

Smoky Mountain Bible Institute

Archeology 111 Early Church II

Antioch: in America we have six places called Antioch. There are also six places called Antioch in Asia. However, of the 19 times Antioch is mentioned in scripture, most are in Acts, and most have to do with the work of Paul and Barnabus during his first missionary journey, starting what became one of the earliest and largest Christian communities in the early Church. This town, which today is called Antayak in southern Turkey on the Orontes River with a population of a little over 200,000, was a major Roman crossroad connecting many peoples, roads, a river and the Mediterranean. Antioch was a main center of early Christianity. The city had a large population of Jewish origin in a quarter called the Kerateion, attracting early missionaries. Evangelized, among others, by Peter himself, according to the tradition upon which the Antiochene patriarchate still rests its claim for primacy. Converts here were the first to be called Christians. Two thousand years ago, with a population estimated by Chrysostom to be about 100,000 people between 252 and 300 AD, ten assemblies of the church were held at Antioch, and it became the seat of one of the four original patriarchates, along with Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Rome. The city's slow growth over the last 2000 years is because it sat on the border between Christianity and Islam for many centuries, not to mention being in and out of the hands of Crusaders. However, because of its rich history, it also is a treasure trove of archeological evidence which affirms its place in the history of the early Christian Church.

Philippi: Located on the Roman road Via Egnatia, this is the place where the Gospel was first preached on the European continent. This was also a prominent seat of early Christianity where you can still see today ancient ruins of the Egnatian Way, the Roman Forum, even possible locations of Paul's imprisonment, and the place where Paul met Lydia, who was one of the first converts to the Gospel.

Thessalonica: If you continue another 115 miles southeast on the major east-west corridor of Via Egnatia, you will come the second largest city in Greece today, Solonika. Much of ancient Thessalonica lies beneath this modern city. However, the ruins of a number of early church buildings and other Roman and Christian artifacts, affirm this as the same place to which Paul was expelled for preaching the Gospel, and is the same location to which he sent letters that are now part of God's Holy Word.

The 7 Churches of Revelation: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, & Laodicea are not fictitious places dreamed up by John. They are real places, four of which have been extensively excavated. These are now all modern towns or cities with names like Anatolia, Izmir, Akisar, Sart, and Alasehir, while the centers of Pergamum and Laodicea are not covered by modern towns. These churches also show that there is nothing new under the sun, having the same problems the early congregations had 2000 years ago; false apostles, false prophets, false teaching, having no fruits of faith, being worldly, spiritually poor, and blind to the needs of those around them. Sounds sadly a lot like the things we struggle with today.

We have reached the end of our exploration of the field of archeology.

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In Christ
Pastor Portier