

# Ephesus



*“And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” (Acts 19:8–10)*

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# The Biblical City Of Ephesus

## Introduction

- I. One Roman writer called Ephesus *Lumen Asiae*, The Light of Asia.
- II. “Ephesus was the Gateway of Asia. One of its distinctions, laid down by statute, was that when the Roman proconsul came to take up office as governor of Asia, he must disembark at Ephesus and enter his province there. For all the travelers and the trade, from the Cayster and the Maeander Valleys, from Galatia, from the Euphrates and from Mesopotamia, Ephesus was the highway to Rome. In later times, when the Christians were brought from Asia to be flung to the lions in the arena in Rome, Ignatius called Ephesus the Highway of the Martyrs.” (William Barclay, *The Revelation Of John*, 1.58)
- III. Ephesus was the chief commercial city of the province and the center of the mother goddess worship of western Asia.
  - A. In the New Testament era it was the fourth greatest city in the world, after Rome, Alexandria and Antioch of Syria.
  - B. Pergamum was the capital of the province of Asia in Roman times, but Ephesus was the largest city in the province, with a population of 300,000.
  - C. Ephesus is now located about five to seven miles inland from the Aegean Sea in the Cayster River valley.
  - D. The harbor, which frequently silted up, made Ephesus the most favorable seaport in the province of Asia.
- IV. Three great roads converged on Ephesus.
  - A. One brought the east trade by way of Colosse and Laodicea.
  - B. The road from Galatia came via Sardis and brought the trade of Asia Minor.
  - C. The third important road was to the north.

## Discussion

### I. Paul's First Visit

- A. Paul visited Ephesus on the return from his second evangelistic journey when he “entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews” (Acts 18:19–21).
- B. Priscilla and Acquila, who had come from Corinth with Paul, and remained at Ephesus (Acts 18:18–28).
- C. Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew, came to Ephesus and “Aquila and Priscilla heard him, (and) they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately” before he went to Corinth (Acts 19:1).

### II. Paul's Second Visit

- A. On his second visit to Ephesus, Paul found and taught twelve disciples who knew only the baptism of John (Acts 19:1–7).
- B. Paul “went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8).
- C. He later taught the disciples in the school of Tryannus for two years.
  1. All of Asia, Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord (Acts 19:9–10).
  2. Paul labored in Ephesus for a total of three years (Acts 20:31).
  3. The churches in Colosse, Hierapolis and Laodicea were probably the fruit of Paul's work in Ephesus (Col 4:12–16).

4. Many were healed and “this became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified” (Acts 19:11–18).
  5. Ephesus was full of wizards, sorcerers, witches, astrologers, diviners of the entrails of animals and people who could read one’s fortune by the palm of the hand or the fall of knucklebones.
  6. Repentant magicians publicly burned their books, “so the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed” (Acts 19:19–20).
  7. Timothy and Erastus were with Paul, but he sent them to Macedonia, “but he himself stayed in Asia for a time” (Acts 19:22).
- D. The disturbance over Diana of the Ephesians (Acts 19:23–41).
1. *Diana* is the Latin term; *Artemis*, the Greek term.
  2. There were 33 temples in the Roman world where Artemis was worshiped.
  3. Paul’s companions, Gaius and Aristarchus of Macedonia, were seized and taken into the theater.
  4. The disciples would not allow Paul to go into the assembly.
  5. Paul exhorted the disciples and left for Macedonia (Acts 20:1).
- E. At the end of his third missionary tour, in the spring of A.D. 57, Paul stopped briefly at Miletus, “for Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost” (Acts 20:16).
1. Paul met the elders of Ephesus at Miletus (Acts 20:17–38).
  2. In his final words to the Ephesian elders he told them of his deep sorrow that they would see his face no more (Acts 20:38).

### III. Other People Associated With Ephesus

- A. Timothy, a native of Lystra (a city of Lycaonia), was likely converted on Paul’s first evangelistic journey (Acts 14:6–23).
1. By the time of Paul’s second journey, Timothy was well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium (Acts 16:1–2).
  2. Timothy joined Paul on the second journey and worked with him at Ephesus but was sent into Macedonia prior to the disturbance over Artemis of the Ephesians (Acts 16:3; 19:21–22).
  3. After Paul’s release from his first Roman imprisonment, he left Timothy at Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3).
  4. While there, Timothy received the letters known to us as *First Timothy* and *Second Timothy*.
- B. Priscilla and Aquila went from Corinth to Ephesus with Paul on the return from his second journey, and they taught the way of God more accurately to Apollos (Acts 18:18, 19, 24–28).
- C. Apollos, an Alexandrian who knew only the baptism of John (Acts 18:24–28).
1. At Ephesus he was instructed by Priscilla and Aquila.
  2. He soon went to Corinth and worked with those who had believed.
- D. Erastus—possibly the same Erastus who is later mentioned as the city treasurer at Corinth (Acts 19:22; Rom 16:23).

- E. Trophimus the Ephesian was with Paul in Jerusalem.
  - 1. Paul was incorrectly accused of having taken him into the temple.
  - 2. This incident led to the arrest of Paul (Acts 21:27, 31; 24:6, 12, 13).
- F. Tychicus is mentioned as a traveling companion of Paul (Acts 20:4).
  - 1. He was probably one of the messengers of the churches who went with Paul to Jerusalem to deliver the collection for the poor saints which had been gathered by the churches of Macedonia and Achaia.
  - 2. He carried the letters to Ephesus and Colosse (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7-9).
  - 3. When Paul wrote his final letter to Timothy he stated that he had sent Tychicus to Ephesus (2 Tim 4:12).
- G. Onesiphorus helped Paul in many ways at Ephesus (2 Tim 1:16-18).
- H. The apostle John (cf. Rev 1:11; 2:1).
  - 1. Our Lord's letter to the church at Ephesus is included in the book of Revelation (Rev 2:1-7).
  - 2. It is generally held that John's residence at Ephesus was during the last two decades of the first century.

#### IV. Sites To See In Ephesus Today

- A. The Harbor.
  - 1. Because of deforestation and a lack of tides in the Mediterranean to clear out the debris, the harbor tended to silt up—the present site of the city is approximately five to six miles inland.
  - 2. The area of the harbor can be seen at the end of the Arcadian Way.
  - 3. It was probably from this harbor that Paul set sail for Macedonia after the riot (Acts 20:1), stopping first at Troas (2 Cor 2:12).



- B. Arcadian Way (Harbor Street).
  - 1. This was the main street of the city and led from the harbor to the theater.
  - 2. The street was over 100 feet wide and paved with marble slabs.
  - 3. The street was often used for parades and ceremonies, and was flanked on either side by rows of columns 50 feet deep.
  - 4. The street was named in honor of the emperor Arcadius (A.D. 383-408) who enlarged and restored it.
  - 5. Galleries and rows of small shops lined each side of the street.
  - 6. At night the street was lit by lanterns.

### C. The Theater.

1. This theater gives us some impression of the elegance of ancient Ephesus in the time of Paul and other early Christians.
2. The theater was cut into Mount Pion between.
3. Originally built during the Hellenistic Age, it was expanded during the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41–54) and completed during the reign of Trajan (A.D. 98–117).
4. This structure measured 495 feet in diameter and seated an estimated 25,000 people.
5. The great uproar over Artemis of the Ephesians took place here (Acts 19).



### D. The Agora.

1. The *agora* is the open market place and was of vital importance in any Greek or Roman city.
2. Some shops in the agora have been identified as belonging to silversmiths.

### E. The Marble Street.

1. The main street of Ephesus led from the theater to the main part of the city, and was built between the time of Paul and John.
2. One will see many things of interest along the streets, including one relief which shows a gladiator (cf. 1 Cor 15:32; Eph 6:10–17).

### F. Library of Celsus.

1. The library was built in A.D. 135 by Gaius Julius Aguilas in memory of his father, Celsus, who was a Roman senator and governor-general of the province of Asia.
2. Thousands of parchments and papyri were stored here and protected from dampness and worms by a double wall—but not from earthquake or war.
3. Estimates of the number of rolls that could be stored in the library vary from 9,500 to 12,000.
4. Celsus was a lover of books and was given the honor of being buried, not only within the city, but in the vault of his own library among his books.
5. One of the steps leading into the library has a menorah carved in it.
6. On the first floor of its façade there stood four female statues representing wisdom, fortune, knowledge, and virtue.



### G. Curetes Street.

1. The street derived its name from the Curetes (priests), who guarded the sacred fire of the *bestia* (hearth) in the *prytaneion*.
2. The Curetes were a college of priests attached to the service of Artemis.
3. Many inscriptions and reliefs may be seen along the street.
  - a) Inscription bearing name of Emperor Diocletian (A.D. 284–305), who gave severe persecution to Christians and burned copies of the Bible.
  - b) Inscription bearing name of Emperor Constantine (A.D. 306–337).
  - c) Caduceus, the staff of Hermes or Mercury, the symbol of physicians.
    - (1) The serpent was commonly associated with Asklepios.
    - (2) The city of Pergamum had a marvelous temple of Asklepios.
  - d) A relief representing Nike, the goddess of victory, with a wreath in her left hand and a spike in the right.

### H. Temple of Hadrian (A.D. 117–138).

1. A small temple, but the most beautiful building on Curetes Street.
2. The emperor Hadrian visited Ephesus twice.

### I. Fountain of Trajan (A.D. 98–117).

1. Located on the northern end of Curetes Street.
2. It was dedicated to the Emperor Trajan at the end of the first century.
3. Christians were persecuted during his reign.



### J. The Odeion.

1. This semi-circular structure, also known as the Small Theatre, had 22 tiers and accommodated between 1,500 and 2,200 spectators.
2. Here musicians played their flutes, lyres, and citharas, and poets recited from Homer and Hesiod.

### K. The Terrace Houses.

1. The “terrace houses” at Ephesus show us how the wealthy lived during the Roman period.
2. These houses are located on a hill opposite of the Hadrian Temple.

L. The Temple of Artemis (the Artemision, or Temple of Diana)

1. The Temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
2. “The Temple of Artemis (or Diana, according to her Roman name) at Ephesus ranked as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. As the twin sister of Apollo and the daughter of Zeus, Artemis was known variously as the moon goddess, the goddess of hunting, and the patroness of young girls. The temple at Ephesus housed the multi-breasted image of Artemis which was reputed to have come directly from Zeus (Acts 19:35). The temple of Artemis in Paul’s day was supported by 127 columns, each of them 60 meters (197 feet) high. The Ephesians took great pride in this grand edifice. During the Roman period, they promoted the worship of Artemis by minting coins with the inscription, ‘Diana of Ephesus.’” (*Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 345–346)
  - a) The temple was four times as large as the Parthenon.
  - b) Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23–79) said the temple was constructed on marshy soil to safeguard it against earthquakes.
3. “For over a thousand years this goddess with her temple provided a focal point for the rich religious, economic, and cultural life of her worshippers. Now hardly one stone can be seen of one of the most famous buildings in the world, the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus. Built on marshy ground not far from the Cayster River, it arose on a site occupied from time to time by several temples of which at least one dates from pre-Greek days. It faced west, toward the sea and the setting sun. Pliny the Younger tells us that the columns in front of the temple were carved with notable events in the life of the Greeks and that the statue of Artemis stood in the inner sanctuary. Some of the statuary from this temple is displayed in the New Hofburg Museum in Vienna. This temple was the first in the world to be constructed entirely of marble.” (Everett Blake and Anna Edmonds, *Biblical Sites In Turkey*, 119)
4. “After years of archeological research the ruins of the temple were discovered in 1877 by J. T. Wood. The platform on which the temple stood was 418 by 239 feet, and the temple itself was 342 by 163 feet and had over one hundred columns supporting its roof.” (Homer Hailey, *Revelation, An Introduction And Commentary*, 120)
  - a) One of the items recovered from the temple site was a sculptured marble column *drum*, which was found at the southwest corner of the later temple—it is now in the British Museum.
  - b) The relief shows a youthful winged Thanatos (death), as well as other figures from the underworld.



5. The Temple of Artemis was completely rebuilt three times before its destruction in A.D. 401.
6. The Hellenistic temple which Paul saw was destroyed in A.D. 262.
7. “The original temple of Diana crumbled into the dust many centuries ago. It was rebuilt and became one of the seven wonders of the world. It was to this temple Alexander came. The Macedonian wanted his name carved on one of the 127 pillars. He offered all the riches of his eastern campaign for the privilege. The city fathers turned down the offer. But nobody refused Alexander. The Ephesians did. They talked him into a calm acceptance by saying, ‘If we put the name of another god on her temple it will upset her.’ So the mightiest mortal on earth couldn’t even buy the privilege to have his name on a pillar in the temple of a god. Years later Paul wrote to a group of Ephesians telling them they were the temple (not of a god) but of the Almighty God.” (Jim McGuigan, *The Book Of Revelation*, 44)
8. “Paul was to find that his doctrine of Christ as the Messiah of the Jews, and the Savior of all mankind, met with considerable opposition here. The goddess who had largely given Ephesus its wealth and importance—so that it was a kind of Lourdes of the ancient world — was at the core of so much human thinking. She derived from those early manifestations of religious belief, the mother-goddess figures to be found from Asia Minor to the Cyclades, and westward to Sicily. The embodiment of the female principle, she represented not only fertility but resurrection in the shape of new birth, the eternal return of life to the earth and, as found in a number of early carvings (at Tarxien in Malta, for instance), the ‘Tree of Life’. As Isis she bore the divine son, Horus; and as Artemis she was the Mother of Wild Things, the goddess of all animals. The Isis-Artemis conception embraced everything. It could be taken at any level; from the simple peasant’s conception of the divinity who would ensure that his beasts and land were fruitful, to the intellectual idea of an all-creating mother who sustained the whole universe.” (Ernie Bradford, *Paul The Traveler*, 194–195)

#### M. Grotto of St. Paul and Thekla.

1. This cave is located about a half-mile up a steep hillside and is not normally seen by tourists (access is extremely limited).
2. The cave, located on Bülbül Mountain, is about 6 feet wide by 30 feet long.
3. Inside the cave are simple frescos of Paul, Thekla, and her mother; Abraham and Isaac; David; and Christ surrounded by the apostles.
4. Some of the paintings date from the fourth century.



#### N. Basilica of St. John.

1. Built in the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D., under emperor Justinian I (A.D. 527–65), over the supposed site of the apostle John's tomb.
2. This tomb was one of the most sacred sites in the Middle Ages and thousands made pilgrimage here on their way to Jerusalem.
3. On the way into the basilica you pass through the Gate of Persecution.
4. A baptismal font located in front of the basilica.

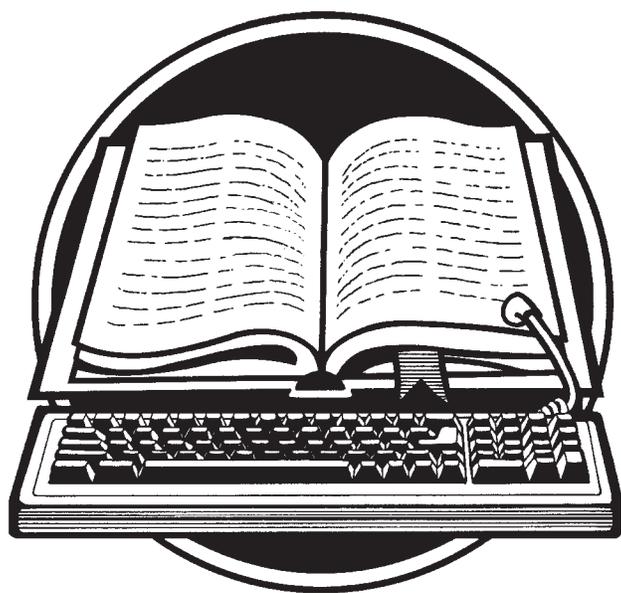


#### O. The Ephesus Museum.

1. The Ephesus Museum (*Efes Müzesi*) in the town of Selçuk holds the best of the archeological objects excavated at Ephesus.
2. This museum also houses a few artifacts from the Temple of Artemis.
3. There are also marble statues of the fertility goddess Cybele (Artemis).

#### Conclusion

- I. Although Luke does not mention Paul being imprisoned while in Ephesus, Paul himself told the church at Corinth, “For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves...” (2 Cor 1:8–9).
- II. On another occasion he spoke of his fight “with beasts at Ephesus” (1 Cor 15:32).
- III. Near the end of the first century our Lord said of the Christians in Ephesus, “I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars” (Rev 2:2).
- IV. “A city of such prominence as Ephesus, located on a world thoroughfare, was bound to get its share of false teachers, even men claiming to be apostles. In an age when we pride ourselves in tolerance and compromise, this attitude might appear bigoted and intolerant. Bigoted, no; intolerant, yes, but an intolerance commended by the Lord. Churches would do well today to follow such a course with their intellectually oriented teachers and leaders who pervert truth and make boastful claims for their own human wisdom. John approved the practice of proving all spirits (1 John 4:1).” (Hailey, *Revelation, An Introduction And Commentary*, 121)



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