

10 Philadelphia

Names (also known as)

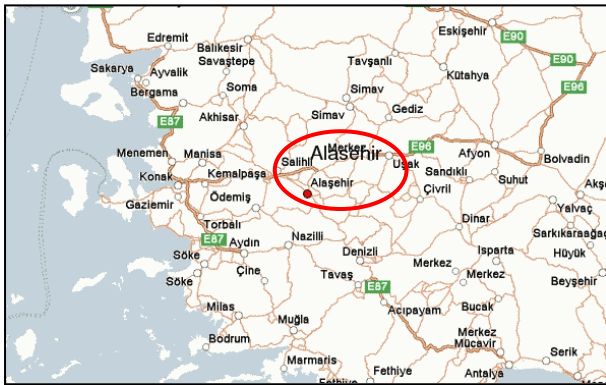
Alaşehir

Etymology

Greek: Φιλαδέλφεια, i.e. "city of brotherly love".

Location/Description

Philadelphia is a town and district of Manisa Province in the Aegean region of Turkey. It is situated in the valley of the Kuzuçay (Cogamus in antiquity), at the foot of the Bozdağ Mountain (Mount Tmolus in antiquity). The town is connected to İzmir by a 105 km (65 mile) railway.



It stands on elevated ground commanding the extensive and fertile plain of the Gediz River, (Hermus in antiquity) presents at a distance an imposing appearance. It has several mosques and Christian churches. There are small industries and a fair trade. From one of the mineral springs comes a heavily charged water popular around Turkey.

Within Turkey, the city's name is synonymous with the dried Sultana raisins, although cultivation for the fresh fruit market, less labour-intensive than the dried fruit, gained prominence in the last decades.

Scriptural references

New Testament

Rev. 1:11; 3:7.

Brief history

As Philadelphia, Alaşehir was a highly important centre in the Early Christian and Byzantine periods, and remained a titular see of the Catholic Church.



Alaşehir began as perhaps one of the first ancient cities with the name Philadelphia. It was established in 189 BC by King Eumenes II of Pergamon (197-160 BC). Eumenes II named the city for the love of his brother, who would be his successor, Attalus II (159-138 BC), whose loyalty earned him the nickname, "Philadelphos", literally meaning "one who loves his brother". The city is perhaps best known as the site of one of the seven ecclesias of Asia in the Book of Revelation.

Lacking an heir, Attalus III Philometer, the last of the Attalid kings of Pergamum, bequeathed his kingdom, including Philadelphia, to his Roman allies when he died in 133 BC. Rome established the province of Asia in 129 BC by combining Ionia and the former Kingdom of Pergamum.



Philadelphia was in the administrative district of Sardis. In AD 17, the city suffered badly in an earthquake, and the Roman emperor Tiberius relieved it of having to pay taxes. In response, the city granted honours to Tiberius. Evidence from coinage reveals that Caligula helped the city; under Vespasian, Philadelphia received his cognomen, Flavia. Under Caracalla, Philadelphia housed an

imperial cult; its coins bore the word Neokoron (literally, "temple-sweeper"—caretaker of the temple).

A small theatre located at the northern edge of Toptepe Hill is all that remains of Roman Philadelphia.

Philadelphia was a prosperous Byzantine city, called the "little Athens" in the 6th century AD because of its festivals and temples. The Byzantine walls that once surrounded the city have all but crumbled away. A few remnants are still visible at the northeast edge of town, near the bus stand. The city was taken by the Seljuk Turks in 1074 and 1093-94. In 1098, during the First Crusade, it was recovered by Byzantine Emperor Alexios I.

It was the centre of several revolts against ruling Byzantine emperors. By the 14th century, the city was surrounded by Turkish emirates but maintained nominal allegiance to the Byzantine emperor. The town remained prosperous through trade and its strategic location.

Philadelphia was an independent, neutral city under the influence of the Latin Knights of Rhodes, when taken in 1390 by Sultan Bayezid I. Twelve years later it was captured by Timur, who built a wall with the corpses of his prisoners.

The Greek army occupied the city during the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922) who in retreat adopted a scorched earth policy. 70% of the buildings of Alaşehir were destroyed by fire. It is estimated some 3,000 lives were lost in the burning of Alaşehir.

The suburb of Athens named Nea Filadelfia ("New Philadelphia") is so named because Greek refugees from Alaşehir.

Christ's letter to Philadelphia

Philadelphia is the sixth ecclesia of the seven (Rev. 1:11) to receive a letter from Christ (Rev. 3:7-13). According to the letter, the Philadelphians were suffering persecution at the hands of "the synagogue of Satan" (Rev. 3:9 – perhaps Judaistic former members). The fact that Christ calls them a synagogue suggests division had occurred and they were now a separate group. Bro. Thomas comments – “The Synagogue of the Satan with its clergy were arrayed against those who kept the word and held fast the name, in every city. The Satanists, as they have done ever since, contended that they were the true Jews; the genuine Israel of God.” (Eureka)

This beloved ecclesia is worthy of praise for its faithful, vigorous preaching even in the face of persecution. The Lord promised to bless their efforts but there would be no relief from persecution. They were faithful even under severe trial from outside the ecclesia

Philadelphia shares with Smyrna the distinction of receiving nothing but praise from Christ.


Philadelphia – The beloved ecclesia

- ❖ **Commended by Christ for:**
 - works accomplished with little strength;
 - keeping his word;
 - not denying his name;
 - endurance under trial – V.10.
- ❖ **There is no criticism or condemnation.**

The trauma of persecution and the city's long history of earthquakes may lie behind the reference to rewarding the ecclesia's faithful members as temple pillars (Rev. 3:12).

A pillar in the temple

- ❖ All that remains of ancient Philadelphia.
- ❖ The Temple was God's abode in Israel (I Kings 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:19-20). Pillars – **Jachin = He shall establish; Boaz = Strength.** Hence, '**He shall establish by strong ones**'. Represents royal priesthood of Israel.



Sources:

Eureka Vol. 1 pg. 379
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alasehir>

(Compiler – Jim Cowie)

A pillar in the temple of my God

