

CORINTH

The Grecian city of Corinth was located on the western end of a four mile stretch of narrow land that joins the Peloponnesus to the mainland of Greece. As early as New Testament times men (Nero) sought to build a canal through the isthmus, but it was not accomplished until 1893, after the invention of dynamite. In ancient times smaller ships were dragged across the isthmus on rollers to avoid the stormy seas to the south while larger ships transferred their cargo from one harbor to another.

After fighting a few wars over the years, the city-state was controlled by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. The city was destroyed by the Romans in the battle of Corinth in 146 B.C. and was rebuilt about a century later. Julius Caesar rebuilt Corinth as a Roman city, and Augustus later made it the capital of Achaia.

1. Advantageous location of Corinth on an Isthmus:

- a. made it a very wealthy and indulgent city. Its riches eventually rivaled those of Athens.
- b. Its three excellent harbors made it ideal to handle commercial traffic on both the western and eastern seas. Virtually all traffic between northern and southern Greece had to pass through the city. Good harbors existed on both sides of the isthmus: Cenchrea on the east and Lechaemum on the west.
- c. As a trade center and host to all sorts of travelers, it had an unsettled population that was extremely debauched.

At its peak, the city was known for its:

- a. riches, painters, and its unique architecture.
 - 1. building columns created in the Corinthian style were some of the most ornate in the ancient world.
- b. Sadly, the area was also known for its vices.
 - 1. Immorality and sexual sins were rampant, in part, due to a pagan temple within the city limits that was dedicated to the pagan goddess Aphrodite. The temple's illicit services employed more than 1,000+ women as prostitutes, who the temple called "priestesses."
 - 2. Hence, "to live as a Corinthian" was a synonym for sexual immorality. Many of these problems affected the Corinthian church, as Paul's epistles reveal. Paul spent over 18 months during his second journey (verses 9-11) seeking to establish a strong church.

During his second missionary journey, in the summer of 50 A.D., the apostle Paul leaves the city of Athens and travels to Corinth. Corinth is about 40 miles west of Athens. In the city he meets a couple named Priscilla and Aquila. When they discover Paul is a tent maker like themselves they let him stay in their home.

Paul's friends and fellow evangelists Silas and Timothy join him in Corinth. He preaches the gospel every Sabbath until he leaves the city around Autumn of 52 A.D. Paul revisits the city in 58 A.D. during his third missionary journey. He writes at least two letters to the Corinthian church, the first in the late winter of 56 A.D. and the second in late summer of 57.

Acts 18: Paul at Corinth

- Paul's 2nd missionary journey (start of 3rd journey, vs. 23)
- Paul left Athens and went to Corinth (about 40 miles, a 2-3 day journey).
 - Athens was noted for learning and intellect
 - Corinth was noted for its fleshly immorality—pursued pleasure.
 - He was alone in Corinth, a city of 125,000 people; on a major commerce sea route.
 - It was the “Las Vegas” of the world; a place where people went to have a good time.
 - The temple of Aphrodite towered over the city on a high hill (1,886 ft.).
 - 1,000 prostitutes worked in the city
 - See 1 Cor.6.9-11: “...such were some of you.”
 - 1 Cor 2:1-5 - He came to Corinth in “weakness, fear, and much trembling...”
 - might have been sick as ‘weakness’ (in the Greek) probably refers to his physical condition.
 - (2 Cor. 12:7 - his “thorn in the flesh”)
 - Loneliness, poverty, mistreatment, and illness can fill even the sturdiest heart with fear
 - He was penniless... he worked as a tentmaker so as not to be a financial burden (2 Cor. 11:9)
 - Greek word for “tentmaker” also means workers in leather
 - Aquila and Priscilla – fellow tentmakers:
 - Lived in Rome until Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews in about 49 AD
 - God allowed Paul to find their friendship in Corinth
 - Ever move to a new place and find fellow Christians as friends?
 - friendship is strength when fear threatens us
 - Paul stayed with them in their house (V. 3)
 - They even risked their lives for Paul and were life-long friends (Rom. 16:3-4)
 - The “church that is in their house”...in various cities (Rom. 16:5 ; 1 Cor. 16:19)
 - Careful handling of Apollos later in the chapter (V. 24-26)
- V. 4: he “reasoned” in the synagogue and “persuaded” both Jews and Greeks:
 - not with “excellence of speech” or “persuasive words of human wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:1,4)
 - there is a time and place for different methods of teaching
- V.5-6: “Your blood be on your own heads...I will go to the Gentiles.” (after opposition and blasphemy)
 - He was through trying to convince them – his obligation to them was over
 - Silas and Timothy arrived:
 - only thing better than two new friends...two old friends! (1 Thess. 3:6,7 ; 2 Cor. 11:9)
 - During this time, Paul wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians (1 Thess. 3:6)
 - the last place Silas is mentioned in Acts is in Corinth (V.5).
 - Paul went back to preaching the Word full-time
- V.7-11: Titus Justus (a Roman) lived next door to the synagogue; a worshipper of God
 - Romans usually had 3 names and his name was likely Gaius Titius Justus
 - We see Gaius mentioned in 1 Cor. 1:14 (along with Crispus) as having been baptized by Paul
 - Crispus (the leader of the synagogue) believed in the Lord and was baptized (1 Cor. 1:14)
 - Responsible for the facilities and the services
 - The defection of the top man in the synagogue (next door) must have devastated the Jews.
 - V.8 “Many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.” (Rom. 10:17)
 - Paul gets one last blessing to help him overcome his fear... a special visit from Jesus (vs. 9-10):
 - “Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.”

- Paul has been unable to remain in any one city very long because of pressure from the Jews
- Even strong men can break under constant pressure.
- Message: stay in Corinth, there are many people to baptize yet! (Stayed 18 months)
- This (vs. 9-10) was the 3rd of 6 visions given to Paul in Acts:
 - 9:3-6 – road to Damascus (“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”)
 - 16:9-10 – Macedonian call – take the gospel to Europe
 - 22:17-18 – was told to leave Jerusalem quickly – his life was in danger
 - 23:11 – he will make it to Rome when it was looking bleak in prison
 - The Lord appears Himself (not sending a messenger/angel). Paul really needed encouragement here – looked like he was about to die. He learns that no harm will come to him there and he will live to testify another day. The Lord had a mission for him in Rome.
 - Lesson: the Lord will never leave us or forsake us. He is present in times of trouble.
 - 27:23-24 – there would be no loss of life in dire straits on the ship

➤ V.12-17: Paul Appears Before Gallio’s Judgment Seat

- Gallio’s brother was Seneca (Stoic Roman philosopher) who tutored Nero, the infamous Roman Caesar
- Gallio was proconsul in Corinth in AD 51 from an inscription found at Delphi.
- Paul was at Corinth from the fall of AD 50 to the spring of AD 52.
- “Judgment seat” comes from the Greek word bema. It was a raised stage near the center of Corinth where court was held. It was made of stone covered with blue and white marble. It is still preserved and stands in Corinth today.
- 2 Cor 5:10 – Paul uses the “judgment seat” as a term they would be well-acquainted with!
- Jews wanted to take advantage of the newly appointed Gallio and rid themselves of Paul and the gospel
- Charge: V.13: “This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.”
- Response: V.14-15: “If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you; but if there are questions about words and names and your law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters.”
 - Words (like salvation, resurrection, etc.) Names (like Jesus, Christ, Savior, etc.)
 - So, the Jews beat Sosthenes (Crispus’ replacement)
 - This is possibly the same Sosthenes mentioned in 1 Cor. 1:1
 - Gallio considered Christianity a sect of the Jewish religion (an already approved, legal religion)
 - Gallio’s recognition of Paul’s innocence brought about 10 years of peace for the church. Legal precedent was set.

➤ V. 18-22: Paul Returns to Antioch in Syria by way of Ephesus

- Took Aquila and Priscilla with him as traveling companions - Christians, friends, and fellow-tent makers
- He possibly left Silas and Timothy in Corinth since they were not mentioned in the traveling party
- Paul had his hair cut off at the port city of Cenchrea, for he was keeping a vow
 - Vow: found 7 times in N.T. and refers to making a request to Deity (Acts 26:29).
 - Vows were voluntary but once made, they were binding (Num. 30:3 ; Deut. 23:21-23)
 - They were not made rashly (Prov. 20:25).
 - An oath could be made to a man but vows were only made to God.
 - Possibly a Nazarite vow (Num. 6:2,5) Acts 21.
 - Possibly a personal vow to God for protecting him while he was in Corinth, not sure
- In Ephesus, he preaches in a synagogue but soon leaves Aquila and Priscilla behind so he can be in Jerusalem to celebrate an important feast and salute the Jerusalem church
- After keeping the feast, he then returns to Antioch for some time



Acts 13:1-14:28



Acts 15:36-18:22



Acts 18:23-21:16