

Paul the Apostle, Philippi and Philippopolis

Presented by Romyana Hristova,
Life Together, Evangel Temple
June 5, 2022

“Paul the Apostle, Philippi, and Philippopolis”



The Roman Empire ca. 400 AD. Source: Wikimedia

“Paul the Apostle, Philippi, and Philippopolis”

- The location of Phillipi:

Phillipi (Greece) or Philippopolis/Plovdiv (Bulgaria)?

- What is in the name?

Philip II (Gr. Philippos) of Macedon (382-336 BC), father of Alexander the Great; conquered Crenides/**Phillipi** (356 BC) and Thracian Evmolpia /**Philippopolis** (347-42 BC, a *polis*). Both names are used interchangeably.

“Paul the Apostle, Philippi, and Philippopolis”

- Why is this question worthy of attention?
 - 1) It concerns an important part of Paul’s missionary activities
 - 2) Paul’s second journey (49-52 AD) – his first one in Europe -> the **beginning of the Christian Epoch in European history**
- Asen Chilingirov’s thesis – **Philippopolis**, based on historical documents and archeology (article 2006, book 2019)

Biblical references to Paul's journeys to Philippi

Second journey:

Acts 16:9 - "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood **a man of Macedonia** and prayed him, saying, Come over unto **Macedonia** and help us."

Acts 16:12-40 – "And from thence (Troas) to **Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia**, and a colony... (12) And on the sabbath we went out of the city **by a river side** where prayer was wont to be made..."(13). "And they came out of **the prison...**" (40)

Third journey:

- **Acts 20:6** - "And **we sailed away from Philippi** after the days of unleavened bread **and came unto them to Troas in five days;**"

Biblical references to Paul's journeys to Philippi

The results of his missionary activities:

Romans 15:19 - “Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that **from Jerusalem**, and **round about** unto **Illyricum**, I have **fully preached** [not proclaimed] the gospel of Christ.”

Romans 16:1-16 – Paul salutes all his helpers and disciples; some of them became bishops: Andronicus in Sirmium (7), **Hermas/Erm** in **Philippopolis** (14).



 - Prefecture of Illyricum, 318-379 AD

Roman Praetorian Prefecture of Illyricum, 318-379 AD. Source: Wikimedia

Arguments against **Philippi**

- 1) The small Greek town of Philippi and **the method and the goal of Paul** – to preach to local people in focal centers
 - Philippi was **not “the chief city”** of Macedonia, this was Amphipolis
- 2) Philippi was destroyed in 42 BC; rebuilt as military colony **for Roman veterans**, the majority population until 6th c. AD.; **no Christians, no Jews** - proven by archeology (1930s) -> pagan temples; 767 Latin inscriptions (2-vol.set, c.1500 pages, 1995 & 2009 by Greek and German scholars).

Philippi, Wikipedia, 2012



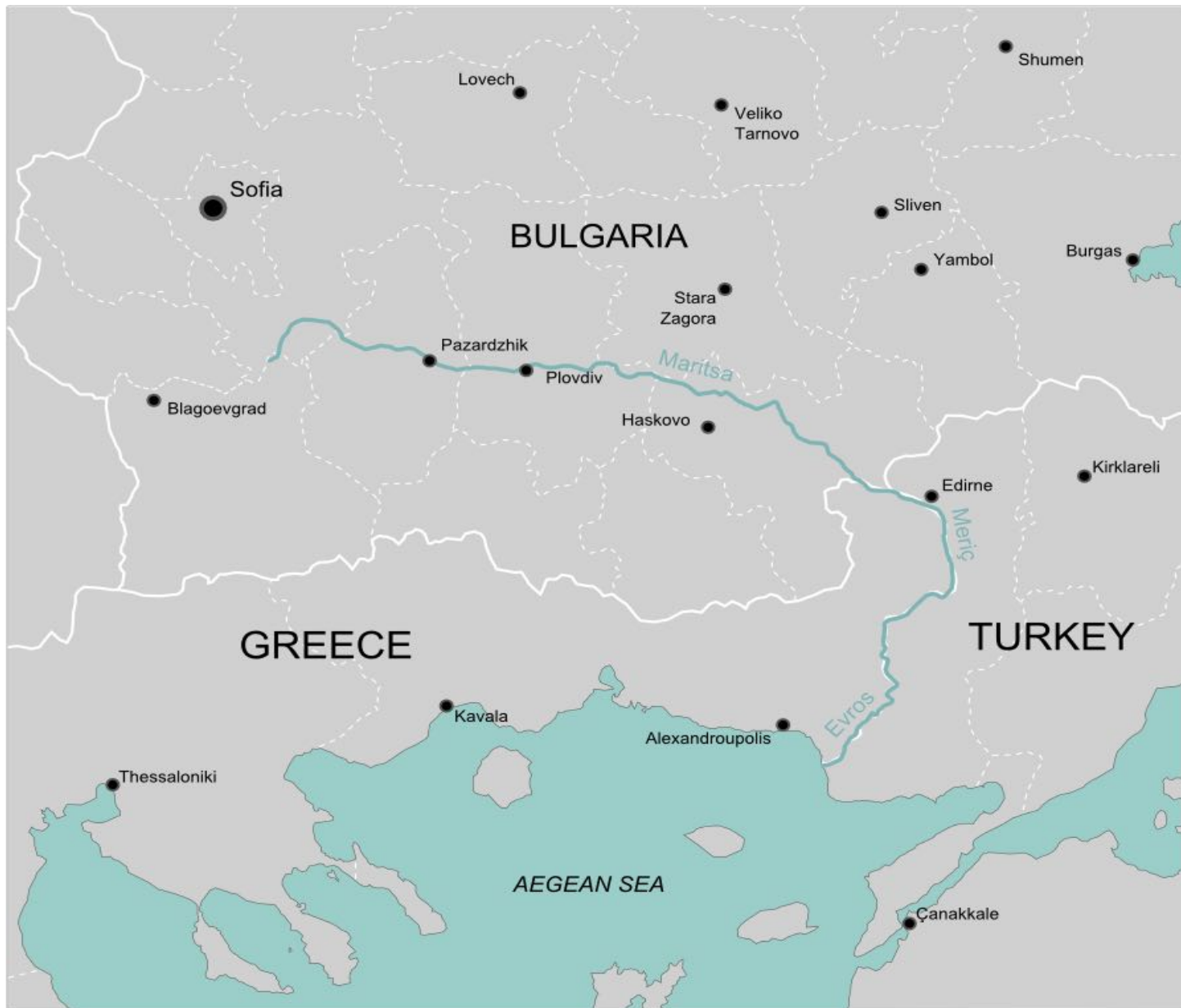
Arguments against Philippi

- 3) Lack of Christians & Jewish **cemeteries**
- 4) Lack of the **institutions** of Rome & their buildings in Philippi: court, magistrates, prison (1937-water tank). Paul's conflict with Roman authorities (Acts 16: 16-40)
- 5) Lack of Jewish **synagogue** / worship place by the river
- 6) Lack of a **navigable river** (Acts 20:6)



Paul's Second Missionary Journey. Source: Conforming to Jesus Ministry





Maritsa River. Source: Wikipedia

Rivers and prison



Maritsa River at Plovdiv, Bulgaria



Maritsa (Meric) at Edirne, Turkey



Krenides River at Philippi. Source: Bible Places



"Prison" at Philippi. Source: Padfield.com

Arguments for **Philippopolis**

- 1) River - Hebros/Evros/**Maritsa** runs through Philippopolis & Turkey, flows in Aegean Sea; 5 days, 410 km
- 2) **The largest city of the province of Thracia**, incorporated in the Roman Empire (46 CE); on *Via Militaris* road; had institutions
- 3) **Synagogue**, 3rd c. AD, floor mosaics with Menorah & names of donors

Arguments for Philippopolis



Synagogue, 3rd c. AD in Philippopolis/Plovdiv.

Source: Wikimedia



Menorah, 3rd c. AD, Philippopolis/Plovdiv. Source: Regional Archaeological Museum Plovdiv

Arguments for Philippopolis

(4) Relations with Philippians – warm and amicable, a special bond (Phill 4:7-17), in contrast with all other churches

(5) Evidence for Paul's legacy in Philippopolis until mid-19 century:

- “Christian Apostle” – a 12-cen. old Bulgarian manuscript found in Ukraine
- A travelog by Armenian travelers, 17 cen. (Venice 1806), reference to 2 cross-shaped chapels where Paul preached as per locals' account

Arguments for Philippopolis

- **Evidence in Russian texts:**
 - St. Dimitri of Rostov (Ukraine) identifies Philippi with Philippopolis in his *Lives of Saints* (4 vols., c.1705)
 - “Philippopolis, in Turkish Filibe, in Bulgarian Plovdingrad and Plovdirov The inhabitants of Philippi were converted to Christianity by the Apostle Paul, who founded the diocese here. “ —
REFERENCE ENCYCLOPEDIC DICTIONARY, vol. 11,
St. Petersburg, 1848, p.94.

Arguments for Philippopolis

(6) The **first bishop of Philippopolis** –

Hermas/Erm, saluted by Paul in ***Romans 16:14***; one of 70 apostles of Jesus. Hermas wrote *The Shepherd*, canonical text, part of the *NT* until end of 4th c.(as per Origen in his *History of the Church*, destroyed in 5th c.); **Coptic translation** found mid 19 c., published after WWII in various languages.

Arguments for Philippopolis

- (7) Paul's legacy - the spread of Christian communities on the Balkans as a result of missions by Paul and Andrew, “**from Jerusalem to Illyricum**”, three main centers with bishops mentioned by Paul (Romans 16): **Sirmuim** (Epaenetus, Andronicus); **Philippopolis** (Hermas), **Tomi** (Constantsa, Rumania) before mid 1st c. AD.
- The Arian controversy (early 4th cen.)- Trinity essence
 - Council in Serdica (c.343); Counter-council in **Philippopolis** by Eastern/Arian bishops (c.343/44) – the **first schism** between the Eastern and Western Church

Churches of Illyricum and Asia Minor

- **Apostolic Church of prefecture Illyricum** (dioceses of Macedonia, Dacia & Pannonia), Sirmuim center, archbishop – offered compromise (“of like essence”); declared “**heretical**” and its bishops and lay people persecuted and killed, 5-6 c. AD; 26 Arians (martyrs) with Slavic names burned in 378.
- **Destruction of multiple churches** on the Balkans, built mid 4th-end 5th cen., **over 900!**, during the period c.6-8th cen.; no earthquakes causes.
- Destruction of Church Councils’ archives.

Plovdiv, the Cultural Capital of Europe, 2019



The Roman Theatre of Philippopolis, 1st c. AD

The Bishop's Basilica, 3rd c. AD.

April, 2021 opened for visitors



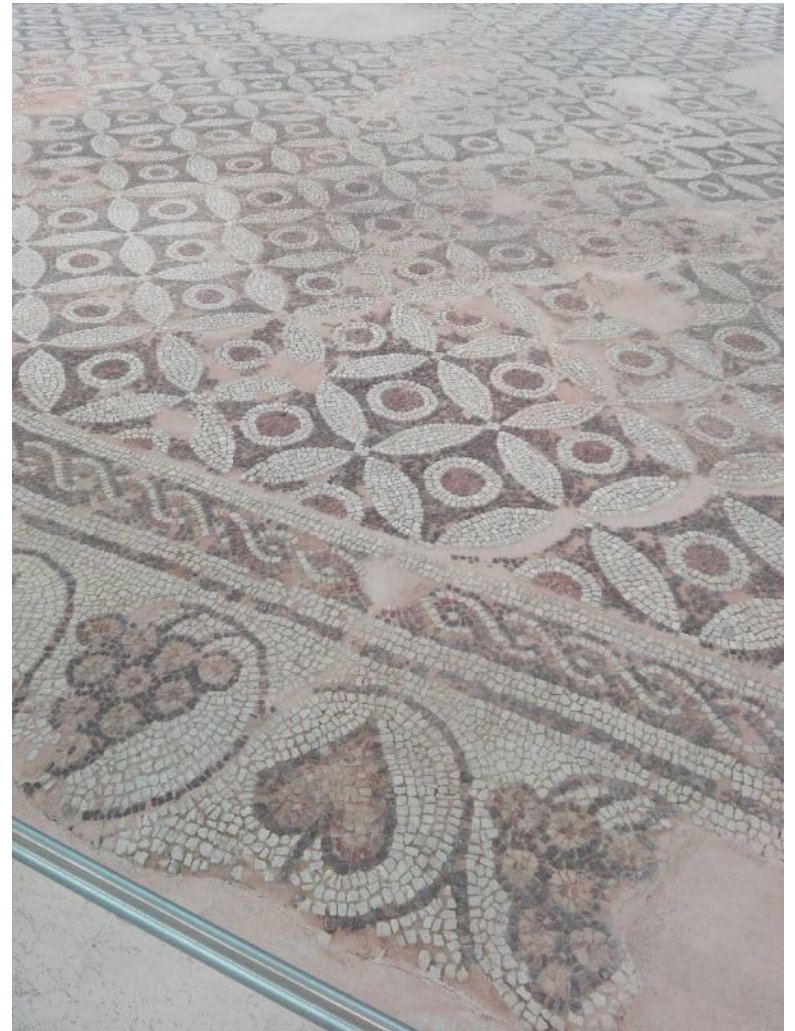
The Bishop's Basilica



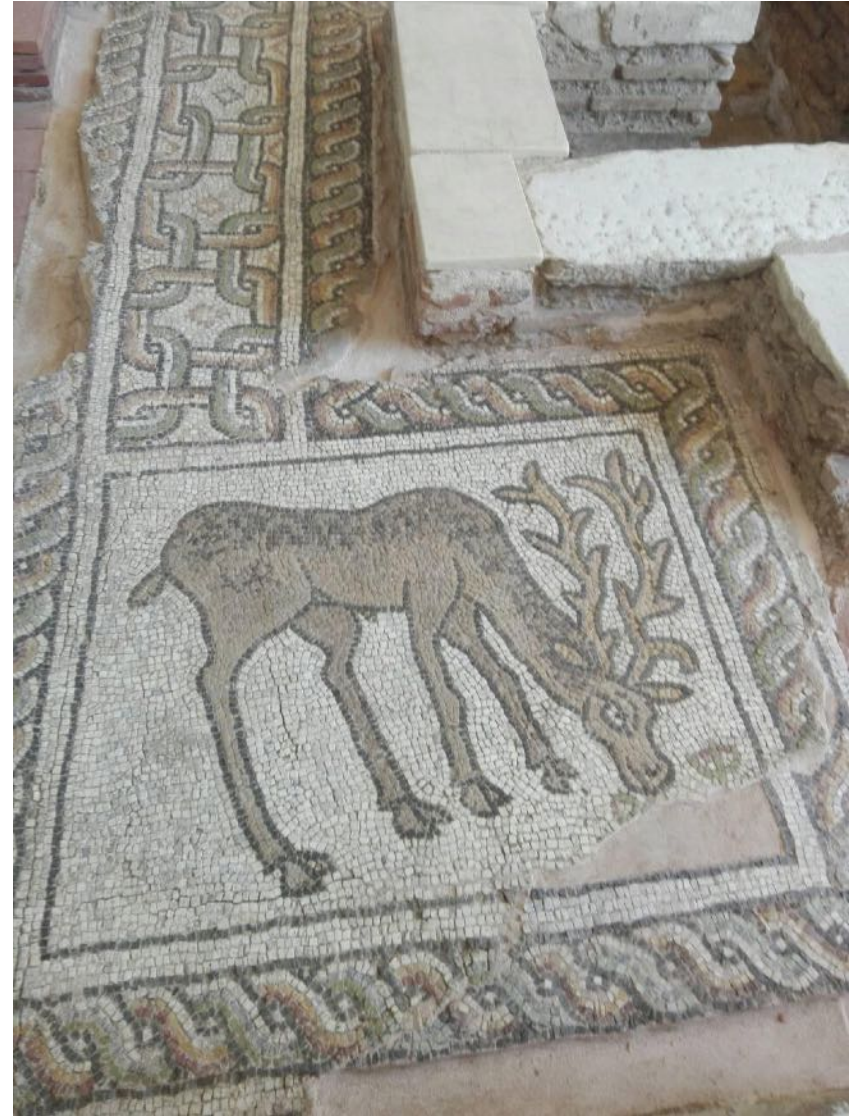
The Bishop's Basilica



The Bishop's Basilica



The Bishop's Basilica



Videos:

- Basilica website -> Home page (music and subtitles):

<https://www.plovdivmosaics.org/>

- The past of Basilica 1/2 parts, c.2 min:

<https://vimeo.com/355960924>

- The future of Basilica – 2/2 parts, 3:27 min:

<https://vimeo.com/359504807>

Selected Bibliography

- Chilingirov, Asen. *Paul the Apostle, Philippi and Philippopolis*. Sofia: Bulga Media, 2019, <http://macedonia.kroraia.com/tschilingirov/apff/index.htm>
- Chilingirov, Asen. "Philippi and Philippopolis." 2006, [https://www.otizvora.com/files2015/tschilingirov//atch-filipi i filipopol.pdf](https://www.otizvora.com/files2015/tschilingirov//atch-filipi_i_filipopol.pdf)
- Jeffery, R.M.C. "Paul's Missionary Methods" in *Concise Dictionary of the Christian World Mission*, New York: Abingdon Press, 1971.
- Paul's Missionary Journeys Map, Conforming to Jesus Ministry, https://www.conformingtojesus.com/charts-maps/en/paul's_journeys_map.htm
- Praetorian Prefecture of Illyricum, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Praetorian_prefecture_of_Illyricum
- The Arian Controversy, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christology/The-Arian-controversy>
- The Bishop's Basilica of Philippopolis (text and video), <https://www.plovdivmosaics.org/bishops-basilica-a-symbol-of-unity-respect-video/>