

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF I CORINTHIANS

I. THE WRITER

- A. Very little question is raised concerning the author of this book. Both at the beginning and the end of the book, Paul identified himself as being the author - 1:1; 16:21.
- B. He revealed that he had preached in Corinth – 2:1-5, that he had laid the foundation for the church - 3:10. This could only refer to Paul's visit to Corinth during his second missionary journey – Acts 18:1-18.

II. DATE AND PURPOSE OF WRITING:

- A. The Book of I Corinthians Was Written In Approximately 55 A.D.
- B. Few Years After Leaving The Church At Corinth He Received Some Disturbing News Concerning The Church at Corinth.
 - 1. The church was full of pride, the church was excusing sexual immorality, spiritual gifts were being used improperly, and there was widespread misunderstanding of key Christian doctrines.
 - 2. The Apostle Paul wrote I Corinthians in an attempt to restore the Corinthian church to its foundation – Jesus Christ.

III. THE CITY OF CORINTH

- A. The city of Corinth was located on a narrow strip of land called a isthmus = is' mas, (Def. a narrow strip of land having water at each side and connecting two larger bodies of land). This isthmus connected the Peloponnesus = pel' a pa ne' sas (Def. – peninsula forming the S part of the mainland of Greece, 8,130 sq. miles), with Northern Greece, and formed the land bridge between Aegean and the Adriatic Seas.
- B. Located forty miles west of Athens, Corinth was the capital of this southern province called Achaia. The Romans had destroyed the city in 146 B.C. But because its location was so important, they later rebuilt it under Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. By the time Paul arrived in the city in A.D. 50-52, the city had grown to a population of 500,000. Today the ruins of the city remain.
- C. In that day Corinth was the crossroads for travel and commerce, both north and south for the Greek peninsula, and east and west from Rome to the Near East. Corinth's magnificent harbors were on the Aegean Sea, Cenchrea to the east, and Lechaemum on the edge of the Gulf of Corinth to the west. These harbors were crowded with ships, and its streets with travelers and merchants from almost every country under heaven. Thus, Corinth became a city of wealth and pleasure. People went there with money to spend and to indulge themselves in varied pleasure. Even in that pagan world the population of the

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city was bad. At night it became sin-city with its brawls, lewd songs, and drunkenness. In the daytime its markets and squares swarmed with Jewish peddlers, foreign traders, sailors, soldiers, athletes in training, boxers, wrestlers, chariot riders, racing-men, betting men, slaves, idlers, and parasites of every description. To behave as a Corinthian, was a proverbial synonym for living a low, shameful, and immoral life.

- D. On the highest point in the city, stood the pagan temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, full of religious prostitutes to serve the wishes of its followers.
- E. The founding of the Corinthian church is recorded by Luke in – Acts 18:1-18.
 - 1. When Paul arrived at Corinthian, he found two friends, Aquila and Priscilla. They had come from Italy because the ruler there, Caesar Claudius, had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome. The occupation of Aquila and Priscilla was that of making tents. This trade Paul knew well – Acts 18:3.
 - 2. During the week, Paul worked with his hands, but every Sabbath he was in the synagogue, logically proving from the Old Testament that the promised Messiah had to suffer death and be raised from the dead, and that Jesus was indeed that promised Saviour – Acts 17:2-3.
 - 3. He would preach to them and seek to persuade them to come to Christ, but as he continued to constrain them by the Word of God many of the Jews opposed him and abused him. His message was very clear that Jesus was the Christ, but they refused to believe the Word of God, so Paul shook his clothing and told them he was clear from their blood, and that he would carry this gospel message to the Gentiles – Acts 18:6.
- F. Paul then moved his ministry into the house of Justus, commonly known as Titus, which lived next door to the Jewish synagogue. Soon after, the chief ruler of the synagogue, Crispus, along with his family, believed. From this new site, a ministry to the pagan, idolatrous Corinthians was begun with much success.
- G. There must to have been a lot of opposition at this time because God gave Paul special encouragement. He was told he would suffer no bodily harm and that many would be saved through his ministry – Acts 18:9-10.
 - 1. Paul then labored for 18 months, both as an evangelist and as a teacher of those who had been saved.
 - 2. There were many converts of the Jews, but many more of the Gentiles. Many of those with low morals were being saved, such as drunkards, murderers, liars, and thieves. This created many problems in the church later.
- H. After Paul left and went to Ephesians where he stayed three years Acts 19:1-10; 20:31. Apollos was left in Corinth. About this time the church began to divide up into small groups. Apollos left Corinth and returned to Ephesus.

Lesson 3

- I. The situation at Corinth continued to deteriorate. Members of the household of Chloe brought Paul a firsthand report of the divisions within the church, I Cor. 1:11. Also, three other members came later with a financial gift for Paul and I am sure with news of the church, I Cor. 16:17. Perhaps they also carried a letter to Paul from the church with several questions about doctrinal and moral issues, 7:1. So with this information as well as the information that Apollos brought, Paul learned about the true condition of the church. Unable to leave Ephesus at the time, 16:3-9, Paul did the next best thing; he wrote this letter to resolve the many problems.

IV. OUTLINE AND KEY VERSES:

A Book Outline:

1. Introduction - {1:1-9}
 - a. Salutation – {1:1-3}
 - b. Thanksgiving – {1:4-9}
2. Responding to Reports – {1:10 – 6:20}
 - a. A Church Divided – {1:10 – 4:21}
 - b. Social Relations and Legal Action – {5:1 – 6:20}
3. Responses to Their Letter – {7:1- 16:12}
 - a. Marriage - {7:1-40}
 - b. Meat Offered to Idols – {8:1 – 11:1}
 - c. Women in Worship – {11:2 – 11:16}
 - d. Lord's Supper Abused – {11:17 – 11:34}
 - e. Spiritual Gifts Abused – {12:1 – 14:40}
 - f. Disbelief in the Resurrection – {15:1 – 15:58}
 - g. The Collection and Apollos – {16:1-12}
4. Conclusion – {16:13-24}

B. Key Verses:

1. I Corinthians 3:3
2. I Corinthians 6:19-20
3. I Corinthians 10:31
4. I Corinthians 12:7
5. I Corinthians 13:4-7
6. I Corinthians 15:3-4

Lesson 4

WORKSHEET

1. Who wrote the book of First Corinthians? - 1:1; 16:21
2. Paul revealed that he had _____ in Corinth – 2:1-5, that he had laid the foundation for the _____ - 3:10. This could only refer to Paul's visit to Corinth during his _____ missionary journey – Acts 18:1-18.
3. The book of I Corinthians was written in approximately.
4. Why did Paul write the book of I Corinthians?
5. When Paul arrived at Corinthian he found two friends that he worked with who were they? – Acts 18:2-3
6. What kind of work did they do? – Acts 18:3
7. During the week, Paul worked with his hands, but every Sabbath he was in the _____ preaching. – Acts 17:2-3.
8. He would preach to them and seek to persuade them to come to Christ but when they rejected his message what did he do? – Acts 18:6
9. There must to have been a lot of opposition at this time because God gave Paul special encouragement. He was told he would suffer no bodily harm and that many would be saved through his ministry – Acts 18:9-10. What do these two verses mean?
10. Paul left Corinth and went to Ephesus where he stayed for _____ years – Acts 19:1-10; 20:31.
11. What family brought news of the condition of the Corinthian church to Paul? – I Cor. 1:11