

CHRONOLOGY OF CORINTHIANS

by Wil Pounds

The following is a working chronology of the activities of the Apostle Paul in relation to the church at Corinth.

1. Paul visited Corinth on his second missionary journey and established a church there about A.D. 50 (Acts 18:1-17).
2. While in Ephesus (A.D. 55), Paul heard of moral problems within the Corinthian church from Chloe's people" and wrote a letter of instruction to them. He referred to this "previous letter" in *1 Corinthians* 5:9. This letter no longer exists; it was lost without trace. We will call it Paul's "Corinthians A" letter after F. F. Bruce's designation (F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1977, p. 264).
3. Paul received a letter from some of the members in the church concerning serious problems within the fellowship (I Cor. 7:1). They sought Paul's counsel in dealing with the issues. The family of Chloe came with news of the church (I Cor. 1:11), and the visit of Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (I Cor. 16:17). On the basis of the letter and other information that reached him in Ephesus about problems in the church, Paul wrote what is now called *1 Corinthians* in about A.D. 55 and sent it to Corinth via Timothy (I Cor. 4:17). We will call *1 Corinthians* letter "Corinthians B".
4. The pastoral letter, *1 Corinthians*, was not successful and the situation grew worse. In fact, it seems to have stimulated further rebellion against Paul's authority. In response Paul probably made a brief visit across the Aegean Sea to Corinth in a personal attempt to resolve the crisis (2 Cor. 2:1; 12:14; 13:1-2). This is often referred to as the "painful visit" which breaks his heart. Paul was rebuffed by members of the church. The opposition comes to a head with one member in particular defying his authority. The leadership in the church took no effective action in Paul's defense. Paul, deeply humiliated, left Corinth.
5. The "painful visit" didn't accomplish its goal, therefore Paul returned to Ephesus and wrote a third letter to the Corinthians "out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears." It is referred to in *2 Corinthians* 2:3-4, 9, and 7:8, 12. This "exceedingly severe letter," delivered by Titus (2 Cor. 2:3f, 13; 7:13), is often called the stern or rebuking letter. This letter left Paul almost sorry that he had written it. We will call it letter "Corinthians C".
6. Titus visited Corinth with the "severe letter" in an attempt to reconcile the situation. Paul, in the mean time, was so anxious to hear from Titus that he left Ephesus traveling north to Troas seeking him (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:5, 13). Somewhere in Macedonia, probably Philippi, Paul received the good news from Titus of a change in attitude in the Corinthian church. The leader of rebellion had been rejected and disciplined. The church was once again open to Paul's counsel and desirous of his friendship.
7. Paul responded by writing *2 Corinthians* from Philippi around A.D. 56 or early A.D. 57. We will call this letter "Corinthians D."
8. Paul made a final visit to Corinth (Acts 20:1-3) during which he solidified his relationship with the church and received the mission offering for the Jerusalem church. On this stay in Corinth Paul probably wrote his

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and received the mission offering for the Jerusalem church. On this stay in Corinth Paul probably wrote his letter to the Romans. He sends Titus back to them with two other friends.

F. F. Bruce is of the opinion that "this second visit of Titus to Corinth was not so happy as the former one. . . Paul was really putting them on the spot. . . . A new feeling of resentment showed itself among some members of the church, and it was fostered by certain visitors to Corinth who did their best to undermine Paul's prestige in his converts' eyes." (Bruce, p. 276). He bases his theory on 2 Cor. 10-13.

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