

History of Redemption:

The most familiar passage of Philippians is, arguably, 2:5-11. This, the "great parabola of Scripture," describes Jesus in his pre-incarnate glory, his humble stature as a man, and his present and future exaltation at the right hand of God the Father. These verse, however, were not written primarily as a doctrinal sketch of the incarnation. They were intended as a homiletical tool--an illustration of Paul's point that Christian should be patient and forbearing with one another. Paul was especially concerned for the unity of the body of Christ at Philippi (cf. 1:7, 14, 27; 2:1-11, 14, 25; 3:17; 4:2-3). No one Christian is higher or more important than any other. Those who might have been as his assistants Paul calls "my fellow workers," "my fellow soldier," "brother", and "my loyal yokefellow."

One reason for this unity is that all Christians still await the perfection that Jesus will bring (1:6; 3:20-21) and are now being re-created as God works in them (1:6; 2:12-13; 3:12-14). Knowing that it is his perfect work they can press on, not taking credit for successes and victories, confident that his purpose(s) will triumph in them (3:3-14).

Questions:

Where was Paul when he wrote Philippians? Who wrote Philippians 2:6-11? Was it an extremely early Christian hymn or confession? (As long as we are at Biblical, Ralph Ritter, the assistant librarian has a nice paper on this portion which he would probably let you read.) How serious was the disunity in the church of Philippi?

Archaeology:

Philippi was an important city of Macedonia (see Acts 16:21). It straddled the Egnatian Way, the great East-West road from Rome to Asia, and was served by Neapolis, its port city, 10 miles away. The population of Philippi was mixed. Thracians from the surrounding region, were settled there about 350 BC by Philip II (father of Alexander the Great) and the city was named for Philip. There were also a few Romans, deported there about 40 BC and a few Jews.

In 42 BC Antony and Octavia defeated Brutus and Cassius near Philippi. In honor of his victory Antony made Philippi a Roman colony. It was not considered part of Rome proper--its citizens were Romans, its language was Latin, its law was Roman (the Romans usually allowed conquered territories to continue to live under their own law), civic life was Roman in style, and