

High Peaks Bible Fellowship

Introduction to First Corinthians

The City of Corinth

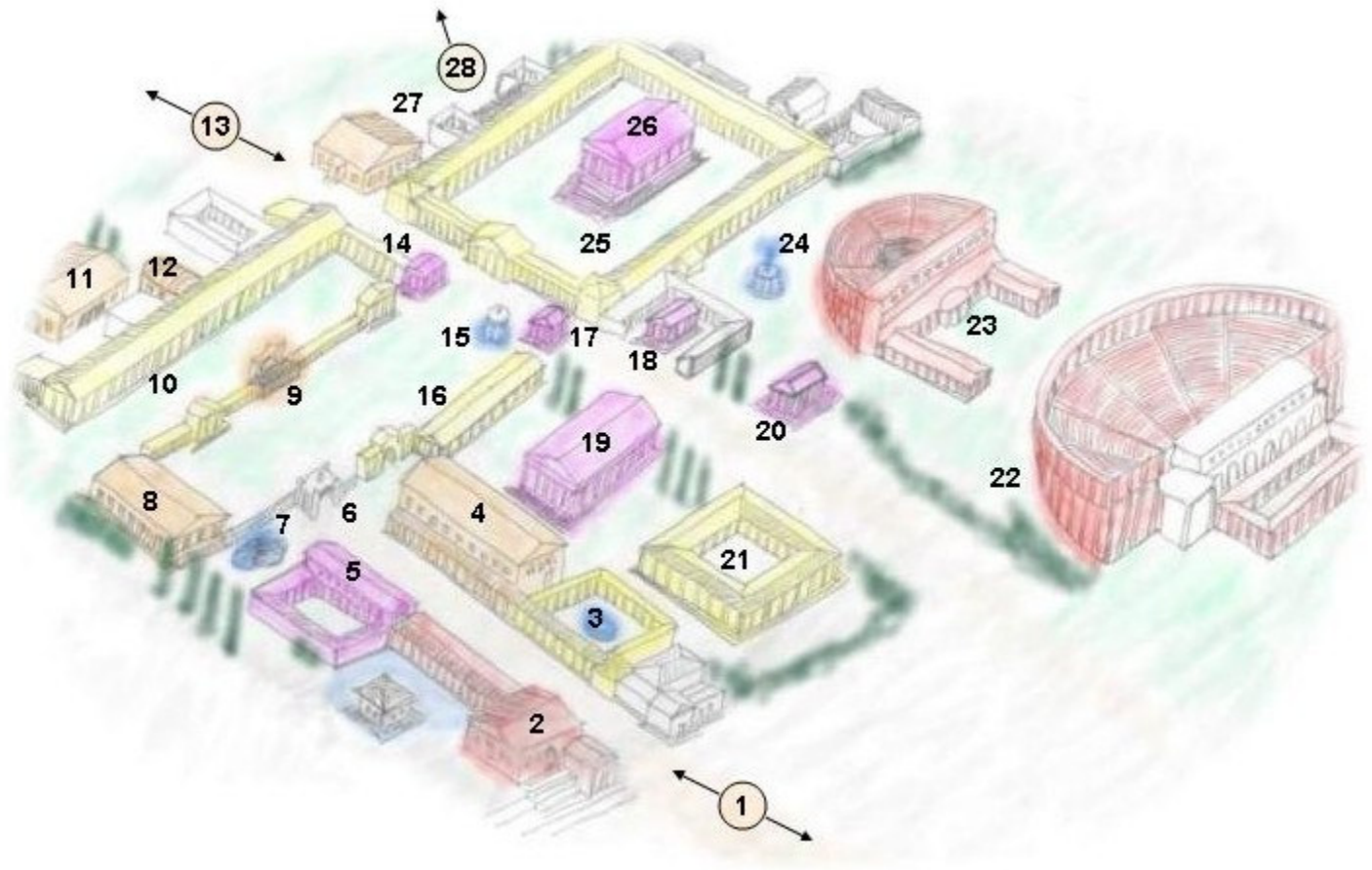
Location of Corinth

- Corinth is located on the mountainous peninsula of Greece that juts down into the Mediterranean Sea. The lower portion of this peninsula is almost an island, but is connected to the mainland by a narrow isthmus which is only four miles wide. The ancient city of Corinth is located at the southern edge of this isthmus.
- Corinth was served by two seaports: Lechaem to the northwest and Cencrea to the southeast. To save the two hundred mile voyage around the dangerous Peloponnesus, traders often put their ships on rollers and moved them overland from one port to the other.
- Corinth became an excellent location for commerce, and the inhabitants accumulated great wealth. Corinth was also an important military location for the defense of Greece.



Life in Corinth

- Commercial products from Italy and the nations of the west were landed at Lechaem on the west; and merchandise from the islands of the Aegean sea, from Asia Minor, from the Phoenicians and the other eastern nations was landed at Cencrea on the east. The city of Corinth became the commercial crossroads between Asia and Europe.
- The city of Corinth gained a reputation among all the ancient cities for its riches, its luxury, and its morally decadent lifestyle.
- Corinth was dedicated to two main deities:
 - Poseidon (Roman name = *Neptune*) was the god of the sea.
 - Aphrodite (Roman name = *Venus*) was the goddess of sexual love (and the protector of sailors).
- Another favorite god was Apollo, the god of music and prophecy.
- Corinth was especially dedicated to Aphrodite, with its 1,000 female temple prostitutes. It therefore became the most morally permissive, self-indulgent, and degenerate city of the ancient world.
- Follow the numbers on the following map and take a "self-guided tour" of the ancient city of Corinth.



[Orange = Government Sites; Yellow = Commercial Sites; Red = Public Buildings; Purple = Religious Sites]

Legend of Ancient Corinth	
1. North Road from Lechaenum	15. Poseidon Monument and Fountain
2. Public Baths and Latrines	16. Public Market and Shops
3. Fish and Meat Market	17. Temple
4. Basilica (business/legal offices)	18. Temple of Aphrodite
5. Peribolos (courtyard) of Apollos	19. Temple of Apollo
6. Propylea (gateway arch)	20. Temple
7. Peirene Fountain	21. North Market and Shops
8. Julian Basilica (legal offices)	22. Public Theater
9. Bema (judgment seat)	23. Public Music Hall (odeion)
10. South Market and Shops	24. Temple Fountain
11. South Basilica (government offices)	25. West Market and Shops
12. Senate House (bouleuterion)	26. Imperial Cult Temple
13. South Road to Cenchrea	27. Basilica (offices)
14. Temple	28. To the Acrocorinth Mount

- It was only due to the grace of God and the power of the gospel that a church was established in that city of luxury and decadence. This shows that the gospel is able to overcome any kind of wickedness and to appeal to all classes of people. If a church could be established in the most immoral city of the ancient world, then it could have the same effect in any city in the world at any time in history!

Paul in Corinth

- When Paul reached Corinth he stayed with Aquila and Priscilla, who apparently were already Christians (Acts 18:1-3). Paul labored at his trade during the week and spoke in the synagogue every Sabbath, but when Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia they brought a gift that allowed Paul to devote more time to ministry (2 Cor 11:8-9; Phil 4:15).
- Paul's synagogue ministry was successful, and one of the rulers (Crispus) became a Christian. When Jewish opposition arose, Paul moved next door to the house of Titius Justus (Acts 18:4-8).
- At this point in his ministry, Paul must have needed encouragement because the Lord appeared to Paul and encouraged him to continue his ministry despite the opposition (Acts 18:9-11). As a result, Paul stayed in Corinth for 18 months.
- The church in Corinth was composed of *some* Jews, but *mostly* Gentiles (1 Cor 12:2). Most of the converts were probably from the lower classes of slaves, laborers, and craftsman (1 Cor 1:26). Some of the converts had lived lives of gross immorality (1 Cor 6:9-11).
- At some point in his ministry, the Jews seized Paul and took him to Gallio's tribunal at the *bema*. This was the first time that Paul (or anyone else, as far as we know) was put on trial before a Roman provincial governor (Acts 18:12-17). Gallio immediately saw through their charges and threw the entire case out of court. In effect, Gallio's ruling allowed Paul to continue to minister as he pleased.
- Paul continued teaching in Corinth for some time after this event, taking advantage of Gallio's official "hands-off" policy (Acts 18:18).
- Paul left for Jerusalem, taking Aquila and Priscilla with him. They went down to the port of Cenchrea and sailed to Ephesus. They were given an invitation to stay in Ephesus (Acts 18:19-21), but Paul was eager to move on to Jerusalem. Aquila and Priscilla did remain in Ephesus and began helping the new Christians there. Paul continued on to the port city of Caesarea, then up to Jerusalem ("went up and greeted the church"), and finally he "went down" to Antioch (Acts 18:22). This was the end of his second missionary journey.



Apollos in Corinth

- Some time after Paul left Ephesus, Apollos arrived and ministered in the synagogue. He was a Jew from Alexandria who was a trained orator, having the polished style of that school, and he was very knowledgeable about the OT Scriptures. His style was probably very appealing to the philosophy-loving Greeks.
- Apparently Apollos had come under the influence of a disciple of John the Baptist and had learned some of the facts of Jesus' life, including His identity as the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29), but he did not understand the finished work of Christ, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, or the significance of Christian baptism.
- Aquila and Priscilla heard Apollos speak in the synagogue and took him aside to instruct him further. Apollos responded well to their teaching, and when he wanted to minister in Achaia (Corinth, Acts 19:1) the Christians in Ephesus wrote him a letter of recommendation.



Paul in Ephesus

- After his stay in Antioch, Paul set out again by land for Asia. He arrived in Ephesus by way of the "upper country" – which meant he took the more direct high road instead of the typical trade route that followed the Lycus and Meander River valleys.



- Paul met some “disciples” there (Acts 19:1-7), but they were probably not Christians in the full sense of the term because they knew little or nothing about the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross, the giving of the Holy Spirit, or the significance of Christian baptism. Their status was equivalent to OT saints who were ready for the appearance of the Messiah.
- Paul’s teaching ministry in Ephesus began in the synagogue, where he spoke for three months before opposition arose. Paul then moved his ministry to the lecture hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-12). During the next two years the Word of God was proclaimed throughout the entire province of Asia, and the churches in Colosse, Hierapolis, Laodicea, and the other churches mentioned in Revelation 2-3 were probably established during this time.
- It was during this time that Paul also wrote several epistles to Corinth (1 Cor 5:9; 16:8; 2 Cor 2:4, 9; 7:8-12), including the one preserved in our Bible as First Corinthians. He may also have made a brief visit to Corinth during this time (2 Cor 2:1).

The Chronology of Paul’s Corinthian Correspondence

1. While in Ephesus, Paul wrote his “previous letter” to Corinth (see 1 Cor 5:9).
2. Afterward news came to Paul in Ephesus of continuing problems, so he wrote First Corinthians and sent Timothy and Erastus to deliver the letter (see Acts 19:22; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:7-11).
3. Things continued to become worse, so Paul made a brief “painful visit” to Corinth (see 2 Cor 2:1; 12:14; 13:1-2).
4. His visit did not solve the problems in Corinth, so Paul wrote a “severe letter” (see 2 Cor 2:4; 7:8) and sent Titus to deliver it (see 2 Cor 8:6; 12:18).
5. Paul was worried about the response to his “severe letter” and could not wait for Titus to return with news, so Paul set out to meet Titus (see 2 Cor 2:12-13; 7:5). Somewhere in Macedonia Paul met Titus and learned that all was well (see 2 Cor 7:6-7, 13). Probably at Philippi, Paul wrote Second Corinthians and sent Titus to deliver it (see 2 Cor 8:6, 16, 23).
6. Paul had planned to visit Rome, but he wanted to wait until he had made his final tour of Macedonia and Achaia and had gone to Jerusalem with the collection for the needy saints there (see Acts 19:21; 1 Cor 16:1-5), so Paul made one last visit to Corinth.

The Occasion for Paul's Writing

- First Corinthians was written in reply to a letter that had been sent by the church at Corinth to Paul (1 Cor 7:1). That letter had been delivered to Paul by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus who had come to consult with him (1 Cor 16:17-18). In addition to this, Paul had heard from some members of the family of Chloe about specific problems in the church at Corinth which required his attention and correction (1 Cor 1:11).
- The following are some of the subjects which Paul addressed in this letter:
 1. Factions and a divisive spirit within the Church
 2. Pride in human wisdom and incorrect philosophical concepts of the gospel
 3. Fleshly behavior and the carnality of the Corinthians
 4. Wrong ideas about the work of ministers
 5. Immorality within the Church
 6. Lawsuits among believers in the Church
 7. Christian liberty and the physical body
 8. Advice regarding marriage
 9. Christian liberty and meat sacrificed to idols
 10. Impropriety in public worship services
 11. Improper use of spiritual gifts
 12. Resurrection and its importance in the gospel
 13. Collecting funds for needy saints

Points of Application:

- Ancient Corinth was a prosperous city, and sometimes prosperity can be a spiritually dangerous thing. Money is not the "root of all evil" (1 Tim 6:10), but the love of money can certainly distract a Christian from complete devotion to the Lord.
- As it did in Corinth, the grace of God and the power of the gospel message can overcome any obstacle in the lives of those who believe. We should never underestimate the supernatural power of God that can do amazing things, in our lives as well as in the lives of those around us.
- Just as with the apostle Paul in Corinth, God knows when we most need encouragement and He will provide exactly what we need to keep going and to keep growing in our journey of faith.
- Each Christian has his own unique style and special gifts from God. Paul and Apollos ministered in very different ways, and Priscilla & Aquila were just an ordinary couple whom God used to minister to Apollos informally in their own home. Each of us today is called and gifted by God with unique abilities and perspectives. We should accept each other and strive to work together to use our gifts for the glory of God.

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High Peaks Bible Fellowship

Our primary purpose is to uphold the truths of the Word of God.

I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)

Our primary responsibility is to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-12)