

PHILIPPIANS INTRODUCTION

Philippi:

It was the scene of the battle between Brutus and Octavian, which gave birth to the Roman Empire in 42 B.C. Octavian (Augustus), the head of the new state, rebuilt Philippi and filled it with his own soldiers, making it a military outpost and colony of Rome. The strategic location of the city made this colonization extremely advantageous. It commanded one of the principle routes between Europe and Asia. It was the “chief” or “first city of Macedonia (Acts 16:12), evidently meaning the farthest eastward from Rome, and the “first” city after entering Macedonia from the east. ¹

A variety of national types assembled in Philippi ---Greek, Roman, Asiatic,---representing different phases of philosophy, religion, and superstition. That the inhabitants were religiously zealous is attested by the archaeological finds of the rocks near Philippi, which have been called a “veritable museum of mythology.” It was appropriate, and quite likely the desire of the apostle, that the gospel in the empire should begin in such a strategic and cosmopolitan city. ¹

Paul and his companions had crossed the Aegean Sea and followed the renowned Egnatian Way

1. Beacon Bible Commentary, Volume 9, p. 279.

some eight to ten miles to the city of Philippi. Philippi (named after Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great) was famous as the gateway to Europe, a miniature Rome. With the conversion of Lydia, the slave girl, and the jailer (Acts 16), it became the “birthplace of European Christianity.”

The Pauline authorship has never been seriously doubted. ¹

That Philippians was written from prison is quite clear. If we assume Luke mentions all of Paul’s imprisonments, Rome is the most probable answer. ¹

The immediate purpose was to send a note of commendation and explanation along with Epaphroditus to head off any criticism that Paul was returning prematurely from his charge. This also allowed Paul the chance to assure the church of his grateful appreciation for their gift and correct such minor disorders in the church as pessimism over Paul’s continued imprisonment, timidity about pagan hostility, threat of Judaizers, and disunity that was beginning to fall across the church. If allowed to continue they would soon undermine the cause of Christ at Philippi. ¹

1. The Open Bible, notes, p.1111.