



## Ephesus

We know the Ephesus that was visited by the apostle Paul, but Ephesus as a city was founded long before that. The city was first established in 1000BC by a group of Greek settlers and changed hands many times. Legend has it that Androclus, the son of Codrus, the king of Athens (in Greece) was searching for a place to build a city. He received a prediction by an oracle that said that a fish and boar would show him where to build his city. Days later, when the company was frying fish, one of the fish fell from the pan and irritated a boar hiding in the bushes. Androclus followed and killed the boar, and founded the city of Ephesus on that site.

### ***Greek Ephesus***

The city was founded the second time by Androclus the son of Codrus, with his Ionians from eastern Greece. However, in the 7th century BC (700-600BC) the entire region of Ephesus was devastated by the Cimmerians, a nomadic people coming down from the north who were defeated by the Lydians around at the end of the 7th century.

Under Lydian rule, Ephesus became one of the wealthiest cities of that part of the world. It was a great centre of learning, and home of the Pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus. Woman had equal rights to men, and there are records today of female sculptors and artists, painters and teachers. At night oil lamps lit the streets, a luxury at that time. King Croesus of Lydia began construction of the Temple to Diana (Artemis). This temple was destroyed by fire in 356BC, the same night Alexander the Great was born.

In 547BC the city was captured by Cyrus, the king of the growing Persian Empire. He brought all of Asia Minor under Persian rule. During the Ionian uprising against Persia in the 5th century BC, Ephesus stayed neutral and so kept from being destroyed. Under Persian rule Ephesus remained an important trade centre, and was under Persian control until the city was captured by Alexander the Great. At this point the city had both democratic and oligarchic systems of government.

### ***Hellenistic Ephesus***

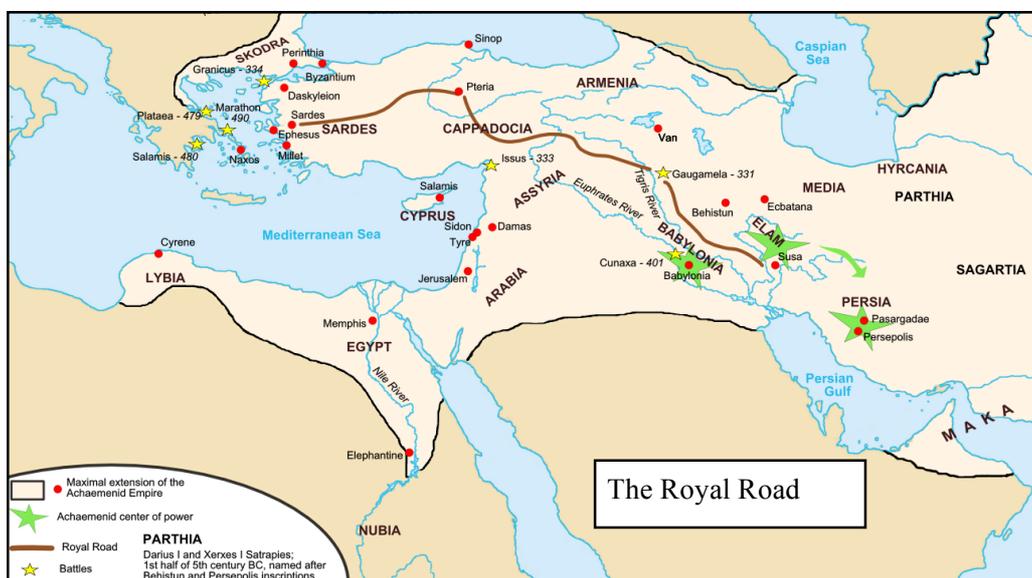
Alexander the Great conquered Ephesus in 334BC. It was during his reign that a new temple to Diana was constructed which became one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Though Alexander the Great claimed that he conquered under the banner of the Christians, but his actions did not match his words with the Ephesians. When Alexander

came to Ephesus, and saw the destroyed temple to Diana, he offered to rebuild it. The Ephesian response was that it was not good for one god to build a temple to another. Alexander was seen as a god, and because of this he gave the Ephesians special privileges.

After the death of Alexander the Great; one of his generals, Lysimachus, began to develop the city again. Since the port of Ephesus was being destroyed by the silt coming in from the River Cayster, Lysimachus constructed a new harbour. He also built defensive walls, moved the city about 3 km southwest, and renamed the city Arsineia after his wife. When the Ephesians refused to leave their homes, Lysimachus has the sewage system blocked up during a storm, making a great mess and forcing the Ephesians to move. However, Lysimachus's re-naming did not last, and in 281BC the city was re-founded as Ephesus. It remained one of the most important commercial ports in Asia.

### **Roman Ephesus**

In 189BC the Romans defeated the Seleucid's and the city was gifted to the King of Pergamum before it became Roman. When Attalos, the King of Pergamon, died in 129BC, he gave his kingdom to the Romans. This kingdom included the city of Ephesus. The Romans taxed the Ephesians heavily, and in 88 BC there was the rebellion of Mithridates. This led to the slaughtering of all of the Latin speaking inhabitants of the city.



CC BY-SA 2.5-2.0-1.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1122623>

In 17AD there was a large earthquake which caused damage to the city of Ephesus. Despite this, Ephesus continued to be one of the most important trading centres in Asia in the time of Paul. It was also a city notable in politics and rich in culture, with the large Celsus Library whose facade still stands today and the second school of philosophy around the Aegean Sea.

### ***Ephesus in Paul's Day***

The countryside around Ephesus was lush and inviting, due in large part to the Cayster River that flowed through it, bringing silt from other parts of Asia Minor to the plains around the city. This silt provided rich farming ground for the Ephesians. The Cayster River emptied into the Ephesian Harbour about 6 km from the coast.

The harbour of Ephesus was quite a busy place, bringing goods and people from both Greece and Asia Minor. Adding to the bustle, Ephesus was also the end point of the Royal Road, a road over 2,700 km long that began in Persia and made Ephesus a hub of world trade. Persians, Babylonians, Elamites, Cappadocians, and Armenians all traveled along this road, bringing goods, money, and culture to the city. Ephesus was rich, and became known as "the white city" because of all of the marble that was used in its construction. Ephesus was also technologically advanced for its time, and had aqueducts and sewers as well as public toilets.

The city was known for its worship of the goddess Diana and the temple. This temple was one of the "wonders of the ancient world" and was the largest building in Greek history when Paul was there, almost 130 x 70 meters in size and with 127 columns, each about 2 meters wide and 20 meters high. It was such a centre of wealth and prosperity that it became one of the ancient world's first banks.

At the time of Christ, Ephesus was a thriving metropolis of a city. Around 27 BC Caesar Augustus gave Ephesus the title of "First and Greatest Metropolis of Asia." He also made it the Capital of Asia Minor. During Paul's day Ephesus was the 4th largest city in the world with about 250,000 citizens.

## ***Decline***

When Paul came to Ephesus, he caused a change in the society and culture. The ecclesia of Ephesus continued to have a reputation for sound doctrine, even 20 years after the Apocalypse was written. But though Christianity became more popular after the preaching of Paul, the temple of Diana remained, and it was because of



the temple of Diana that the Goths came into the city in 262AD and sacked it, destroying the temple. Furthermore, with the rise of the Roman Catholic Church, Ephesus fell into apostate doctrine. Bishops met in Ephesus in 431AD to discuss the status of Mary, and there declared her to be the "Mother of God."

Ephesus never really recovered from the sacking of the Goths. The city was sacked by the Arabs in 654AD, and then again in 700 and 716AD. The silt that allowed for such fertile farming ground filled the harbour, and though it was dredged again and again it was eventually abandoned. When the Seljuk Turks came to the city in 1090AD, it was a small village. It was taken by the Byzantines in 1097AD, and then fell back into the hands of the Seljuks in 1307AD. Though the city had another short period of prosperity under the Seljuk Turks, when they added a mosque and bathhouses, they became vessels to the Ottomans in 1390. In 1402, the Asian warlord of Tamerlane defeated the Ottomans, and the region was given to the Anatolian Bayliks (of Asia Minor). The Ottoman Empire



took back the region in 1425, and by the end of 15th century, Ephesus was completely abandoned. Today Ephesus is a known archeological site, and excavations continue.