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Ancient Ephesus: The History and Legacy of One of Antiquity's Greatest Cities

Charles River Editors

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Ancient Ephesus: The History and Legacy of One of Antiquity's Greatest Cities Charles River Editors *Includes pictures *Chronicles the history of Ephesus and profiles its most famous buildings *Includes footnotes, online resources and a bibliography for further reading *Includes a table of contents “We shall never know what magnificence is, until this imperial city is laid bare to the sun.” - Mark Twain “I have set eyes on the wall of lofty Babylon on which is a road for chariots, and the statue of Zeus by the Alpheus, and the hanging gardens, and the colossus of the Sun, and the huge labour of the high pyramids, and the vast tomb of Mausolus; but when I saw the house of Artemis that mounted to the clouds, those other marvels lost their brilliancy, and I said, ‘Lo, apart from Olympus, the Sun never looked on aught so grand.’" - Antipater Although it is no longer quite as well remembered as it was thousands of years ago, one of the most important cities in the ancient world was Ephesus, a city that dates back nearly 3,000 years and can lay claim to the Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Moreover, while Sparta and Athens were often the centers of power in ancient Greece, Ephesus, located in present-day Turkey on the coast of Ionia, was an instrumental part of the Ionian League, which wielded power for a substantial period of time before the Classical Era. Thanks to its strategic location, Ephesus was an important city no matter who was in control of the region. In fact, while many of its most famous buildings were completed by 500 BCE, the city flourished after it became part of Rome’s domains, and the Romans respected the culture so much that they continued letting Ephesus use original coins. In turn, as the Western Roman Empire dissolved and the Eastern Roman Empire and Byzantine Empire maintained control in the area, Ephesus became an important religious center. In addition to a shrine inspired by the Virgin Mary, Ephesus was mentioned repeatedly in the Bible, including in the New Testament’s Revelations, and St. Paul even wrote some of the epistles in Ephesus. Ironically, and unfortunately, it was Ephesus’ role as an important place for early Christians that ensured the final destruction of its most famous feature: the Temple of Artemis. One of the oldest of the Wonders, construction began under King Croesus around 541 BCE, and it was constructed of marble in place of a previous structure that had been destroyed by a flood. The 3rd century Hellenic African scholar Callimachus of Cyrene believed the older structure had been built by the Amazons, but the original Temple of Artemis actually dated back to the late Greek Bronze Age around 1000 BCE. It may have been the first columned temple of its kind, but the site was not considered a Wonder of the World until after Croesus' version was built. A lot of information about the history of the Temple of Artemis remains unknown. It was built three times in all before its final destruction by the Goths in 262 CE, but the site's history thereafter is unclear before its rediscovery in 1869. It may have been repaired after the 3rd century CE, but this did not prevent it from being pillaged for building materials to construct Christian buildings in Constantinople a couple of centuries later. Early Christians resented the temple because of its cult and following, and stories in the New Testament survive of early saints praying to exorcise it, causing physical destruction, or being forbidden from entering the city due to citizens' fears of damage to the temple. These tales may reflect real-life instances of attempted arson or vandalism. Ancient Ephesus: The History and Legacy of One of Antiquity’s Greatest Cities looks at the influential city and the way it flourished for centuries. Along with pictures depicting important people, places, and events, you will learn about Ephesus like never before.

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