi, first named Krenedes or Crenides (signifying "Fountains").

Etymology

Philip (after whom the city is named) means "lover of horses."

Location/Description

Philippi was a city in eastern Macedonia, in the Edonis region. Its original name was Crenides (signifying "Fountains") after its establishment by Thasian colonists in 360-359 BC. The city was renamed by Philip II of Macedon in 356 BC and abandoned in the 14th century after the Ottoman conquest. The present municipality, Filippi, is located near the ruins of the ancient city and is part of the region of East Macedonia and Thrace in Kavalla, Greece. It was classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2016.



Brief History

In 368 BC, settlers from the island of Thasos founded a town there called Krenedes, after the springs (krenai) in the vicinity. Unable to protect their settlement, they requested the help of Philip II (359-336 BC) of Macedon (the father of Alexander the Great). He assisted them, but then seized the town because he needed the rich gold deposits in the nearby Pangaion hills to finance his battles to control Greece. He enlarged and fortified the town

and renamed it after himself. But Philippi (from Greek *philippos*, from *philos*, "friend" and *hippos*, "horse," meaning "lover of horses") was of little importance until the construction of the Via Egnatia (Egnatian Way), as it guarded the narrow gap through which the great roadway had to pass.



In 42 BC the plain outside Philippi was the scene of a momentous battle that decided the future of the Roman Empire. After assassinating Julius Caesar, Brutus and Cassius fled east and were forced to confront the pursuing armies of Octavian and Antony. After the loss of a large part of their forces in two successive battles, and with defeat imminent, Cassius and Brutus killed themselves. Octavian later defeated Antony and Cleopatra in a sea battle at Actium, Greece in 31 BC, and went on to become the first emperor, renamed Augustus. Afterward, Philippi was re-founded by Octavian with retired army veterans who were given land in the area so that the frontier city would have a military presence. Thereafter Philippi grew from small settlement to a city of dignity and privilege with the title *Colonia Augusta Julia Philippensis* which gave the Philippians Roman citizenship, exempting them from taxes. They prided themselves on being Romans (Acts 16:21), dressed like Romans and often spoke Latin (numerous inscriptions in Latin are found around the site). No doubt this was the background for Paul's reference in Philippians 3:20 - "**For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ**" (RV).

Famous characters

Philip II, Brutus, Cassius, Octavian, Paul and Silas, Lydia.

Scriptural references

Acts 16:12; 20:6; 1 Cor. 16:24; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 2:2. The Epistle to the Philippians.

Important visitors in AD 52

From Neapolis (modern Kavalla), Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke headed for the important city of Philippi, 15 kilometres inland across a steep mountain ridge. As they came to the top of the hills to the west of Neapolis they could see the city lying at the foot of its acropolis and bisecting the Via Egantia, the main east-west highway of the Roman Empire.



Above, aerial view of the Philippi heritage site

The Via Egnatia



The Via Egnatia (Greek: Ἐγνατία Ὁδός) was a road constructed by the Romans in the 2nd century BC. It crossed Illyricum, Macedonia, and Thrace, running through territory that is now part of modern Albania, the Republic of Macedonia, Greece, and European Turkey.

Starting at Dyrrachium (now Durrës) on the Adriatic Sea, the road followed a difficult route along the river Genusus (Shkumbin), over the Candaviae (Jablanica) mountains and thence to the highlands around Lake Ohrid. It then turned south, following several high mountain

passes to reach the northern coastline of the Aegean Sea at Thessalonica. From there it ran through Thrace to the city of Byzantium (later Constantinople, now called Istanbul). It covered a total distance of about 1,120 km (696 miles or 746 Roman miles). Like other major Roman roads, it was about six metres (19.6 ft) wide, paved with large polygonal stone slabs or covered with a hard layer of sand.



The paving stones of the ancient Via Egnatia (above) can be seen alongside the concrete embankment of the modern road. Note the ruts created by chariot wheels.

In the footsteps of Paul

The excavations of ancient Philippi lie on both sides of the modern highway which follows the line of the old Via Egnatia (shown by the yellow line in the photo above). Generally the remains seen today are Roman or early Christian.



Above, view of the Philippi agora, looking west. At the northeast and northwest corners were two large temples, while at the east end there was a library. Among the principal remains at the site are several ruined churches from a later period.

On the south side of the modern highway is the city's large rectangular agora (230' by 485'), dating from the time of Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD). It must have been built over the agora of Paul's time.

The agora (from Greek *ageirien*, "to assemble") was a public square where goods were sold; also where trials and assemblies were held (in its original context, agora meant "I address the public"; eventually it came to indicate the marketplace also). There were colonnades on three sides.



Above, view from the acropolis (looking south west) of the agora and the ruins of several basilicas built by the Apostasy over the centuries.



Above, agora shops with storage jars.

Philippi was protected by a six-mile (10 km) long circuit of walls starting from the summit of the acropolis and descending the steep slope on the south side to encompass a large part of the area at the base of the hill. The earliest part dates to the time of Philip II; the latest to Justinian I (527-565 AD).

In the center of the agora's north side was a bema (NIV – "court"; ASV & KJV "judgment-seat") which served as a place for public debate (as at Corinth).



Above, the bema which served as a place for public debate and probably trials

The Amphitheatre at Philippi

Against the east slope of the acropolis is the ancient theater (below). It dates back to the founding of the city by Philip II in the mid-4th century BC, but it has been remodelled a number of times. It had seating for about 5,000. One of the oldest edifices in Philippi, it was certainly in its prime at the time of Paul's visit.



Now, as then, Philippi was dominated by its acropolis (below, with remains of bathhouse).



Paul preaches the Gospel in Philippi

At Philippi, Paul did not follow his usual pattern of first going to the Jewish synagogue. Philippi had no synagogue, and it is assumed the Jewish population was small. Also, there are no Old Testament quotes in Philippians. For whatever reason, the Jews and "God-fearers" (those who honoured the Jewish beliefs but were not full converts, i.e., circumcised) of Philippi chose to meet outside the city near the river. One of the more memorable incidents of Paul's second missionary journey took place outside Philippi's city walls - **"And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us. And she persuaded us"** (Acts 16:13-15).

Today, the baptism of Lydia from Thyatira (in Turkey; one of the seven cities of Revelation), the first baptism on European soil, is commemorated on the banks of the Gangites river, beyond the Krenides Gate and about 3/4 mile (1 km) west of the ancient city centre by the 'pilgrimages' of Orthodox Christians. There is an outdoor baptismal area beside the river.

The one agreeable thing about this site is that provision is made for full immersion in water, unlike the normal orthodox practice of infant sprinkling.



The imprisonment of Paul and Silas in Philippi

One day, as Paul and Silas were heading for the riverside sanctuary of Lydia, a strange confrontation brought them to the attention of the whole city - **"And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans"** (Acts 16:16-21).

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. The jailer awoke startled, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, **"Do thyself no harm: for we are all here."**

The jailer called for a light, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were

baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God – he and his whole family.

Across the modern highway from the agora is a small crypt said by orthodoxy to be the "Prison of Paul." However, a guidebook sold at the site states that this "prison" was, in fact, a double water cistern converted into a place of worship. The tradition that Paul and Silas were imprisoned there dates from the 5th century. There is no proof that they were held in this specific locale.



The next day the city magistrates sent some of their representatives to the jailer to have the prisoners released. But Paul and Silas who had been beaten and imprisoned without a trial decided to use their position as a Roman citizens to provide some protection for the newly founded ecclesia in Philippi. As a Roman colony, the ecclesia faced the prospect of fierce persecution if the rulers of the empire turned on the followers of Christ.

Of all the ecclesias he established, Paul had a special bond with the Philippians. No ecclesia supported him with more genuine love, prayers and gifts, as the opening to Paul's later letter to them shows – **"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now"** (Phil. 1:3-5).

The Philippian believers were very appreciative of Paul's care for them and consistently sent much needed help to him and his companions as they continued their labours in Macedonia and Greece – **"Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no ecclesia**

communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity" (Phil. 4:15-16).

Paul, Silas and their companions then journeyed along the Via Egnatia to Amphipolis and Apollonia before they came to the city Thessaloniki (Roman Thessalonica) about 100 miles (160 kms) west of Philippi.

Sources (other than Scripture):

Wikipedia

(Compiler – Jim Cowie)