

A RECONSTRUCTION OF THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE BACKSTORY OF 1-2 CORINTHIANS

Paul started the church in Corinth A.D. 51 and stayed there 18 mos (Acts 18:1-22).

Paul writes an initial letter to the Corinthians about immoral brothers (1 Corinthians 5:9).

Paul receives news from Corinth from Chloe's people (1 Corinthians 1:11) and a letter (1 Corinthians 7:1) and most likely while in Ephesus for 3 years (Acts 19).

Paul writes 1 Corinthians.

Paul is planning to come to Corinth himself but before he comes he is thinking of sending Timothy to Corinth, so he urges the Corinthians to treat Timothy with kindness if he comes. Shortly thereafter Paul sends out Timothy and Erastus (Acts 19:21-22; 1 Corinthians 16:10-11).

Paul receives word that the problems in Corinth have gone from bad to worse. So he sails from Ephesus to Corinth for a brief and painful visit. It didn't go well (2 Corinthians 2:1; cf. 12:14; 13:1—"third" indicates a second visit prior).

Paul (and apparently Timothy?) returned to Ephesus.

Paul writes a "severe" letter. His visit to Corinth hadn't accomplished all that it was hoped that it would, so Paul sent Titus to them with a "severe" letter with much sorrow (2 Corinthians 2:3, 9).

This was a change of plans on Paul's part. He had originally planned to sail from Ephesus to Corinth, then travel north from Corinth through Macedonia, and then back to Corinth, and from there to sail to Judea (2 Corinthians 1:16). This change of plans contributed to the criticism of Paul.

When Paul sent the "severe" letter, it seems he had arranged for Titus to meet him at Troas (2 Corinthians 2:12-13).

Paul left Ephesus and went to Troas. He didn't find Titus there and was deeply concerned. So he left Troas and went to Macedonia hoping to find Titus (Acts 20:1, 2 Corinthians 2:12-13; 7:5).

Paul meets Titus in Macedonia (at Philippi?) (2 Corinthians 7:6-7, 13).

Titus brought a mixed report from Corinth — there was a spirit of repentance (2 Corinthians 2:5ff.; 7:6-16), but some were still ridiculing Paul and holding him in contempt (2 Corinthians 10:1-2, 7-18; 11:4ff.).

Paul writes Second Corinthians (probably in the mid 50's).

He sends it with Titus and two others who return to Corinth (2 Corinthians 8:18-19) ahead of Paul (2 Corinthians 9:5).

In addition to delivering 2 Corinthians, they also were supposed to help the Corinthians resume the collection for the Jerusalem Christians (2 Corinthians 9:1-5; Romans 15:25-32; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4).

Paul continues preaching in Macedonia, probably for close to a year, likely going west into Illyricum (Acts 20:2; Rom 15:19).

After preaching in Macedonia, Paul travels to Greece and specifically to Corinth, and he spends the three winter months there (Acts 20:2-3).

Paul writes the book of Romans from Corinth during this time (late 50's).

After three months at Corinth, Paul was planning on sailing to Judea with the offering for the Jerusalem Christians. It is possible he was intending to arrive for Passover and was going to be traveling on a ship full of pilgrim Jews. These had conspired to kill him, perhaps while at sea; and so he set out from Corinth by land into Macedonia before sailing to Judea (Acts 20:3).