

Ephesus (Selcuk)

Acts 18:19-24;19:1-35;20:16-17;21:29, I Cor. 15:32; 16:8, I Tim. 1:3 II Tim. 1:18; 4:12, Rev. 1:11,2:1

Introduction:Historians use terms to describe the ancient city of Ephesus like the supreme metropolis of Asia which reflects evidence of a highly developed city. By the time of the New Testament it was a city that had become a cultural and religious memory, a yesterday romance, not unlike Paris in the modern world. Filled with the symbols of greatness, but struggling in the economics of a changing world and a troublesome silting harbor, the bustling city continued to play a significant role, but was fading with time.Location and Population:Location: Ephesus was constructed on a river bend, that was eventually dredged into a full harbor near the mouth of the Cayster River, on the western coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Along the coastal plain between Smyrna to the north and Miletos to the south, the site is now about six miles from the Aegean Sea. The city shifted in five distinct locations over time, each within a small area. The St. Paul and St. John were familiar with the city that scholars have dubbed "Ephesus III" the largest (in area) of the five. The areas where Ephesus located are as follows: Ephesus I: Ayasuluk (St. John Area); Ephesus II: Artemision area; Ephesus III: Port of St. Paul: base of Mount Koressos; Ephesus IV: north of Ayasuluk; Ephesus V: Selcuk area.Because of the man-made harbor structure and the flow of the river, a backwash flow caused the harbor to frequently silt up (by 449 BCE we already read of problems documented about the silting. Later, Eusebius records that Ephesus honored Emperor Hadrian for dredging and making navigable the harbor). When cleared, Ephesus was in a location that justified a great seaport. The city sat at the convergence of three land routes with a shipping lane from the north via the channel created by the Island of Chios and an opening facing the cities of Macedonia. The land routes that converged on Ephesus included: 1) The Colossae / Laodicea road (traveling east), 2) The road to Sardis and Galatia (northeast), and 3) The Smyrna (north) main road.Population: Some scholars estimate the number of people living at Ephesus to have exceeded 250,000 inhabitants during Ephesus III, which would make it perhaps the fourth largest of its day behind: 1) Rome; 2) Alexandria; and 3) Antioch. This large a city was an economic stronghold in Asia Minor, and justified the title supreme metropolis of Asia though there is evidence that its overall economic standing may have been slowly declining.History of Occupation:Archaic Period (900-560 BCE): The foundations of the city may date back to the waves of Sea Peoples and resistance movements that characterized part of the Archaic Period. A village developed though it was not as well developed or known as Miletos . It appears to have played a significant role as part of the Ionian Renaissance during the time of Heraclitus the philosopher. It was a farming and trade village until the harbor was established. A significant cultic site to Cybele developed there.Cybele: Originally an Astarte-like warrior-goddess associated with the sacred axe labrys, but later assimilated with the Anatolian Earth Mother Goddess. Little is known of the cultic worship until much later, when the cult was brought to Rome in 205 BCE. The later version required the accession of self-emasculated priests known as galli. Another aspect of the cultic worship was the use of immersion in the blood of a bull, a practice later taken over by Mithraism.Greco-Lyidian Period (560-290 BCE): According to Herodotus (I.26), King Croesus (560 BCE) conquered the city mid 6th century BCE, as he tamed the Ionian cities. The establishment of mining operations for gold and the minting of Lydian coins in this period gave rise to trade that can be archaeologically documented. During this period the city re-engineered the Cybele cultic site and built a Temple to the Greek goddess Artemis, constructed entirely of marble.In 546 BCE, the area became part of the Satrapy of Ionia. When Darius died (485), the Persian King's son Xerxes focused his conquest ambition on Greek territory. On a return from battles in Greece he honored the Temple of Artemis in 478 BCE, an unusual move as the Persians destroyed many other contemporary shrines. The Persians were eventually defeated in the region in 466 BCE, when Ephesus became a tributary of Athens. The city undertook to restore the Artemision, and the city in 450 BCE.As the center for tourism and trade, the Artemision became synonymous with Ephesus . After the tragic fire in 356 BCE (tradition holds that Herostratos set that temple aflame to make a name for himself), the city took a long time to recover. Alexander would later offer to finish the half-reconstructed Temple, but the city declined, not completing the work until Lysimachus held the city upon Alexander's death. Lysimachus introduced new colonists and renamed city after his wife Arsinoë, but name didn't last. He increased the prominence of the city by enclosing it with six miles of wall. (Today, the traditional Prison of St. Paul is located within westernmost tower of that wall).Greco-Roman Period (290 BCE-300 CE): After Lysimachus was killed in 281 BCE, Ephesus came under control of Seleucid dynasty. They were defeated by the Romans at Magnesia (189 BCE) and Ephesus was turned over to control by Pergamum , until in 133 BCE Ephesus came under direct Roman rule.The site was a known Roman haven, as a discovery of a statue of Julius Caesar suggests, along with a record that Antony and Cleopatra wintered there (33/32 BCE). The erection of an Egyptian style Serapis temple at the northeast corner of the Agora may have been by Cleopatra. A famous colossal head identified as Antony has also been found. The Austrian excavation team found a stone head now universally accepted as that of the Egyptian god Amon. Not always a period of comfortable relations, Ephesus didn't like Rome initially when Roman civil wars helped Brutus and Cassius then Antony. Hailed by Pliny as the great luminary of Asia and by Strabo as the greatest emporium of Asia, the city enjoyed frequent foreign guests, and built its tourism industry.Later emperors also enjoyed a relationship with the city. Statuary dedicated to Augustus in the temple of Artemis is depicted on coinage. The monumental triple gate to the commercial agora from the Library of Celsus was dedicated to Augustus' family in 4/3 BCE. Augustus also regulated the scope and size of the legal area of refuge for criminals at the Artemision in hopes of stopping the city from becoming overloaded with criminals. Later, Nero rebuilt the stadium and Ephesus coined a commemorative coin in honor of his work. Nero was not embarrassed to openly take statuary from the city for his own collection.Emperor Domitian (81-96 CE the one who exiled St. John to Patmos) is credited by some as having erected a great altar and temple to himself on Curetes Street. When Domitian was assassinated in 96, the colossal statue was destroyed, pieces are found in the Museum at Izmir. Trajan also took a

special interest in the city. His father had been appointed the proconsul of Asia back in 79 and built a wall around the Artemision precinct. Trajan added to his father's old work a new showpiece: the Nymphaion on Curetes street. After the time of St. Paul and St. John, Emperor Hadrian made Ephesus his "favorite city" and entitled it the "Imperial Capital of Asia" (125 CE). He instituted games called Hadrianea and local sponsors held the games in his honor. A Neocorate temple was built and dedicated to Hadrian in 129 CE. The citizens of Ephesus honored Emperor Antonius Pius on his birthday and he built a great gymnasium in response. The city was eventually destroyed by the Goth invasion of 262 CE, and it never regained any real importance.

Biblical Places in Turkey

Adramyttium Antioch Assos Attalia Bithniya (Nicaea) Cappadocia Carchemish Cnidus Colossae Derbe Ephesus
 Acts Euphrates River Galatia Province Harran Hierapolis Iconium Istanbul Laodocia Lystra Miletus Mt.
 Ararat Myra Nicea Patara Perga Pergamum Philadelphia Pisidian Antioch Sardis Seleucia Smyrna Tarsus Thyatira Tigris
 River Troas Troy