

In Introduction to 1st Corinthians

Adult Bible Class, 08-28-2022

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About Corinth:

Corinth was an important cosmopolitan city in ancient Greece. It was a crucial commercial and industrial city along the major trade route from Athens to Sparta and from the Mediterranean Sea to northern inland cities throughout all of Greece and the Roman empire. It was located on an isthmus (land bridge) approximately 50 miles west of Athens. People from throughout the Roman Empire flocked to this important city making it the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire. Only Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch had more people. At its largest, it had a population of more than 600,000 people.

Corinth was located in the Roman province of Achaia on the Peloponnese peninsula connected to the mainland by the land bridge called the *Isthmus of Corinth*. This land bridge was only 4 miles wide between Cenchreae and Corinth. Engineers devised a method to transport ships across the isthmus by way of rolling them on logs across land. However, if the ship was too large, the cargo would be carried by cart across the 4 miles and reloaded on another ship on the other side. Most tradesmen chose this route because the southern tip of Greece, Cape Malaes, was very treacherous and added over 200 miles to their route while the Saronic Gulf was sheltered allowing for calm seas.

Corinth was also known for the Isthmian games which was second only to the Olympic games. In addition, Corinth was considered the pleasure capital of Greece. Sexual entertainment was a major industry as visitors sought all sorts of immoral pleasures. It was known for two major temples: the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, and the temple of Apollo, the god of the rule of law, music & dance, poetry, and prophecy. The temple of Aphrodite employed over 1000 hetaeras (temple prostitutes) while the temple of Apollo provided male prostitutes. In addition, it was known for its culinary specialties, offering all sorts of foods and spirits from around the world. All in all, Corinth was a hotbed of drunkenness and debauchery.



The Church in Corinth:

We first hear about the church in Corinth from Acts 18:1-18.

Paul went to Corinth during his Second Missionary Journey.

Paul first met Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth. (Ac.18:2)

They were united because they were tentmakers just like Paul. (Ac.18:3)

There was a strong Jewish presence in Corinth when Paul arrived, likely due to Claudius' command that all Jews must leave Rome. (Ac.18:2)

Paul was rejected by most of the Jews, so he established a church in a house next to the Jewish synagogue, in the home of Justus. The synagogue ruler, Crispus, became a Christian and many Gentiles became believers (Ac.18:4-8)

Paul had a vision of the Lord in Corinth. (Ac.18:9-10)

Paul remained in Corinth 1½ years. (Ac.18:11)



Known Letters from Paul to the Church in Corinth:

1. A letter instructing the Corinthian Christians not to fellowship with professed believers who were sexually immoral. (1 Corinthians 5:9)
2. First Corinthians
3. An intermediate letter, the “sorrowful letter,” that pained Paul to write because of the harsh tone he was required to take. (2 Corinthians 2:4; 7:8-9)
4. Second Corinthians

Outline of 1st Corinthians:

- I. Introductory Comments — 1:1-9 (Greetings and Thanksgiving)
- II. Divisions in the Church — 1:10-4:21 (We must keep our priorities on the Gospel Message)
- III. Moral Failure in the Church — 5:1-6:20 (How we act affects our witness about the Gospel)
- IV. Marriage Relationships in the Church — 7:1-40
- V. Obligation to our Fellow Believers — 8:1-11:1
- VI. Instruction for Public Worship, Fellowship and Service — 11:2-14:40
- VII. Our Eternal Hope in the Resurrection — 15:1-58
- VIII. Concluding Remarks — 16:1-24

Other Mentions of Corinth in the New Testament:

After Acts 18:1-18, we hear that Apollos came to Corinth in Acts 19:1. This was some 2-3 years after Paul's visit in Acts 18.

During Paul's third missionary journey he spent a winter in Corinth. (See Acts 20:2-3)

The Epistle known as 2 Corinthians

Erastus, one of Paul's trainees served in Corinth for a time. (2 Tim. 4:20)

Some Lessons We Can Learn From the Church in Corinth:

No matter how sinful the city may be, God has many people in the city (Acts 18:10)

Every believer who calls upon the name of the Lord is considered a Saint (1 Cor. 1:2)

Don't give up on anyone! Two Synagogue Leaders became Christians: Crispus (Acts 18:8) and Sosthenes (1 Corinthians 1:1)

You cannot judge a book by its cover, nor can you judge a church by its cover.