

About this Letter

Corinth

Corinth was an important city. It was on a very narrow section of land (called an 'isthmus') in the southern part of Greece.

1. It was the capital city of the region called Achaia.
2. It had two harbours. The harbour on the east coast was 4 miles (6 km) from the harbour on the west coast. Today a canal joins the two harbours. In Paul's time, people pulled small boats across from one harbour to the other one. They dragged them on a kind of ship railway. Porters carried goods from large boats to the other side. They put the goods on a different boat. The journey would otherwise have been over two hundred miles round a very dangerous part of the sea.
3. As it was a busy centre for trade, Corinth was a good place for the gospel to spread. Merchants and travellers would hear the message and take it with them. There were many different people in Corinth. There were Romans because it was a Roman colony. (A colony is a city or country that another country controls.) There were Greeks, Jews, people from Asia and from further east. There were rich people and many slaves.
4. There was a temple to Aphrodite, the Greek female god of love. There were thousands of prostitutes in the city. Many of them belonged to this temple. Corinth became well-known for bad sexual behaviour. To live 'like a Corinthian' meant to become a drunk often or to visit prostitutes.
5. The Isthmian Games took place near Corinth. They were famous and only second in importance to the Olympic Games.

Paul's first visit to Corinth Acts 18:1-17

On his second journey to take people the good news about Jesus, Paul arrived in Corinth from Athens. He had only very little success in Athens and he did not stay there for very long. But he stayed in Corinth for 18 months. He spent longer there than in any other city apart from Ephesus. He stayed with Aquila and Priscilla, who were tent makers like himself. He preached first in the synagogue. When the Jews opposed him, he used the home of Titius Justus. Titius Justus lived next door to the synagogue. Paul preached very successfully. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, became a Christian. When a new Roman ruler arrived, the Jews took Paul to him. They said that Paul was teaching 'against the law'. But the ruler refused to listen to the Jews. This happened in about AD 51. Paul later went to Syria.

Paul's letters to Corinth

1. The 'previous' letter. Paul said, 'I wrote you a letter. In that letter, I told you to have nothing to do with men with bad character' (1 Corinthians 5:9). This letter is either lost or it may be in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.
2. 1 Corinthians. When Paul was in Ephesus, he received news about troubles in the church at Corinth. This news came from people who were living in Chloe's house (1 Corinthians 1:11), and from Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Corinthians 16:17). A letter also came from the Christians in Corinth. They asked for Paul's advice about various problems. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians.
3. The second 'painful' visit. Paul heard that problems in Corinth were worse. So he made a second visit. There is no record about this. But Paul writes about when he

visited Corinth for the 'third' time (2 Corinthians 12:14; 13:1-2). So there must have been a second visit.

4. The 'severe' letter. Paul's visit was not successful. So he wrote a letter when he was feeling very hurt (2 Corinthians 2:4). He was almost sorry that he had sent it. Some writers believe that chapters 10-13 in 2 Corinthians are the 'severe' letter.

5. The letter to show that the Christians at Corinth and Paul were friends again. Paul was so worried about his 'severe' letter that he went to meet Titus. Titus had taken the severe letter to Corinth. Paul met Titus in Macedonia and learned that all was well. So, he wrote chapters 1-9 in 2 Corinthians. It is possible that someone put the severe letter and the next letter together in the wrong order.

The contents of 1 Corinthians

1:1-9 ~ Greetings and thanksgiving

1:10-4:21 ~ Quarrels about leaders in the church

5:1-13; 6:9-20 ~ Bad sexual behaviour

6:1-8 ~ Christians at the law courts

7:1-40 ~ Marriage

8:1-11:1 ~ Meat that people have offered to idols

11:2-34 ~ Problems in Christian worship

12:1-31 ~ Spiritual gifts

13:1-13 ~ Love

14:1-40 ~ Prophecy and tongues

15:1-58 ~ Resurrection

16:1-24 ~ Money for Jerusalem; Paul's plans and greetings

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