

Galatians: The Letter that Saved the Church

The Story behind the Letter

Blackhawk Church 2021

The Bible is not written to us, but for us



The Bible is not written to us, but for us

- Exegesis—“Not Written to us”
 - Reading a text with the goal of reconstructing the intentions of the original author with respect to his original readers. This step relies heavily on the study of language(s), rhetoric, literary genre, history, ancient sociology and anthropology, etc.

The Bible is not written to us, but for us



- Exegesis — “Not Written to us”
- Canonical Synthesis — “The Bible”
 - The art of integrating the text within the various voices of the canon (66 books of the Bible), and achieving the balancing act of allowing the entirety to reach cohesion and harmony without losing the particularities of the individual voices.

The Bible is not written to us, but for us

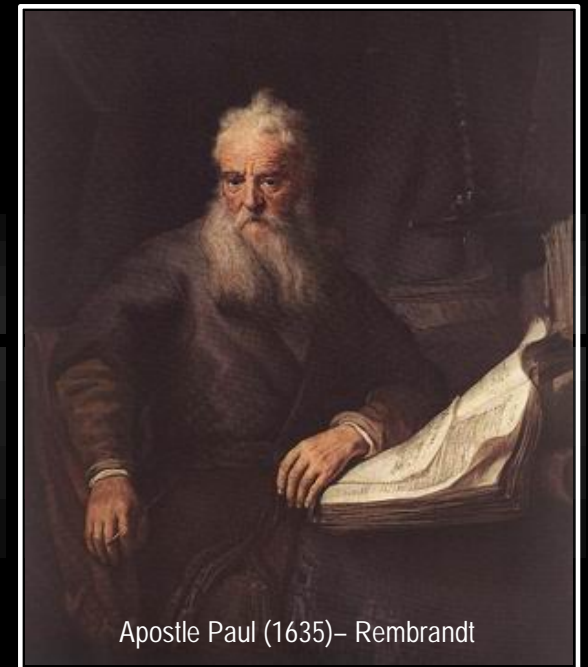
- Exegesis — “Not Written to us”
- Canonical Synthesis — “The Bible”
- Homiletics/Application — “But for us”
 - The art of preaching or the process of bringing the result of the exegesis and synthesis into today’s world in a way that is relevant and contributes to the growth of the Kingdom of God.

Issues for Interpreting Epistles

- **Occasion**: Epistles are occasional documents; that is, they are *ad hoc*, written to address particular situations or problems. This is the major source of our difficulty for interpreting epistles. We have the document written to address the problems, but we do not know what is the problem.
3. **Theology**: The occasional nature of epistles means that they are NOT theological treatises. There is theology implied, but the focus is on theology applied.

The Author

- The author was Apostle Paul
*Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man,
but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who
raised him from the dead— (1:1)*

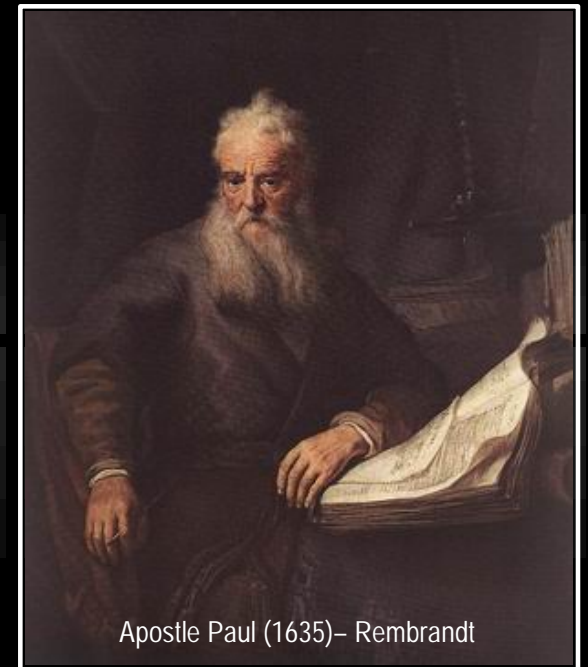


Apostle Paul (1635)– Rembrandt

The Author

- The author was Apostle Paul
- Paul was the founder of the churches

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! (1:8)

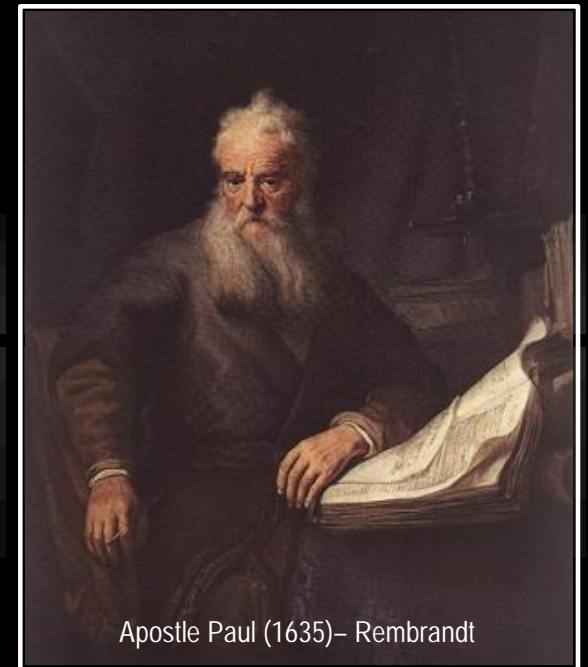


Apostle Paul (1635)– Rembrandt

The Author

- The author was Apostle Paul
- Paul was the founder of the churches
- Likely founded the church as part of his 2nd missionary trip during 53–55 A.D.

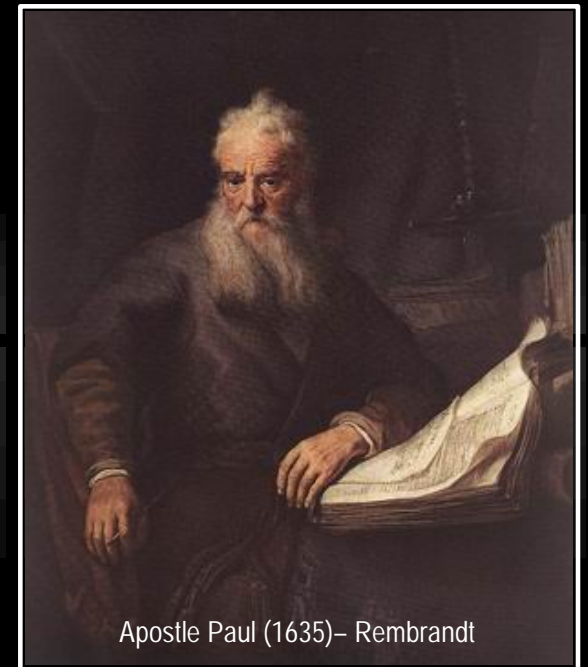
Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia (Acts 16.6).



Apostle Paul (1635)– Rembrandt

The Author

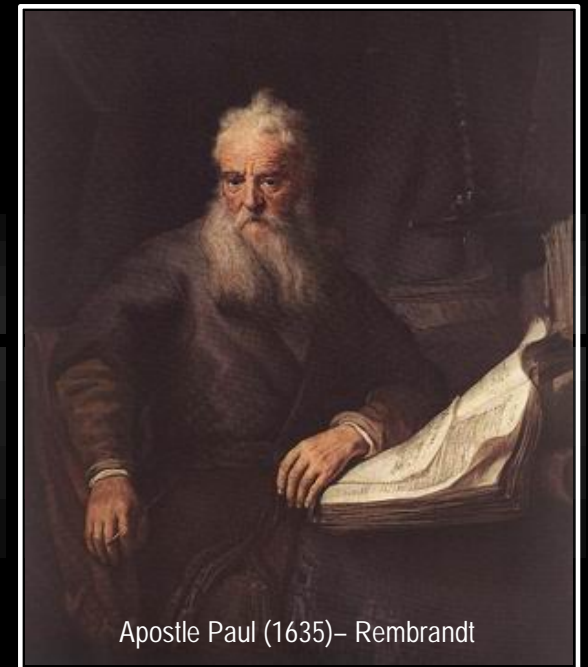
- The author was Apostle Paul
- Paul was the founder of the churches
- Likely founded the church as part of his 2nd missionary trip during 53–55 A.D.
- The letter was written relatively soon after the journey.
I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—(1:6)



Apostle Paul (1635)– Rembrandt

The Author

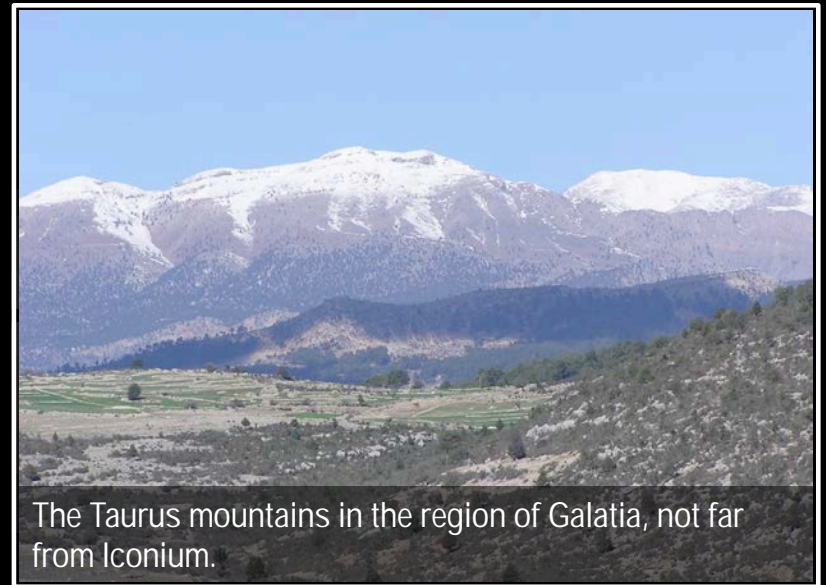
- The author was Apostle Paul
- Paul was the founder of the churches
- Likely founded the church as part of his 2nd missionary trip during 53–55 A.D.
- The letter was written relatively soon after the journey.
- Paul, because of his eye problem, did not write this letter (except for the last section). Instead, as his custom, Paul used an amanuensis.
See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand! (6:11)



Apostle Paul (1635)– Rembrandt

The Recipients

- The recipients are the churches in Galatia:
To the churches in Galatia: (1:2b)

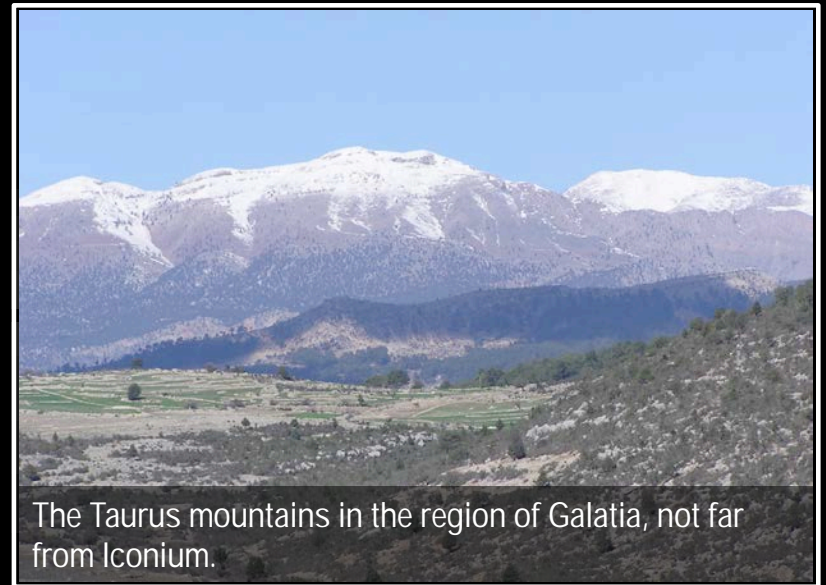


The Taurus mountains in the region of Galatia, not far from Iconium.



The Recipients

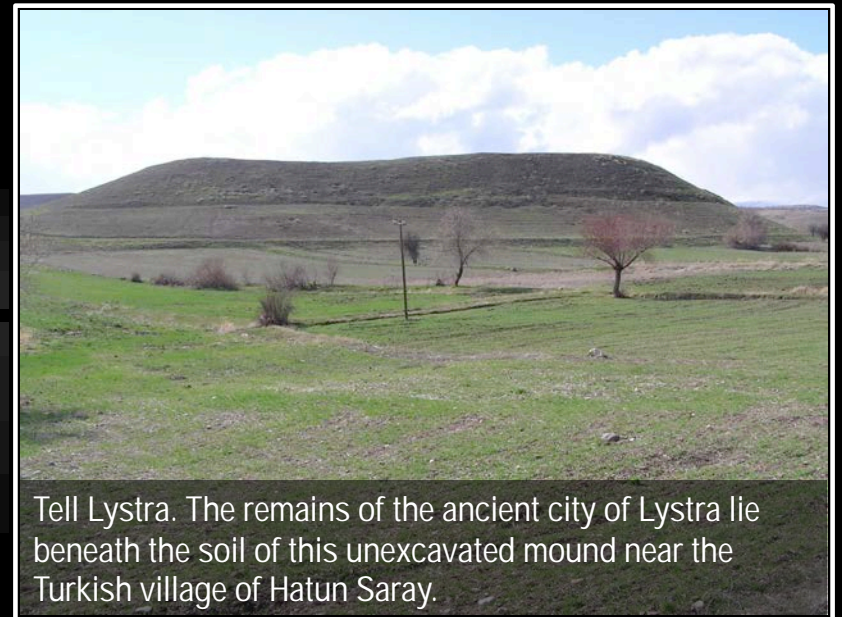
- The churches in Galatia are comprised of mostly Gentile believers
⁸ Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. ⁹ But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?



The Taurus mountains in the region of Galatia, not far from Iconium.

The Recipients

- The churches in Galatia are comprised of mostly Gentile believers
- The church took care of Paul when his illness (eye problem?) incapacitated him.
¹³ As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you, ¹⁴ and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. ¹⁵ Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me (4:13-15).



Tell Lystra. The remains of the ancient city of Lystra lie beneath the soil of this unexcavated mound near the Turkish village of Hatun Saray.

The Situation

- Outsiders had infiltrated the churches of Galatia and have caused confusion.

Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ (1:7b).

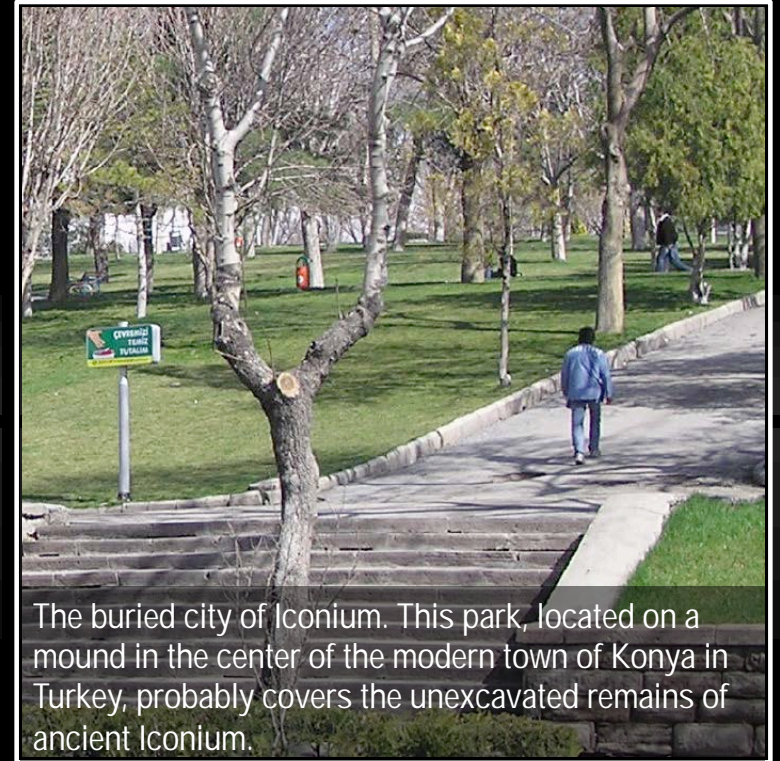
The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty (5:10b).



The Dying Gaul. This marble statue in the Capitoline museum in Rome is a Roman copy of a lost Pergamene sculpture.

The Situation

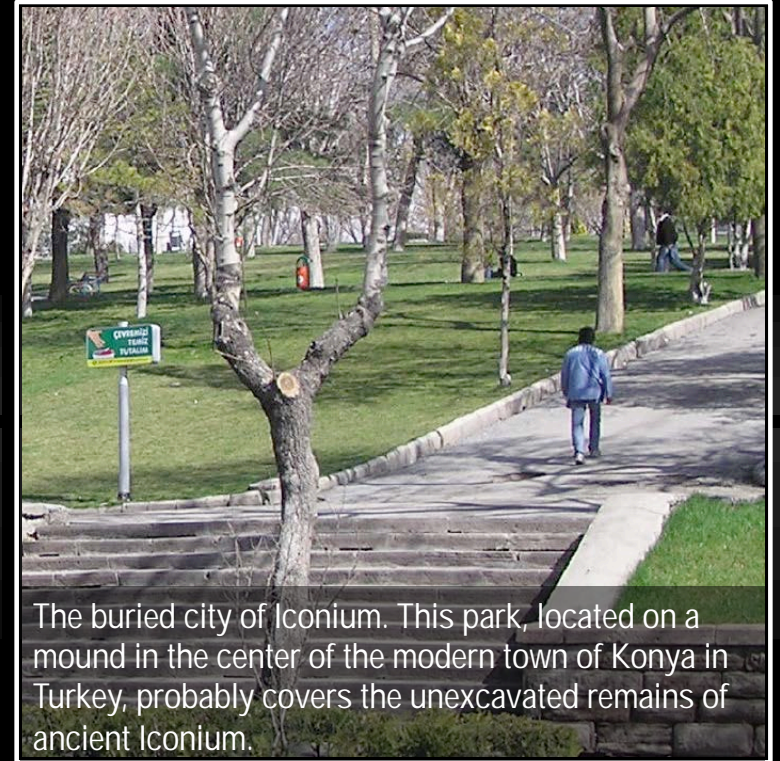
- These people challenged Paul's authority, arguing that he lacked proper credentials.



The buried city of Iconium. This park, located on a mound in the center of the modern town of Konya in Turkey, probably covers the unexcavated remains of ancient Iconium.

The Situation

- These people challenged Paul's authority, arguing that he lacked proper credentials.
1. Paul's not one of the 12.
 2. Paul never met Jesus
 3. Paul's not from the Jerusalem Church
 4. Pau's not known to the inner circle
 5. Paul was a Pharisee

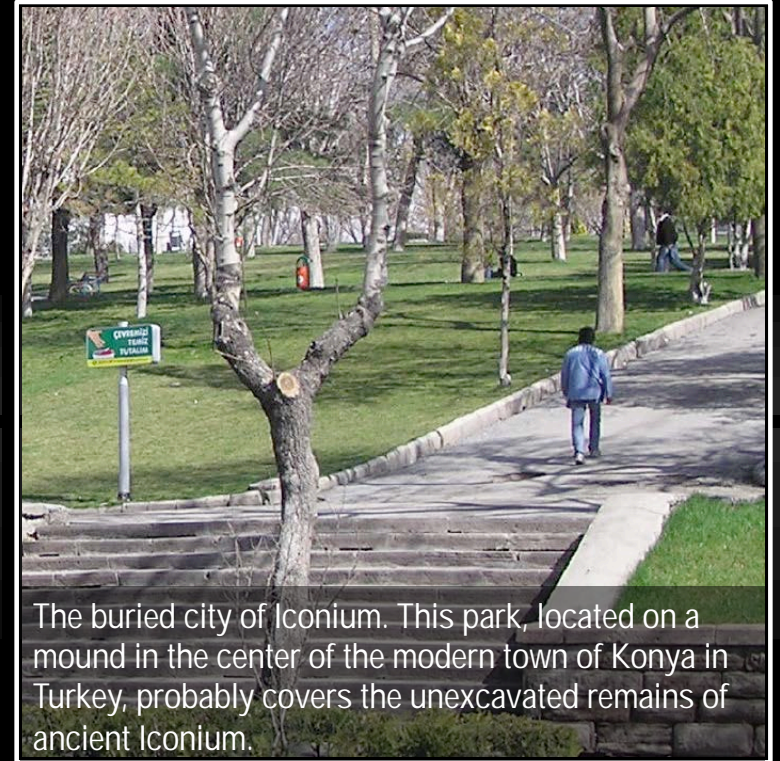


The buried city of Iconium. This park, located on a mound in the center of the modern town of Konya in Turkey, probably covers the unexcavated remains of ancient Iconium.

The Situation

- These people accused Paul of being a “people-pleaser”

10 Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ (1:10)



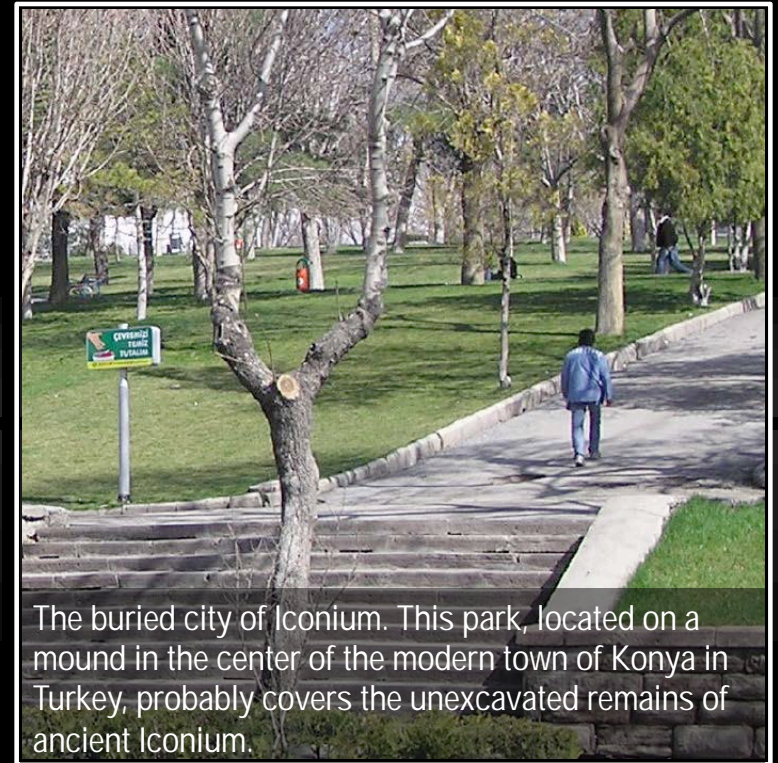
The buried city of Iconium. This park, located on a mound in the center of the modern town of Konya in Turkey, probably covers the unexcavated remains of ancient Iconium.

The Situation

- These people accused Paul of duplicity (teaching circumcision elsewhere):

¹¹ Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished.

¹² As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves! (5:11-12)

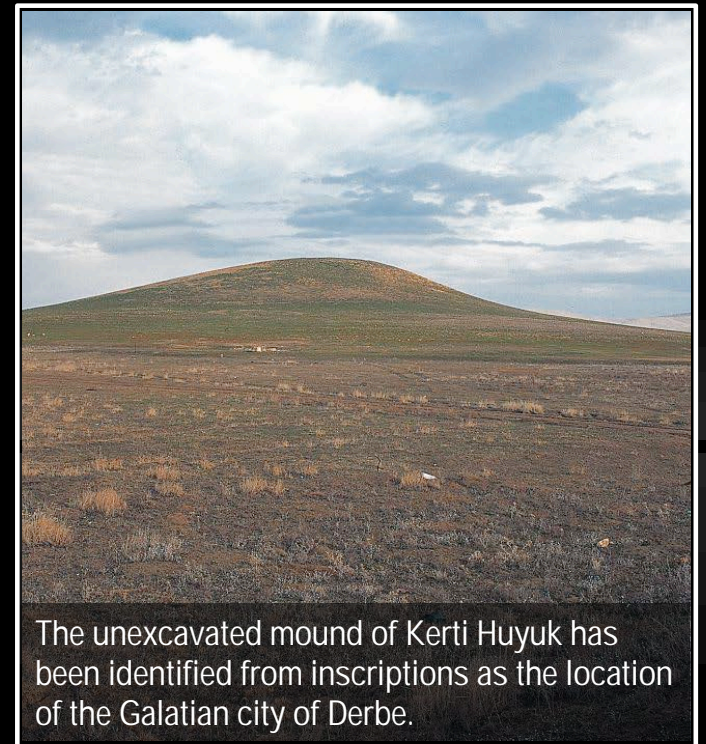


The buried city of Iconium. This park, located on a mound in the center of the modern town of Konya in Turkey, probably covers the unexcavated remains of ancient Iconium.

The Situation

- These people challenged Paul's gospel arguing that Gentile Christians must perform “the works of the law.”

*¹⁶ know that a person is not justified by **the works of the law**, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by **the works of the law**, because by **the works of the law** no one will be justified (2:16).*

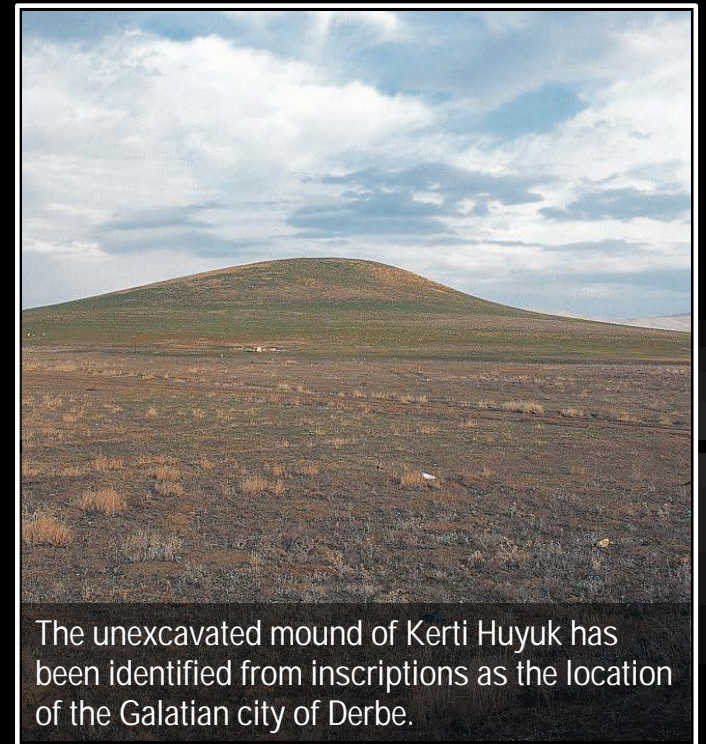


The unexcavated mound of Kerti Huyuk has been identified from inscriptions as the location of the Galatian city of Derbe.

The Situation

- These people challenged Paul's gospel arguing that Gentile Christians must perform “the works of the law.”

*² I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by **the works of the law**, or by believing what you heard? ... ⁵ So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by **the works of the law**, or by your believing what you heard? (3:2-5)*

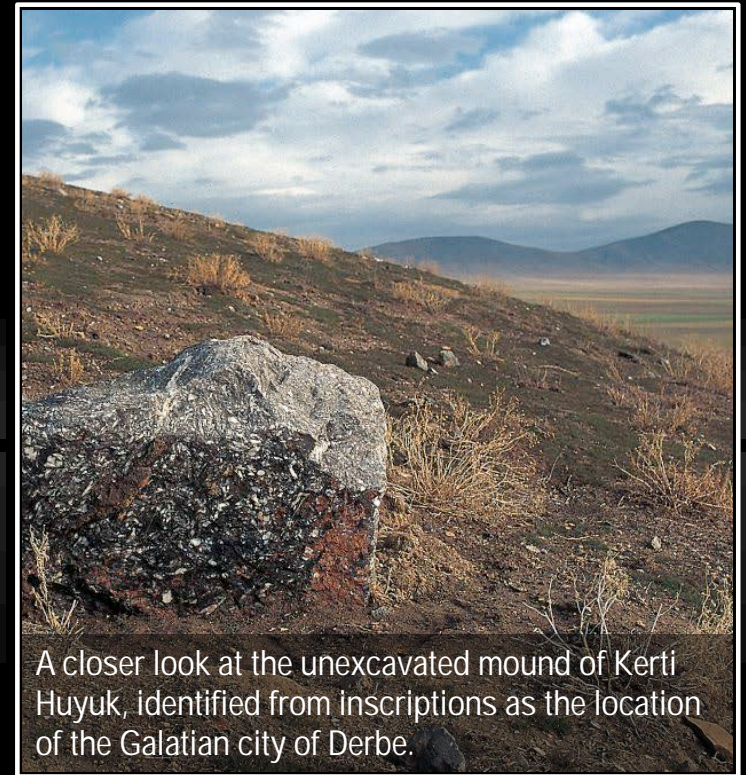


The unexcavated mound of Kerti Huyuk has been identified from inscriptions as the location of the Galatian city of Derbe.

The Situation

- “The works of the Law” have something to do with circumcision:

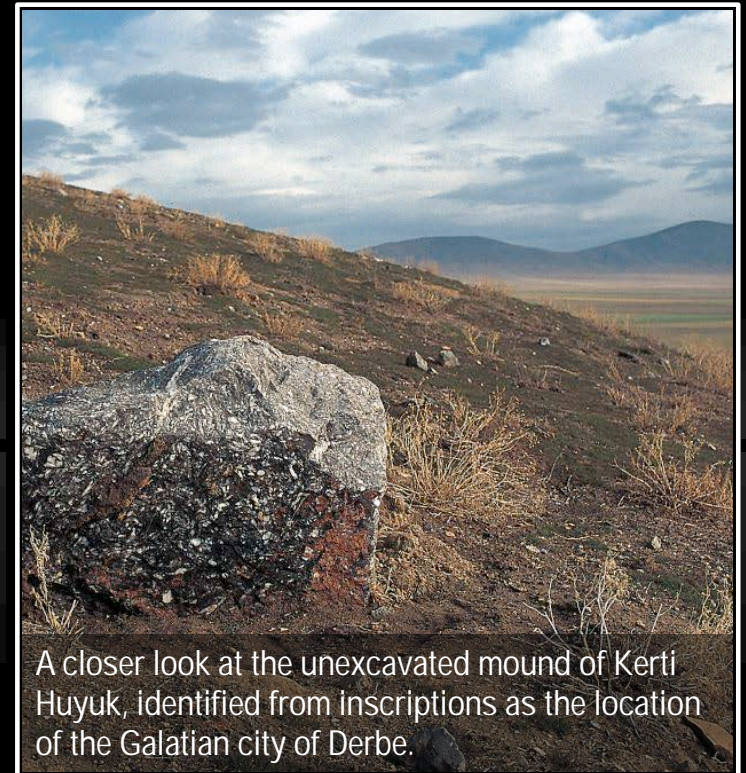
*² Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be **circumcised**, Christ will be of no value to you at all. ³ Again I declare to every man who lets himself be **circumcised** that he is obligated to obey the whole law (5:2-3).*



A closer look at the unexcavated mound of Kerti Huyuk, identified from inscriptions as the location of the Galatian city of Derbe.

The Situation

- “The works of the Law” have something to do with circumcision:
*¹² Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be **circumcised**. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³ Not even those who are **circumcised** keep the law, yet they want you to be **circumcised** that they may boast about your **circumcision in the flesh**. . . .¹⁵ Neither **circumcision** nor **uncircumcision** means anything; what counts is the new creation (6:12-15).*



A closer look at the unexcavated mound of Kerti Huyuk, identified from inscriptions as the location of the Galatian city of Derbe.

The Context of Galatians



- *Author:* Paul
- *Recipient:* The churches in Galatia are composed of mostly Gentiles. Paul founded these churches likely as part of his second missionary journey (49-52 AD).
- *Date:* Some time after the founding of these churches (52-55 AD).

The Context of Galatians

- *Situation:*

After Paul left Galatia, Jewish Christians (likely from Jerusalem) came to these churches and taught the Galatians that to be truly part of the KOG and become children of Abraham, they needed to embrace Jewish ethnicity by following some key elements of the Torah, in particular, circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws. These Jewish Christians also attacked Paul's authority as an apostle (not connected to Jerusalem), labeling him as a people-pleaser who avoided teaching the hard parts of the gospel (e.g., circumcision).

- *Content:* The letter is Paul's response to the situation

Galatians 1-2: A Conversation

Galatians: Look, Paul, this is what they're saying about you. You're not a real "apostle." You're not from the Jerusalem Church. You're not one of the 12. Those guys, they're from Jerusalem. They're from James, he's Jesus's brother. Who are you?

Also, they say you are a people-pleaser. You didn't tell us about circumcision because you're kind of a wimp. What are we supposed to think?



Galatians 1-2: A Conversation

Paul: You're dang right, I'm not from Jerusalem. I barely ever went there. I'm not sent from Jerusalem. Oh no, I received my apostleship directly from Jesus the Messiah. The content of the gospel I teach comes directly revealed from God.

But you should also know, the “leaders” of the Jerusalem Church already affirmed my gospel (no need for Gentile circumcision) and gave me authority over the gentile churches. This meddling is a betrayal and violation of that agreement. Can you really trust these people?



Galatians 1-2: A Conversation

Paul: In fact, don't get too impressed by these leader-types from Jerusalem. They don't have it figured out. I had to straighten out Peter in front of everybody in Antioch when he started behaving hypocritically when faced with pressure from James. Who do you think is the people-pleaser in that situation?



