

## **CORINTH, GREECE Introduction Material**

Corinth was a very old, large, and important city in the nation of Greece. It is thought that over a half million people (actually about **650,000**) lived in Corinth and the adjoining area. Of this number, approximately 250,000 were free persons and 400,000 were slaves. The reason so many people lived here is because Corinth was a very busy and thriving center of commerce, located on a 4 mile strip of land between 2 very busy seaports (Cenchrea 6 miles to the east and Lechaemum 1.5 miles to the west.) The cargoes from the ships of the two seaports were transported into Corinth or on to the other harbor by being hauled, sometimes ship and all, on a road between the two seaports. In this way, cargoes of all types of products and goods from such places as Spain and Italy on the west and Egypt, Asia Minor, and other locations on the East passed through Corinth.

In addition to the seaports on the E and the W, Corinth was also on a major North South Highway. Since it was on these major land and water trade routes, the city was large and impressive with wide and magnificent streets and contained temples, marketplaces, theaters, statues, fountains, the meat market (macellium), and the Bema. Also, the famous Spring of Peirene ("...drink deep or not at all...") was located here.

Corinth, having been a major commercial center, dating as far back as the 8th century BC and earlier, was still a place where everything crossed and passed and, at the time Paul was writing to the Church located there, it was the largest commercial City in Greece

In addition to the commerce, tourists, and travelers, which brought much wealth into the city, Corinth was also very wealthy because of the surrounding fertile farm lands which produced olives, grapes, dates, and other fruits.

Of course, commerce was not all that passed through Corinth. Obviously with travelers from all over the world passing through its streets, markets, and shops, with them came the beliefs and cultures of those other countries. Furthermore, being located in Greece, the culture of Corinth was the typical Greek culture with its emphasis on learning and philosophy, so its citizens were very interested and involved in oratory, in discussing and debating concepts and philosophies, and in learning about new beliefs and gods. Indeed, they placed a very great value and premium on knowledge and intellectual wisdom. They also were very involved in participating in or watching all types of athletic sports and games. (As you will recall, the Olympics originated in Greece.)

Concerning the religions in Corinth, there were many! Some sources say that as many as 12 Temples were located in Corinth. Some of these temples were in the city, while others were located on the Acrocorinth, a 500 foot high hill (high place) that rose above the city. On the top of this hill was the temple and statue of Aphrodite (Astarte), the goddess of love and fertility, whose worshipers practiced religious prostitution, with over 2,000 pagan priestess-prostitutes, as a part of their rituals! The Temple of Asclepius, the god of healing, was also located in Corinth. And in the center of the city was the temple of Apollo, which dated back to the 6th century BC. There was also a Jewish Synagogue.

Therefore, Corinth, like any big city, was a place of varied beliefs, cultures, religions, and of open and unrestrained immorality. It was a very wealthy, proud, and wicked city!

And it was to the Christian Church in this old, famous, large, vile, and wicked city that Paul is writing the letter known to us as 1 Corinthians, the letter that we will be studying in this Bible Study.

## **1 Corinthians 1**

<sup>1</sup> Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,

<sup>2</sup> To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:

<sup>3</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Thanksgiving**

<sup>4</sup> I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. <sup>5</sup> For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— <sup>6</sup> God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. <sup>7</sup> Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. <sup>8</sup> He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **A Church Divided Over Leaders**

<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you, brothers and sisters,<sup>[a]</sup> in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. <sup>11</sup> My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. <sup>12</sup>What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas<sup>[b]</sup>"; still another, "I follow Christ."

<sup>13</sup> Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? <sup>14</sup> I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, <sup>15</sup> so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. <sup>16</sup> (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) <sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

**Introduction questions:**

1. **Who wrote** this letter (book) of 1 Corinthians? (1:1)

\_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

2. **To whom** was it written? (1:2) \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Are the recipients of this letter Christians?** (Believers in God / Jesus) (1:2)

.....Circle your answer.....Yes.....No

Corinth was a city in what country? \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately how many people lived in Corinth and its 'suburbs'?

\_\_\_\_\_

Thinking now about where YOU live, is Corinth larger or smaller than the town or city in which you live?

\_\_\_\_\_

Let's think about why Corinth was such a large city of over 500,000 people:

Was it a "college" town such as Athens, Greece? .....Yes.....No

Was it a big commercial center.....Yes.....No

Was it on a major trade route with highways and seaports?.....Yes.....No

? **What was its predominant "culture"?** (Circle your answer from the choices below.)

.....Babylonian.....Hebrew.....Roman.....Greek.....Egyptian..

Since Corinth's culture was based on the Greek way of living and thinking, **what kinds of things were important and emphasized in Corinth?** (Circle your answer from the choices below. ... Hint: More than 1 answer may be correct.)

.....Greek Philosophy.....Man's Wisdom.....Man's Knowledge.....

.....Art and Culture.....Intellectual pride.....Oratory.....

.....Worship of many gods & goddesses.....education.....  
.....learning.....sacrificing to pagan gods and goddesses...  
.....immorality.....physical beauty.....Sports.....  
.....worship or adulation of men who are wise and knowledgeable.....

**1 Corinthians 1:1-17, Divisions in the Church:**

1. What do you feel Paul meant by saying, "to those sanctified in Christ Jesus?"

2. How many spiritual gifts did the Christians at Corinth lack?

3. What do you feel Paul meant when he said for them all to agree? Were they to agree on everything?

4. How do you feel the Christians in Corinth Chloe's household after this letter was received? Why?

5. Based on verses 12-14, what do you think Paul would have to say about the denominationalism rampant throughout the Church today?

6. How do you feel people who worship with you regard other denominations and independent Christians?

7. How do you feel God wants us to regard them? Why?

8. Given the topics of the letter and the circumstances under which it was written, do you think it applies to us today?