

Bible Survey, part 5 – The New Testament

The Epistles – 1 Corinthians

“Keeping the Power in the Gospel”

OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE

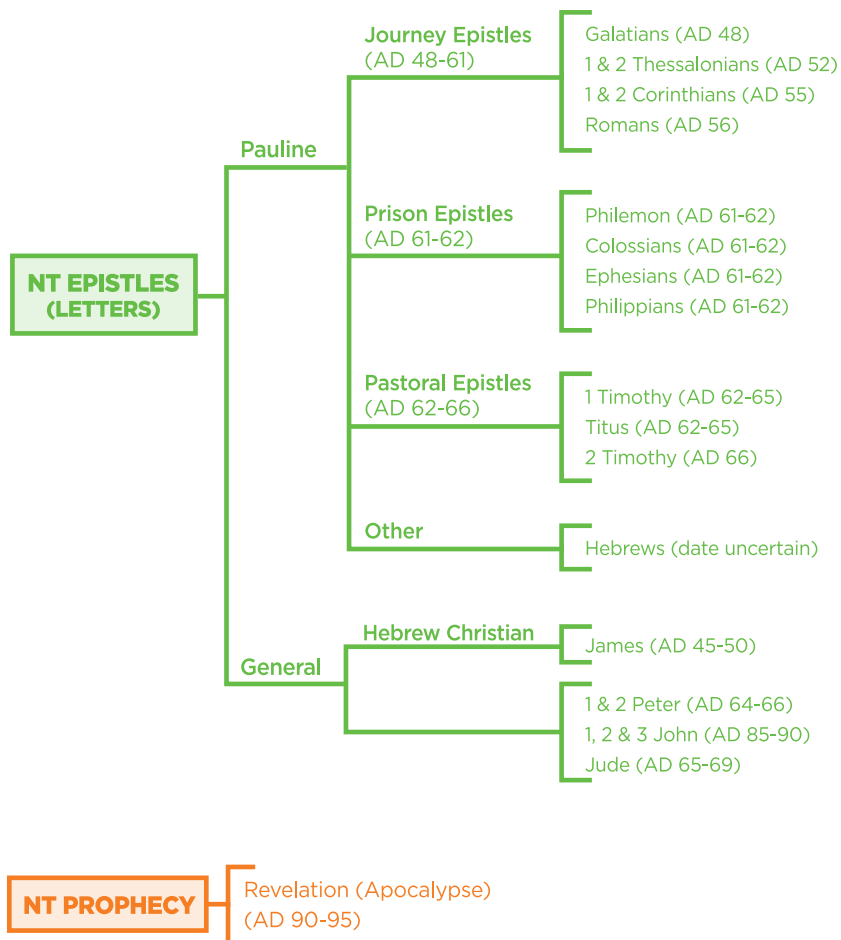
- **WHAT** each book is about
- **WHEN** each one was written
- **HOW** they are all interconnected

“Epistle” = “letter”

After the Gospels and the Book of Acts, the rest of the New Testament is made up of these 21 New Testament “letters”:

- 14 were written by Paul
- 7 were written by other Apostles

OUTLINE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES



HIGHLIGHTS IN THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

Birth of Paul	around the time of Christ's birth
Conversion of Paul	AD 33
First missionary journey	AD 47-48
Galatians written after first journey	AD 48
Apostolic Council at Jerusalem	AD 49
Second missionary journey	AD 49-52
1 & 2 Thessalonians written during second journey	AD 52
Third missionary journey	AD 52-56
1 & 2 Corinthians written during third journey	AD 55
Romans written during third journey	AD 56
Arrest in Jerusalem	AD 56
Journey to Rome	AD 60-61
In Rome awaiting trial, under guard	AD 61-62
Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians written from prison	AD 61-62
Paul released, revisits churches, resumes evangelistic ministry	AD 62-66
1 Timothy, Titus written	AD 62-65
Paul arrested, imprisoned at Rome	AD 66
2 Timothy written from Rome	AD 66
Paul executed	AD 66



Paul's letters **do not appear in chronological order** in the New Testament but are grouped in 2 sections:

#1 Letters to the churches (Romans to 2 Thessalonians)

#2 Letters to individuals (1 Timothy to Hebrews)

All Paul's "church letters" follow the same basic pattern:

- The **beginning** = **theological issues**
- The **end** = **everyday Christian-life topics**

Enhanced CD contains:

- **Audio file** to play on any CD player
- **MP3 file** to play on your computer
- **Sermon Notes** – content of the PowerPoint slides in Word document

Download MP3 file and Sermon Notes on MBC website (mcleanbible.org – click on Sermon Archives)

Paul came to Corinth in 50-51 A.D., established a church, and spent 18 months there discipling these young believers (Acts 18:1-17).



The Corinth Canal

Method #1 – If it was a big ship they would unload the cargo on one side of the isthmus – transport it on land across the isthmus – then reload it on a different ship docked and waiting on the other side.

Method #2 – If it was a small ship – they would take the entire ship out of the water on one side of the isthmus – transport the whole ship on land across the isthmus then reload it on the other side.

Because of all this commerce, Corinth had become the **chief city of Greece** at the time of the Apostle Paul

- **Population** = 700,000 people
- **Renown** for its immorality



A year later Paul headed out from Antioch on his third missionary journey.



“For I have been informed concerning you by Chloe’s people.” 1 Corinthians 1:11

“Now, concerning the things about which you wrote to me . . .” 1 Corinthians 7:1

And so – 1 Corinthians really has **two distinct parts**:

#1 – Chapters 1-6 where Paul confronts the Corinthians about the sin going on there that “Chloe’s people” had told him about

#2 – Chapters 7-16 where Paul answers the specific questions they had written him about

When we read 1 Corinthians we discover – that Paul addresses a **ton of spiritual issues** – because this church had a **ton of spiritual problems!**

Divisions within the church family (Chapters 1-4)

Grossly immoral behavior within the church that the church had ignored (Chapter 5)

Believers suing other believers in secular courts (Chapter 6)

Unbiblical teaching about sex (Chapter 6)

Confusion over marriage and divorce (Chapter 7)

How to correctly handle our freedom in Christ (Chapters 8-10)

The role of women/the celebration of the Lord’s Supper/the practice of spiritual gifts – especially charismatic gifts (Chapters 11-14)

Heresy about the resurrection (Chapter 15)

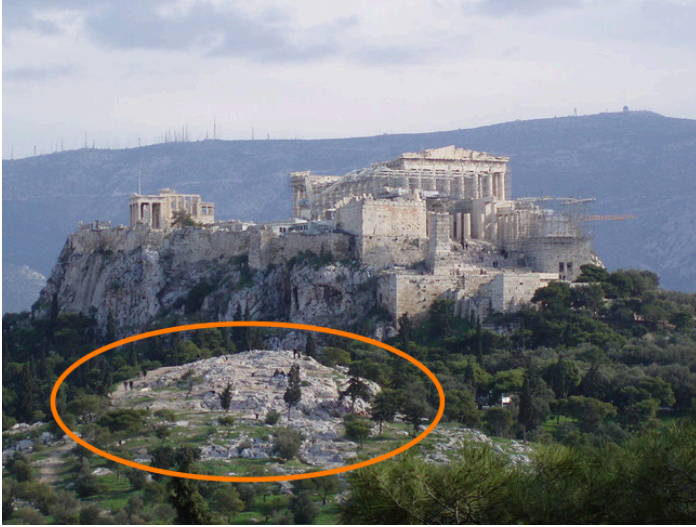
Confusion about financial giving to the Lord (Chapter 16)

The Corinthian church became, by far, the most carnal, sinful church that the Apostle Paul started!

So What?



Athens was home to the greatest philosophers in the world at that time – and they would meet and debate on **Mars Hill** [just below the Parthenon].



Suddenly, Paul finds himself in front of the most brilliant minds in the world with an **open invitation** to speak to them about Jesus.

“Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious, and while I was examining the objects of your worship, I found an altar inscribed to ‘An Unknown God.’ This is the God that I proclaim to you.”
Acts 17:22, 23

“As Lord of heaven and earth, He made the world and all things in it, and does not live in temples made with hands.” Acts 17:24

“For in Him, we all live and move and have our being, even as one of your own poets has said, ‘For we are His offspring.’” Acts 17:28

“And having overlooked our times of ignorance, God now declares to people everywhere that they must repent.” Acts 17:30

“Because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man He has appointed, having given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead.” Acts 17:31

“But a few men joined Paul and believed . . . along with a woman named Damaris.” Acts 17:34

“And after these things, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.” Acts 18:1

Every other place where Paul preached, large numbers of people came to Christ – but **NOT** in Athens!

Every other place where Paul preached, he always left a church behind – but **NOT** in Athens!

As far as we know – Athens is the **only place Paul ever ministered** where he **failed to establish a church!**

“When I came to you [in Corinth], I did not come with eloquence of speech or high-sounding wisdom. For I resolved to know **nothing** among you **except** Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” 1 Corinthians 2:1-2

“My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of human wisdom, but were with the Holy Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on the power of God.”
1 Corinthians 2:4-5

Paul is not saying these things for no reason – he is **reacting** to a **serious mistake** he feels he made in Athens.

“I did not come to you with eloquence of speech or high-sounding wisdom . . .” – **Like I tried to use in Athens!**

“I did not use persuasive words of human wisdom . . .” – **Like I tried to use in Athens!**

“I resolved to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” – **Which is not what I based my sermon on in Athens!**

If you compare Paul’s message in Athens to every other message of his in the Bible – you’ll find that it’s radically different.

I believe Paul left all these elements out in order to try and **“repackage”** the Gospel for these Athenian intellectuals.

But what Paul **learned** in trying to do this is that there is a limit – beyond which we **cannot go – without robbing the Gospel of its power.**

“From now on, I am resolved to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”
1 Corinthians 2:2

There is nothing wrong with us trying to make the Gospel **relevant** to people – but we must not **“cut the heart out of the Gospel”!**

The “heart” of the Gospel:

- The sinfulness of man & the holiness of God
- The reality of hell
- Man’s inability to save himself
- The virgin birth
- The deity of Christ
- His sinless life
- His death on the cross
- His shed blood as the only payment for our sin God will accept
- His plan of salvation as the exclusive way to get into heaven
- His resurrection as the supreme proof of it all

The **true message of the cross** – no matter how we “package” it – is **“offensive”** to people’s fleshly pride.

“. . . the **offense** of the cross.” Galatians 5:11

But remember what Paul learned in Athens: we **cannot remove** “the **offense** of the cross” **without destroying** the “**power** of the cross”!

If a “repackaged” Gospel didn’t get you and me born-again and headed to heaven – then **why in the world would we offer it to somebody else?**

As we share Christ, we want to be sensitive, gentle, relevant and respectful.

But **above all else**, we want to be **“straight”** with people and tell them the **TRUE** Gospel.

“We are considered fools for Christ’s sake.” 1 Corinthians 4:10

“For the message of the cross is **foolishness** to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the **power of God.**” 1 Corinthians 1:18

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the **power of God** unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.” Romans 1:16

The “**un-eviscerated**” Gospel – the “**un-compromised**” Gospel – this is where the **power of God** resides.