

The Biblical City Of Antioch Of Pisidia



Roman aqueduct at Antioch of Pisidia

“But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day...” (Acts 13:14)

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Antioch Of Pisidia

Introduction

- I. Of the sixteen ancient cities in Turkey named Antioch, only two are of any significance to Bible students today.
 - A. One is Antakya (Antioch of Syria; Antioch on the Orontes) and the other is Antioch of Pisidia (Pisidian Antioch).
 - B. Both cities played a major part in the early days of the church.
- II. Around 50 A.D., Paul visited Antioch of Pisidia on his first evangelistic journey (Acts 13:13–14) and his first recorded sermon was preached there (Acts 13:15–51).

Discussion

I. History Of Antioch Of Pisidia

- A. Antioch of Pisidia is located $\frac{1}{2}$ mile north of the village of Yalvac in the Isparta province in southern Turkey.
- B. After the death of Alexander the Great, Seleucus I Nicator, founder of the Seleucid Dynasty, took control of Pisidia (c. 330–280 B.C.).
 1. Seleucus I Nicator founded nearly 60 cities, and 16 of them were named in honor of his father Antiochus (Antiochos).
 2. The cities he captured were soon Hellenized and fortified cities were built at strategically important places.
 3. Judging from coins minted around that time the city must have been economically prosperous.
- C. In 188 B.C., the Romans defeated Antiochus III and declared Antioch of Pisidia a free city.
 1. In 25 B.C. the Emperor Augustus made Antioch in Pisidia a Roman colony, gave it the title of *Colonia Caesarea Antiochia*, and placed the area under direct Roman control, creating the Roman province of Galatia that encompassed much of central Asia Minor.
 2. As a Roman colony, Antioch of Pisidia was settled by veterans of the Roman army in their retirement.
 3. Paul's letter to the Galatians would have been directed to the Christians in Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe.
 4. By the middle of the first century A.D., several members of the imperial household had served as magistrates here.
 5. In 295 A.D. Antioch became the capital of Pisidia, a new Roman province created by the Emperor Diocletian.
- D. The first excavations of Antioch of Pisidia were carried out here in 1913–14 and 1924 by archaeologists William Ramsay and D. M. Robinson.
 1. Excavations at Antioch were resumed in 1979 and revealed the remains of many important buildings dating from the Roman era and later.
 2. One of these finds was the foundation of the city portal built as a monument commemorating the victory of the Roman emperor Septimius Severus over the Parthians.

3. At the highest point of the city Emperor Augustus built the Augustus Temple that was dedicated to the mother goddess Cybele (Kybele).
 - a) The front of the temple had a stairway of twelve steps leading up to the porch.
 - b) This building was used as an “open air church” around 400 A.D.
4. A fourth century Byzantine church building, a basilica dedicated to Paul, stands on the west side of the city and was its largest church building.
 - a) At the time it was built, it was one of the largest church buildings in the world; it is still one of the largest ever-discovered in Asia Minor.
 - b) Most of the walls have disappeared, but the mosaics and inscriptions that cover the floor are worth seeing.
 - c) At the lower left corner of the basilica are the remnants of what is believed to be a first century synagogue.
 - d) Antiochus III ordered 2,000 Jewish families be moved from Babylonia to certain areas in Lydia and Phrygia because he believed they would be loyal supporters of the Seleucids (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*).
 - e) A mosaic floor in the church building has been found with Psalm 42:4 inscribed on it.
 - f) In 1927 William Ramsay found an iron seal with the names of three martyrs from the time of Diocletian: Neon, Nikon and Heliodorus.
- E. If you visit the city today you can see the remains of several other important buildings, including:
 1. The foundations of a 26-foot wide triumphal arch, the Triple Gate, a gateway built in the second century A.D. and dedicated by Emperor Hadrian in 129 A.D.
 2. The city walls—some sections date to the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods.
 3. The Decumanus Maximus (the major north-south street) leads from the Triple Gate to the intersection with the east-west Cardo Maximus.
 4. A theater was built during the Hellenistic period and later expanded by the Romans.
 - a) The theater could hold between 12,000 and 15,000 persons seated on some 26 rows of seats.
 - b) This theater was in existence when Paul visited the city.
 5. The Cardo Maximus (the major east-west street).
 - a) Some of the columns along the left (north) side of the street are still standing.
 - b) Numerous shops lined the street and are still visible today.
 - c) As you walk on the road you will see carvings of garlanded bull’s heads among the ruins—the bull was the symbol of the Hellenistic moon goddess Men.
 6. A Roman bath, dating back to the first century A.D.
 7. North of the city are the massive remains of a Roman aqueduct that brought fresh water from springs in the Sultan Mountains about 6 miles from Antioch.
 - a) The aqueduct terminated at the nymphaeum, a monumental fountain from which water was distributed to the whole city.
 - b) Over 3000 cubic meters of water were distributed every day.

- F. Antioch of Pisidia was definitely “off the beaten path” in Paul’s day (as well as now), so you might wonder why Paul visited the city.
1. Just prior to his visit at Antioch of Pisidia, Paul had preached on the island of Cyprus and met Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:6–7).
 2. After Paul’s confrontation with Elymas the sorcerer, Sergius Paulus “believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord” (Acts 13:12).
 3. There is an inscription displayed in the Yalvac museum that clearly shows the whole word of “Paulli” and portions of “Sergii.”
 4. “The family of Sergii Paulli had large estates in the vicinity of Pisidian Antioch. Please note, that on Paul’s first journey, on the island of Cyprus, the proconsul, Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7–12) was converted to Christianity. It may have been that at that time Sergius Paulus requested Paul to travel to Pisidian Antioch to speak to other members of his extended family that resided there—maybe even giving him a letter of introduction. This, and other inscriptions, strongly hint at the possibility of this type of connection—indeed, even providing a reason as to why Paul traveled to this city.” (Dr. Carl Rasmussen, *Holy Land Photos*).

II. Paul’s Sermon At Antioch

- A. After leaving Perga (Acts 13:14), Paul and Barnabas would have followed the *Via Sebaste* into Antioch of Pisidia (a journey of about 110 miles).
- B. Paul’s first recorded sermon was preached at Antioch of Pisidia.
- C. “Arriving at Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas entered the synagogue on the Sabbath. A typical first-century synagogue service would have included the *shema*, the liturgy of ‘The Eighteen Benedictions,’ a reading from the Law, a reading from one of the prophets, a free address given by any competent Jew in attendance, and a closing blessing. The leader of the synagogue, usually one of the elders of the congregation, took charge of the building and made arrangements for the services (Lk 8:41, 49). This office was sometimes held for life and passed on within a family. Perhaps Paul’s dress proclaimed him a Pharisee and thereby opened the way for an invitation to speak.” (*Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary*).
- D. As with Stephen’s speech (Acts 7:2–53), Paul’s sermon was a summary of Jewish history and belief (Acts 13:15–41).
 1. God is the God of the people of Israel.
 2. God chose the patriarchs for Himself.
 3. God redeemed His people from Egypt, leading them through the desert.
 4. God gave them the land of Palestine as an inheritance.
- E. Paul ended his sermon with a call to repentance, based on Habakkuk 1:5.
 1. He warned the congregation that Habakkuk’s words applied to all who reject Jesus as the Messiah.
 2. “So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath” (Acts 13:42).
 3. As Paul and Barnabas saw it, the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia had rejected the very thing they were looking for—“eternal life” (Acts 13:43–51).

- F. “Having been expelled from Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas ‘shook the dust from their feet in protest against them’—a Jewish gesture of scorn and disassociation, which was directed at the city’s magistrates and the Jewish leaders. Then they went southeast on the *Via Sebaste*, heading for Iconium some eighty miles away. The new ‘disciples’ left behind at Pisidian Antioch, far from being discouraged at this turn of events, were ‘filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.’” (*Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary*).

Conclusion

- I. Paul may have visited the Antioch again on his second evangelistic journey, but only Derbe and Lystra are mentioned (Acts 16:1).
- II. Paul visited Galatia and Phrygia on this third missionary journey (Acts 18:23).
- III. The only other time Paul refers to Pisidian Antioch is in 2 Timothy 3:11, where he mentions an unpleasant incident in the city.

Photographs of Antioch of Pisidia



Decumanus Maximus



Foundation of Triple Arch



Theater



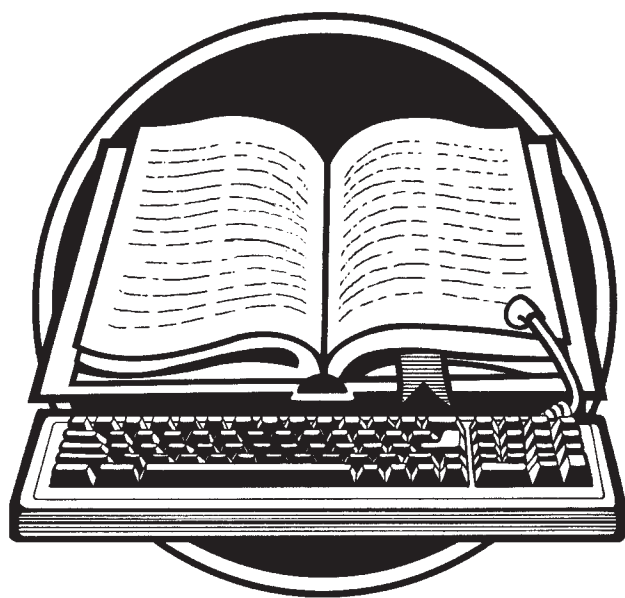
Garlanded Bull's Head



Village of Yalvac



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