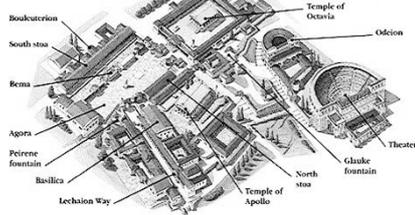


NT Introduction: 1 Corinthians

by Lim Kar Yong

RECONSTRUCTION OF ANCIENT CORINTH (c.AD 100)



Discussion

Paul's founding mission in Corinth is recorded in Acts 18:1-18. According to Acts 18:11, he stayed there for a period of a year and a half. We can assume that during this period, Paul would have instructed the Corinthian believers in this new found faith.

- What do you think Paul could have taught the Corinthians?

Paul's Mission in Corinth

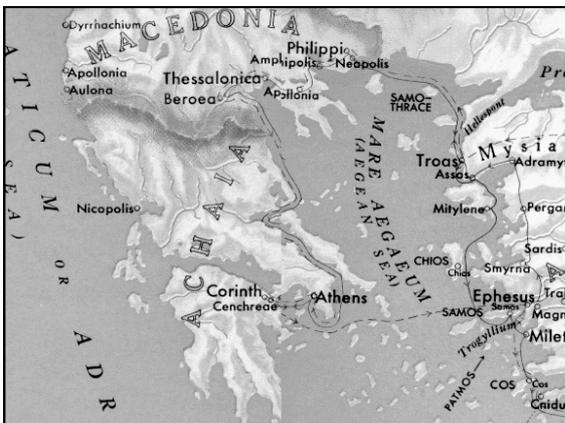
After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

- Acts 18:1

Where is Corinth?

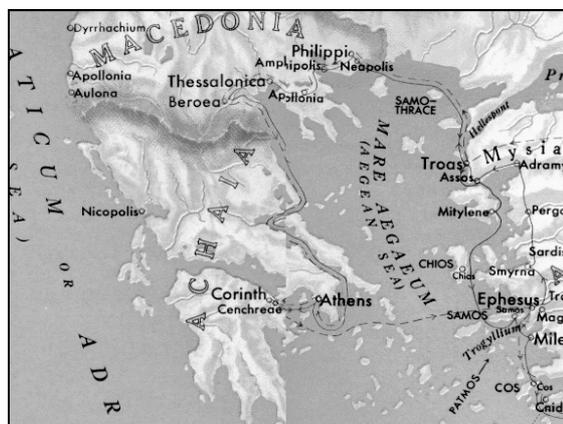
Corinth "is situated on the Isthmus and is master of two harbours, of which the one (Cenchreae) leads straight to Asia, and the other (Lechaemum) to Italy; and it makes easy the exchange of merchandise from both countries that are so far distant from each other."

- Strabo *Geography* 8.6.20



- Corinth also controlled the land route from the Peloponnese.
- "It receives all cities and sends them off again and is a common refuge for all, like a kind of route or passage for all mankind, no matter where one would travel, and it is a common city for all Greeks, indeed, as it were, a kind of metropolis and mother in this respect." Aelius Aristides, *Orations* 46.24

- Those who frequented Corinth include “traders or pilgrims or envoys or passing travellers.” Favorinus
- Merchandise: leather, linen, wine, oils, fine marble – goods that appeal to the tastes of the wealthy residents and traders



Why did Paul choose Corinth as His Next Mission Field?

- The Location
- The History of the City
- The Characteristics of the City
- The People
 - Traders: Commercial dominance
 - Pilgrims & Passing Travellers: Transport hub
 - Envoys: Political influence

Why did Paul choose Corinth as His Next Mission Field?

- The Activities
 - Isthmian Games in 51
 - The games drew “crowds of people” (Strabo)
- Political Advantage
 - Administrative capital of the province
- Socio-economic powers, crowds from all cities, mini globalisation

- Summary
 - The city of Corinth:
 - Offers Paul possibility of influencing people from different background and locations
 - Offers Paul avenue of communicating and spreading the gospel
 - Offers Paul great opportunities of reaching the Gentiles & Jews

What are the Challenges Faced by Paul in Corinth?

- Socio-economic problems
 - “Corinth is called ‘wealthy’ because of its commerce.” (Strabo)
 - Corinth’s wealth: trade, banking, products of artisans, government administration
 - Benefactors of the Isthmian Games
 - Poor and Rich

What are the Challenges Faced by Paul in Corinth?

- Social Network
 - The proverb: “Not for every man is the voyage to Corinth”
 - Self-made people
 - Patron-Client relationship
 - “This is my defence to those who sit in judgement of me...I have not used any of these rights.” 1 Cor 9:3-18

What are the Challenges Faced by Paul in Corinth?

- Status Inconsistencies
 - “The city of Corinth...was always great and wealthy, and it was well equipped with men skilled both in the affairs of state and in the craftsmen’s art.” (Strabo)
 - “Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.” (1 Cor 1:26)

What are the Challenges Faced by Paul in Corinth?

- Religious Structures and Practices
 - More than 26 deities worshipped – Poseidon, Apollos, Demeter and Kore, Aphrodite, Fortune, Asklepion, Octavia, etc.
 - 34 temples excavated
- Imperial Cult
 - “saviour”; “lord”; “son of God”

What Could Possibly Be the Initial Attraction of Paul’s Gospel?

- Religious attraction?
- Social Identity?

Paul and the Corinthians

- Paul's dialogue with the Corinthians
- Paul's activity in Corinth and contacts with the Corinthians according to Acts
 - Acts 18
 - Acts 19:1
 - Acts 20:2-6

- The sequence of Paul's contacts with the Corinthians according to Paul's letters
 - Founding Visit – AD50/51 – as per Delphi inscription; Acts 18:12-16

- **First Letter (1 Cor 5:9)**
 - Why?
- Information from Corinth
 - Paul in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8)?
 - Oral report from Chloe's household
 - Letter from the Corinthians (6x **Περί δε** in 1 Cor 7:1; 7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1; 16:12)
- **Second Letter (1 Corinthians)**

- Second Visit
 - Painful visit (2 Cor 2:1)
 - Paul returns to Ephesus
- **Third Letter**
 - Severe letter (2 Cor 2:3, 4, 9; 7:8, 12)
 - 2 Cor 10-13?
 - Or letter is now lost?
 - Paul's "death" experience in Asia? (2 Cor 1:8)
 - Paul travels to Troas, Macedonia (2 Cor 2:12-13)

- Information from Corinth
 - Paul meets Titus (2 Cor 7:6)
 - Titus' report (2 Cor 7:7)
- **Fourth Letter (2 Corinthians or part of 2 Corinthians?)**
- Third Visit?
- Fifth Letter?

Group Discussion

- Based on internal evidence and Acts 18,
 - describe Paul's relationship with the Corinthians
 - describe the social and economic background of the Corinth church
 - describe the spiritual state of the Corinth church
 - describe the occasion and purpose for 1 Corinthians
 - what is the possible outline for 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians

- Authorship
 - Internal Evidence
 - External Evidence
- Date and Place of Origin
 - Gallio – 50-51
 - Ephesus
- Destination/Audience

- Occasion and Method of Composition
 - Previous letter
 - Oral report from Chloe's Household
 - Letter from Corinth
- Unity of the Letter
- Relationship with 2 Corinthians
 - Paul's relationship with Corinth
 - Paul's opponents in 2 Corinthians
 - Who?
 - Newly arrival?

Primary Sources

- Pausanias, *Greece*, 2.1.1-5.1
- Strabo, *Geography*, 8.6.20-23

Outline of 1 Corinthians

1. Salutation (1:1-9)
2. Response to Chloe's Household (1:10-6:20)
 - a) Divisions in the church (1:10-4:21)
 - i. Fact of the divisions (1:10-17)
 - ii. Causes of the divisions (1:18-4:13)
 - iii. Resolution for the divisions (4:12-21)
 - b) Failure to discipline the immoral brother (5:1-13)

- c) Failure to resolve personal disputes (6:1-11)
 - d) Failure to exercise sexual purity (6:12-21)
3. Response to Letter from Corinth (7:1-16:12)
 - a) Concerning marriage, celibacy and ministry (7:1-40)
 - b) Concerning Food & Christian liberty (8:1-11:1)
 - i. Eating meat offered to idols (8:1-13)
 - ii. Paul's personal example in giving up his rights (9:1-27)
 - iii. Israel's failure as example (10:1-13)
 - iv. Eating meat in pagan temples (10:14-22)
 - v. Eating meat from marketplace and in homes (10:23-11:1)

- c) Concerning Worship (11:2-14:40)
 - i. Worship (11:2-16)
 - ii. Abuse in the celebration of the Lord's Supper (11:17-34)
 - iii. Abuse in the exercising of spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40)
 - d) Concerning resurrection (15:1-58)
 - e) Concerning the collection for Jerusalem (16:1-11)
 - f) Concerning Apollos (16:12)
4. Conclusion

How did Paul use what he saw in Corinth in addressing the church?

Temples

- Temple of Apollos (22)
 - 7 of the original 38 Doric columns are still standing
 - Height 24 ft; diameter 6ft

How Does Paul's Use the Temple Imagery?

- Church divisions
- Sexual Immorality
- Not to be "Yoked with Unbelievers"

- Divisions in the church of Corinth
 - 1 Cor 1:10-17
 - "I am a follower of Paul"; "I follow Apollos"; "I follow Peter"; "I follow only Christ"
 - 1 Cor 3:5 – Who is Apollos, and who is Paul?

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

- 1 Cor 3:16-17

- Sexual immorality
 - 1 Cor 6:9-20

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

- 1 Cor 6:18-20

- Not to be "Yoked with Unbelievers"
 - 2 Cor 6:14-7:1
 - What does Paul mean here? Is this a reference to marriage with unbelievers?
 - "What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God."

Lechaion Road (1)

- Main street – note the marble flooring
- Originated from the Lechaion seaport
- Imposing Acrocorinth at the background
- Meat Market (4)
- Baths (5)
- Peirene Fountains (7)
- Jewish Synagogue?

Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, for, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. But if anyone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience' sake--the other man's conscience, I mean, not yours.

- 1 Cor 10: 25-29

- The Guiding Principle
- 2 Issues:
 - Food sold in the marketplace
 - Food served in the temple as part of cultic meals

Roman Villas

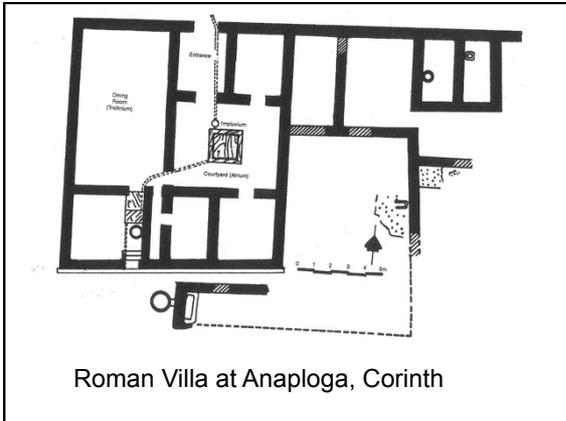
- Mosiac flooring – status symbol

Layout of Roman Villa

- Owner of a villa – what is his socio-economic status?
- House church – where do they meet?
- Eucharist – where is it held?
- Equality – is this practised?

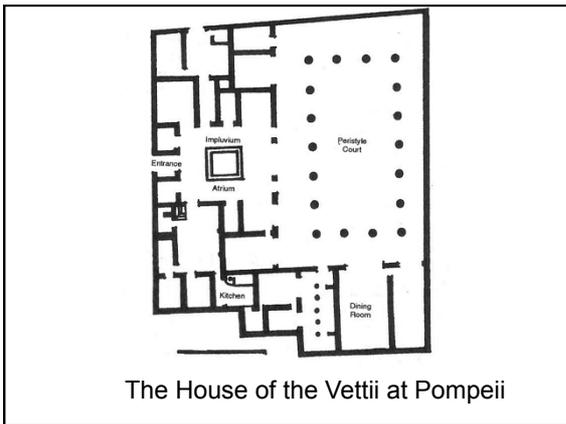
Roman Villa at Anaploga

- Meetings held in public parts of the house:
 - Entrance
 - Atrium (courtyard) – 16ft x 20ft
 - Triclinium (dining room) – 18ft x 25ft



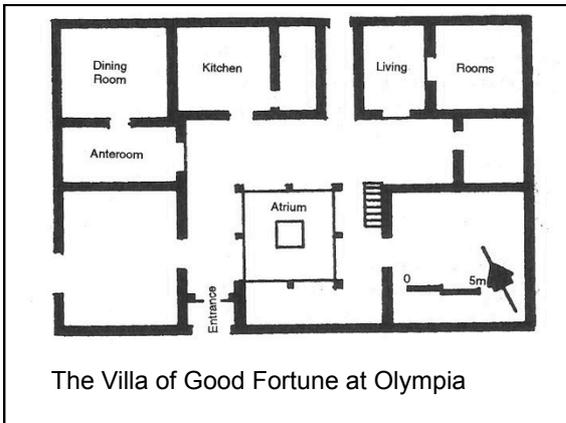
House of the Vettii at Pompeii

- Atrium (courtyard) – 33ft x 33ft
- Triclinium (dining room) – 13ft x 21ft



Villa of Good Fortune at Olympia

- Atrium (courtyard) – 23ft x 20ft
- Triclinium (dining room) – 16ft x 19ft



House of Gaius

- Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings. (Rom 16:23)
- “the whole church comes together...” (1 Cor 14:23)
- Some of the congregation (16 names):
 - Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:2)
 - Titius Justus (Acts 18:7)

- Crispus (Acts 18:8)
- Sothenes (Acts 18:17)
- Gaius (1 Cor 1:14)
- Stephanas (1 Cor 1:16)
- Apollos (1 Cor 16:12)
- Fortunatus, Achaicus (1 Cor 16:17)
- Lucius, Jason, Sospater, Tertius, Eratus, Quartus (Rom 16:21-24)
- Spouses, children, slaves?
- Total number: 50?

- How to accommodate this number?
- Some in Triclinium and others in Atrium?
- Prevailing Social custom:
 - Triclinium – reclining by dining table
 - Atrium – sitting down
- 1 Cor 8:10?
 - For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating (Greek: katakeimenon: reclining at table) in an idol's temple..
- 1 Cor 14:30?
 - And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down,..

- Type of food served?
 - Different types of food to different types of guest?

“The best dishes were set in front of himself and a select few, and cheap scraps of food before the rest of the company. He had even put the wine into tiny little flasks, divided into three categories... One lot was intended for himself and for us, another for his lesser friends (all his friends are graded) and the third for his and our freedmen.”

- Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 2.6

“See now that huge lobster being served to my lord, all garnished with asparagus. See how his lordly breast distinguishes the dish. With what a tail he looks down upon the company, borne aloft in the hands of that tall attendant! Before you is placed on a tiny plate a crab hemmed in by half an egg – a fit banquet for the dead...”

Juvenal

- Discrimination in the Corinth church?
 - Two groups of believers, one in triclinium and one in atrium?
 - Different types of food served?
 - Food from kitchen destined for triclinium carried through the atrium
 - The rich and the poor?
 - Factor for divisions in the church?
 - Problems in Eucharist?
 - How do we apply this in our context?

In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you,... When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk.

Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!

- 1 Cor 11:17-22

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

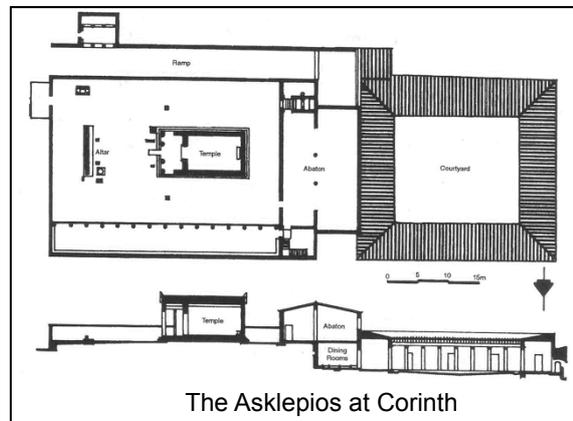
- 1 Cor 11:27-29

Temple of Asklepios

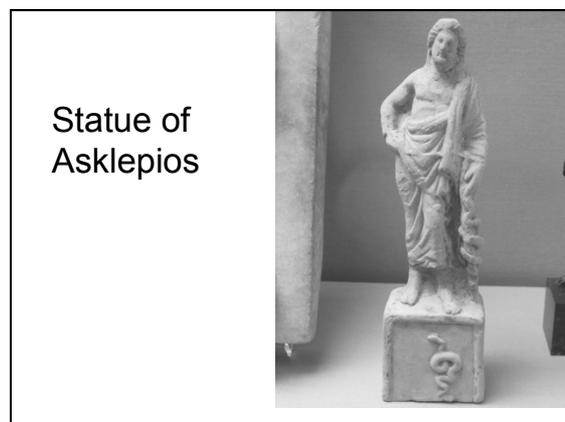
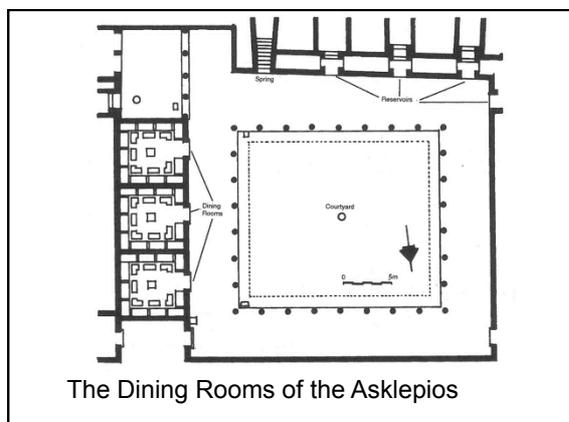
- God of healing
- Popularity attested by the terra cotta replicas of various parts of the body healed



Marble relief of left leg with inscription dedicating it to Asklepios and Hygeia (health) from Tyche as thank offering, presumably for cure of affliction on the leg



The Asklepios at Corinth



- The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.
- For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.
- Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.

- As it is, there are many parts, but one body.
 - Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.
- 1 Cor 12:12-14, 20, 27

If the *foot* should say, "Because I am not a *hand*, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the *ear* should say, "Because I am not an *eye*, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

- 1 Cor 12:15-16

If the whole body were an *eye*, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an *ear*, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

- 1 Cor 12:17-18

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment.

But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

- 1 Cor 12:21-26

Paul's Ministry in Corinth

- Why is Paul so concerned that the Corinthian church must be different from the prevailing culture?
- What is Paul's ultimate hope for the Christian church?
- In what ways/areas does Paul hope to see the Corinthian church be agents of transformation?

What Story are We Telling as a Church?

- The Nature of Our Ministry Today?
 - Our preaching?
 - Our witness?
 - Our community as a people of God?
 - Our worldviews?
- What lessons can we learn from the Corinthian church?

- If Paul were to write to your church:
 - In what specific areas would Paul thank God for the church?
 - In what specific areas would Paul rebuke/instruct/correct the church?
- How can we be agents of transformation in our present context?

What Happens When Nature
Calls?