

THE BIG READ (7)

Jesus in 1 Corinthians

A. Introduction

1. Every book of the Bible has one dominating theme – Jesus is the Christ.

“Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’”
(Luke 24:45-47)

Jesus is the Christ who will suffer and die.

Jesus is the Christ who will rise from the dead on the third day.

Jesus is the Christ who will forgive the sins of all who repent.

Jesus is the Christ who will be preached to the nations.

2. After the four Gospels that tell the story of Jesus’ earthly life, and Acts which traces the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome, the remainder of the New Testament is made up of epistles or letters that were sent to individual Christians or churches.

These letters address specific situations in the lives of believers and through them we are taught how to live as God’s people.

3. 1 Corinthians is the next of the New Testament letters written by the apostle Paul.

1 Corinthians is one of the hardest letters to summarise.

Paul wrote this letter while he was in Ephesus in AD53/54.

“I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.” (1 Corinthians 16:7-9)

B. Why did Paul write this letter?

1. Corinth was large and very busy city.

The capital city of the Roman province of Achaia.

A centre of business, commerce, travel and culture as well as self-indulgence and immorality.

The venue of famous sporting games that was second only to the Ancient Olympics.

It was a good place for spreading the gospel.

2. Paul planted a church in Corinth around AD51/52.

According to Acts 18:1-18, he spent a year and a half in Corinth, establishing and strengthening the church.

But after he left some issues to do with the beliefs and behaviour of some of the members of the church had arisen.

Some of them were extremely serious.

3. News about the problems in the church at Corinth had reached Paul.

It was a worldly church (5:1-6:20)

"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud!" (1 Corinthians 5:1-2)

"If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? ... But instead, one brother goes to law against another – and this in front of unbelievers." (1 Corinthians 6:1, 6)

"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute?" (1 Corinthians 6:15)

3. In 1 Corinthians 7:1-16:4 we see Paul answer questions about a number of different issues.

"Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry." (1 Corinthians 7:1)

"Now about food sacrificed to idols." (1 Corinthians 8:1)

"Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant." (1 Corinthians 12:1)

"But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (1 Corinthians 15:12)

"Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do." (1 Corinthians 16:1)

4. Throughout the letter one of the key questions addressed is "What does it mean to be spiritual?"

The Corinthians overemphasised the spectacular spiritual gifts (such as speaking in tongues).

Paul says that the spiritual person is one who is becoming more and more like Jesus.

"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1)

"And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven." (1 Corinthians 15:49)

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

D. Jesus in 1 Corinthians

1. Jesus is revealed in 1 Corinthians through the instructions Paul gives to the church about how it should be.

Paul says the character of the church should reflect the character of Christ.

"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1)

"But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:16)

"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?" (1 Corinthians 6:15)

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (1 Corinthians 12:27)

As we look at how the church should be, we are shown a reflection of Jesus.ⁱ

2. Jesus is holy.

The church is to be different from the world and reflect Jesus' holiness.

"To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ – their Lord and ours." (1 Corinthians 1:2)

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16)

"I have written to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people – not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave the world. But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat." (1 Corinthians 5:9-11)

"And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:11)

"You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

3. Jesus is One.

There should be no division within the church because Christ is One.

"Is Christ divided?" (1 Corinthians 1:13)

"Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live." (1 Corinthians 8:6)

"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." (1 Corinthians 12:12)

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (1 Corinthians 12:27)

4. Jesus is loving.

Love should be a central mark of every local church.

"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing." (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

Love shows itself in practical ways.

"Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling-block to the weak." (1 Corinthians 8:9)

"So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment." (1 Corinthians 11:33)

"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:3)

5. As local churches display the holiness, unity and love of Christ, Christ is made known to the world.

ⁱ This idea is drawn from *The Message of the New Testament: Promises Kept* by Mark Dever.