

Dr. Craig Keener, Acts, Session 19

Acts 18, Paul in Corinth

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Keener, Acts, Session 19, Acts 18, Paul in Corinth, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Craig Keener **explains** the historical context of Paul's 18-month stay in Corinth, as described in Acts 18. He **discusses** the expulsion of Jews from Rome under Claudius, **connecting** this event to the arrival of Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth. Keener then **details** Corinth's demographics and economy, emphasizing its diverse population and Paul's work as a tentmaker, which facilitated his ministry. Finally, he **analyzes** the significance of Paul's appearance before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, **placing** this event within its broader historical and social context.

2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Keener, Acts, Session 19 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels – Acts → Acts).



Keener_Acts_Session
19.mp3

3. Briefing Document

Briefing Doc: Paul in Corinth (Acts 18, Keener Lecture)

This briefing doc reviews the main themes and key facts from Dr. Craig Keener's 19th lecture on the Book of Acts, focusing on Paul's time in Corinth.

Main Themes:

- **Paul's Trade:** Keener dives deep into the significance of Paul's tentmaking, arguing that it was likely leatherworking and allowed him unique access to travelers, merchants, and potentially even Roman citizens.
- **Corinth's Cultural Context:** The lecture paints a vivid picture of Corinth as a diverse and bustling Roman colony, emphasizing its wealth disparity, religious syncretism, and notorious reputation for immorality.
- **Early Christian Community Life:** The narrative highlights the formation and dynamics of early house churches, emphasizing their relational nature and the practical challenges faced by believers like Aquila and Priscilla.
- **Historical Accuracy of Acts:** Keener uses the example of Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, to demonstrate the historical accuracy of Acts and its alignment with other Roman sources.

Key Facts and Ideas:

- **Expulsion of Jews from Rome:** Keener discusses Claudius' expulsion of Jews from Rome (likely in 49 AD), explaining why Aquila and Priscilla were in Corinth and highlighting the apologetic nature of Luke's account.
- "Crestus was a common slave name... It actually was a Greek word meaning kind. But it was also a common Roman misspelling of Christus because Romans weren't familiar with that name apart from Christ."
- **Significance of Leatherworking:** Keener argues that Paul's trade was likely leatherworking, not just tentmaking, and that this allowed him to engage in conversations and share the Gospel with a wider audience, including those who traveled frequently.
- "In Corinth, those needing leatherworking, especially civilians who traveled a lot, means that these conversations in the workshop, he would be reaching travelers, merchants, etc."

- **Challenges of Living in Corinth:** The lecture describes the living conditions in Corinth, including the crowded tenements, lack of sanitation, and presence of pagan idols and temples, emphasizing the challenges faced by early Christians in such an environment.
- **House Churches and Their Dynamics:** Keener discusses the use of homes for Christian gatherings, suggesting that Titius Justice (possibly Gaius from Romans) hosted the early church in Corinth. He argues that these house churches provided a family-like atmosphere and fostered close relationships.
- "Meeting in a home provided a family-type atmosphere, and that's really useful. ...It's also useful because you build relationships in what we call small groups today."
- **Paul's Appearance Before Gallio:** The lecture provides details about Gallio, the proconsul, and his time in Corinth, using his known dates to further support the historical accuracy of the Book of Acts.
- "Galio is identified here in 1812. We know of Gallio elsewhere in Roman literature. He was the brother of Seneca the Younger, the famous Stoic philosopher..."

Quotes from the Source:

- **On Paul's Trade:** "The term that's used here for tent-making had also come to be applied widely to leatherworking in general."
- **On the Synagogue in Corinth:** "The inscription speaks of the synagogue. There's an inscription that's been found from Corinth that says, 'Synagogue of the Hebrews,' written in Greek."
- **On Gallio's Arrival:** "His friends liked him. Apparently, he was sent in April of the year 51 to Corinth, and he took up his office, as you were supposed to, on July 1st of the year."
- **On the Bema:** "At the eastern end of Corinth's forum, overlooking the lower terrace of Corinth's forum, like the Roman rostra, there was a bema in front of colonnaded shops."

Overall, Keener's lecture provides a detailed and insightful look at Paul's time in Corinth, drawing on biblical text, historical context, and archaeological evidence to illuminate the life and ministry of the early church in this important city.

4. Acts Study Guide: Session 19, Acts 18, Paul in Corinth

A Study Guide on Paul in Corinth (Acts 18)

Key Terms and Definitions

- **Achaia:** A Roman province in southern Greece. Corinth was its capital.
- **Agora:** The marketplace and center of public life in ancient Greek cities.
- **Bema:** A raised platform used for public speaking, proclamations, and legal proceedings in Roman cities.
- **Cilicium:** A type of coarse cloth made from goat hair, produced in Cilicia, Paul's home region.
- **Claudius:** Roman emperor who reigned from 41-54 AD. He expelled Jews from Rome, likely due to disturbances related to early Christians.
- **Corinthianize:** An expression meaning "to act like a Corinthian," often implying sexual immorality.
- **Crestus:** A common Roman misspelling of "Christus" (Christ). Suetonius attributed the Jewish expulsion to disturbances caused by "Chrestus," likely a misunderstanding of the controversies surrounding Jesus.
- **Dio Cassius:** A Roman historian who lived in the 3rd century AD. His account of Claudius' reign is incomplete, but mentions restrictions on Jewish gatherings.
- **Dialkos:** A paved road across the Isthmus of Corinth, allowing ships to be dragged between the Saronic and Aegean Seas.
- **Gallio:** Proconsul (governor) of Achaia from 51-52 AD. He dismissed the charges against Paul, finding them a Jewish internal matter.
- **Gens:** A Roman clan or family.
- **Isthmian Games:** Panhellenic athletic games held every two years at the Isthmus of Corinth, similar in importance to the Olympic Games.
- **Octavia:** Sister of Roman emperor Augustus, deified after her death.
- **Patron:** A wealthy individual who provides financial and social support to others (clients) in exchange for loyalty and services.
- **Pontus:** A region in northern Asia Minor, the birthplace of Aquila.

- **Praetor:** A high-ranking Roman magistrate, responsible for legal matters and sometimes governing provinces.
- **Proconsul:** A governor of a Roman province.
- **Prisca (Priscilla):** A Jewish Christian woman, wife of Aquila, and a close associate of Paul.
- **Silas:** A leading member of the early Christian community and a companion of Paul on his missionary journeys.
- **Suetonius:** A Roman historian who wrote in the early 2nd century AD. He mentions the expulsion of Jews from Rome by Claudius.
- **Societas:** A Roman business partnership.
- **Synagogue:** A Jewish place of worship and communal gathering.
- **Tentmaker (σκηνοποιός):** Paul's trade. It likely involved working with leather and perhaps textiles, encompassing a wider range of skills than just making tents.
- **Titius Justus:** A Gentile "God-fearer" who hosted Paul and the Corinthian church in his home after they left the synagogue.
- **Triclinium:** The dining room in a Roman house, typically furnished with three couches for reclining during meals.

Short-Answer Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. Why were Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth? What was their trade?
2. What does the name "Crestus" in Suetonius' account tell us about the reason for the Jewish expulsion from Rome?
3. How did Paul support himself financially in Corinth? Why was this work looked down upon by the Roman elite?
4. What advantages did Paul's trade offer him in terms of spreading the Gospel?
5. Describe the religious milieu of the Corinthian marketplace. How did this environment affect early Christians?
6. Why did Paul leave the synagogue in Corinth? Where did he and his followers meet afterwards?

7. What was a "triclinium," and how might it have been used by the early Christians in Corinth?
8. What was the "bema" in Corinth, and why is it significant in relation to Paul's ministry and his letters?
9. Who was Gallio, and what was his role in the events described in Acts 18?
10. What information does Acts 18 provide about the dating of Paul's ministry in Corinth?

Short-Answer Quiz: Answer Key

1. Aquila and Priscilla were in Corinth because they had been expelled from Rome by Emperor Claudius. They were tentmakers, which in the context likely referred to leatherworking and possibly textile crafts.
2. The name "Crestus," a common misspelling of "Christus," suggests that the expulsion was linked to unrest caused by early Christians in Rome. This is further supported by the fact that Jewish communities often debated about the identity of Jesus as the Messiah.
3. Paul supported himself by working as a tentmaker alongside Aquila and Priscilla. Manual labor was seen as demeaning by the Roman elite, who considered it beneath the dignity of free citizens, especially those engaged in intellectual or political pursuits.
4. Paul's trade provided opportunities to interact with a diverse group of people, including travelers, merchants, and other artisans, who he might not have encountered otherwise. The relatively quiet nature of leatherworking allowed for extended conversations, providing a natural setting for sharing the Gospel.
5. The Corinthian marketplace was filled with temples, statues, and shrines dedicated to various pagan deities. This constant presence of pagan imagery and practices posed challenges for early Christians who sought to live faithful lives in a predominantly pagan society.
6. Paul left the synagogue after encountering opposition from some Jewish leaders who rejected his message about Jesus. He and his followers began meeting in the home of Titius Justus, a Gentile who was sympathetic to their beliefs.
7. A triclinium was a formal dining room in a Roman house, featuring three couches where people reclined during meals. House churches in Corinth may have used

their tricliniums to host gatherings, providing a comfortable and intimate space for fellowship and teaching.

8. The bema in Corinth was a large raised platform used for public pronouncements and legal proceedings. It represented the authority of the Roman government and is likely the type of setting Paul had in mind when he wrote about the judgment seat of Christ in his letters.
9. Gallio was the Roman proconsul (governor) of Achaia. When Paul was accused by the Jews, Gallio dismissed the charges, deeming them a religious dispute internal to the Jewish community.
10. Acts 18 links Paul's time in Corinth with the expulsion of Jews from Rome by Claudius, dated to 49 AD, and the proconsulship of Gallio, which began in 51 AD. These historical markers help to establish a chronology for Paul's ministry in Corinth, indicating a stay of approximately 18 months between 49/50 AD and 52 AD.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the significance of Paul's trade as a tentmaker (leatherworker) for his missionary strategy in Corinth. How did his work facilitate his interactions with different segments of Corinthian society?
2. Discuss the challenges and opportunities faced by early Christians living in a cosmopolitan city like Corinth, marked by religious pluralism and social diversity.
3. Explore the reasons for the division within the Corinthian synagogue regarding Paul's message. What factors might have contributed to the acceptance of Christianity by some Jews and the rejection by others?
4. Explain the significance of house churches in the development of early Christian communities. What advantages did meeting in homes offer in the context of Roman society?
5. Using Acts 18 and other relevant sources, examine the historical accuracy of Luke's account of Paul's ministry in Corinth. Consider details like the expulsion of Jews from Rome, the proconsulship of Gallio, and the social and religious environment of the city.

5. FAQs on Keener, Acts, Session 19, Acts 18, Paul in Corinth Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Paul in Corinth

1. Why were Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth?

Aquila and Priscilla were Jewish believers in Jesus who were likely expelled from Rome by Emperor Claudius around the year 49 AD. The expulsion edict was likely prompted by unrest within the Jewish community due to debates about Jesus as the Christ. Corinth was a major Roman colony and a significant trading hub with a large Jewish population, making it a natural destination for Aquila and Priscilla.

2. What was the significance of Paul working as a tentmaker in Corinth?

Paul's work as a tentmaker, or more likely as a leatherworker, served multiple purposes. It allowed him to support himself financially without being beholden to the Corinthian church and enabled him to connect with a diverse range of people, including travelers and merchants. Many of these individuals were of higher social standing than the typical Jewish believers, giving Paul access to a demographic that would otherwise be difficult to reach.

3. What challenges did Paul face due to the religious environment in Corinth?

Corinth was steeped in paganism, with temples, statues, and shrines dedicated to various Roman and Greek deities scattered throughout the city, especially in the marketplace. While Paul was able to share the gospel in this environment, he likely faced resistance and opposition from those who adhered to the traditional pagan beliefs. Additionally, the prevalence of immorality in Corinth posed a challenge to Paul's message of Christian ethics.

4. How did house churches function in Corinth?

House churches in Corinth likely emerged due to the split within the synagogue over Paul's teachings. These gatherings provided a more intimate and family-like setting for worship, fellowship, and teaching, fostering close relationships among believers. The homes of wealthier individuals, like Titius Justice and Gaius, may have been large enough to accommodate gatherings of 50 or more people.

5. What was the significance of the vision Paul received in Corinth?

The vision of Jesus that Paul received in Corinth provided him with encouragement and reassurance to continue his ministry despite opposition. Jesus specifically told Paul not to be afraid and assured him that there were many people in Corinth who would believe. This divine affirmation strengthened Paul's resolve and confirmed the importance of his mission in this city.

6. What role did Gallio play in Paul's time in Corinth?

Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, presided over the legal case brought against Paul by the Jews in Corinth. However, Gallio dismissed the case, declaring it a matter of Jewish internal disputes and refusing to involve Roman legal authority. This event demonstrates that early Christians were sometimes falsely accused and brought before Roman authorities.

7. How did Paul utilize his workplace for evangelism?

The nature of Paul's work, especially if he was a leatherworker, afforded him many opportunities for conversation and discussion with his customers and fellow workers. These conversations likely provided natural openings for Paul to share his faith and engage in intellectual and spiritual discourse. The marketplace itself, with its constant activity and diverse crowds, would have been a fertile ground for spreading the gospel.

8. What were the living conditions like in Corinth?

Living conditions in Corinth, similar to other Roman cities, varied significantly based on social status and wealth. The wealthy enjoyed spacious homes, while the majority of the population resided in multi-story tenement buildings. The poorest often lived in cramped and poorly maintained quarters, particularly in the upper levels of these structures. These living conditions highlighted the stark social divisions present in Roman society.