

Resurrection from the Dead: The Corinthian Correspondence



Figure 1. Artist's reconstruction of the agora of ancient Corinth. (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/agora#/media/1/9404/230098>)

Locations of videos shot in ancient Corinth

-  Lechaion Road
-  Bema (Judgment Seat)
-  Erastus Inscription
-  Theater

Lechaion Road

The Lechaion Road was Corinth's main entrance; it gets its name from the city it connects directly to: Lechaenum. The road led into Corinth's Forum, the city's public square. The remains of the building I was standing next to (at right side of photo) was a *macellum*, or indoor food market, which was next to a *basilica*.

Much of what we know regarding names comes from the writings of the Greek traveler and geographer Pausanias, who described the places and practices of Greek cities, like Corinth, during his travels in the 2nd century.

The large hill in the background is the Acrocorinth (the acropolis of Corinth), upon which is located a temple to Aphrodite.



Photo 1. Lechaion Road, looking south, toward the Acrocorinth.

The Bema (Judgment Seat)

Acts 18:9–17 (NASB95)

⁹ And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid *any longer*, but go on speaking and do not be silent; ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.” ¹¹ And he settled *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. ¹² But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, ¹³ saying, “This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.” ¹⁴ But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you; ¹⁵ but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters.” ¹⁶ And he drove them away from the judgment seat. ¹⁷ And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and *began* beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.



Photo 2. Plaque indicating the Bema.



Photo 3. The northeast corner of the Bema.

Questions to Consider

1. The apostle Paul is given instructions directly from Jesus! How does that fact inform your understanding of Paul's mission?
2. Jesus promises Paul that he won't be harmed, yet Paul is brought before the judgment seat. How does this inform your understanding of the nature of Christian persecution/attack/harm?
3. Contrast Christ's characterization of Corinth as a city in which He has many people with the overbearing nature of pagan presence. Consider this excerpt from Pausanias's account of Corinth:

On leaving the market-place along the road to Lechaeum you come to a gateway, on which are two gilded chariots, one carrying Phaethon the son of Helios (Sun), the other Helios himself. A little farther away from the gateway, on the right as you go in, is a bronze Heracles. After this is the entrance to the water of Peirene. The legend about Peirene is that she was a woman who became a spring because of her tears shed in lamentation for her son Cenchrias, who was unintentionally killed by Artemis. (Paus. 2.3.2)¹

¹<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0160%3Abook%3D2%3Achapter%3D3%3Asection%3D2>

Erastus Inscription

The book of Romans was written from Corinth; in Romans, Paul mentions a city official named Erastus:

Romans 16:23 (NASB95)

²³ Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. **Erastus**, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother.

Other Scriptures That Mention Erastus

Acts 19:20–23 (NASB95)

²⁰ So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing. ²¹ Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.” ²² And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and **Erastus**, he himself stayed in Asia for a while. ²³ About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way.

2 Timothy 4:18–20 (NASB95)

¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen. ¹⁹ Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. ²⁰ **Erastus** remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.

Scholarly debate casts doubt on whether these references are all to the same man. But scholars love to debate and to cast doubt. They do agree, however, that this inscription dates to the middle of the 1st century—exactly when Paul and Erastus would have been in Corinth.

The inscription (Latin) reads, “ERASTVS•PRO•AEDILITATE•S•P•STRAVIT” which communicates the following: “Erastus, in return for his aedileship, laid the pavement at his own expense.”² An *aedile* was an elected public office whose duties included oversight of public buildings, streets, and traffic. The original inscription would have been filled with metal, such as bronze.

A treasurer and an *aedile* may not have been the same thing; it is likely that Erastus held both offices at different times, much like modern public officials who later pursue higher offices.

² Mounce, R. H. (1995). *Romans* (Vol. 27, p. 281). Broadman & Holman Publishers.



Photo 4. The Erastus Inscription in the theater plaza.

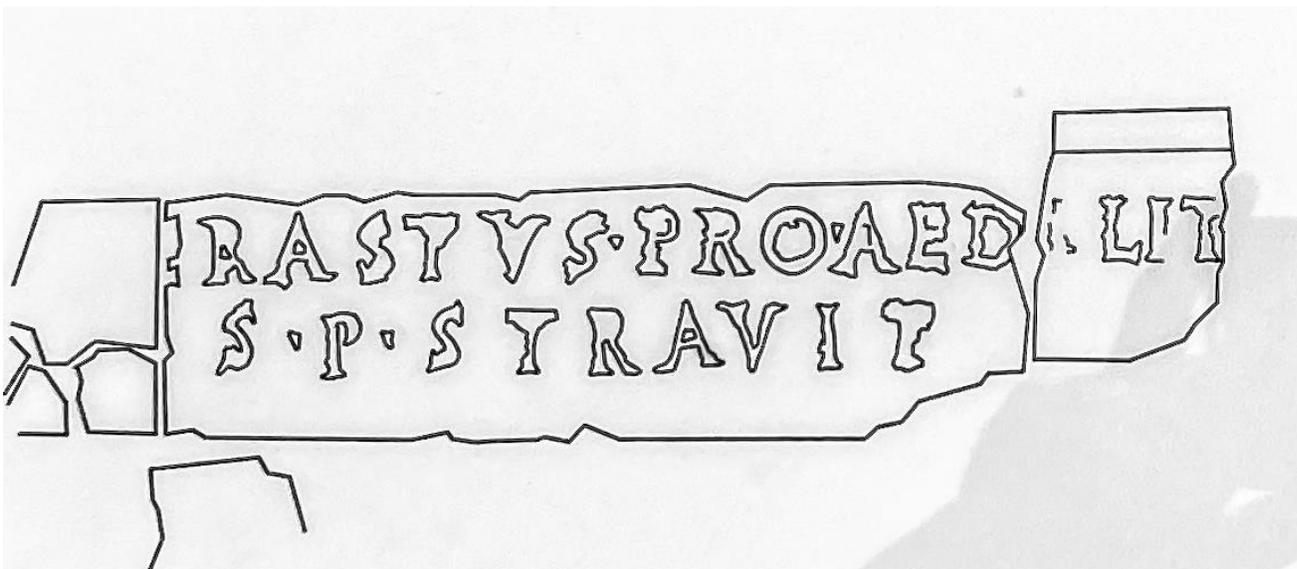


Figure 2. Line drawing of inscription (from plaque at site).



Photo 5. Panorama of Corinthian theater with Acrocorinth in southern background.

The Theater of Corinth

The Theater of Corinth could entertain up to 18,000 spectators seated in its *cavea* (seating area built into the side of a hill). In the photo below, I am standing in the *orchestra*, facing north, with the *cavea* behind me.

The column I'm preaching next to is a pagan altar known as a *bucranium* (lit. "ox head").

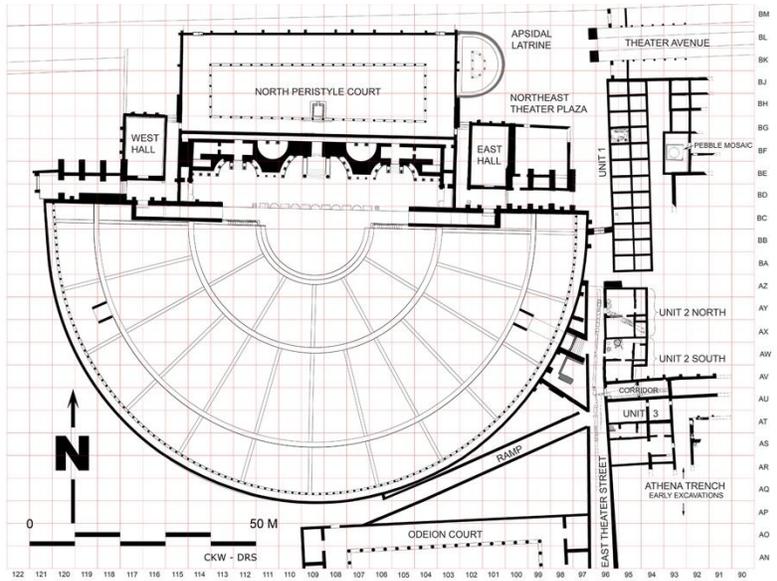


Figure 3. Theater excavation plan of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. (Credit: C. I. Williams, II, D. R. Scahill, <https://www.ascsa.edu.gr/news/newsDetails/small-but-significant-glass-from-east-of-the-theater-at-corinth>)



Photo 7. Bucranium featuring garlanded ox skull.



Photo 6. Standing on the orchestra floor of the Theater of Corinth.

What Kind of Body? (1 Corinthians 15:35–49)

Questions To Consider

1. How does the analogy of the seed help you understand the continuity/discontinuity of the resurrection body?
2. Consider Table 1 below. In what way does knowing your future state influence the way in which you live now?

Table 1. Comparing the body that dies and the resurrection body.

Earthly Body	Resurrection Body
Ends in death	Cannot die
Ends in dishonor	Begins in glory
Weak	Powerful
Natural	Spiritual

Mysteries Revealed (1 Corinthians 15:50–58)

Death as sleep was an idea familiar to Greeks, as illustrated by this 4th century B.C. carved limestone burial bed.

Paul speaks of death as sleep but reveals that not *everyone* will sleep. Some will be alive when the Lord returns, and those believers will not experience the sleep of death—instead, they will be instantaneously changed.



Photo 8. Funeral bed (kline) from Corinth, housed in the Archaeological Museum of Ancient Corinth.

How To Live (2 Corinthians 4:16–5:10)

2 Corinthians 4:16–5:10 (NASB95)

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ **For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,** ¹⁸ while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. ¹ For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, ³ inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. ⁴ For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. ⁶ Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight— ⁸ we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. ⁹ Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

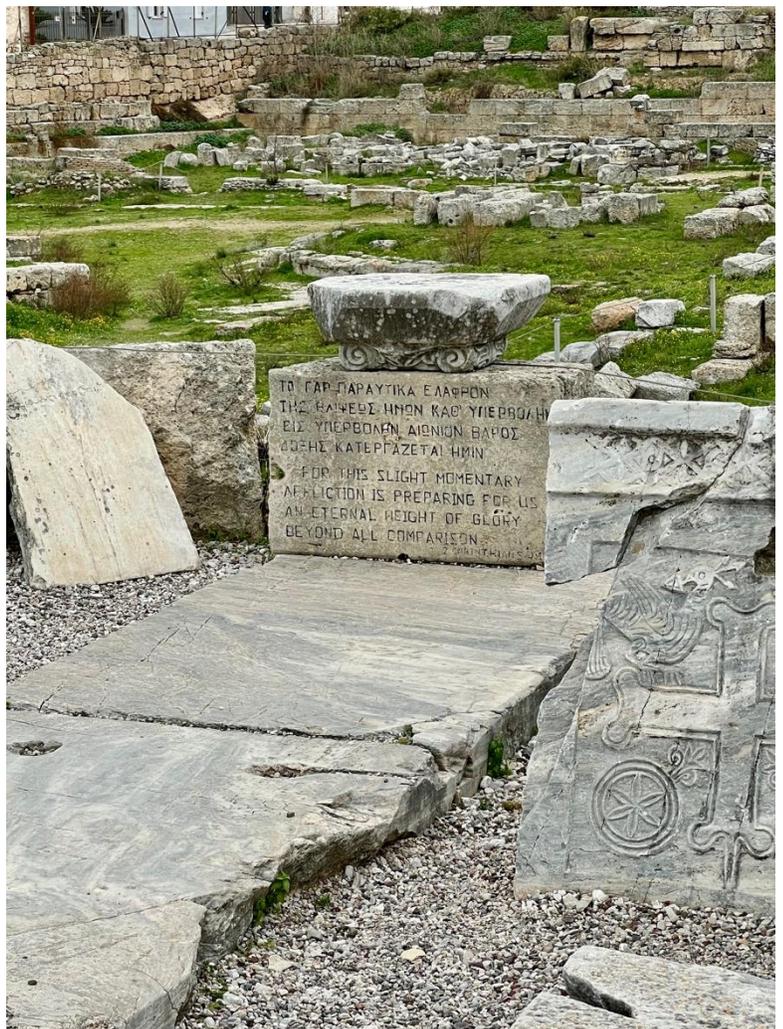


Photo 9. Inscription with words of 2 Corinthians 4:17 sitting atop the Bema. (The site was converted into a Byzantine church in later centuries.)

Comfort from Corinth (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18)

Areas of Comfort in Paul’s words written from Corinth:

- Grief over death is legitimate.
- Grief over death is not hopeless.
- Our deceased loved ones are not lost or left behind.
- Scripture gives us new revelation about the resurrection: the dead rise first!
- Whatever our lot in life, whether we live or die, there will come a time in which this statement is true: **we shall always be together with the Lord.**

Questions to Consider

1. Which of the above do you find to be the greatest comfort?
2. How has the death of a close loved one affected your view of grief?

Life in the Lamb (Revelation 21:21–27; 1 Corinthians 5:7–8)

Revelation 21:21–27 (NASB95)

²¹ ...And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. ²² I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. ²⁵ In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; ²⁶ and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; ²⁷ and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.



Photo 10. Remains of the rear of the temple of Apollo at Corinth.

Questions to Consider

1. In light of what you’ve seen regarding temples and the common practices of ancient Greek cities, how does the promise of the next life compare?
2. How would this message strike contrast for those living at that time? For believers? Unbelievers?