

Antioch Of Pisidia



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

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Introduction

- I. Of the sixteen ancient cities in Turkey named *Antioch*, only two are of any significance to Bible students today.
 - A. One is now called 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 A.D. 50, 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. The History Of Antioch

- A. Antioch of Pisidia is located ½ mile north of the village of Yalvaç 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 Nicator I had nearly 60 cities founded and gave to 16 of them the name of his father and son: Antiochos” (Ünal Demirer, *Pisidian Antioch*, 20).
 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., Emperor Augustus made Antioch in Pisidia a Roman colony and was given the right of *Jus Italicum* (which means they had the same rights and privileges of the citizens of Rome, i.e., the right to have a free constitution and exemption from the land tax).
 2. The city was given the title of *Colonia Caesarea Antiochia*.
 3. Augustus placed the area under direct Roman control, creating the Roman province of Galatia that encompassed much of central Asia Minor.
 4. As a Roman colony, Antioch of Pisidia was settled by veterans of the Roman army in their retirement.



5. “In order to gain better control over this part of Asia Minor, Augustus established several colonies of military veterans in the region. Antioch was the first such Roman colony in the area. Settled by veterans from the Roman legions V and VII, the city was called Colonia Caesarea Antiochia. This refounding of the city as a Roman colony inaugurated the most illustrious period of Antioch’s history. The next one hundred years witnessed a flurry of building activity in the city. A large temple and sanctuary for the promotion of the imperial cult was built, as was a grandiose triple-arched gateway and stairs leading to the sanctuary, a colonnaded street, an aqueduct, and a nymphaeum.” (Fant & Reddish, *Biblical Sites in Greece and Turkey*, 153)
 6. Paul’s letter to the Galatians would have been directed to the Christians in Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.
 7. By the middle of the first century A.D., several members of the imperial household had served as magistrates here.
 8. In A.D. 295, Antioch became the capital of Pisidia, a new Roman province created by Emperor Diocletian.
- D. The first excavations of Antioch of Pisidia were carried out 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 Augusteum (Imperial Sanctuary).
 - a) This temple was dedicated to the mother goddess Cybele (Kybele).
 - b) The front of the temple had a stairway of twelve steps leading up to the porch.
 - c) This building was used as an “open-air church” around A.D. 400.
 - d) In 1914 one of the most breathtaking discoveries of archaeology was found as fragments in front of the Imperial Sanctuary.
 - e) “One of the three surviving copies of ‘*Res Gestae Divi Augusti*,’ the famous inscription recording the noble deeds of the Emperor Augustus was found in front of the Augusteum in Antioch. The original was carved on bronze tablets and exhibited in front of the Mausoleum of Augustus in Rome, but unfortunately has not survived. The Antioch copy on stone was written in Latin which is a sign of the importance of the city as a military and cultural base of Rome in Asia.” (Ünal Demirer, *Pisidian Antioch*, 28)
 - f) Sixty pieces of the *Res Gestae* are on display in Yalvaç Museum.



4. A fourth-century Byzantine church building, a basilica dedicated to Paul, stood 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 to be moved from Babylonia to specific areas in Lydia and Phrygia because he believed they would be loyal supporters of the Seleucids (Josephus, *Antiquities* 12:146–153).
 - 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 six miles from Antioch.
 - a) The aqueduct terminated at the Nymphaeum, a monumental fountain from which water was distributed to the whole city.
 - b) Over 3,000 cubic meters of water were distributed every day.



II. Why Was Paul At Antioch?

- A. 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.
- B. Just before his visit to Antioch of Pisidia, Paul had preached on the island of Cyprus and met Sergius Paulus at Paphos (Acts 13:6–7).
- C. 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).
- D. There is an inscription displayed in the Yalvaç museum that clearly shows the whole word of *Paulli* and portions of *Sergii*.
- E. “If Sergius Paulus (13:12) had supplied them with letters of recommendation (cf. 9:2) to the local aristocracy, they would receive immediate hospitality; his own relatives were from this region. (Some of the largest land holdings in the region belonged to the Sergii Paulli, about halfway between Antioch and north Galatia’s capital.)” (Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 359)
- F. “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, *holylandphotos.org*)
- G. “An inscription discovered at Antioch has sometimes been linked to an episode in Acts. According to Acts, Paul and Barnabas visited Cyprus prior to going to Antioch. In the city of Paphos they met the proconsul **Sergius Paulus**, who was converted to Christianity (Acts 13:4–12). An inscription discovered near Antioch in 1912 mentions the name ‘L. Sergius Paullus the younger, son of L.’ On the basis of this inscription it has been claimed that the proconsul whom Paul converted was a member of the same family as this ‘L. Sergius Paullus’ and that Antioch was the hometown of the proconsul of Cyprus. Furthermore, it is sometimes argued, the reason that Paul made the trip inland to Pisidian Antioch was that Sergius Paulus convinced Paul to visit his hometown.” (Fant & Reddish, *Biblical Sites in Greece and Turkey*, 155)



III. 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. "This formal synagogue service probably included the Shema, additional prayers, and the Torah reading. The invitation indicates that the synagogue rulers recognized the distinguished and learned character of their guests, and that they anticipated from the text of the day a message of encouragement. Since Antioch was the most important city in southern Galatia, this represented no mean invitation. Some have suggested Paul may have worn his official pharisaical robes to the service and therefore been recognized immediately as one who could contribute. I have no idea what text Paul built upon that day (though scholars speculate freely), but we do know from established synagogue practice that he tied together passages from the Pentateuch and the prophets and that the theme, as we have already noted, centered on encouragement." (Kenneth O. Gangel, *Holman New Testament Bible Commentary*, 5:214)
- D. "Arriving at Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas entered the synagogue on the Sabbath. A typical first-century synagogue service would have included the *Shema* (Dt 6:4-9; 11:13-21; cf. Nu 15:37-41), the *Shemoneh Esreh* ('Eighteen Benedictions,' 'Blessings,' or 'Prayers'), 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 ... took charge of the building and made arrangements for the services (Lk 8:41, 49). He was usually one of the elders of the congregation. Generally there was only one such leader in each synagogue (cf. 18:8, 17), but at times two or more made up the synagogue chapter. The office was sometimes held for life and passed on within a family. Occasionally, the title was even given honorifically to women and children. Perhaps Paul's clothes or manner of attire identified him as a Pharisee and so opened the way for an invitation to speak." (Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary Revised Edition*, 10:918)
- E. 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.



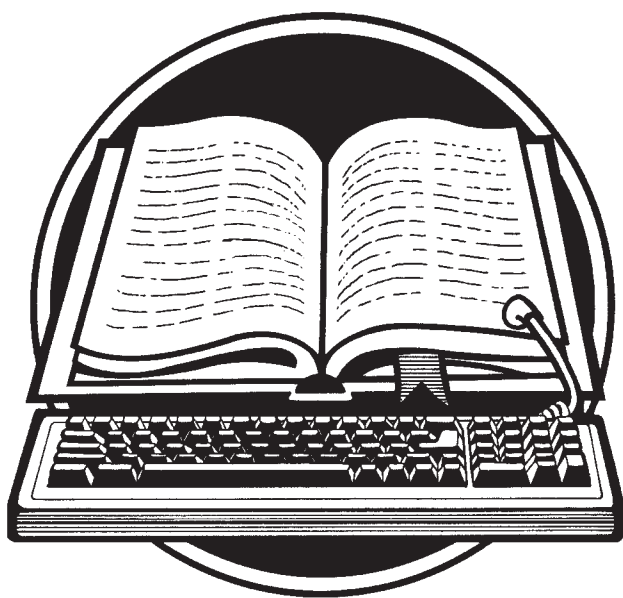
5. “The address which Luke records is of considerable length and can be summed up as a historical survey designed to root the coming of Jesus in the kingly succession of Judah and to show that the career of Jesus was in fulfillment of prophecy: it culminates in an appeal to the hearers not to repeat the error of the people of Jerusalem who had rejected Jesus. The general pattern is similar to that of the other speeches in the first part of Acts, the same basic elements being present. To a certain extent the speech is complementary to that of Stephen; the earlier speech rehearses the history of Israel from the patriarchs to Solomon, with particular emphasis on the first part, while the present speech concentrates on the period of the monarchy and culminates in the presentation of Jesus which is missing from Stephen’s speech.” (I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary, 5.234–235)
- F. Paul ended his sermon with a call to repentance (Acts 13:38–41), based on a quotation from 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).
 - G. “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 here was directed against the city’s magistrates and the Jewish leaders. Then they went southeast on the *Via Sebaste* and headed for Iconium, some eighty miles away. The new ‘disciples’ left behind at Pisidian Antioch and its environs, far from being discouraged at this turn of events, were ‘filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.’” (Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Revised Edition*, 10.928)

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.

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