

THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

LESSON EIGHT = The Church in Corinth
Bible Class Series by Ray Reynolds (2/9/11)

Introduction: Each of the congregations in the New Testament had unique features and characteristics. They all had qualities we can learn from and use to better our own congregations today. In this lesson we are going to consider the church in Corinth. Let's study together

Discussion:

I. The Geography of Corinth

The city of Corinth is located on a narrow strip of land in Southern Greece (the "Bridge of Greece"). The city of Corinth was one of the main cities providing the ancient world with commerce.

* Ships from the east (Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt) would port in Cenchreae.

* Ships from the west (Italy, Sicily, and Spain) would port in Lechaemum.

To avoid Corinth, traders had to make a 200 journey around Peloponnesus (Cape Maelea). The flat terraces of land behind the city rose about 1,500 feet above the skyline.

II. The History of Corinth

The city of Corinth in New Testament times was an ancient city (at least 800 BC).

Corinth was destroyed in 146 BC but rebuilt thanks in part to Julius Caesar in 44 BC.

The city was repopulated with Italian freed slaves, displaced Greeks, and other diverse cultures.

The Roman government was located in nearby Achaia (**Acts 18:12**).

Corinth was a leading city of Greece for both political and commercial reasons.

It had the temples of Apollo, Aesculapius, Dionysus, Isis, Aphrodite, etc.

III. The Beginning of the Church in Corinth

The Jews in Corinth were planted there because of the Dispersion.

In Asia Minor there were many Jewish settlements, but this one seems to be unique.

Luke records the early background of the church in **Acts 18**.

Paul makes a very important contact with a man named Aquila and his wife Priscilla.

Every Sabbath day he preached in the synagogue to both Jews and Greeks.

Paul is rejected by the Jews and he decides to shift his focus to the Gentiles (**Acts 18:6-8**).

Paul receives a vision that he should stay awhile in Corinth (1 1/2 years).

IV. The Work of the Church in Corinth

The Bible and historical evidence prove the existence of a large congregation in Corinth.

The work seems to be successful because of the message of God's grace to all people.

The conversion of Titius (or Titus) Justus is a very important step.

Paul did extensive work among the Gentiles after his rejection by the Jews (**Romans 16:23**).

Paul would move to Ephesus from Corinth (**Acts 19**).

The correspondence between Paul and the Corinthians.

V. **The Letters to the Church in Corinth**

An outline for I Corinthians:

- I. Church Problems Regarding Unity – I Corinthians 1-2
- II. Church Problems Regarding Immaturity – I Corinthians 3-4
- III. Church Problems Regarding Purity – I Corinthians 5
- IV. Church Problems Regarding Immorality – I Corinthians 6
- V. Church Problems Regarding Sexuality – I Corinthians 7
- VI. Church Problems Regarding Liberty – I Corinthians 8
- VII. Church Problems Regarding Idolatry – I Corinthians 9-10
- VIII. Church Problems Regarding Loyalty – I Corinthians 11
- IX. Church Problems Regarding Spirituality – I Corinthians 12
- X. Church Problems Regarding Charity – I Corinthians 13
- XI. Church Problems Regarding Stability – I Corinthians 14
- XII. Church Problems Regarding Authenticity – I Corinthians 15
- XIII. Church Problems Regarding Sincerity – I Corinthians 16

An outline for II Corinthians:

- I. Offering Hope Through Consolation – II Corinthians 1
- II. Offering Hope Through Instruction – II Corinthians 2
- III. Offering Hope Through Commendation – II Corinthians 3
- IV. Offering Hope Through Manifestation – II Corinthians 4
- V. Offering Hope Through Reconciliation – II Corinthians 5
- VI. Offering Hope Through Separation – II Corinthians 6
- VII. Offering Hope Through Satisfaction – II Corinthians 7
- VIII. Offering Hope Through Devotion – II Corinthians 8
- IX. Offering Hope Through Demonstration – II Corinthians 9
- X. Offering Hope Through Transformation – II Corinthians 10
- XI. Offering Hope Through Declaration – II Corinthians 11
- XII. Offering Hope Through Affection – II Corinthians 12
- XIII. Offering Hope Through Examination – II Corinthians 13

Anyone have a favorite verse from I or II Corinthians they want to share?

VI. **The Dilemmas of the Church in Corinth**

The church suffered a setback with Paul's trial before Gallio.

- * Gallio was governor of all of Southern Greece and brother of Seneca, a Roman philosopher.
- * Historians have documented evidence that Gallio became proconsul in the Summer of 51 AD.

The Jewish leaders hoped to separate themselves from the Christians.

- * Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, is beaten for his association with Paul.
- * Paul, calls Sosthenes a brother in **I Corinthians 1:1**.

The heresies of the Corinthian church.

The conflicts of the Corinthian church.

Several acute cases of "preacheritis" in the New Testament.

- * There is a Apollos party, a Cephas party, a Paul party, and a Christ party.

The influence of Gnosticism.

VII. **The Maturity of the Church in Corinth**

The church benefited when it was lead by stable mature leaders.

- * The congregation succeeded when Priscilla and Aquila were there leading them.
- * Paul, Apollos, Peter, Titus and Timothy were also effective, but they needed stability.

The church would have matured faster with good shepherds.

- * It seems from **I Corinthians 1-4**, they had no elders.
- * The three men in **I Corinthians 16:17** were sent to supply what was lacking (**Titus 1:7**).

The church would have matured faster with solid preaching.

- * It seems that Apollos was actually discouraged with the brethren there (**I Corinthians 16:12**).
- * Paul tells them in **I Corinthians 16** Timothy will bring the next letter, but it was Titus.
- * Were the Christian missionaries avoiding this city and these brethren? Why?

The church became a mature church when they heeded Paul's advice.

What was Paul's advice to these brethren?

Conclusion: God clearly blessed the church in Corinth. We can see that history shows the wisdom and providence of God throughout the New Testament. We should trust Him to provide direction for the church today. It is my prayer that by studying about these wonderful congregations of the Lord's people that we will see our place in the kingdom. Next week we will study about the church in Rome.