

# Early Christian Geography

## Focusing on Sites in Modern Turkey (Ancient Anatolia or Asia Minor)

### KEY BIBLICAL TEXTS:

- **Addressees of First Epistle of Peter:** “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Peter 1:1)
- **Witnesses at the Pentecost:** “Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, / Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, / Cretans and Arabians...” (Acts 2:9-11)
- **Stephen in Jerusalem:** “Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and others of those from Cilicia and Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen.” (Acts 6:9)
- **Early Disciples:** Barnabas of Cyprus (4:36); Nicolaus of Antioch (6:5); Saul of Tarsus (7:58; 9:11, 30)
- **Earliest Gentile Missions:** “Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that took place over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, and they spoke the word to no one except Jews. / But among them were some men of Cyprus and Cyrene who, on coming to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists also, proclaiming the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 11:19-20)
- **Seven Churches of the Book of Revelation:** Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea (Rev 1:11; 2:1—3:22)
- **Romans warn against attacking Jews (ca. 142 BC):** “The consul wrote the same thing to Demetrius the king and to Attalus and Ariarathes and Arsaces, / and to all the countries, and to Sampsames, and to the Spartans, and to Delos, and to Myndos, and to Sicyon, and to Caria, and to Samos, and to Pamphylia, and to Lycia, and to Halicarnassus, and to Rhodes, and to Phaselis, and to Cos, and to Side, and to Aradus and Gortyna and Cnidus and Cyprus and Cyrene.” (1 Mac 15:22-23)

**SYRIA** (9x in Acts 15:23, 41; 18:18; 20:3; 21:3; Matt 4:24; Luke 2:2; 4:27; Gal 1:21) – large Roman province that included Israel/Palestine up to 70 CE, and modern Syria and Lebanon; far NW coastal strip now part of Turkey

- **Antioch** (15x in Acts 6:5; 11:19-30; 13:1-3; 14:24—15:35; 18:22-23; Gal 2:11; not same as Pisidian Antioch) – 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city of 1<sup>st</sup> cent. Roman empire; early Christian center; home church of Barnabas, Paul, et al.
- **Seleucia** (only Acts 13:4; also 1 Mac 11:8) – seaport ca. 28 miles SW of Antioch

### NORTHERN AND CENTRAL TURKEY/ANATOLIA:

- **PONTUS** (3x in Acts 2:9; 18:2; 1 Pet 1:1) – region S of Black Sea; home of Aquila (and wife Prisca?)
- **BITHYNIA** (2x in Acts 16:7; 1 Pet 1:1) – region in NW Anatolia, between Mysia and Pontus; Paul wanted to visit there, but was prevented; Roman province, together with Pontus
- **CAPPADOCIA** (2x in Acts 2:9; 1 Pet 1:1) – part of Kingdom of Pontus; Roman province as of AD 17
- **GALATIA** (7x in Acts 16:6; 18:23; 1 Cor 16:1; Gal 1:2; 3:1; 2 Tim 4:10; 1 Pet 1:1) – scholars debate whether “Galatia” refers to pre-Roman Kingdom of Galatia (“Northern Galatia”), with capital **Ancyra** (Ankara), or the area of early Pauline ministry in “Southern Galatia” (incl. Pisidia & Lycaonia, see below)

**CYPRUS** (8x in Acts 4:36; 11:19-20; 13:4-12; 15:39; 21:3, 16; 27:4; also OT: Isa 23:1, 12; Jer 2:10; Ezek 27:6) – largest island in E Mediterranean; home of Barnabas; first stop on first mission of Barnabas & Paul (Salamis & Paphos)

### SOUTHERN AND SOUTH-CENTRAL TURKEY/ANATOLIA:

- **CILICIA** (7x in Acts 6:9; 15:23, 41; 21:39; 22:3; 23:34; 27:5; also Gal 1:21) – region in SE Anatolia; area of very early Christian missionary activity, since it was Paul’s homeland
  - **Tarsus** (5x in Acts 9:11, 30; 11:25; 21:39; 22:3) – large city; center of learning; Saul/Paul’s birthplace, where he also returned for a time after becoming a Christian
- **PAMPHYLIA** (5x in Acts 2:10; 13:13; 14:24; 15:38; 27:5) – small coastal region S of Pisidia, W of Cilicia, E of Lycia; Jewish community mentioned in 1 Mac 15:23; Paul pass through several times
  - **Perga** (3x in Acts 13:13-14; 14:25) – port city visited only briefly by Barnabas and Paul; where John Mark left them to return to Jerusalem
  - **Attalia** (only Acts 14:25) – seaport founded by Attalus II, king of Pergamum (159-138 BC)

- **PISIDIA** (2x in Acts 13:14; 14:24) – mountainous region in central Anatolia; high plateau w/ large lakes; N of Pamphylia & Lycia, W of Lycaonia, E of Phrygia; sparsely populated today
  - **Antioch** (4x in Acts 13:14; 14:19, 21; 2 Tim 3:11; “Pisidian Antioch” is diff. from “Syrian Antioch”) – main city of Pisidia; Barnabas & Paul visit Jewish synagogue; Paul gives a very long speech; some Jewish & Gentile converts, but also strong opposition
- **LYCAONIA** (2x in Acts 14:6, 11) – region in central Anatolia; sometimes part of ancient Kingdom and Roman province of Galatia; plateau W of Cappadocia and Cilicia, E of Pisidia and Pamphylia; poor area with little historical importance; distinct Lycaonian language (now unknown)
  - **Iconium** (6x in Acts 13:51; 14:1, 19, 21; 16:2; 2 Tim 3:11) – modern Konya; Barnabas & Paul preach there, with results as in Pisidian Antioch: some converts, much opposition; revisit later
  - **Lystra** (6x in Acts 14:6, 8, 21; 16:1-2; and 2 Tim 3:11) – Barnabas & Paul preach, heal a lame man; are worshipped as gods Zeus & Hermes; but opponents later influence the people to stone Paul; persecution mentioned in 2 Tim; home of Timothy, who joins Paul & Silas after a later visit
  - **Derbe** (4x in Acts 14:6, 20; 16:1; 20:4) – Barnabas & Paul visit twice, make some disciples, but no incidents mentioned in Acts; “Gaius from Derbe” later accompanies Paul

## WESTERN TURKEY/ANATOLIA:

- **ASIA** (20x in NT; 14x in Acts 2:9; 6:9; 16:6; 19:10-31; 20:4, 16-18; 21:27; 24:19; 27:2; also Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 1:8; 2 Tim 1:15; 1 Pet 1:1; Rev 1:4) – heavily populated region in SW Anatolia; Roman province varied in size over the centuries; incl. most of “Seven Churches of Revelation” (Rev 2—3)
  - **Ephesus** (21x in NT: Acts 18:19—19:41; 20:16-38; 21:29; also 1 Cor 15:32; 16:8; Eph 1:1; 1 Tim 1:3; 2 Tim 1:18; 4:12; Rev 1:11; 2:1) – ancient, large, wealthy city; capital of Roman province of Asia; huge temple of Artemis/Diana (1 of 7 wonders of ancient world); many Roman-era ruins; major Pauline missionary base as of mid-50's; Paul lived here 3+ years; taught in hall of Tyrannus; wrote letters from here; silversmiths’ riot; Ephesus later also a center of Johannine Christianity
  - **Miletus** (3x in Acts 20:15, 17; 2 Tim 4:20) – large port city by ancient mouth of river Meander; Paul met elders from Ephesus there; Tychicus stayed there during an illness; modern *Balat*
- **PHRYGIA** (3x in Acts 2:10; 16:6; 18:23; also 2 Mac 5:22) – region in NW Asia Minor; S of Bithynia, W of Galatia, N of Pisidia; three principal cities not mentioned in Acts
  - **Colossae** (only Col 1:2) – church prob. founded by Epaphras; recipients of a Pauline letter
  - **Laodicea** (7x in Col 2:1; 4:13-16; also Rev 1:11; 3:14) – also prob. founded by Epaphras; recipients of a (lost!) Pauline letter; one of seven churches of the Book of Revelation
  - **Hierapolis** (3x in Col 4:13; Rev 1:11; 2:12) – another Pauline church, prob. founded by Epaphras; one of seven churches of the Book of Revelation
- **MYSIA** (2x in Acts 16:6-7) – region in NW Asia Minor; ancient kingdom of Pergamum; part of Roman Province of Asia; region mentioned only in passing in Acts, but has several important cities
  - **Troas** (6x in Acts 16:8, 11; 20:5-6; 2 Cor 2:12; 2 Tim 4:13) – region and city (Alexandrian Troas) far NW of Asia Minor; ancient Troy; Roman colony in 1<sup>st</sup> Cent.; brief mentions in two letters; Paul passes thru at least twice; Eutychus dozes, falls out window, but is raised by Paul
  - **Assos** (2x in Acts 20:13-14) – seaport where Paul meets his companions, sailing for Mitylene
  - **Pergamum, Smyrna, Sardis, Philadephia** (2x each in Rev) – “seven churches of Revelation”
  - **Thyatira** (4x in Acts 16:14; Rev 1:11; 2:18, 24) – Lydia (Paul’s convert in Philippi) is from here
- **ISLANDS off the West Coast** – visited only briefly by Paul, no mention of Christian communities
  - **Mitylene** (only Acts 20:14) – main city on SE coast of island of **Lesbos**, W of Pergamum
  - **Chios** (only Acts 20:15) – large island W of Smyrna
  - **Samos** (only Acts 20:15; also 1 Mac 15:23) – island SW of Ephesus
  - **Patmos** (only Rev 1:9, not Acts) – small island W of Samos; where John [of Rev] was exiled
  - **Cos** (only Acts 21:1; also 1 Mac 15:23) – small island SW of Miletus
  - **Rhodes** (only Acts 21:1; also Ezek 27:15) – large island SW of Asia Minor
- **LYCIA** (only Acts 27:5) – region and Roman province on S coast of Asia Minor
  - **Patara** (only Acts 21:1) – port city at ancient mouth of Xanthus river (now silted)
  - **Myra** (only Acts 27:5) – main city and seaport; Paul’s party transfers ships here on way to Rome
  - **Cnidus** (only Acts 27:7; also 1 Mac 15:23) – city on SW coast, opposite Cos; brief stop