
Corinth

This study of the history and geography of the city of Corinth is taken from the Thompson Chain Reference Bible.

Corinth, the proud, wealthy, and wicked city of the ancient world, was located on the four-mile-wide strip of land which linked the southern Peloponessus with the mainland of Greece. Being on the North-South highway, and having the two thriving seaports of Cenchraea on the east and Lechseum on the west, it was literally “at the meeting of the ways,” and easily became the greatest commercial center of Greece. About it were fertile lands on which were grown olives, grapes, dates, and many other well-known fruits.

As the head of the Achaean League, Corinth was destroyed in 146 BC by Mummius, the ruffian Roman leader, who sent shiploads of statuary, paintings, and other art treasures to Rome.

In 46 BC Julius Caesar rebuilt the city, giving it wide streets, market places, temples, theaters, statues, fountains, and the white and blue marble Bema, or rostra, where orations were made and judgments rendered. Southward was the Acrocorinth, a hill that arose five hundred feet above the city. On this eminence was located the temple and statue of Aphrodite (Astarte), the goddess of love and fertility, who not only dominated much of the social and religious life of the city, but whose worship tended to foster, or even popularize, immorality among both citizens and travelers.

Paul came to Corinth about 52AD and spent a year and a half, supporting himself by tent making, while by his preaching and teaching he converted both Jews and Greeks, and gathered together the church to which he wrote two immortal epistles.

The city had almost continuous settlement until 1858 when a terrible earthquake destroyed it. The surviving inhabitants went four miles away and built new Corinth. The old city lay in ruins, and was gradually being burried by many feet of soil, until in 1896 the American School of Classical Studies at Athens took possession of the site and dug twenty trial trenches in various locations. In trench number three they uncovered a paved street,

over 46 feet in width, with sidewalks and butters, but with no marks of wheels, which meant that it was for foot traffic only. The street led north and south, therefore the diggers followed through, hoping to find the Agora, or market place.

In the various campaigns which followed, the excavators made numerous small finds, such as sculptured fragments, various vase fragments, reliefs, certain terra cottas, an angel, a marble lintel of a door on which was inscribed “Synagogue of the Hebrews,” and a limestone block on which was a first century inscription saying that Erastus, the Commissioner or Administrator, had paved this plaza (some sixty feet square) at his own expense.

Paul writes of one Erastus who was the “Chamberlain” or treasurer of the City (Romans 16:23), and it could well be that the inscription speaks of this same man who later became a Christian and a valuable helper of Paul.

The larger finds consisted of a Greek theater, the temple of Apollo, the ancient court and fountain of Peirene, the Agora, and the Bema, the judgment platform where, in all probability, Paul was brought before Gallio and acquitted. Also the pavement below where the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat, Acts 18:17 saying “And Gallio cared for none of those things.”

In passing along the paved road leading out through the western gateway of Corinth, this writer was confident that he was treading where Paul had walked, for he undoubtedly went this way many times during his 18-month stay in Corinth.

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