

## Introduction and Background

Philippians is a very personal letter, written by Paul to a group of Christians that he respects, loves, and has spent considerable time with. This lesson will provide some background on the city of Philippi, the church there, and the writing of the epistle (date, time, location).

### The City of Philippi

- Philippi received its name from Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, who conquered the city in 360 B.C.
- Philippi was the site of a famous battle, when Octavius and Marc Antony defeated Brutus and Cassius. After this battle Philippi became a Roman colony.
- As a Roman colony, residents of Philippi were citizens of Rome, with a measure of free will and special privileges as Roman citizens.
- Philippi was located on the Egnatian highway, a major trade route through Macedonia.

1) What indication is there that few Jews lived in Philippi?

### Paul's History with Philippi

*Acts 16:6-40*

2) What caused Paul to go to Philippi?

3) Who were his first converts?

4) What miracle caused Paul and Silas to be imprisoned? Who was converted as a result?

5) When asked to leave the city, what did Paul and Silas do before their departure? Why?

6) Where did they go after leaving Philippi?

*Philippians 4:15-16*

7) How many times did the Philippians send aid to Paul in Thessalonica?

8) At what other times did they assist him?

## *2 Corinthians 8:1-5*

- 9) What was the economic condition of the churches of Macedonia?
- 10) Describe their giving for the poor saints in Judea. How did Paul apparently feel about their giving? What explains their generosity?

## *Acts 20-28*

- 11) How long did Paul remain in Greece after the uproar in Ephesus (Acts 20:1-3)?
- 12) Why did Paul return through Macedonia after his visit to Corinth? Where was he returning to?
- 13) What happened to Paul in Jerusalem (Acts 21:32-33)? How long did he remain a prisoner under Felix? Where was he finally taken for trial (Acts 27:1)?
- 14) What were the conditions under which Paul was imprisoned? How long had he been a prisoner in Rome when Acts was completed?

## **Date and Location**

The most common theory is that Paul wrote Philippians during his imprisonment in Rome, sometime between A.D. 60-64, the same imprisonment during which he wrote Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon.

- Philippians 1:13; 4:22 seem to indicate that Paul was in prison at Rome
- The tone of the letter suggests that Paul was under house arrest, a condition which is consistent with Acts 28:30-31.

An alternative theory, supported by Mott and others, is that Paul wrote Philippians during his imprisonment in Caesarea, sometime between A.D. 57-60.

- Paul's plans to visit Philippi (Philippians 1:25; 2:23) are consistent with a visit while travelling from Caesarea to Rome and then Spain, which fits with his statements in Acts 19:21 and Romans 1:8-15; 15:22-29.

The epistle was probably written towards the end of the imprisonment:

- There is mention of the fact that an imminent verdict is due (1:20, 1:27, 2:17)
- Some time must have elapsed for the hostility to the gospel to grow (1:15)

- Some time must have elapsed for the gospel to progress (1:12)
- Some time must have elapsed for at least four trips between Rome/Caesarea and Philippi:
  - A message to Philippi to indicate that Paul is in prison
  - A trip by Epaphroditus to Rome to assist Paul
  - A message back to Philippi regarding Epaphroditus' condition
  - A message back to Paul regarding the Philippian reaction to Epaphroditus' sickness

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What are some similarities/differences between Philippi and the DC area? What are some similarities/differences between the church at Philippi and the church at Annandale?

For this class I will primarily be using the following references:

Malone, Avon. *Press to the Prize: Studies in Philippians*. 1991.

Mott, Jr., L. A. *Thinking Through Philippians*. 1996.