



IN SEARCH OF PAUL

April 6-22, 2021

Community - Context - Commentary

ISOP GROUP "BE ATTITUDES"

"Only, live your life together in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ..." - Philippians 1:27

Here are the things we want our group to be about:

- Be respectful of and listen to others' viewpoints, regardless of level of education, gender, or political views.
- Be supportive of one another and helpful in whatever ways are needed.
- Be patient with each other.
- Be respectful of physical and emotional space. Not everyone likes to be touched or hugged.
- Be willing to participate in the discussions; leaving room for nonverbal processors to speak up and add input. Some may need more time for processing in order to add to the discussions. When in doubt; listen first, talk later. Listen to understand rather than reply.
- Be open to other cultures and beliefs; engage, live, and learn the local culture as much as possible.
- Be prompt. "On time" means being there a couple of minutes early so as not to hold up the rest of the group.
- Be prepared. Read all required materials prior to the trip.
- Be openly inquisitive. Your question is probably on the mind of others as well.
- Be sensitive to each person's physical ability, not limiting or pressuring others.
- Be "self-care aware". Rest when needed without feeling guilty. Tell someone if you are not feeling well or need a pharmacy.
- Be examples of our faith in all encounters. Realize that the beliefs of others may differ and strive to understand.
- Be fully present when present.
- Be safe. Let others know where you are going and don't go alone.
- Be responsible in the use of alcohol.

And things learned from experience:

- We will live and travel together for 16 days. First, get to know people. Take care not to offend. If offense is given or taken, speak with the person. *"If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."* – *Romans 12:18*
- At times we may be in crowded tourist areas. Do not lose sight of the group.
- The larger groups make for longer meal stops, bathroom stops, and site visits. We have a group of 26. Everyone should do their part to avoid late days. Don't rush, but don't dawdle.
- Never pass up a chance to use a bathroom.

And two final things:

- Remember that we are subject to the laws and legal systems of Turkey and Greece.
- Remember that we are guests in the cultures and countries of others.

COMMENTARY

Tuesday, April 6

We will depart the United States from various airports. Make sure that you have your passport and Turkish travel e-visa with you.

Wednesday, April 7

Most flights will arrive at the new Istanbul airport between 3:00 and 5:00 PM. Upon arrival, follow the signs to Passport Control and present your passport and travel visa. Then pick up your luggage at baggage claim, go through customs, then out into the reception area to the designated meeting point where Cenk Eronat, our guide in Turkey, will greet you. When all have arrived, our bus will take us to our hotel. After checking in, we will have dinner together at the hotel.

Thursday, April 8

The day will be spent in the “old city” of Istanbul. Istanbul is getting ready for the [Turkey’s](#) centennial in 2023, so the “Blue Mosque” and some portions some museums are closed for renovations, but there’s plenty to see. This day has the most walking, but it’s all on paved urban surfaces. Places we will visit:

- Portions of the [archaeological museums](#) and the entirety of the [Topkapi Palace](#), from which the sultans ruled the Ottoman Empire until 1856 when the [Dolmabahçe Palace](#) was completed.
- The [Hagia Irene](#), the first church completed in Constantinople in 337 and the site of the 2nd Ecumenical Council or the [First Council of Constantinople](#) in 381 CE.
- The [Hagia Sophia](#), completed in 357 CE during the reign of Justinian I. It was the site of the 5th Ecumenical Council or the [2nd Council of Constantinople](#). Look for the [Omphalion](#).
- The [Hippodrome](#), which features two obelisks and a column taken from Delphi.

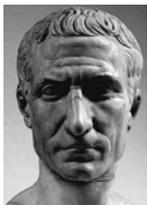
This day highlights the beginnings of “Imperial Christianity” and “Christendom”; begun under Constantine the Great (306-337 CE) and completed under Theodosius I (379-395 CE).

Friday, April 9

The first part of the day we travel to Greece; or, in 1st century terms, from the Roman province of Thrace into the province of Macedonia. Heading west, it takes awhile to get out of Istanbul; population of 15+ million. Take a look at the wonderful contemporary architecture along the way. In the rural areas, you will see small towns and an agricultural economy. During much of the drive will be along the north coast of the Sea of Marmara.

As we near Greece, we say a temporary “Goodbye” to Cenk Eronat and transfer to another bus for the boarder crossing. You will need your passports available. After passing Greek customs, we will meet Voula Kalapoda, our guide for Greece, and board our tour bus.

We travel from the border to Philippi where we will visit the “traditional site” where, according to Acts 16, [Paul met Lydia](#), see the magnificent [baptistry](#) built there, and also discuss Paul’s letter to Philemon.

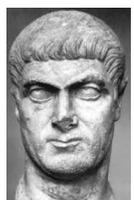


[Julius Caesar](#), who had been given the title, “dictator for life”, represented the struggle between the “Republicans”, who favored a representative republic with a ruling senate, and the “Imperialists”, who favored power centralized in the emperor. On March 15, 44 BCE he was assassinated in Rome by a group of Republican senators led by Cassius and Brutus.

A new round of civil war broke out and the Imperialists, led by Octavian (Augustus) and Mark Anthony, finally met the Republican forces, led by Cassius and Brutus, on the plain at Philippi in 42 BCE. The Imperialists were victorious, ending the Republic and securing the Empire. The struggle was then between Octavian, who ruled the western empire, and Mark Anthony, who ruled the eastern. They finally met at Actium in 31 BCE and Octavian defeated the navy of Mark Anthony and Cleopatra; establishing Octavian as absolute ruler.

Octavian later ceded Philippi to military leaders and it functioned under military rule. Acts 16:20 has Paul and Silas being brought before the “magistrates” in Philippi. The Greek word in the text is “stratagois” - “officers” or “generals”, from which we get “strategy”. There is a sense in which Philippi is the birthplace of Roman Imperialism.

After touring the ancient ruins of Philippi – located on the Via Egnatia – we will travel to Kavala (modern Neapolis, Acts 16:11) and check into our hotel. Overnight in Kaavala.



In 293 CE, the empire established a tetrarchy. Two Augusti ruled; one in the west and one in the east. Under each of them a Caesar would serve; later to be elevated to an Augustus. [Diocletian](#) became Augustus in the east; Maximian in the west. [Galerius](#) (married to the daughter of Diocletian) was appointed Caesar in the east ; and [Constantius](#) (father of [Constantine the Great](#)) in the west.

Christians lived in relative peace during the reign of Diocletian, but persecutions began later in his reign; perhaps encouraged by Galerius. However, in 311 CE Galerius and Constantine issued the [Edit of Toleration](#), which ended Diocletian's persecution.

Then in 313 CE, emperors Constantine and Licinius issued the [Edit of Milan](#), making Christianity a legal cult. About 361 CE, this was followed by Emperor [Julian the Apostate](#) issuing a decree that all forms of Christianity, Judaism, and Paganism were legal .

In 381 CE, [Theodosius the Great](#) began the [Christian persecution](#) of all forms of religion except Nicene Christianity. From 389-392 CE, he closed all temples and worship sites of Roman religion; including Delphi.

Finally in 393 CE, Theodosius issued laws banning any public non-Christian religious customs. He also closed the Olympic games. Christianity had - finally and fully - become imperial. Christendom. [Empire baptized!](#)

Saturday, April 10

Paul went to the provincial capitals. So, like Paul, we head for Thessaloniki, capital of the province of Macedonia.

There are not many archaeological ruins at Thessaloniki because, unlike Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus, and other sites, the modern city is built right on top of the ancient one. However, we will see a portion of the [Roman forum](#).

We will visit the [mausoleum and triumphal arch](#) of Emperor Galerius; although there is no evidence that Galerius was ever entombed in the mausoleum. The last stop in Thessaloniki is the excellent [archaeological museum](#) of ancient Macedonia.

On the way from Thessaloniki to Kalambaka (Meteora), we will stop at [Vergina](#) to see the tomb of [Phillip II](#); King of Macedon and father of [Alexander the Great](#). It is a good glimpse into the wealth, authority, and power of ancient rulers.

After checking into our hotel, after dinner we will have some group discussion and celebrate the Eucharist. Two nights in Kalambaka.



The Hellenization of the territories conquered by Alexander the Great significantly influenced Paul's world. At it's height the empire of Alexander stretched from Greece to India, and through Israel to Egypt. After withdrawing from his campaign in India, he died in Babylon in 323 BCE at the age of 33. His body was taken the Alexandria, Egypt for burial. His empire was then divided between his generals. The Seleucids ruled the northern areas and the Ptolemies ruled Israel and Egypt.

Even [Jerusalem and Judaism](#) were Hellenized; influenced by Greek culture. The world of Paul now spoke Greek, the New Testament is written in koine Greek, the Old Testament was translated into Greek - the Septuagint. It was no longer a "Hebrew" world.

Sunday, April 11

We will begin the day by visiting [Varlaam Monastery](#); built by priest-monks Theophanes and Nektarios Apsarades, who arrived at the rock about 1517-1518 CE. We are stepping into the time of the Reformation; a time when Greece was part of the Ottoman Empire.

Pay particular attention to the iconography in All Saints Church. It reflects late Medieval / early Renaissance theology. Does it represent your theology?

After a driving tour past some of the other monasteries, we will have a traditional Easter lunch in Kalambaka. After our evening meal at the hotel, we will have discussion and end the day by celebrating the Eucharist.

Monday, April 12

We first stop at [Pefkis Icon Factory](#) and see Greek Orthodox icons being hand painted. Icons can be purchased.

We then head to [Delphi](#) to see the extensive archaeological site; the center of which is the temple and oracle of Apollo. After walking the site, we will visit the museum; all the artifacts of which were excavated at Delphi. Make sure to see the [omphalos stone](#), the inscription for Trajan's (98-117 CE) restoration of the temple, and the statue of [Antinous](#), the younger lover of Hadrian (117-138 CE).

After dinner at the hotel, we'll have some discussion. Overnight in Delphi.



Temples to [Apollo](#) dot the ancient Greco-Roman world . We will see his temples at Delphi, Corinth, and Didyma; all of which had oracles.

He was the "son of the most high god", Zeus and wife, Leto. His twin sister was [Artemis](#). He was one of the most complex and gifted gods with regard to his [attributes](#). He was the god of light, truth, knowledge, prophecy, healing, and the mediator between the gods and mortals.

If there is a "christ-like" figure in the Greco-Roman pantheon, it is Apollo. Paul is not in contention with the temple in Jerusalem. He's in contention with the temples and cultus of Roman religion; particularly of Apollo, Artemis, Aphrodite, and the Imperial cult.

In the later empire, prior to Constantine, Apollo became conflated with the god [Sol Invictus](#); the Unconquered Sun. His feast day was December 25th which, as tradition has it, Christianity usurped to celebrate Christ's birth.

But for you who fear my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go forth leaping like calves from the stall. — Malachi 4:2

Hail the Heav'n-born Prince of Peace. Hail the Sun of Righteousness! Light and Life around he brings, risen with Healing in his Wings. — Charles Wesley

Tuesday, April 13

In the ancient area of Athens, we will visit the [Areopagus](#) where, according to Acts 17, Paul gave his sermon about "and unknown god". Then we will climb the [Acropolis of Athens](#) on which there are temples to Athena (the Parthenon), Nike, Poseidon, and Augustus. There will be free time for lunch and, if one wishes, to visit the [Acropolis Museum](#).

Wednesday, April 14

In the morning we head for ancient Corinth, stopping first at the [canal](#); completed in 1893. For centuries, many people had envisioned a shortcut around the treacherous Peloponnesian Peninsula. Emperor Nero first started and attempt using 6000 Jewish prisoners, but it was abandoned upon his death. We will also see the [diolkos](#) (ancient road) used to transport boats across the isthmus prior to the canal. Think how long ships crews might be in port at Corinth while waiting in the eastern or western queue!

The locale of [Ancient Corinth](#) has been occupied since about 6500 BCE. In 400 BCE it had a population of maybe 90,000. It had been destroyed by the Romans in 147 BCE, only to be ordered rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 44 BCE just prior to his assassination. It was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia. In [The Rise of Christianity](#), Stark put the population of Paul's Corinth at 100,000. In a later book, [Cities of God](#), he revised it to 50,000. When asked "Why?", he said he found better data. The size of Paul's community in this large city? Maybe 30?

We will take discuss 1 Corinthians while seated in the ancient forum, explore the site, and visit the newly expanded museum. After a late lunch we will drive to Piraeus, the port of Athens, say "Goodbye" to our guide and driver, and board our ferry, the [Blue Star 2](#), for Patmos; sailing at about 7:00 PM. You will have cabins with beds and full bath. We arrive on Patmos - still in Greece - at 3:15 AM, go to our hotel, and fall back into bed. Overnight on ferry and on Patmos.

Thursday, April 15

After breakfast at the hotel, we will visit the "[Cave of the Apocalypse](#)", traditional site for the writing of Revelation, and then the [Monastery of St. John](#), which has a [gospel book dating from the 6th century](#). After lunch, we board a smaller ferry for a four hour ride to Kusadasi, Turkey; discussing Romans on the way. You will again need your passport and

visa upon arrival. Two nights in Kusadasi.

Friday, April 16

We will now be entering the area of the “Seven Churches of the Apocalypse” mentioned in [Revelation 2-3](#). Ephesus is mentioned first, but we will also eventually visit Laodicea, Sardis, Smyrna (Izmir), and Pergamum.

At [Ephesus](#), capital of the Roman province of Asia, we will get our best glimpse of 1st century urban life in the Roman Empire. Still, we are seeing only the public spaces. Inside the walls of a Roman city, vast areas were taken up by public space: forums, administrative buildings, markets, baths, temples, stadiums, and theaters. With the exception of the homes of the wealthy, like the [terrace houses](#) we will visit, many people lived in cramped and crowded [insulae](#) or apartments. People spent as much time as they could in public spaces.

Highlights: the Administrative Forum that had a colossus and [temple of Emperor Domitian](#), a [temple to Emperor Hadrian](#), [fountain of Emperor Trajan](#), [Library of Celsus](#), the [Gate of Mazeus](#) (through which Paul undoubtedly walked), and the [great theater \(Acts 19\)](#).

The [Temple of Artemis](#), one of the seven wonders on the ancient world, was at Ephesus; but little remains.

After an outdoor lunch (provided), we will tour a carpet factory cooperative and see how Turkish carpets are made. Carpets may be purchased.

Saturday, April 17

We first visit the [temple of Apollo at Didyma](#); one of the largest temples of the ancient world; complete with oracle. Then we meander up the Meander Valley (yes, that’s the source of the verb) to [Aphrodisias](#) a city that had Augustus as patron. The Julian Imperial family - Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero - claimed to be descended from Aphrodite.

Besides the Monumental Gate, the Temple of Aphrodite, the stadium, and the bouleuterion, the most impressive and important structure is the [Sebasteion](#) and the reliefs in the museum. It is the best expression of Roman imperial theology that we will see. Overnight at Pamukkale.

Sunday, April 18

We first visit [Hierapolis](#); a huge site. The population may have reached 100,000. There was a large Jewish population in Hierapolis. Not all the Jewish people returned from the exile in Babylon (586-536 BCE); many stayed. Antiochus the Great (ruled the Seleucid Empire 137-222 BCE) moved over 2000 Jewish families from Babylon to this area. The Jewish population in the area of Hierapolis, Laodicea, and Colossae may have reached 50,000 by 62 CE.

The main sites we will visit together are the Martyrion, the [tomb of Philip the Apostle](#), and the theater; perhaps the best theater restoration on our trip. After some free time to explore, we will head for [Laodicea](#) and [Sardis](#); ending the day with dinner on the waterfront at Izmir (ancient [Smyrna](#)). Overnight in Izmir.

Monday, April 19

[Pergamon](#) was a huge city - maybe 200,000 by mid second century - and was briefly the capital of the province of Asia before it was moved to Ephesus. We will first visit the acropolis with it’s [Temple of Hadrian](#), remains of the [Altar of Zeus](#), and [dizzying theater](#). We will then visit the [Asclepion](#) - unique on our tour - where the great physician Galen practiced. Drive to Assos; overnight.

Tuesday, April 20

Aristotle had a academy in [Assos](#), where he married the daughter of King Hermias. When the Persians attacked Assos, he fled to Macedonia and tutored Alexander the Great, son of Phillip II. [Acts 20](#) has Paul walking from Troas to Assos before setting sail to Miletus; which was close to Didyma. We will climb the acropolis of Assos and see the Temple of Athena, circa 530 BCE; roughly the time of Ezra rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity.

After Assos, we pass by Troas and stop at [Troy](#), the oldest walls of which date from 2500 BCE; about the time the Great Pyramid was completed in Egypt. Troy gives us our best understanding of archaeological research in that all nine historical periods can be seen.

It's also a fitting end to our journey in that Virgil, in his [Aeneid](#) (written 29-19 BCE), wove the story/myth of Aeneas leaving Troy and sailing to Italy where he became the ancestor of the Romans. The Aeneid is filled with ascription and prefiguration that paves the way for Roman imperial theology and manifest destiny. As Crossan writes in [In the Shadow of Empire](#), "*These ... elements establish the irrevocable destiny of Rome - from Troy to Italy and from Aeneas to Augustus.*" (p. 63) Overnight in Canakkale.

Wednesday, April 21

Crossing the Dardanelles by ferry, we travel through the region where the Battle of Gallipoli was fought and arrive in Istanbul; visiting the [Spice Bazaar](#) before going to our hotel for a farewell dinner. Overnight in Istanbul

Thursday, April 22

After a leisurely breakfast, we board our bus for the airport, say "Goodbye" to our guide and driver, and board our flights for home.