

# WALKING THE BIBLE LANDS

with  
DR. WAYNE STILES

## Acrocorinth

*Living Temples that Glorify God*

Ancient Corinth's lower city had the Temple of Apollo, while the Acrocorinth up here on the acropolis, had the Temple of Aphrodite, which some estimate had 1000 temple prostitutes. Corinth was notorious for its immorality, and Christians living in the city struggled with it. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians of Corinth to remind them that these temples weren't the only ones here. Christians have another temple to remember, and we carry it with us wherever we go.

The Apostle Paul's second missionary journey lasted from April AD 50 to September of 52. During those 2-1/2 years Paul spent 18 months living in one place—Corinth. It was a strategic city for a number of reasons.

Geographically, it was the crossroads of the area,

both for shipping and for overland travel, as Corinth stood on the isthmus between mainland Greece and the Peloponnese peninsula. The isthmus also served as the site of the Isthmian Games, one of the precursors to our modern Olympics. Whenever sports fans came to Corinth for the games every other year, they would stay in encampments, not hotels. So Paul, as a tentmaker, found more than a way to make a living, but he found an audience of travelers who could hear the gospel of Christ and then return home with it.

For centuries, Corinth was known primarily for two things: its wealth and its immorality. The wealth came from its geographical position on the isthmus, as well as the revenue the games provided. The immorality came from the travelers, as well as the locals, who frequented the many pagan temples. Like all Roman cities, Corinth had temples dedicated to everything from Greek gods to Roman emperors.





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One hundred fifty years before the time of Paul, the Romans had destroyed the Greek city of Corinth. And in the time of Paul, the structures were still being restored. One of these was the Temple of Apollo, originally built in the 6th-century BC. It was completely restored by Paul's day, and today 7 of the original 38 columns are still standing. Paul would have seen these.

In addition to the Temple of Apollo, Corinth had temples and altars to Asclepius, Poseidon, Athena, Hermes, and other Greek gods.

The massive mountain that overshadows the city, the Acropolis of Corinth, is called the Acrocorinth. Today you can only drive up the Acrocorinth only so far, and then you have to walk



through several historical gates toward the top. The outer gate dates to the time of the Ottoman Turks, more than 500 years ago. From there the next gate was initially built by the Franks, then rebuilt by the Venetians, and dates to fourteenth century. The final gate has the oldest fortifications, with a Byzantine tower on the left and on the right, portions of ancient Hellenistic cornerstones stand 36 feet tall and date several centuries before the time of the Apostle Paul.

From the summit, the highest point of the Acrocorinth, we get a magnificent view of the Gulf of Corinth directly north, as well as the four-mile wide isthmus, and to the far right, the azure waters of the Saronic Gulf. It was here on the summit where the pagan Temple of Aphrodite stood. All that's left are its foundations. The Roman geographer Strabo estimated that 1000 cult prostitutes serviced the worshippers of Aphrodite in the temple that stood here. Although some historians doubt the accuracy of Strabo's estimate, nevertheless, the immorality in Corinth was widespread. So much so that the Greeks coined the term *corinthiazesthai*, a word that meant "to live a Corinthian life"—an immoral life.



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Four years after Paul left Corinth, while he was at Ephesus, and then Macedonia, on his third missionary journey, he wrote the epistles of 1-2 Corinthians to the Christians in Corinth. All we have to do is read Paul's letters to see what kind of cultural and moral struggles the Corinthian Christians had. When Paul wrote to them, he reminded them in 1 Corinthians 6:

*"Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)*

The Christians here were no strangers to pagan temples in their midst. They also would have been aware of the true Temple of God in Jerusalem, which some of them, no doubt, had even seen. In fact, the Jerusalem Temple was just one of several temples our Lord has inhabited through the centuries. God said in Exodus 25, verse 8:

*"Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them." (Exodus 25:8)*

After Israel entered the Promised Land, King Solomon constructed the First Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and we read in 1 Kings 8:

*"The glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD." (1 Kings 8:11)*

But the sin of the nation ultimately resulted in their exile from the Promised Land, and the presence of God departed from the Temple (Ezekiel 10:18), and the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem. But God's prophets promised that the Lord would again dwell with His people one day (Isaiah 7:14; Ezek. 37:27; Zech. 2:10).



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Herod the Great greatly enlarged the Second Temple with a large retaining wall—the ruins of which still surround the Temple Mount today. Scripture never mentions the glory of God entering the Holy of Holies of the Second Temple. Instead, the glory of God entered another temple. John 1:14 says:

*“The Word became flesh, and [tabernacled] among us, and we saw His glory.” (John 1:14)*

Because John used the word “tabernacled,” he emphasized that the glory that filled the wilderness tabernacle was now veiled behind the flesh of Jesus Christ (John 1:1; 14; Heb. 10:14-20). Jesus entered the Second Temple Himself, and used the “temple” as an illustration of His own body that would be destroyed and resurrected (John 2:19). Before Jesus ascended after His resurrection, He promised to send the Holy Spirit who would permanently indwell and empower His church to fulfill a Great Commission (John 14:15-17; Acts 1:8).

Paul wrote to the Corinthians and explained:

*“We are the temple of the living God; just as God said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’” (2 Corinthians 6:16)*

Paul contrasted the immoral temples in Corinth, with their temple cult prostitutes, with the temples of Christian bodies—and made a powerful application. He wrote:



*“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!... Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:15, 18-20)*

Corinth had its temples of idols—made of stone. Corinth also had its temples of God—made with the human bodies of believers in Jesus. It doesn’t take much to bridge the gap between then and now, does it? The culture that was here—and the one that we live in today.

Like the Corinthian Christians, we have the Spirit of God living within us to strengthen us and to remind us, as Paul wrote: “You have been bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body.”





### Questions to Consider:

1. What connections do you see with today's culture after reading Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11?
2. How can comparing our body to a temple of the Holy Spirit strengthen us to live a holy life?

(Photos courtesy of the [Pictorial Library of Bible Lands](#))