

# 1 CORINTHIANS

## *Introduction and Chapter 1*

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### INTRODUCTION:

#### **THE CITY OF CORINTH**

##### A. LOCATION

1. Corinth was located on a narrow isthmus (4 miles wide) between the Aegean and Adriatic Seas, about 50 miles west of Athens.
2. It was the capital of the Roman Province of Achaia.

##### B. HISTORY

1. Corinth was a flourishing city even before the time of Christ.
2. It had been destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC; rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C.

##### C. POLITICAL STATUS: a Roman colony

##### D. POPULATION

1. When the city was rebuilt in 46 B.C., it was initially populated by discharged Roman army veterans.
2. Because of its location as a seaport city, the population came to include Romans, Greeks, and Orientals - a very cosmopolitan population.
3. The population in Paul's day was approx. 500,000 people, surpassed only by Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch.
4. There were many wealthy in the city, many poor also, and a large slave population.
5. Corinth's population was transient (many sailors, businessmen, etc.), and the commercial prosperity of the city attracted many different types: *Roman officials, military men, Grecian farmers, Syrian merchants, sailors, etc.*

##### E. COMMERCE

1. Corinth was a seaport city; shipping and commerce were very important (Corinth was considered "the hub of Roman Empire commerce").
2. Ships were actually dragged across the narrow isthmus on land to avoid the long trip around the coast: through the harbors of Corinth flowed the commerce of the world!

##### F. RELIGION

1. The city was a center of idolatry: Apollo, Poseidon, Aphrodite and others were worshipped there in the many pagan temples.
2. There was a temple to Aphrodite located on top of the Acro-Corinthus which was served by a thousand "religious prostitutes" ("sacred prostitutes").
3. Also a Jewish synagogue in the city (Judaism was considered an "Oriental religion").

##### G. OTHER ACTIVITIES

1. Education: the study of arts and sciences flourished.

2. Sports: the Isthmian Games were held every two years (similar to Olympics).
3. Arts: many celebrated artists lived here; Corinth prided herself on the embellishment of the city and the adornment of the Temples.

#### H. MORAL CONDITION

1. Corinth had a reputation as a very wicked city; immorality was rampant.
2. "**KORINTHIAZOMAIN**," meaning "to act like a Corinthian," came to mean "to commit fornication."
3. Dishonesty, drunkenness, and all other vices were to be found in excess.
4. Corinth was "A seaman's paradise, a drunkard's heaven, a virtuous woman's hell."

### **THE BOOK OF FIRST CORINTHIANS**

A. AUTHOR: Paul

B. DATE: 55 - 57 A.D.

C. PLACE OF WRITING: Ephesus

D. BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH AT CORINTH: about 50 A.D. (see Acts 18:1-18)

1. PAUL'S FIRST VISIT, 50-52 A.D. (Acts 18)
2. PAUL'S SECOND VISIT, 54-55 (not recorded in Acts, but in 2 Corinthians 2:1-4; 12:14; 13:1-2).
3. PAUL'S THIRD VISIT, 55-56 A.D. (Acts 20:1-3)

E. THEME OF THE BOOK: Correction and Instruction

*The church at Corinth was being plagued by many problems: factions, immorality, lawsuits, problems concerning marriage, meats offered to idols, problems regarding the roles of men and women, abuse of the Lord's Supper, abuse of spiritual gifts, problems with lack of love, disorders in the assembly, questions about the resurrection*

F. OCCASSION OF WRITING: Paul writes to plead with the brethren, rebuke and instruct them, regarding disorders. He writes from Ephesus, in probably the Spring of 57 A.D., before Pentecost (16:8). He was planning to spend the following winter in Corinth (16:5-8), which he does (Acts 20:2-3).

### *1 CORINTHIANS Chapter 1*

#### I. SALUTATION, 1:1-3

A. Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ.

1. Remember Paul's conversion (Acts 9:1-19; 22:1-16): Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus, necessary for him to be an apostle (see Acts 1:22; 26:16-18).
2. There was question in the mind of some whether Paul's apostleship was genuine, and Paul was called upon to defend his apostleship (see 1 Corinthians 9:1-3; 2 Corinthians 10-13; Galatians 1-2).



1. Some have taken this verse to mean that baptism is not important in the teaching and work of Paul. Is this view correct?
  - a. Is baptism important? Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21
  - b. Did Paul believe in baptism? Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27; Col. 2:12
  - c. Was Paul baptized? Acts 9:18; 22:16
  - d. Did Paul baptize anyone? See above
  - e. Can we conclude, then, that Paul thought little or nothing of baptism? NO!
  
2. Paul's mission was to preach the gospel: *whether he personally did the baptizing was not of great consequence to Paul, and in the case of the Corinthians, he is specifically glad that he did not baptize them, because of their factionalism.*
  - a. Paul relied on others to do the baptizing (compare John 4:1-2)
  - b. Is baptism significant? One CANNOT PREACH CHRIST WITHOUT IT! (see Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 8:5, 12, 35-36).

#### IV. THE WISDOM OF GOD, 1:18-31

A. In these verses, we see a conflict between God's wisdom and man's wisdom.

##### WHAT OF THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS?

*What some thought:*

Perishing: "foolishness"

Jews: "stumblingblock"

Greeks: "foolishness"

*What it really is:*

Saved: "power of God"

Unto them which are called =

Power of God and Wisdom of God

***THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD IS WISER THAN MEN, THE WEAKNESS OF GOD IS STRONGER THAN MEN! We preach Christ crucified!***

B. What God hath chosen:

1. Not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, and the foolish things of the world to confound the wise – weak things, base things, etc.
2. WHY? "that no flesh should glory in men"

##### SOME ADDITIONAL NOTES ON CHAPTER 1:

1. *Verse 26: notice that he says "not many," NOT "not any" - there were in fact some men of prominence in the first century converted to Christianity (Erastus, a teacher at Corinth, Rom. 16:23; Sergius Paulus, Proconsul of Cyprus, Acts 13:12; Dionysius, Judge in the court of Aereopagus in Athens, Acts 17:34; Treasurer in Ethiopia, Acts 8; some even in Caesar's house, Phil. 4:22).*
  
2. *Verse 22: Note that Paul said the Jews "require" a sign (this is VERY significant, and must be remembered later – compare Exodus 4:8-9, 30).*