

PHILIPPI

Philippi was located in northeast Macedonia on a hillside in a pass of the Pangaion range, which made it a strategic military site. The land surrounding Philippi was situated between the Strymon River on the west and Nestos River on the east, making the area fertile for agriculture. The land to the north was wooded, while the area to the south had marshes. The original city was named Krenides, which means “Springs” or “Fountains” (Strabo *Geography* 7, fragments 34, 41, 42; Appian *Civil Wars* 4.105). At least three rivers or streams flowed close by the city, one on the east and two on the west. The most prominent of these was the Gangites River on the west (McRay, 286-87).

Krenides was originally an old Thracian village. Herodotus reported that the Persian Xerxes, during his march to Greece, passed Mount Pangaion where Thracian tribes were working in gold and silver mines (Herodotus *Histories* 7.112). In 360 B.C., Krenides was settled by people from Thasos, an island located to the south in the Aegean Sea. An Athenian exile named Callistratus led the expedition (Isocrates *On the Peace* 24).

The Greek settlers, however, were soon threatened by Thracian tribes and appealed to Philip II of Macedon for assistance. In 356 B.C., Philip seized the opportunity to take the city to expand his power eastward. Renaming it Philippi after himself, the ruler populated and fortified the city. He exploited the northern forest timber as well as the nearby gold and silver mines at Mount Pangaion. The gold mines reportedly produced over a thousand talents yearly, which aided in the minting of coins and in supporting the military (Strabo *Geography* 7, fragment 34; Diodorus Siculus *Library of History* 16.3.7; 16.8.6, 7; Appian *Civil Wars* 4.105). Nearly two centuries later, the Romans won the battle at Pydna, and Aemilius Paulus divided Macedonia into four districts (168-167 B.C.); Philippi was located in the first of these (Livy *History of Rome* 45.29-30). Strabo described the city during this time as only “a small settlement” (Strabo *Geography* 7, fragment 41).

Another change that altered the city was the completion of the Egnatian Way (*Via Egnatia*), which was built between 146 and 120 B.C. Traveling west, this highway crossed the Roman province of Macedonia from Cypsela (Ipsala) to the Aegean Sea (Neapolis) to the Adriatic Sea (Dyrrhachium and Apollonia), making travel to Rome much more accessible. One could travel across Macedonia on the Egnatian Way to the Adriatic Sea and sail to Brundisium, Italy, and take the Appian Way (*Via Appia*) to Rome. A milestone from Gallikos nearby Thessalonica indicates that the proconsul Gnaeus Egnatius (146-143 B.C.) was the man who ordered the construction of the Egnatian Way (McRay, 283). Philippi was located along this major road, which brought travelers and trade to the city. Many years later, the Egnatian Way was extended further east from Cypsela to Byzantium, making the highway about 500 miles long. The milestone mentioned above indicates that it was 260 Roman miles from Dyrrhachium to Gallikos, roughly half of the distance of the Egnatian Way.

The assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. also had a lasting impact upon Philippi. In 42 B.C., the republic supporters Cassius and Brutus, two of the murderers of Julius Caesar, were defeated by the imperialists Mark Antony and Octavian on the plains and hills surrounding Philippi (Appian *Civil Wars* 4.105-132; Plutarch *Lives: Brutus* 38-53; *Lives: Antony* 22; Dio Cassius *Roman History* 47.42-49). These events ended the republic of Rome (510-30 B.C.) and began the Roman Empire (30 B.C.—A.D.).

476). The victors, Octavian and Antony, settled many of their veteran soldiers there, making Philippi a Roman colony. The presence of these veterans and their families provided stability in the colony and protected the interests of the Roman Empire. The city was named *Colonia Victrix Philippensium* in honor of the victory, as indicated on ancient coins minted there.

By 30 B.C., Octavian had defeated Antony in the War of Actium. Later, he populated Philippi with veterans from Antony's army, taking them from their land in Italy (Dio Cassius *Roman History* 51.4.6). This strategy removed Antony's followers from Octavian's immediate presence. The land surrounding Philippi was made available to those veterans for settlement. Octavian then renamed the city *Colonia Julia Philippensis* in honor of the late Julius Caesar. Three years later, in 27 B.C. when Octavian became Augustus, the name was adapted to *Colonia Julia Augusta Philippensis* (McRay, 283). New coins were minted and building projects were begun.

As a result of Octavian's relocation of veterans, many inhabitants lived in the villages and on the farms outside Philippi, a territory encompassing 730 square miles. Colonists included a cohort from the praetorian guard, but one should be careful not to over-interpret the military presence at Philippi. While the colony consisted of veterans and had a military flavor, evidence is lacking for an actual standing Roman army there after 27 B.C.

The colony of Philippi was like a miniature Rome due to the fact that it employed Roman insignia, money, and dress. In addition, Philippian architecture included a Roman forum, gymnasium, and baths. Philippi was given the *ius Italicum*, that is, the right to the Law of Italy, along with other privileges such as *immunitas*, or tax exemptions (*Digest of Justinian* 50.15.6). Such rights gave Philippian citizens equal status with those living on Italian soil, including the right to buy and sell land. The colony also possessed *libertas*, that is, their own local administration. The constitution of Philippi was modeled after that of Rome. Two *aediles* were appointed to public works, controlling buildings, markets, and roads. Two *quaestores* were appointed to be the city treasurers, and the *duo uiri* or *duumviri* ("two men") were appointed as the chief magistrates (see Acts 16:22, 35, 36, 38).

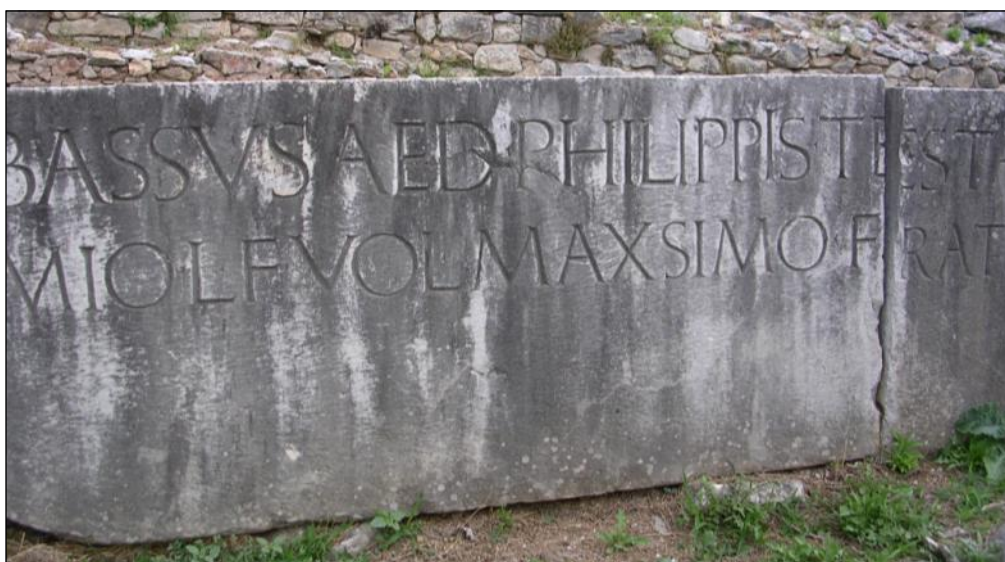
Latin was the dominant language found in ancient inscriptions at Philippi, for only about 15% of the inscriptions discovered are written in Greek. The Roman style of government is well attested in the inscriptions, which mention *aediles*, *quaestores*, and *duumviri*. Although the Latin inscriptions point to a strong Roman presence in Philippi, there were many other people in the area who spoke Greek or some other language. Prior to Roman occupation, Greek had been the official language for more than 300 years, and it was still prevalent in the first century. When Paul wrote his letter to the Philippian church, he did so in Greek.



Latin Inscription at Philippi



Latin Inscriptions at Philippi



The cosmopolitan mixture of the people inhabiting Philippi is demonstrated by evidence from religion. The inhabitants of the colony worshiped a variety of deities, including Greco-Roman, Thracian, and Egyptian gods. For example, Roman religion included a temple dedicated to Bacchus (Dionysus), the god of grape harvests and wine—products which were of great concern to an agricultural community. Nearly 200 carvings on the hillside of Philippi depicted various gods and goddesses, especially the hunting goddess Diana (Artemis). Many of these date from the second and third centuries A.D. and relate to fertility, childbirth, young children, and death. One prominent figure is the Thracian horseman, who supposedly guarded the deceased and led them into the next life. There also existed a temple dedicated to a pantheon of Egyptian gods. An altar dedicated to the emperor Augustus and the later ruins of two temples flanking the east and west sides of the forum point to the prominence of the imperial cult in the city.



Acropolis of Philippi

Paul in Philippi (Acts 16:11-40)

While Philippi has an interesting secular history, it is remembered more for its sacred history involving Paul. Even though the church already existed in Rome (see Acts 2:10; 18:2; Suetonius *Lives of the Caesars: Claudius* 25.4), the church at Philippi was the first one in Europe planted by the apostle. Philippi in Macedonia became the bridge between Paul's work in Asia and Europe. His evangelistic efforts recorded in Acts 16 took place at Philippi about A.D. 49 or 50. This date is established by the Gallio Inscription, which indicates that this proconsul of Achaia held office from A.D. 51 to 52 (Acts 18:12). (For a photo of the inscription, see *Corinth & Vicinity*, page 12.) The two dates are closely related because within a year's time Paul made his way from Philippi to work in Corinth of Achaia (Acts 18:1).

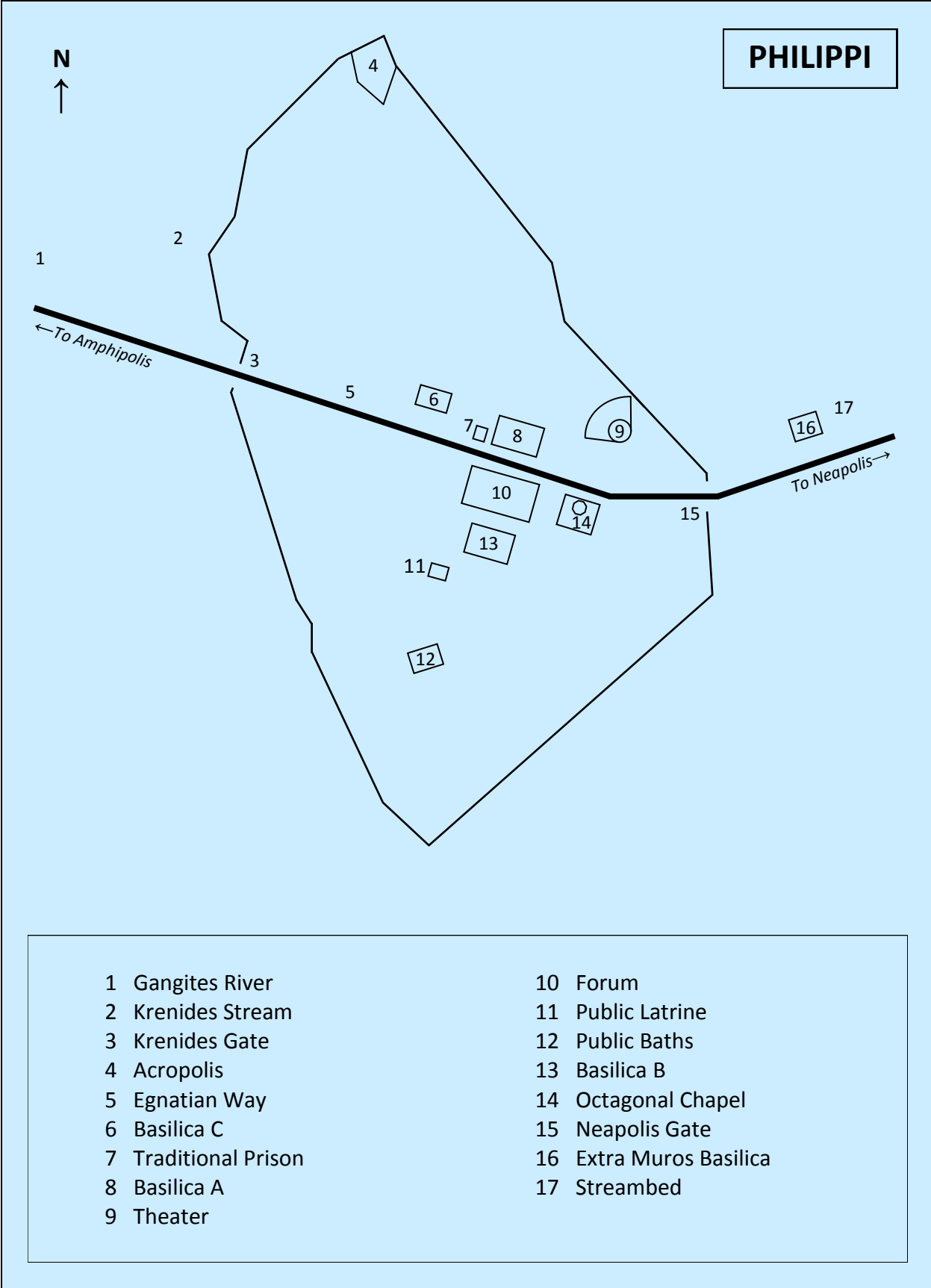
When in Troas on the second missionary journey, Paul received the vision of a man from Macedonia pleading with him to come into his region (Acts 16:9). In the first century, God sometimes communicated his will through inspired visions (Acts 2:17; 10:9-16; 18:9, 10; 23:11; 2 Cor. 12:1-4). Paul likely recognized the man as a Macedonian simply on the basis of his plea for Paul to come to Macedonia, and not by any distinctive dress or appearance. The apostle correctly understood the vision as God's call to take the gospel to Macedonia, and he did not hesitate to obey.

During this time, Luke the doctor (Col. 4:14)—the author of the book of Acts—joined the missionary team. When Luke accompanied Paul, his narrative in Acts indicates his presence with the “we sections” (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5—21:18; 27:1—28:16). This terminology refers to the narrative shifting from third person (“they”) to first person (“we”) when Luke joined Paul’s company, and shifting back to third person when they separated. Some have identified Luke with the Macedonian of Paul’s vision, but this identification is sheer speculation. After all, the Macedonian was visionary and Luke was in the flesh. The New Testament does not state what city or province Luke came from, but rather only hints that he was a Gentile (Col. 4:11, 14).

The men sailed from Troas to the mountainous island of Samothrace and anchored there for the night. The next day, they sailed past Thasos to the port city of Neapolis (modern Kavalla) in Macedonia. On the voyage, they had favorable winds which made for a straight course and speedy journey (Acts 16:11). Apparently, Paul and his companions did not spend much time in Neapolis (“New City”). Rather, they headed to Philippi, which was located nearly ten miles to the northwest. It is believed that all travelers on the major highways had to possess an official pass and pay other tolls. If this was the case, the missionary team must have paid their expenses and then traveled the famous Egnatian Way that connected Neapolis to Philippi. Along this road, they crossed over Mount Simvolo and probably stopped at a Roman station to rest and be refreshed with a drink of water. Eventually, the group passed the Temple of Cybele and the eastern cemetery, arriving at Philippi. There the Egnatian Way served as the main street running southeast-northwest and dividing the city in half. They entered the city through the eastern Neapolis Gate and would eventually exit through the western Krenides Gate.



Egnatian Way at Philippi





Greek Theater





Public Latrine



Paul's missionary strategy was normally to choose an important city, establish the church, and let the gospel radiate from that place (see Acts 19:1, 8-10). Luke described Philippi as such a location, highly praising it as "a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony" (Acts 16:12; NASB). When Paul came to Philippi, the city had been a Roman colony for almost one hundred years. Several other colonies are referred to in Acts (such as Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, Troas, and Corinth), but Luke did not choose to designate them in this way. Perhaps he had a special interest in Philippi because of his ongoing work there as a missionary.

There is much debate concerning the other part of Luke's description. The NIV describes Philippi as "*the* leading city of that district of Macedonia" (emphasis added). The difficulty with this translation is that Amphipolis was the capital of the first district where Philippi was located (Strabo *Geography* 7, fragment 47). It may be, however, that Philippi was even more prominent than the capital Amphipolis and that such a designation expresses the Philippians' civic pride as a Roman colony. Nevertheless, several textual variants appear in various ancient Greek manuscripts, and there are also multiple translation alternatives. First, Philippi could be "the first city of the district," but then one would have to relocate the port Neapolis in Thrace instead of Macedonia. A second possibility is "a city of the first district," which is historically accurate. As previously noted, Macedonia had been divided into four districts, and Philippi was located in the first of these (Livy *History of Rome* 45.29-30). This description, however, seems like a passing detail and has little impact on the reader. Third, Philippi may be described as "a leading city of the district." This is the reading of the NASB and is most likely the correct one. There is no article in the Greek text preceding *prōtē*, a word that can be translated "leading" or "first." Instead of "*the* leading city," it was "*a* leading city." Perhaps Luke described Philippi as a prominent city without comparing it to Amphipolis.

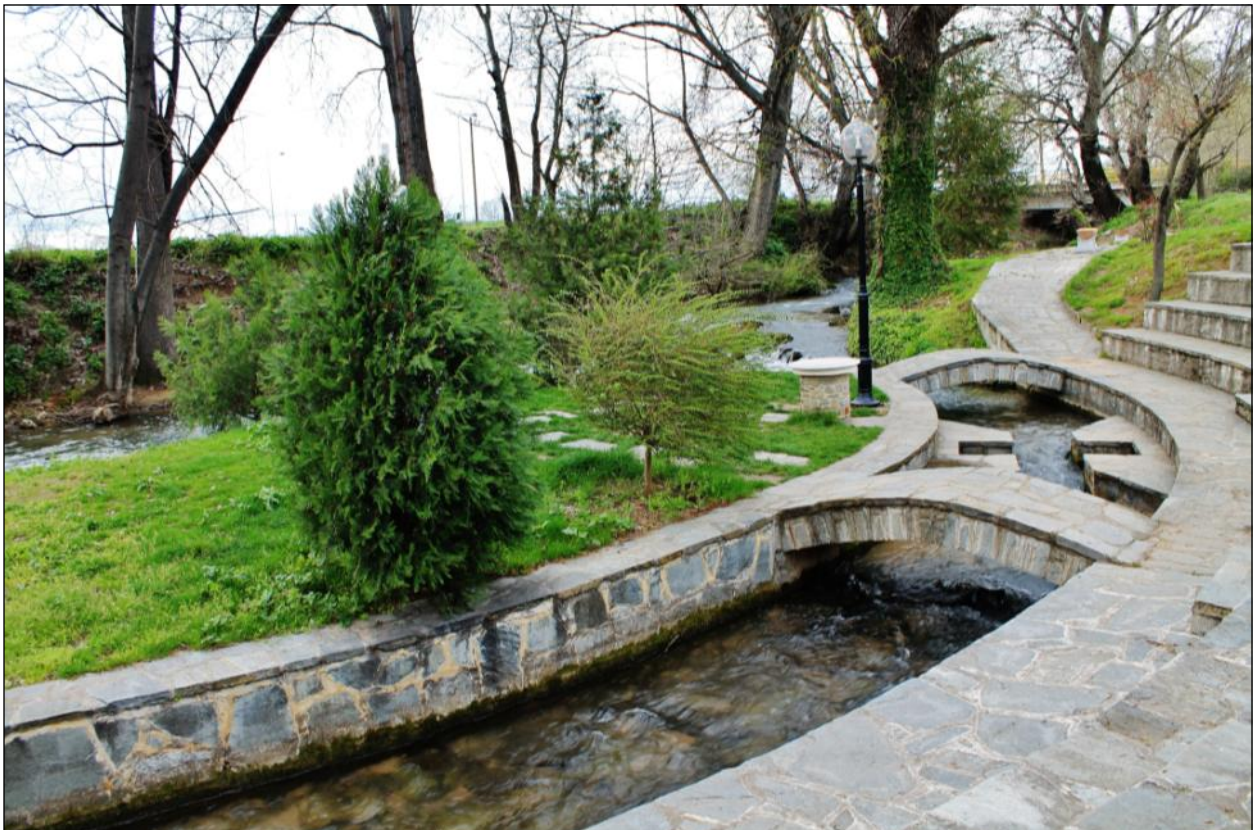
Lydia and Her Household (Acts 16:13-15)

As was his custom, Paul began his work at the Jewish synagogue (Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:1, 2, 17; 18:4; 19:8; see Rom. 1:16). He targeted Jews, proselytes, and God-fearers because they possessed a knowledge of the Old Testament, godly values, and an expectation of the Messiah. On the Sabbath, Paul and his companions sought out "a place of prayer" outside the city gate by the river (Acts 16:13). Some writers speculate that Luke was originally from Philippi and attended medical school there, but the phrase "we expected to find" in Acts 16:13 indicates the whole group's lack of familiarity with the city.

Paul went outside the city because the Jews often built their synagogues near bodies of water to satisfy the requirements for ritual cleansing (Josephus *Antiquities* 14.10.23). There are three possible sites for the river mentioned. (1) The first site is the Gangites River, accessed through the Krenides Gate on the west side of Philippi and through a colonial arch some distance from the city. A strong argument against the Gangites is that it is 1½ miles from the gate—too far for the traditional Sabbath's day journey of about ¾ mile (Acts 1:12; Mishnah *Erubin* 4.3) and inconvenient for worshipers. (2) The next possible site is the Krenides Stream located outside the Krenides Gate. This stream is locally known as "the River of Lydia." A modern Greek Orthodox baptistry was constructed at this site in honor of Lydia. (3) The last place is a streambed outside the Neapolis Gate on the east. In this area, ruins from a fourth-century church building may commemorate the place where Paul met Lydia (McRay, 286-87).

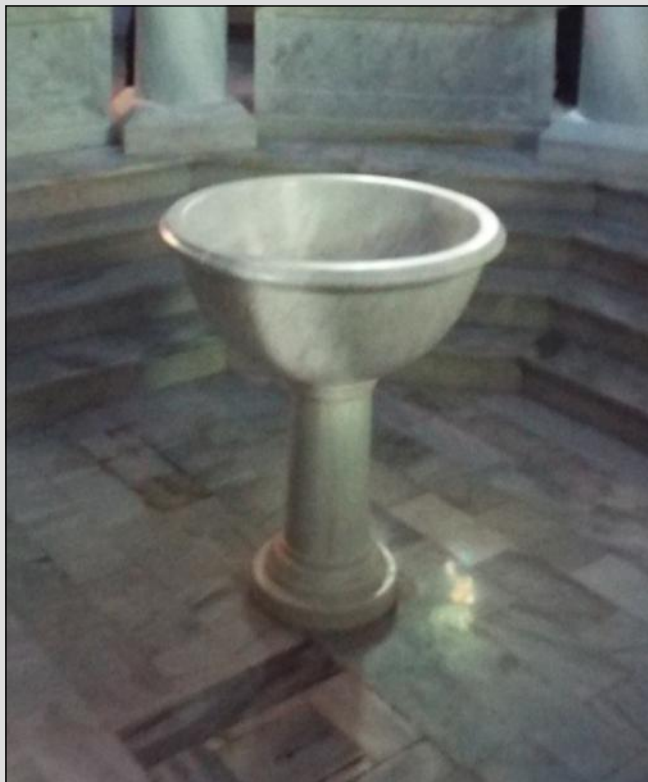


Krenides Stream, a Traditional Site for Lydia's Immersion





The Baptistry of St. Lydia (Near Krenides Stream)



The Baptistry of St. Lydia is a modern Greek Orthodox building dedicated to Lydia, a woman whom Paul converted to Christ when he came to Philippi. The building has a fashionable octagonal shape. The inner part of the dome has depictions of baptism accounts in the Bible. Ironically, the central piece of the building is a bath that is used for *infant* baptism (pictured on the left). While the Greek Orthodox correctly immerse (*baptizō*) in water, they do so to infants who have not yet sinned and do not have the capacity to believe. This practice contradicts the biblical teaching. In the New Testament, baptism is for penitent believers in order to receive the forgiveness of their sins. It is preceded by one's personal confession of faith in Jesus (Acts 2:37, 38; 8:37, 38; Rom. 10:9, 10).

There is some debate about whether or not an actual synagogue existed outside of Philippi. Instead of his usual term “synagogue” (*synagōgē*), Luke employed the term “[place of] prayer” (*proseuchē*) in Acts 16:13, 16. Since this word is used and there are no Jewish men mentioned in the narrative, some scholars argue that no synagogue existed at Philippi. Instead, they suggest that there was only an informal, open-air meeting place. They further maintain that Palestinian tradition required a quorum of ten Jewish men to establish a synagogue (see Mishnah *Megillah* 1.3; 4.3; *Sanhedrin* 1.6; *Aboth* 3.6). Since there was no synagogue, they also assert that Philippi had a very small Jewish population.

Such arguments may be mistaken. Other scholars point out that Diaspora Judaism varied greatly from Palestinian practices. The later teachings of the Mishnah prescribed what should take place, not what always happened in reality. Further, the term *proseuchē* is frequently used to refer to synagogues in ancient literature and inscriptions, especially in the Diaspora (see Josephus *Antiquities* 14.10.23; *Life* 54, 56; Philo *Life of Moses* 2.39 [216]; *Flaccus* 6—8 [41, 45, 47-49, 53]). Therefore, Lydia and the other women may have been meeting inside a synagogue. It could be that the synagogue at Philippi was constituted solely by women at that time; the fact that no Jewish men were found there allows for such a possibility. Nevertheless, it may be that the women were meeting at a time when the rest of the congregation was not present. A grave stele inscription mentions a *synagōgē* in Philippi, but it dates from the third century A.D.

Among the group of women who had gathered together was a woman named “Lydia.” The designation Lydia, meaning “the Lydian lady,” was sometimes used as an ethnic nickname, especially for slaves. This fact is interesting since Lydia’s hometown Thyatira was located in an area that had once been known as northern “Lydia.” Nevertheless, there is evidence which indicates that Lydia was also a personal name. This name is found in both Latin literature and Greek inscriptions.

Lydia’s hometown of Thyatira was located in the province of Asia (Acts 16:14; Rev. 1:4, 11). There is some irony here, because Paul had been prevented by the Holy Spirit from preaching in that province (Acts 16:6). Nevertheless, his first convert in Europe was from Asia. Furthermore, she was a *woman*—and the person in Paul’s vision was a certain *man* from Macedonia (Acts 16:9). Luke also made mention of other prominent women in Macedonia who were receptive to the gospel (Acts 17:4, 12).

Lydia was a merchant dealing in purple-dyed fabrics (*porphyropōlis*), and her hometown Thyatira was well known for its purple dye. Although dye was often made from mollusks or murex shells found in the sea, the region of Lydia was famous for producing a cheaper dye from madder roots, that is, *rubia*. Just as Lydia had come to Macedonia from Thyatira, an inscription mentions a guild of purple dyers in Macedonia who honored one of their members, a Thyatiran (*Inscriptiones Graecae* 10.2.1.291). Lydia was certainly not the only person engaged in the purple industry at Philippi. In addition, Lydia’s position as a female purple dealer was not uncommon, for inscriptions mention similar lady merchants from Rome.

Purple was used for dyeing fabrics, especially dresses used on festive occasions. The cheaper purple fabrics were more accessible to the public, but clothing dyed with purple from the murex was typically worn by the wealthy. The New Testament attests to purple clothing being a status symbol for the rich (Mt. 27:28; Mk. 15:17; Lk. 16:19; Rev. 17:4; 18:12, 16). Purple was also used for makeup.

Lydia’s devotion to God is clearly evident from the fact that, instead of working at her business,

this pious Gentile went to the river to pray on the Sabbath. Paul and Silas shared the gospel with Lydia and her household, which may have included her children, other dependents, and servants. No doubt these individuals assisted Lydia in her purple fabric business. The text does not specifically explain Lydia's status. Since no husband is mentioned, it would appear that she was not married. Further, since Lydia possessed authority over her household, she was probably not divorced. After all, it was more common in the Greco-Roman world for the husband to retain possession of the household in such cases. The best guess is that Lydia was widowed.

Luke described Lydia as "a worshiper of God" (*sebomenē ton theon*; Acts 16:14). This term was used for Gentiles who attended the synagogue and accepted the ethical monotheism of Judaism, but who did not commit themselves to obey all of the Jewish law. Such individuals are variously described as worshiping and fearing God (Acts 10:2, 22, 35; 13:16, 26, 50; 17:4, 17; 18:7). At some point, Lydia, a Gentile, had attached herself to the Jewish faith. Perhaps she had become a God-fearer while still living in Thyatira, where a sizable Jewish colony resided. The majority of inscriptions relating to God-fearers refer to women.

As was the custom of rabbis, Paul and his companions sat down and instructed the women gathered at the "place of prayer" (Acts 16:13). These ladies certainly welcomed the teaching of such an educated Jew as Paul. As God-fearers, Lydia and her household were anticipating the Messiah. The Lord opened Lydia's heart to pay attention to Paul's message (Acts 16:14). Parallel statements from the Old Testament point to both the divine and human wills acting together. For example, at the time of the exodus, God hardened pharaoh's heart and pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 8:15, 32; 9:12, 34; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8). After hearing the message of Christ and putting their trust in him, Lydia and her household were immersed (*baptizō*) in the river (Acts 16:15). At this point, they were united with Christ (Rom. 6:3, 4; Gal. 3:26, 27) and added to his church (Acts 2:38, 41, 47; 1 Cor. 12:13).

Lydia demonstrated great freedom in her conversion; she did not have to consult any man prior to obeying the gospel. The influence she possessed over her household is also evident by their following in her footsteps. It was common for those in a household to follow in the religion of the household head, but such uniformity was not absolute (Lk. 12:51-53; 1 Cor. 7:14). Other household baptisms recorded in the New Testament include the houses of Cornelius (Acts 10:24, 46-48), the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:33), Crispus (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:14), and Stephanus (1 Cor. 1:16). Some try to read the practice of infant baptism into these household conversions. However, all of the household members were clearly mature enough to be believers (Acts 10:33, 46; 16:13, 14, 34; 18:8; 1 Cor. 16:15).

Lydia showed her love for God by extending hospitality to the missionary team (Acts 16:15). Prior to Lydia's invitation, Paul and his companions probably stayed in a local inn at Philippi. It may have seemed awkward for the four men to accept this offer from a woman, but Lydia had prefaced her invitation with the words "If you consider me a believer in the Lord." To refuse her hospitality would not only have been a breach of etiquette, but it also would have suggested that Paul, Silas, Luke, and Timothy did not view her conversion as genuine. Lydia's generosity was reflected by the rest of the Philippian church, who continued to support Paul's work more than a decade later (Phil. 4:10-20).

Lydia's home served as Paul's base of operations while working in Philippi. House churches were the norm during the first century (Acts 2:46; Rom. 16:5, 23; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philem. 2), and Lydia's house also served as a meeting place for the Philippian church (Acts 16:40). At least four

benefits were derived from meeting in a home. (1) It was economical since a church member already paid rent or owned it. The church did not have to purchase a building or rent a lecture hall (see Acts 19:9). (2) Meeting in a notable person's home (such as Lydia's) would lend credibility to the church, especially as it became separated from Judaism. (3) Meeting in a home would not gain much notice from the authorities. (4) Homes provided an intimate context for worship, building relationships, and sharing fellowship meals. This context brings to life Paul's description of the church as "God's household" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Even though the believers met in Lydia's home, it should not be assumed that she led the church. Rather, the missionary team guided the young congregation in the earliest days. Further, Luke stayed behind when the other missionaries left Philippi, and he apparently remained there for about seven years. During that period, Luke trained men to lead the congregation (see Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-9). When Paul wrote the Philippian Christians over a decade later, men were serving as overseers and deacons of the congregation (Phil. 1:1).

The Slave Girl (Acts 16:16-22)

Paul and his companions returned to the place of prayer, perhaps a synagogue, to teach other adherents of Judaism about Jesus. Their meetings likely took place on the Sabbath (see Acts 18:4) over an extended period of time described as "several days" (Acts 16:12). One day they were met by "a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future" (Acts 16:16). The Greek text literally says she had "a spirit of [the] Python" (*pneuma pythōna*), or "Pythian spirit."

Greek mythology serves as the backdrop for this designation (Strabo *Geography* 9.3.12; Aeschylus *Eumenides* 1-63; Euripides *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1242-1258). According to legend, the god Apollo had slain the Python, a large and powerful snake which guarded the oracle of Delphi at Mount Parnassus, 75 straight-line miles northwest of Athens. Apollo then became the guardian of the sanctuary. The spirit of Apollo was believed to periodically take control of his priestess ("Pythia"). One day a month, except for the three months of winter, the priestess would descend into the oracle grotto or cavern of the temple to inquire of the god. Then she would ascend to give an inspired message (see the *Delphi* section).

Luke must have used the term "Pythian spirit" in an accommodative sense. Surely the inspired historian did not believe in the validity of the Apollo myth; as a Christian, he would have attributed any power the girl possessed to Satan or an evil spirit. Nevertheless, the slave girl at Philippi was behaving in a manner similar to the Pythia at Delphi. She was involved in the practice of "fortune-telling" or "divination" (*manteuomai*). As a result, the possessed girl brought in a great sum of money for her masters (Acts 16:16). Like those inquirers who traveled to Delphi, the people in Philippi and the surrounding area were interested in their future and would pay the slave owners a good price to have their fortunes told.

As the missionary team was going out to the place of prayer to speak to the worshipers, the slave girl became a nuisance to them. On repeated occasions, she kept on shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved" (Acts 16:17). While Jews used the term "Most High God" to refer to the true and living God, pagans also used this expression for Zeus as the chief god of their pantheon (Pausanias *Description of Greece* 2.2.8; 5.15.5; 9.8.5). Paul did not appreciate an endorsement from a pagan, which may have sent mixed signals to those listening. More

than that, he did not want publicity from a possessed person. Such testimony was yet another way Satan was trying to impede Paul's ministry. The repetition of the girl's shouting became a great annoyance to the apostle, bringing undue attention to him and his coworkers. In his frustration, Paul drove the evil spirit out of her (Acts 16:18). Such details indicate the reality of the woman's possession; she had been exploited by both her evil owners and an evil spirit. As an apostle, Paul cast demons out "in the name of Jesus Christ"—that is, by Christ's authority. Like Jesus and the other apostles, Paul drove out the evil spirit "at that moment."

The text does not indicate if the slave girl became a follower of Jesus. Certainly, she felt a great freedom from the burden of the evil spirit, but it is unclear if she ever experienced the forgiveness of sins found in Christ. Since her masters were so hostile toward Paul and Silas, we are inclined to think that she did not become a Christian—at least not immediately. It seems that Luke was more interested in what happened to the two missionaries, including their arrest, beating, and imprisonment.

The owners of the slave girl were blinded to Paul's great miracle by their own lust for money. Humorous repetition is used in the Greek text of Acts 16:18, 19: After the spirit "left" (*exēlthen*), the owners' hope for profit "was gone" (*exēlthen*). Without the ability to foretell the future, the slave girl's monetary value significantly dropped. The gospel message and its accompanying power were certainly not good for businesses tied to pagan religion. Both telling the future and crafting amulets were very profitable ventures inseparably tied to the worship of false gods (see Acts 19:23-27).

The owners became angry and seized Paul and Silas, making a "citizens' arrest." Most likely, the owners were two men—business partners. The word "dragged" (*helkō*) suggests violent action on their part (Acts 16:19). Such influential men, who were also Roman citizens, had the social status to initiate a lawsuit in court. Paul and Silas were taken to the "marketplace" (*agora*), which was called a *forum* by the Romans. Excavations at Philippi have yielded impressive remains of a Roman forum measuring 325 feet by 164 feet. Although this structure dates to a later period, being built by Marcus Aurelius sometime after A.D. 160, it rests on the same ground as the previous forum from the first century. The market place was a large expanse of stone paving surrounded by grand columns, shops, temples, and other buildings (see Vitruvius *On Architecture* 5.1.1-4). There were also statues and monuments set up in honor of the Roman emperors. McRay described the specific place the missionaries were taken after being arrested as a tribunal *bēma* or speaker's platform on the northern side of the forum flanked by monumental fountains (McRay, 285). The *bēma* was a place where politicians made speeches and magistrates administered justice.

Paul and Silas appeared before the local government officials, who are generically called "authorities" (*archontes*) and then more specifically "magistrates" (*stratēgoi*) in Acts 16:19, 20. The latter term was the Greek equivalent of the Latin word *praetors*. In the Roman colony of Philippi the *praetors* would also be known as *duo uiri* or *duumviri*. Bruce explained their presence in these words: "The constitution of a Roman colony was modelled on that of the city of Rome, with two collegiate magistrates at the head; the *duo uiri* of Philippi (by courtesy called praetors) and their attendant licitors . . ." (F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* [New York: Doubleday, 1969], 307).

Driving a spirit from a slave girl was no grounds for charges against the two missionaries. Therefore, the owners leveled two other accusations against Paul and Silas (Acts 16:20, 21): First, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar." Second, they are "advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."



The Roman Forum



The *Bēma* at the Forum

(1) *Disturbing the Peace.* Paul and Silas were accused of throwing Philippi into confusion. The instigation of riots was viewed as serious criminal activity and offenders could be severely punished. Further, the local magistrates would be subject to discipline by Rome if they allowed such disturbances to go unchecked (see Acts 19:40). The Jews, among other ethnic and religious groups, were generally tolerated unless they caused civil unrest which threatened the *Pax Romana*, or “Roman Peace.” Such peace had recently been disturbed in Rome by the Jews. In response, the emperor Claudius had expelled them from the city by issuing an edict in A.D. 49 (Acts 18:2; Suetonius *Lives of the Caesars: Claudius* 25.4). Philippi, being a Roman colony or “miniature Rome,” possessed the same attitude against Paul and Silas, two Jews who were upsetting the status quo.

The Romans did not see a clear distinction between Judaism and Christianity at this point in history (Acts 18:15; 23:29; 24:14; 25:19). Nevertheless, the disturbances in Rome were due to friction between unbelieving and believing Jews. Suetonius recorded that the reason for the Jewish expulsion under Claudius was dissension over a man named “Chrestus,” which surely refers to Jesus Christ (Suetonius *Lives of the Caesars: Claudius* 25.4). Such misspelling of the names “Christ” and “Christian” was common (Tertullian *Apology* 3; *Ad Nationes* 1.3; Lactantius *Divine Institutes* 4.7).

Disturbance of the peace was strongly tied to the missionaries’ ethnic identity. It seems that the owners, crowd, magistrates, and lictors did not ever consider the possibility that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens (see Acts 16:37). They thought that the two missionaries were Jewish, non-citizens, and foreigners. Only part of their assessment was correct. Apparently there was nothing distinctive about the missionaries’ appearance that identified them as Roman citizens and granted them special favors.

Although imperial policy tended to favor the Jews by granting them many privileges, public sentiment was often against them. Both Romans and Greeks had many irritations with the Jewish people. To begin with, the Jews were considered lazy because they rested on the Sabbath day while other people were working. In addition, they took money out of local economies by sending taxes and contributions to the Jerusalem temple. They were also seen as unpatriotic because most would not serve in the Roman army. The Jews were viewed as “man-haters” (*misanthrōpoi*) because many would not have table fellowship with Gentiles or closely associate with them. Along with the issue of table fellowship, the Jews’ dietary regulations seemed bizarre—especially their disdain for swine. They differed not only in what they ate, but also in how their food was prepared. Most would have scruples against buying and consuming meat from the market place that had been dedicated to an idol. Furthermore, the Jews were considered atheistic because they did not worship idols; their God was invisible. One last example of criticisms is the Jewish practice of circumcision, which was viewed by many Gentiles as mutilation (Cicero *Flaccus* 28 [66-69]; Tacitus *Histories* 5.4-5; Juvenal *Satires* 14.96-106).

(2) *Upsetting Religious Beliefs.* The slave owners portrayed the two missionaries as trying to win Romans as converts to Judaism; they were “advocating customs” unlawful for Romans “to accept or practice” (Acts 16:21). The word “custom” (*ethos*) is frequently used in the New Testament for the religious habits of the Jews (Lk. 1:9; 2:42; Jn. 19:40; Acts 6:14; 15:1; 26:3; 28:17). For Romans to adopt such beliefs and practices would be to break Roman law. This second charge no doubt clenched the magistrates’ decision against Paul and Silas: These Jews are disturbing the peace—and they are promoting anti-Roman criminal activity!

Upon several occasions the Jews had been granted the right to practice their ancestral customs

within the Roman Empire (Josephus *Antiquities* 14.10.1-26). When Paul and his companions came to Philippi, it was permissible for the Jews to practice their religion. Nevertheless, it was a completely different matter for them to proselytize Romans. Only the recognized gods were to be received by the Romans; there was a ban against introducing foreign religions (Cicero *Laws* 2.8; Dio Cassius *Roman History* 57.18.5; 67.14.1-2). Nevertheless, the Romans did practice new religions—as long as they did not contradict Roman customs, compete with their dominant religions, or upset the peace. Even so, the Roman law banning foreign religions was at times carried out against such groups as the Jews, Druids, magicians, and devotees of Isis because of scandalous behavior (Josephus *Antiquities* 18.3.4-5; Suetonius *Lives of the Caesars: Tiberius* 63.1; Tacitus *Annals* 2.85).

If a Roman became a Jewish proselyte, it was a punishable offense. Despite potential consequences, such conversions did take place. However, patriotism was high in Philippi and the Roman colony was not fertile ground for making converts. If a Roman converted to Judaism, he would adopt many practices that would be deplorable to both family and friends, including Sabbath observance, dietary restrictions, military exemption, and circumcision. Further, he would give up worshiping the many gods who supposedly protected the city and empire (polytheism) in order to honor the God of the Jews (monotheism). Conversion would also prevent one from paying homage to the Roman emperor, which in turn would have the appearance of treason (see Pliny *Letters* 10.96). Perhaps the slave owners learned something of the missionaries' message about the Messiah. If so, the proclamation of Jesus as "Lord" (Acts 16:31) would have probably been misunderstood as rebellion against Claudius Caesar. Paul and Silas were attacked with this direct accusation later in Thessalonica: "They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus" (Acts 17:7).

Politics, business, and religion were interconnected at the forum, where the slave owners were leveling charges against Paul and Silas. From the *bēma* or judgment seat (politics), they could not only see the shops (business) but also the temples (religion) surrounding the forum. It is believed that the most important religious institution was the Imperial cult, represented by sanctuaries on the east and west ends of the forum. This atmosphere no doubt intensified the anger of all the Romans gathered there.

A crowd had gathered from the forum around the hostile slave owners, and they joined in the attack against the missionaries (Acts 16:22). One ancient manuscript adds that the crowd was "shouting" or "crying out." They were roused by the charges of anti-Roman acts that had been leveled against Paul and Silas. Religious and patriotic fervor easily stirred people in the ancient world (see Acts 19:23-34). In response to such fervor, the magistrates had Paul and Silas stripped and beaten (Acts 16:22, 23). Such a verdict would quiet the crowd by placating their desire for "justice."

The officers took the two missionaries and tore off their clothes, exposing at least their backs and chests (see Livy *History of Rome* 8.32.10-11; Tacitus *Histories* 4.27). Then they were probably draped over a whipping post and tied to it. The term "officers" (*rhabdouchoi*) can more literally be translated "rod-bearers" (Acts 16:35, 38). The Greek compound word joins "rod" (*rhabdos*) and "bear" (*echō*). Bruce commented, "They carried as symbols of office bundles of rods, with an ax inserted among them under certain circumstances—the *fascēs et securēs*—denoting the magistrates' right to inflict corporal and capital punishment" (F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976], 336). This symbol appears on the reverse ("tails") side of old U.S. Mercury dimes issued from 1916 to 1945.

The Jewish synagogues sometimes meted out punishment (Mt. 10:17; Mk. 13:9), using up to thirty-nine stripes from a leather whip. The Law proscribed forty lashes (Deut. 25:2, 3), but the Jews eliminated one to ensure that the Law was not broken by miscounting (2 Cor. 11:24). In contrast to the Jews, the Romans used wooden rods to beat law breakers. They did not have a set limit of blows which they could not exceed, but rather the number was left to the discrimination of the magistrates or lictors. Luke literally reported that Paul and Silas were beaten with “many blows” (*pollas . . . plēgas*), which has been translated “severely flogged” (Acts 16:23). Six or seven years later, Paul wrote that he had received the Jewish beating five times and the Roman beating three times (2 Cor. 11:24, 25). The flogging at Philippi would be included as one of the three Roman beatings.

These acts of punishment served three primary functions. (1) Beatings were sometimes used to interrogate the prisoner (Acts 22:24, 29). One might be more likely to confess to a crime if he feared further abuse. (2) The pain inflicted would discourage the prisoner from future deviant practices. In the case of Paul and Silas, the flogging was aimed against the men converting Romans to Judaism (in reality, Christianity). (3) Both the stripping and beating brought great shame and humiliation. Paul later wrote to the Thessalonian believers that he had “suffered and been insulted in Philippi” (1 Thess. 2:2). Furthermore, the Philippians had witnessed this great struggle (Phil. 1:30). Such shame would not only insult the one beaten, but also intimidate his close associates.

The Jailer and His Household (Acts 16:23-40)

After being soundly beaten, Paul and Silas were cast into prison (Acts 16:23). The facility was probably just a short distance from the forum tribunal (*bēma*), where charges had been made and the flogging had taken place. The traditional site for the prison is located northwest of the forum. Vitruvius, an ancient Roman architect, noted that prisons were usually constructed near the forums of ancient cities (*On Architecture* 5.2.1). Some argue, however, that the traditional prison was actually a cistern in the first century A.D.

Paul and Silas were entrusted to the Philippian jailer, who was the warden of the prison having guards underneath him (Acts 16:29). After being commanded to securely guard the prisoners, the jailer threw them “in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks” (Acts 16:24). The impression given is that the jailer showed Paul and Silas no mercy. The inner cell was for maximum security, a room that was reserved for the most hardened criminals or those of the lowest social status. Such treatment demonstrates great irony: Paul and Silas had not engaged in any criminal activity, and they were both Roman citizens!

The word “stocks” (*xylon*) is the Greek term for “wood.” It is often used for objects made of wood, including stocks, poles, gallows, and crosses. Wooden stocks are well attested in antiquity (Job 13:27; 33:11; Herodotus *Histories* 6.75; Lysias 10.16), serving both as restraining devices and instruments of torture. The stocks had several holes for the legs, which could be stretched far apart in order to cause pain and cramping. Eusebius wrote about Christians whose feet were placed in stocks which had at least five pairs of holes spaced apart. They were stretched in the stocks and extended to the fifth hole (*Ecclesiastical History* 5.1.27). It was impossible for a prisoner to rest comfortably while locked in this device that allowed little movement. The difficulty would be greatly intensified for Paul and Silas, whose backs were bruised and bloody from the previous flogging. Their circumstances were miserable indeed!



Traditional Prison



Traditional Prison Cell

In the face of such excruciating pain, blood loss, thirst, and hunger, most men would complain and curse. However, these two Christians chose a much different outlet: “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God” (Acts 16:25). The midnight hour was not the normal time that Jews traditionally offered prayers (Ps. 55:17; Dan. 6:10; 9:21; Acts 3:1), but these were born out of deep necessity. Perhaps their prayers contained themes similar to the believers’ prayer in Acts 4:24-30, including praise of God, points about Jesus, and requests for courage and miraculous signs.

Most people would be asleep at midnight, but the singing of Paul and Silas broke the silence of the late evening and kept the other inmates wide awake. These prisoners were intently listening to the two Christians as they sang. Their songs in the night preached a powerful sermon to those listening. Paul served as a concrete example of the principles which he would later prescribe for the Philippians: “Rejoice in the Lord always. . . . Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:4-7). Tertullian’s later language aptly fits Paul’s and Silas’ situation: “The legs feel nothing in the stocks when the heart is in heaven” (Tertullian *To the Martyrs* 2).

No matter how tightly the jailer had secured the two missionaries, their God possessed the power to set them free. “A violent earthquake” shook the ground (Acts 16:26)—an immediate response to the missionaries’ praise and prayers. The fact that an earthquake occurred in Philippi is not that surprising since the phenomenon frequently happened in that part of the world during the first century. Earthquakes were often viewed as the work of a god or the sign of his visitation to the area (see Ovid *Metamorphoses* 9.782-783; 15.669-678; Lucian *Lover of Lies* 22). Both the timing and results indicate that this seismic activity was a miracle from the true and living God (see Acts 4:31; 5:19, 20; 12:5-19). It shook the prison foundations, threw open the cell doors, and unfastened the chains. Cell doors were often locked with a simple wooden bar and chains were bolted into the wall. A violent earthquake would easily produce the results that Luke described.

Although the singing had kept the inmates awake, the jailer—some distance away—had fallen asleep. The violent tremors of the earthquake and subsequent booming noises of the stones, doors, and chains jolted the jailer from the early stages of his slumber. He peered through the darkness and saw the cell doors opened. In such a condition of shock and panic, the jailer logically assumed that his prisoners were all gone. In response to this notion, he reached for his “sword” (*machaira*) to take his own life (Acts 16:27). This weapon was a short sword or dagger.

While such a response shocks modern readers, it was a very natural reaction for a pagan living in the Greco-Roman world. Whenever an individual was confronted with a seemingly inescapable danger, suicide was viewed as both a viable and honorable solution. The Philippian jailer believed he was in such a situation and wanted to escape the impending public humiliation. According to Roman law, if a prisoner escaped, the one responsible for guarding him could be beaten or even sentenced to death (Acts 12:18, 19; 27:42; *Digest of Justinian* 48.3.12-14). The Philippian jailer anticipated the worst case scenario because he was responsible for several inmates and he had been specifically commanded to guard Paul and Silas “carefully” (Acts 16:23). He fully intended to end his life before an executioner carried out the sentence against him.

Before the jailer could plunge the sword into his chest, Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!” (Acts 16:28). The small amount of moonlight that allowed the jailer to see that the cell

doors had swung open also allowed the apostle to see the silhouetted figure of the jailer. Perhaps Paul also heard a cry of despair from the jailer or the rattling sound of the sword leaving its sheath. The Greek text says Paul shouted “with a loud voice” (*megalē phōnē*). His words echoed through the dark prison, capturing the jailer’s attention and preventing him from making an irreversible, tragic mistake.

Apparently, there were other guards present at the prison that night because the jailer “called for lights” (Acts 16:29). Perhaps the “lights” (*phōtes*) were torches—sticks with rags which had been soaked in olive oil and set on fire. Another possibility is that they were oil lamps or lanterns. With these lights the jailer could clearly see that all the inmates were present, just as Paul had said. Some Greek manuscripts add the detail that the jailer “secured the rest.” At some point, he had the guards restrain the inmates and lock the doors, but for the jailer there were other matters more pressing at this time.

The jailer, now more awake, “rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas” (Acts 16:29). This action was a complete reversal of his previous treatment of the two men (Acts 16:24). The jailer had been convicted by many things: Paul’s and Silas’ joy in the midst of pain, their abiding presence in an unlocked cell, and Paul’s compassion in sparing his life. No doubt the seismic activity also contributed to his fear.

At this time, there was a change in scenery; the jailer led Paul and Silas outside. He then asked the important question, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). Similar questions concerning salvation appear elsewhere in Luke’s writing (Lk. 3:10; 10:25; 18:18; Acts 2:37). The jailer’s question also has continuity with the slave girl’s statement about the missionaries’ telling people “the way to be saved” (Acts 16:17). There is some debate concerning what the jailer intended by the question. Being a pagan, did he understand being “saved” as protection from divine retribution for his mistreatment of Paul and Silas? Or, did he understand it as referring to everlasting life? No matter how he meant the question, Paul and Silas took it as an open door to tell the man about Jesus. It is noteworthy that times of crisis frequently turn people’s thoughts heavenward toward eternal issues.

Paul and Silas answered the question by replying, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). The term “believe” is used here in a comprehensive manner, certainly including faith, repentance, and baptism. It is a synecdoche, where a part is used for the whole (see Acts 18:8; Gal. 3:26, 27). One is not saved by “faith alone” (Jas. 2:17, 19, 24); his trust in the Lord must lead him to turn from sin, be immersed into Christ, and live a faithful Christian life (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3, 4; 1 Pet. 3:21; Rev. 2:10). The missionaries pointed the jailer to faith in the “Lord Jesus.” Wordplay is present in the Greek text of Acts 16:30, 31: The jailer called Paul and Silas “sirs” or “lords” (*kyrioi*), and they pointed him to the one “Lord” (*kyrios*). The confession “Jesus is Lord” may be used to express a person’s faith at baptism, as well as throughout the Christian life (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3).

The opportunity for salvation was available not only to the jailer but also his household. At this time, the jailer took Paul and Silas to his home where they could speak to the whole family. Since “faith comes from hearing . . . the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17), the missionaries spoke “the word of the Lord” to the jailer and his household (Acts 16:32). Typically, Romans expected whole households to follow the religion of the head. However, even though the whole household followed the jailer in conversion, it was imperative that each individual truly believe in Jesus.

After hearing the good news, the jailer took the two prisoners and his family to a place with plenty of water. One suggestion is that the jailer’s residence had a courtyard with a sizable pool of water. Another possibility is that they went to the nearby forum where there were fountains of water.

Davies described the ruins from the second-century forum in these words: “On either side of the *bēma* are reservoirs for water, 3 feet deep, 70 x 10 feet in length and breadth, and around the edges of the forum proper are gutters that still carry water” (Paul E. Davies, “The Macedonian Scene of Paul’s Journeys,” *BA* 26 [1963]: 96). The jailer first used some water to wash the blood and dirt from the wounds of Paul and Silas. Such a humble act demonstrated the man’s repentance and hospitality. Certainly, he realized the great injustice that had been meted out to these men—and lamented the fact that he had a role in it! Then the jailer and his entire household were immersed in water. John Chrysostom wrote, “He washed and was washed: he washed them from their stripes and he himself was washed from his sins” (*Homilies on Acts* 36).

The act of baptism demonstrated their new faith in Jesus and brought them into the new covenant (Heb. 10:19-22). It was the point at which their sins were forgiven (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Eph. 5:26), they received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; Tit. 3:5), and they were added to Christ’s kingdom, the church (Acts 2:41; 1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 1:13). The urgency of washing the wounds (repenting) and being baptized is highlighted by the words “that hour of the night” and “immediately” (Acts 16:33). Throughout the book of Acts, repentance and baptism occurred the very hour people came to faith in Christ and wanted to become Christians (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:35-39; 9:18 [22:16]; 10:45-48; 16:14, 15).

After the baptisms, the jailer brought them to his house (Acts 16:34). When they arrived, the jailer engaged in another act of hospitality by setting a meal before them. The preparations were not convenient since it was in the middle of the night, but this service was necessary because Paul and Silas had probably not eaten since before their arrest. The two men, although of Jewish heritage, had no reservations about eating non-kosher food in the home of a Gentile. Paul would later write, “To those not having the law I became like one not having the law . . . so as to win those not having the law. . . . I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Cor. 9:21, 22; see Acts 10:9-16; Gal. 2:11-14).

This was a time of celebration for the jailer and his family. Each household member had heard the gospel (Acts 16:32), had come to faith in God and Christ (Acts 16:34), and had been baptized (Acts 16:33). Therefore, the jailer “was filled with joy” (Acts 16:34). Rejoicing is the natural response to God’s gift of salvation (Acts 2:46, 47; 8:39; 13:48, 52), and joy is also a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

At some time in the night, the jailer returned Paul and Silas to the prison. The missionaries had experienced an eventful evening from midnight until sunrise and had gotten little sleep. They had spent time in worship, survived an earthquake, spared the jailer’s life, preached the gospel, had their wounds washed, baptized the jailer’s household, enjoyed a meal, and returned to their prison cell. Early in the morning they received news from the authorities: “When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: ‘Release those men’” (Acts 16:35).

The arrival of this message is intriguing. Had the magistrates originally intended to set Paul and Silas free the next day? The fact that they were put in the inner cell of the prison would argue against the idea. Why, then, did the magistrates change their minds? Perhaps they had learned the full story about Paul’s exorcism involving the slave girl. Maybe they had more of an opportunity to reflect upon the mob action and the lack of justice that had been administered. A stronger possibility is that they were frightened by the earthquake in the night. They likely interpreted it as a sign of divine retribution because of their rash and brutal treatment of God’s servants. One manuscript tradition adds these words to Acts 16:35: “recollecting the earthquake that had taken place, they were afraid.” Another

scribal addition to Acts 16:39 places these words in the mouths of the magistrates: “We did not know the truth about you, that you are righteous men.” Perhaps the magistrates wanted Paul and Silas to leave before something worse happened to their city!

The magistrates sent the officers (lictors) to the prison early in the morning, since at sunrise the city was not yet in full swing. The reason for this timing was probably to avoid much notice; they did not want a crowd to repeat the disturbance of the previous day. The officers spoke to the jailer, who in turn passed the message on to Paul and Silas. The jailer added, “Now you can leave. Go in peace” (Acts 16:36). “Go in peace” was more than a kind farewell. The language and context indicate that the missionaries were called to leave not only the prison, but also the city. The magistrates were expelling Paul and Silas from Philippi because they wanted to remove the troublemakers from the city and secure the peace. The magistrates probably thought the two missionaries would be glad to leave and would not return any time soon for fear of further beatings.

At this time, the unexpected happened. Paul replied, “They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out” (Acts 16:37). Paul would not leave the prison or Philippi so easily. The slave owners’ two complaints against the missionaries (Acts 16:20, 21) were countered by three from Paul against the magistrates: He and Silas (1) did not receive a fair trial, (2) were publicly beaten, and (3) were thrown in prison. These great injustices were buttressed by the fact that they were Roman citizens. The slave owners, crowd, magistrates, and lictors had been oblivious to their social status. Paul and Silas had been abused publicly, being made a spectacle for all to ridicule. They would not leave secretly.

Philippi was a Roman colony that prided itself on obeying the law. Ironically, the authorities were actually the ones who were advocating practices unlawful for Romans (see Acts 16:21). They did not give Paul and Silas, who were both Roman citizens, a fair trial or due process. The two men were not given an opportunity to defend themselves in court, and their citizen status had been ignored. Without legal justification, Paul and Silas had been beaten, thrown in prison, and locked in the stocks. Cicero once wrote, “To bind a Roman citizen is a crime, to flog him is an abomination . . .” (*Against Verres* 2.5.66 [170]).

Over the centuries, Roman citizens had been granted the right of appeal. A magistrate was forbidden by law to beat, chain, torture, or kill a citizen (Acts 22:25, 29). When the one accused was approached by the lictor, he would cry out “*Provoco!*”—“I appeal!” He would also make the claim “*Civis Romanus sum*”—“I am a Roman citizen” (Cicero *Against Verres* 2.5.62 [161-162]). After the citizen had made his appeal, the magistrate could not legally sentence him or prevent him from going to the higher court in Rome (Cicero *Republic* 2.31; *Digest of Justinian* 48.6.7). In addition, if a Roman citizen was convicted of a capital crime by the higher court, he was subject to a more humane execution. He would be beheaded, rather than fed to the lions or crucified (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 5.1.47).

As early as 500 B.C., the *Lex Valeria* of the Roman republic backed the citizen’s right to appeal. Nevertheless, the laws were not strong enough because they provided no serious sanctions against unjust magistrates who ignored citizens’ rights. In 198 B.C., the elder Cato sponsored the *Lex Porcia*, which imposed a strict penalty on anyone who flogged a Roman citizen or carried out the death penalty against him (Livy *History of Rome* 10.9.4-6; Cicero *Republic* 2.31). After these laws, the *Lex Julia* followed the same basic principles (*Digest of Justinian* 48.6.7). Although beating a Roman citizen with-

out a proper trial was illegal (Acts 22:25), it still happened occasionally. For example, Cicero told of a man who, while being flogged, continued to cry out in vain that he was a Roman citizen (*Against Verres* 2.5.62 [161-162]; see 2.5.54 [140-142]).

The fact of Paul's citizenship is repeatedly stated in the book of Acts (Acts 22:25-29; 23:27; 25:10-12). The apostle was first of all a citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia, the place of his birth (Acts 21:39; 22:3). Paul described Tarsus as "no ordinary city" (*ouk asēmou poleōs*, Acts 21:39), a common expression in his day for a noteworthy place (Dionysius Halicarnassus *Roman Antiquities* 2.35.7; Achilles Tatius 8.3.1). The apostle's description is appropriate since Tarsus was the capital of Cilicia and an important university town (Strabo *Geography* 14.5.13-15; Dio Chrysostom *Discourses* 33.17; 34.7-8, 37).

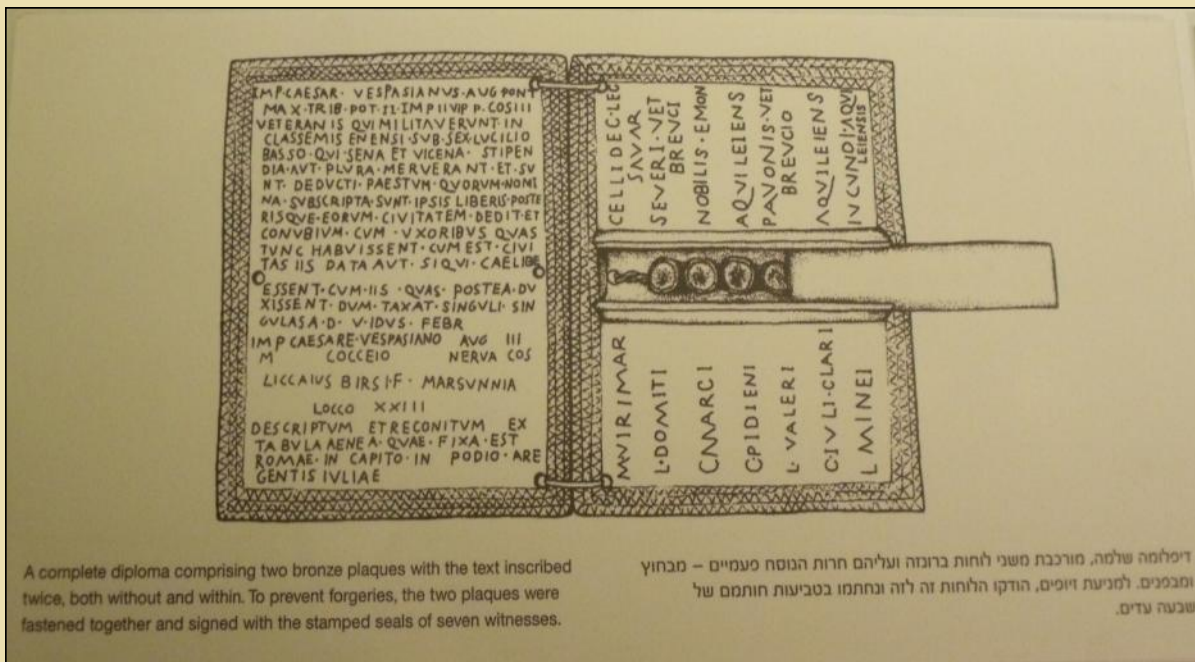
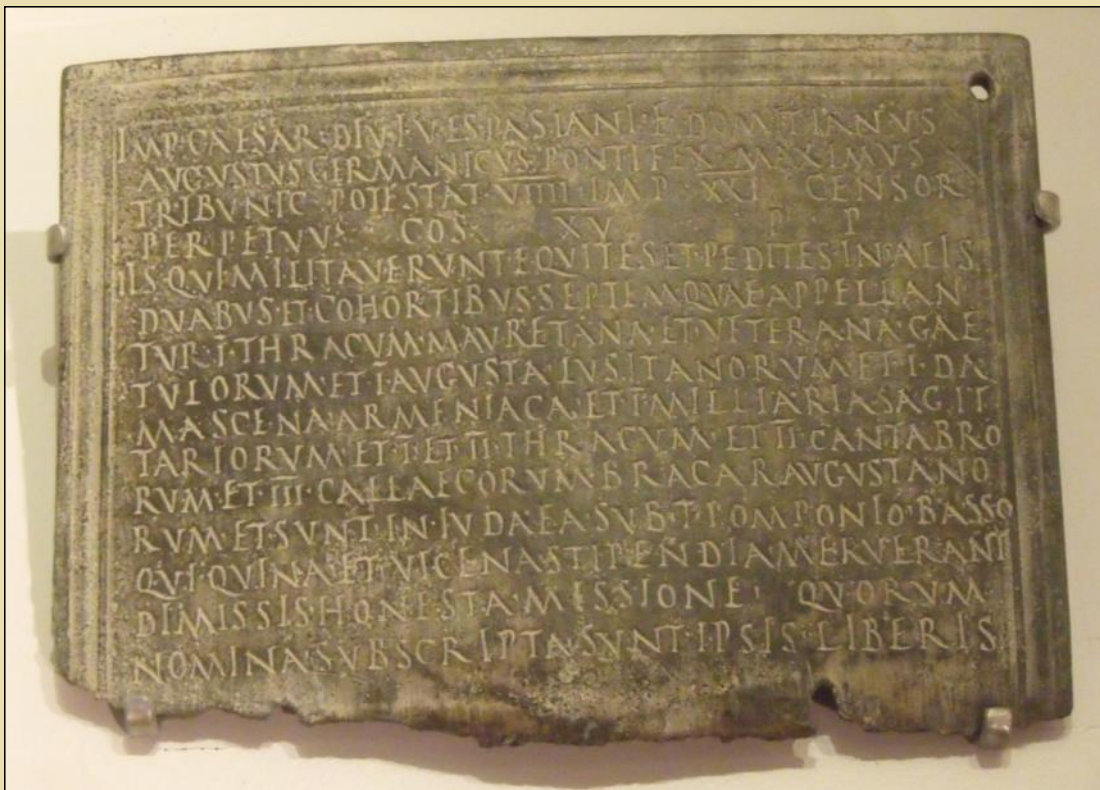
Paul was secondly a Roman citizen, an official status he received at birth due to his father (Acts 22:28). The means by which Paul's father obtained citizenship are unknown. Individually or collectively, people might receive citizenship in various ways: (1) being born a citizen; (2) upon manumission—being set free from slavery; (3) as a reward for some special service; (4) as a reward for military service; (5) by a grant for whole cities; and (6) by purchasing. It may be that one of Paul's ancestors was rewarded for performing an outstanding deed for the Roman government.

As a Roman citizen, Paul possessed other names from birth that the New Testament does not record. Rapske explained, "Citizens had three names: a 'personal name' (*praenomen*) of which there were only about fifteen possibilities; a 'surname' (*nomen* or *gentilicium*), associating one with the largest number of relatives; and a 'family name' (*cognomen*) which was more often than not used alone for the individual" (Brian Rapske, *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994], 84). An example of a full name would be *Marcus Antonius Paulus*.

When an individual was granted citizenship, he assumed the personal name and surname of his patron and also transmitted these names to his descendants. We do not know Paul's personal name or surname; if we did, these would be helpful in reconstructing the circumstances which led to his family's citizenship status. The name "Paul" (*Paulus*) was likely his family name, while "Saul" was his unofficial Hebrew name. He would have been called "Saul" at home and in contexts dealing with Palestinian Jews. When the Acts narrative shifts from Palestine to the Diaspora, Luke changes from using the Hebrew name "Saul" to the Roman name "Paul" (Acts 13:9). Paul probably preferred his Roman name among Gentile audiences to better identify with them. It is also significant that Silas was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37, 38). His name sometimes appears in the Greek New Testament as "Silvanus," which was likely his Roman family name (2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:12).

One issue surrounding an appeal to citizenship is proof. If one were to appeal to citizenship, how would he prove it? The Roman practice of record keeping provides a solid answer. Each legitimate child of a Roman citizen had to be registered within thirty days of birth; the father or an appointed agent would make a declaration in the records office. The child's name would be recorded in a Roman register and the family could obtain a certificate in diptych form, that is, two folding tablets (Fritz Schulz, "Roman Registers of Births and Birth Certificates," *Journal of Roman Studies* 32 [1942]: 78-91).

Since Paul was in Philippi, some 700 miles by land from Tarsus, proof of citizenship using the Roman register there would take several weeks to access. Most likely, the apostle carried a diptych on his travels, using it as modern travelers would use a birth certificate or passport. The diptych concisely recorded the names of the parents, the child's name, date of birth, and civic status. It also included the names of witnesses, usually numbering seven.



Proof of Citizenship. Paul sometimes appealed to his citizenship to protect his life and advance the gospel. The apostle had been “born a citizen” (Acts 22:28). Perhaps his Jewish father had done something extraordinary for the Romans and was granted citizenship. Since Paul was a citizen, he had the right to “appeal to Caesar” (Acts 25:11). (Photos from Israel Museum, Jerusalem)

The difficulty with Paul carrying around a small diptych is that it could easily be misplaced. After all, Paul's travels subjected him to extreme dangers, such as beatings and shipwrecks, in which the cherished certificate could be lost (2 Cor. 11:23-26). Normally, citizens kept their diptychs in family archives. However, Paul did not have a permanent home after his conversion, so it is not unimaginable that he carried it with him. He may have even possessed an extra copy. Regardless, it was rare for people to falsely claim citizenship status; such deceptive individuals who appealed to the emperor were usually executed (Suetonius *Lives of the Caesars: Claudius* 25.3).

One mystery in the narrative of Acts 16 is that Paul did not appeal to his Roman citizenship before he was beaten (see Acts 22:24, 25). His delay did not correspond to the normal behavior of a Roman citizen, who would be expected to give a swift and forceful presentation of his legal status to avoid suffering physical harm and social shame. Many explanations for such a delay have been proposed. (1) The missionaries had not been given an opportunity for a defense. However, if one were about to be beaten, he would not wait for a turn to speak (Acts 22:25). (2) They wanted to avoid a delay in Philippi, and such an appeal may have caused them to lose both time and money. Yet, the extra time in Philippi could potentially have yielded more converts, which was the most important objective. (3) They did cry out, but the authorities refused to listen. However, the magistrates were genuinely surprised when they learned of Paul's and Silas' citizenship. (4) Paul may have been lending credibility to the new church in Philippi. Despite the slave owners' attacks (Acts 16:20, 21), there was no shame in being a Christian. By waiting to play their Roman card, the two men demonstrated that their faith was worth suffering for (Phil. 3:10, 11). They set an example for the young church to follow (Phil. 1:29, 30). (5) They did cry out, but their appeals to citizenship were drowned out by the crowd. The fervor of patriotism mixed with religion may have stirred the mob to a degree where it was difficult to hear. The fourth and fifth explanations seem the most plausible.

Paul insisted that the magistrates themselves escort him and Silas from the prison, and by doing so, the apostle put the officials on the defensive. To some degree, his action would diminish the shame they had incurred on the previous day by the public beating and imprisonment. When the officers (lictors) reported Paul's message back to the magistrates, "They were alarmed" or "afraid" (*phobeō*; Acts 16:38). Their improper administration of justice could reap serious consequences. One possible repercussion is that the magistrates could lose their position in public office. In addition, Philippi's status as a Roman colony might be adversely affected. For example, in A.D. 44 the emperor Claudius stripped Rhodes of its citizenship privileges for crucifying prisoners who were Roman citizens (Dio Cassius *Roman History* 60.24.4).

The magistrates responded to Paul's message in this way: "They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city" (Acts 16:39). Paul and Silas, as Roman citizens, could not legally be expelled from Philippi since they had not been convicted of any crimes. In addition, having a trial at this point would only further underscore how the magistrates had robbed Paul and Silas of justice. Nevertheless, due to public sentiment, the magistrates could not guarantee the safety of the two men. The magistrates were in a difficult dilemma, so they begged the missionaries to leave Philippi.

By this time the city was probably buzzing with business. The magistrates escorted Paul and Silas from the prison, located adjacent to the forum. It is likely that many citizens of Philippi witnessed the parade, which served as legal vindication for the two men. Paul wanted to set the record straight

and protect the Christians remaining there from similar treatment. He also wanted to shield any co-workers that might be used in the future to strengthen the young church. Despite his efforts, over a decade later the church was being persecuted (Phil. 1:27-30).

Paul and Silas were not about to leave town without one last opportunity to assemble with the church. After being led from the prison, they went to Lydia's house to meet with the brothers and sisters and encourage them (Acts 16:40). If the exorcism of the slave girl took place on a Sabbath (see Acts 16:16), then this gathering occurred on the first day of the week, which is the Lord's Day. If this was the case, they would have shared the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-34). Even if the meeting was not on Sunday, the group probably would have engaged in singing, prayer, and teaching. Perhaps Luke the doctor treated Paul's and Silas' wounds with oil or some other medicine. After encouraging the young Christians, Paul and Silas departed. They left through the western Krenides Gate on the Egnatian Way, passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia on their way to Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia (Acts 17:1).

Luke's Continued Ministry at Philippi

Luke remained with the young congregation in Philippi when the other missionaries left town. He was the perfect choice to stay behind in order to build up the new congregation. Since the charges against Paul and Silas were fueled by anti-Semitism, it was convenient to leave behind a Gentile (Col. 4:11, 14). Further, Luke's service as a physician would be greatly valued in the Philippian community.

It was Paul who referred to Luke as a "dear friend" (*agapētos*) and "doctor" (*iatros*) (Col. 4:14); perhaps Luke served the apostle as his own personal physician. Such a friend could perform a significant service to Paul, who experienced all kinds of physical ailments (2 Cor. 4:7-12; 11:23-28; 12:7; Gal. 4:13-15). Luke's mobility as recorded in the book of Acts suggests that he was itinerant, moving from town to town every few years. In addition to itinerants, there were also located doctors employed by ancient cities. During his extended stay in Philippi, approximately seven years, Luke likely served numerous patients along with ministering to the church there.

Paul's Later Associations with the Philippian Church

In the interval between planting the church and writing Philippians, Paul made at least two return visits to Philippi. In A.D. 56, following his extended ministry at Ephesus on the third missionary journey, Paul traveled through Macedonia (Acts 20:1, 2). On this occasion, the apostle wrote 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:5). The Philippians were part of the group of Macedonians that Paul held up as an example of generosity. Their giving was all the more amazing because they were financially strapped (2 Cor. 8:1-5). In A.D. 57, Paul left Greece and traveled back through Macedonia where his party was joined by Luke (Acts 20:3-6). Later, when Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians, he planned to visit Philippi again (Phil. 2:24). That trip must have taken place between A.D. 62 and 64, prior to his second Roman confinement (1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 4:13). On that visit to Macedonia, Paul wrote 1 Timothy.

The Philippian Church's Composition and Character

Beyond the introduction of Lydia and the jailer in Acts 16, very little is known about the members of the Philippian congregation in the first century, but Paul's letter to the Philippians does offer some additional information. The reader is introduced to the selfless messenger Epaphroditus (Phil.

2:25), the feuding Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2, 3), and the peacemaking Clement (Phil. 4:3). The congregation was made up of both Greeks and Romans. Of the names associated with the Philippian church, Lydia, Epaphroditus, Euodia, and Syntyche are Greek, while only Clement is Latin.

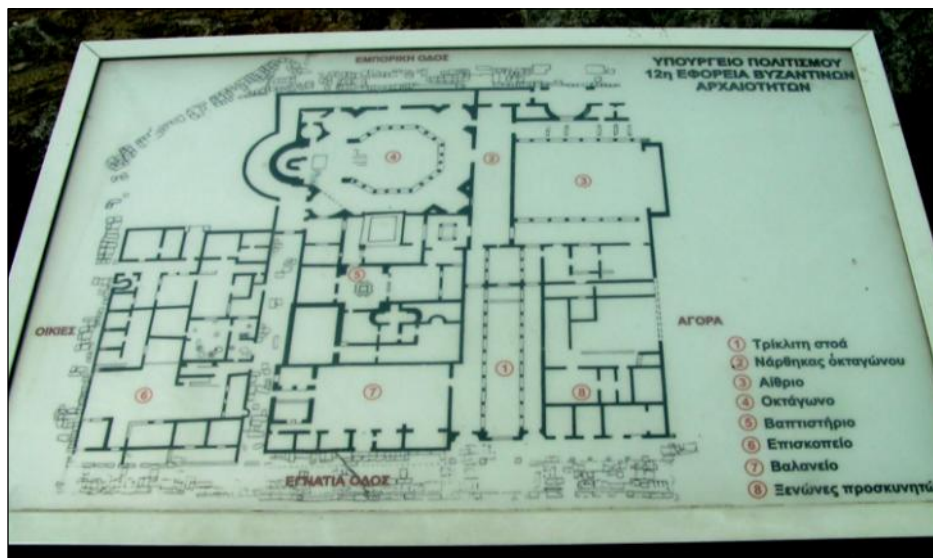
The gospel may not have made significant inroads into the Roman population, but references to the praetorian guard (Phil. 1:13), Caesar’s household (Phil. 4:22), and the Latin-influenced designation *Philippēσιοι* (Phil. 4:15) demonstrate Roman influences on the church. Certainly, Philippi’s status as a Roman colony had a great impact on the congregation’s character; those who were natives of the area had probably been granted citizenship. Nevertheless, Paul reminded the Philippian church of their greater citizenship (*politeuma*) in heaven (Phil. 3:20).

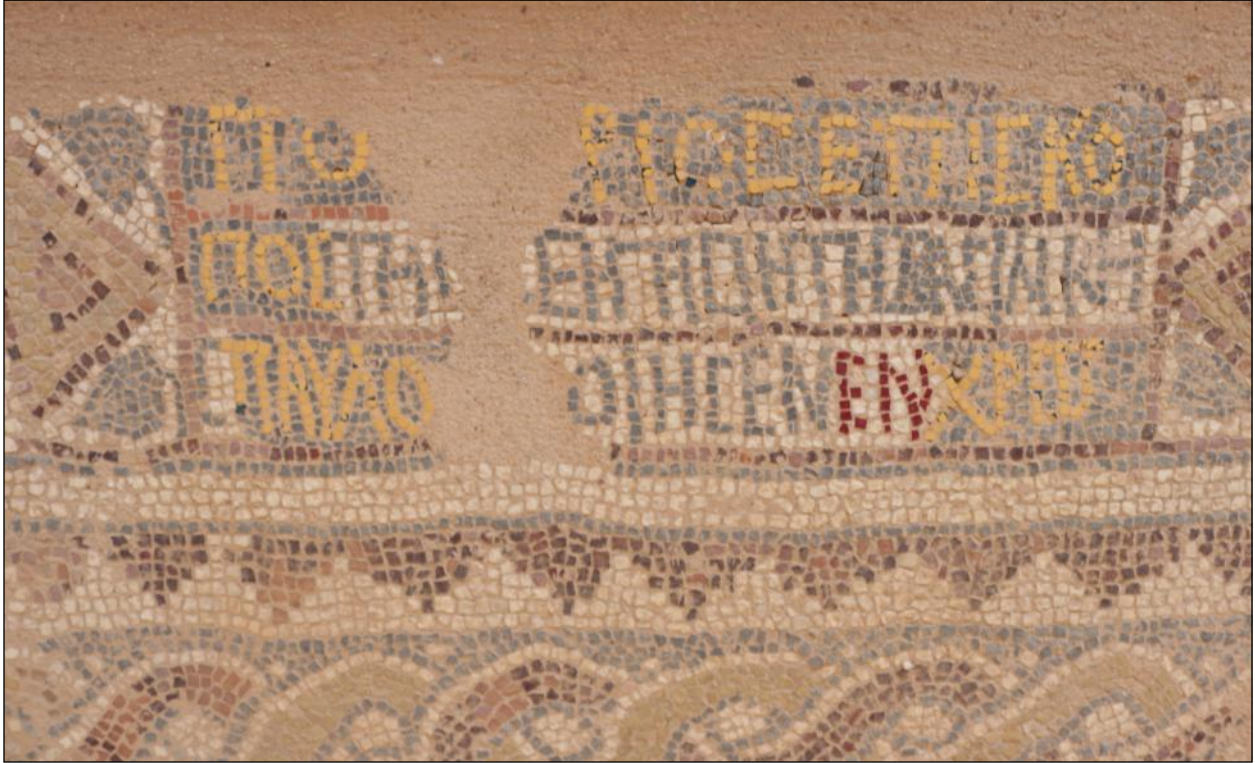
The Philippian church was well known for its generosity. Such acts of kindness began with Lydia and the jailer, and had continued until the time Paul wrote the Philippian letter (Phil. 4:10-20). Rather than being composed of wealthy members, the church was predominantly poor. Even so, these believers possessed generous hearts (2 Cor. 8:1, 2). Philippi’s strategic position on the Egnatian Way provided the church with opportunities to show hospitality to Christian travelers. Such care was later reflected in their treatment of Ignatius (A.D. 110), a second-century Christian en route to Rome for martyrdom. Polycarp commended the Philippians for this hospitality when he wrote, “I greatly rejoice with you in our Lord Jesus Christ, because you welcomed the representations of the true love and, as was proper for you, helped on their way those men confined by chains suitable for saints” (*Philippians* 1.1).

Archaeological Evidence for Christianity at Philippi

Despite initial opposition (Phil. 1:27-30), Christianity flourished in Philippi for several hundred years. Ruins from several church buildings are a testimony to the later wealth of the Philippian church. Five sites will be described at this point.

The first site is located on the eastern side of Philippi and dates to the fourth century A.D. The original building was probably constructed in Constantine’s era following the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313, which showed toleration toward Christianity. This site features a mosaic honoring Paul as well as a cross-shaped baptistry. An octagonal chapel was added to the complex later. There is also an episcopion, or bishop’s residence, which reflects a hierarchy in church government not found in the Bible.





Floor Mosaic: "Porphyrios, bishop, made the embroidery [mosaic] of the basilica of Paul in Christ."



Cross-Shaped Baptistry
Illustrating Immersion into Christ's Death (Rom. 6:3, 4)



Octagonal Chapel

The Extra Muros Basilica was built in the fifth century on the second site. It was located near the eastern Neapolis Gate just outside the walls, and marks one possible place for Lydia's conversion. This area was also used as a cemetery that included Christian burials. The basilica was built over an earlier structure from the fourth century. Later, the Extra Muros Basilica itself was damaged beyond repair, so a small chapel was constructed on the site using its remains.

Basilica A, which dates to the fifth century, is the third site. It was located within the city walls on the north side of the Egnatian Way. This building was large, covering an area almost the size of the Roman forum. It was decorated with beautiful frescoes and fine marble. Basilica A was possibly destroyed by an earthquake.



Basilica A



Basilica B (*Above*) and Its Baptistry (*Below*)

Basilica B was a sixth-century structure built on the fourth site. It was located within the city walls on the south side of the Egnatian Way. The building may have been constructed to replace Basilica A. The structure was never completely finished and its monumental dome collapsed due to faulty construction. A smaller building was later constructed on the site.

Basilica C, also dated to the sixth century, was built on the fifth site. It was located west of Basilica A on the north side of the Egnatian Way. The basilica possessed rich architectural decoration and luxurious marble floors. Like Basilica A, it was probably destroyed by an earthquake.

[This section on Philippi was condensed and revised from my previous work. For more extensive treatment and documentation, see David Stewart, *A Commentary on Philippians* (Searcy, Ark.: Stewart Publications, 2006), 5-59.]

