

CORINTH, CORINTHIANS and US

Acts 18:1-17; I Cor 1:2-9, 6:9-11

CORINTH & the CORINTHIANS

I. LOCATION

- A. Isthmus—route between Adriatic & Aegean seas; four mile transit, 45 miles from Athens
 - 1. Lechaem (W) and Cenchreae (E) anchoring cities
 - 2. As with Suez & Panama canals, lucrative trade, taxes
 - 3. Mild, Mediterranean climate
- B. Geographical/Environmental determinism? (Darwinian roots?)
 - 1. Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* stressed impact of mountains, plains, soils, etc.
 - 2. Webb's *The Great Plains* explained much of its history vis a vis trying environment
 - 3. Corinth's location certainly helped shape its culture

II. POPULATION (estimates range from 100,000 to 1,000,000, thoroughly cosmopolitan)

- A. Dorian invasions (ca. 1000) and important Greek city-state in Peloponnesus
 - 1. Established colonies, e.g. Corcyra & Syracuse
 - 2. Aligned with Sparta in Peloponnesian War (432-404 B.C.)
 - 3. Submits to Philip of Macedon & part of Achaean League
 - 4. Isthmian games next to Olympic games in importance
 - 5. Considerable architectural, artistic activity encouraged by wealthy city.
- B. Roman Control
 - 1. Razed by Mummius (146 B.C.)
 - 2. Re-established by Julius Caesar (44 B.C.) & became settlement center for soldiers
 - 3. Capital of province of Achaia (Gallio & Paul)
- C. Racial/ethnic determinism? (Darwinian roots?)
 - 1. Social Darwinism spawns ideologies powerful in Germany (some areas of U.S.)
 - 2. Traits prevalent in various people groups? Racial or cultural?

III. SITUATION facing St Paul, ca 50 A.D.

- A. Mercantile, Commercial, Business center—flourishing, wealthy city
 - 1. Maritime endeavors (ship building, importing/exporting)
 - 2. Financial center needed for various enterprises
 - 3. Manufacturing, craftsmen of all sorts—Phoenicians established textile center
- B. Rival religions
 - 1. Traditional Greek/Roman gods—temples, rituals; Temple of Venus with 1,000 women
 - 2. Egyptian and Asian cults all vying for attention, recruits
 - 3. Imperial cult re Augustus & subsequent caesars
- C. Licentious city, rather typical of ports throughout Empire—temple prostitutes, temple meals, permissive atmosphere (cf. chapter 6:9-11)
- D. Slavery endemic throughout empire (ranging from 1/3 in Rome to 2/3 in Alexandria)

IV. SUCCESSFUL CHURCH-PLANT

- A. With help of laymen such as Aquilla & Priscilla, Paul successfully established home church—evident 50 years later in St. Clement's Epistle,
- B. Multiple problems demand Paul's attention, rebukes, discipline

HOW CORINTHIAN ARE WE?

- I. An industrial/commercial powerhouse—data from *The Genius of America*
- II. A collage of ethnic/racial peoples—a “melting pot” or “tossed salad”?
- III. Religious diversity, division, uncertainty—theistic, deistic, humanitarian, progressive
- IV. Profound, disquieting moral issues
 - 1. “Culture of death”—abortion, euthanasia, mounting suicides
 - 2. Family dissolving—cohabitation, divorce; amazing reaction to Harrison Butkner speech
 - 3. Sexual immorality: fornication, adultery, sodomy
 - 4. Economic, political tendencies suggest decline