

What is the significance of Cenchrea in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Cenchrea-in-the-Bible.html>

Corinth, the capital of the Roman province of Achaia (modern-day Greece), was a city on the Isthmus of Corinth. It was a large city that controlled two harbors: Cenchrea (or Cenchreae) on the eastern side of the isthmus, and Lechaëum on the western side. Cenchrea was important for its harbor that allowed goods to move between Asia Minor and Italy, Achaia, and Macedonia. Today Cenchrea is known as Kechries, and it is situated on the coast about five miles from modern Corinth.

The Bible refers to Cenchrea a couple of times. One mention of Cenchrea comes during Paul's second missionary journey. Accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla, Paul stopped at Cenchrea to fulfill a vow before sailing to Ephesus on his voyage back to Syria (Acts 18:18-19). Apparently, the vow Paul fulfilled was a Nazirite vow, which had required Paul to not cut his hair (Numbers 6:18). In Cenchrea, Paul "had his hair cut off" (Acts 18:18), signaling the end of the vow (see Numbers 6:19-20).

It is significant that a church was organized in Cenchrea. Paul is not specifically identified as starting the church in Cenchrea, but he is a likely candidate. Paul was "in Corinth for some time" (Acts 18:18), and he would have had ample opportunity to minister in nearby Cenchrea. If it was not Paul who started the church in Cenchrea, it was very likely someone who was saved through Paul's ministry in Corinth.

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul mentions Phoebe as a "deacon" (NIV) or "servant" (ESV) in the church at Cenchrea (Romans 16:1). Whether or not she was a deacon in an official capacity, Phoebe apparently held a good reputation in the church since she is

commended by Paul and was entrusted with delivering Paul's epistle to the Romans.

According to the ancient Greek geographer Pausanias, Cenchrea had temples for Aphrodite, Asclepius, and Isis, as well as a stone statue of Aphrodite and, visible from the sea, a bronze image of Poseidon (Pausanias, II, 2, 3, Loeb edition, W. H. S. Jones, ed.). Undoubtedly, in Paul's day the area surrounding Cenchrea was saturated in idols and the worship of false gods. Despite the spiritual darkness of the area, the gospel broke through and a church began to serve as a beacon of light to those in darkness around them (Matthew 5:16). Even in the darkest of places, the light of the world, Jesus Christ, can shine through (John 8:12).