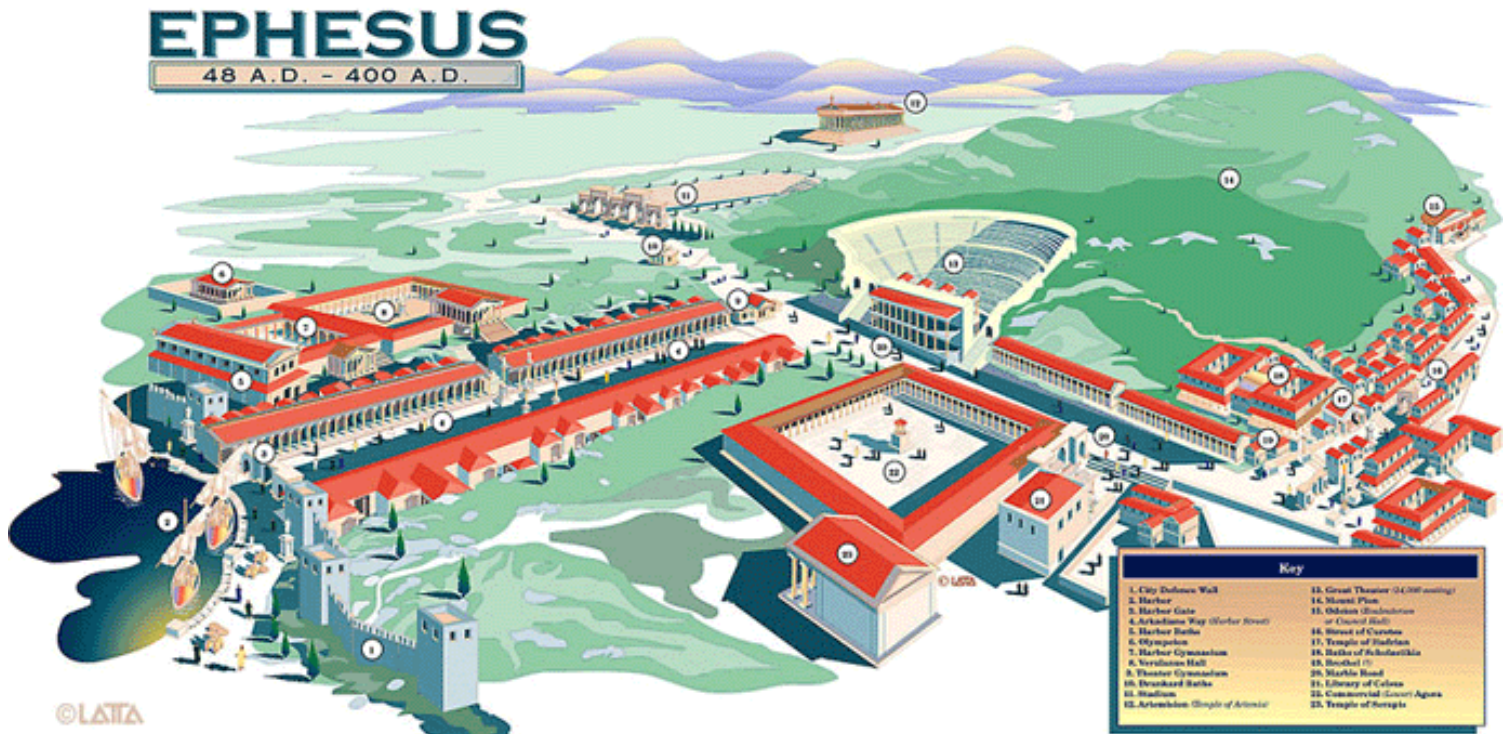


## Background to Ephesians

Ephesus lies on the western coast of what is modern day Turkey, near the Aegean Sea. Though today, its harbor is silted up, in Paul's day, it was an important port city. In fact, it was one of the four largest and most influential cities of the Greco-Roman world. Some population estimates put the number of people living there around 250,000 and some say it was second only to Rome as a cosmopolitan center of trade, and culture.

On his third missionary journey Paul spent 3 years in Ephesus, using it as a base of operations for the gospel. During this time Paul's coworkers and disciples spread the news about Jesus to the surrounding cities and thus "all Asia heard the word" (Acts 19:10).

There are well-preserved ruins of the ancient city and much archaeological work has been done there, which makes it a popular stop on Bible land tours.



Located on the far right of the illustration on the preceding page above is Curetes Street. It is one of the main streets from the Hercules Gate through the city to the library. Its name comes from the priests who were called Curetes.

In the picture to the right, you can see the ruins of the streets as it looks today and a computer generated reconstruction. The street was lined with columns, shops, monuments, and fountains.

There were also some large homes on the hillside on the lefthand side of the street that have become known as the "houses on the slopes."





## Houses on the Slopes

These houses would have belonged to wealthy families and give a good idea of what not only homes would've looked like but the way the interior of various building appeared. Often all we see are the grays and browns of brick and stone ruins but notice the mosaic tile floors and the frescoe painted walls. These homes had "central heat," with clay pipes carrying hot air through the home, and they had hot and cold water.





## The Library of Celsus

At the end of Curetes Street is the Library of Celsus and the entrance to the marketplace. It was built after Paul's time, being commissioned in the 110's and completed during the rule of the Roman Emperor Hadrian. It was built in honor of a former governor of the region.

The library's capacity is estimated at about 12,000 scrolls, making it the third largest library in ancient times after the Alexandria and Pergamum.

The triple arched gate to the right was the entrance to the marketplace.





Here's a computer reconstruction of the way it would've looked.



Library of Celsus

Ephesus

Németh Ádám

virtualreconstruction.com



## The Theater

After the library, the road turns right and runs along the marketplace towards the theater. The theater in Ephesus held about 24,000 people. As you sat in the seats, you faced the harbor. The acoustics in the theater are so well designed that a person speaking in a normal voice from the stage can be heard by someone sitting at the top.

Read the story of the riot over Artemis in Acts 19 that led to thousands chanting “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians” and dragging one of Paul’s companions into this theater. Paul wanted to speak to the crowd but was warned not to do so by both disciples and prominent friends in the city. Picture the scene as you look at these pictures of the theater.





Here is a digital reconstruction of the theater, showing what the stage area could've looked like.



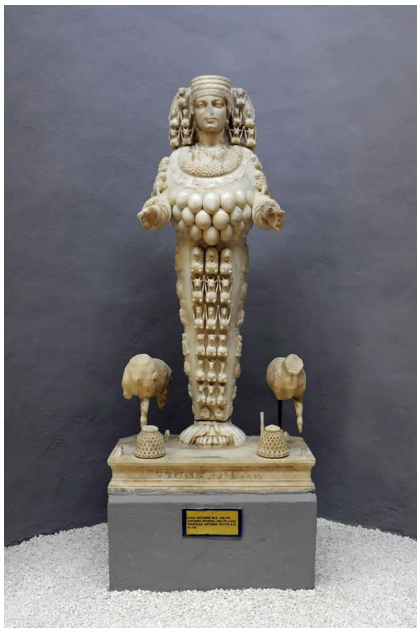
## The Temple of Artemis

The Temple of Artemis was around the hill from the theater. It had been destroyed and rebuilt several times by the first century when Paul preached in Ephesus. As it stood in Paul's day, the temple was 450 feet long by 225 feet wide and reached a height of over 60 feet tall. It was supported by 127 columns each over 17.5 meters tall.

It was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient world and in the 2nd century B.C., Antipater of Sidon wrote this:

"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".

One lone column marks the location of the temple today, but here is a digital reconstruction.



The Ephesians viewed their city as the guardian of Artemis' image and there was a legend that it had fallen from the sky to be entrusted to them. Hence their devotion to her that spurred the riot in Acts 19. Also, since the temple had such a reputation and since it also served as a kind of bank for the region, the silversmiths' claim that they had a lost to lose if her reputation was diminished was true.

When Paul describes the church as a holy temple in Ephesians 2, it not only speaks to the Jewish background about the church being the very thing the temple in Jerusalem no longer was but it also contrasted with the Ephesians notion about the greatness of the temple of Artemis.



## More Resources:

There are an abundance of incredible ruins at the site of ancient Ephesus. Check out the following links to explore more:

-For a handful of pictures with descriptions: <https://www.bibleplaces.com/ephesus/>

-For a good history with a number of good photos visit: <https://www.exploreturkey.com/destination/ephesus/> ... Be sure to click "find more" at the bottom and then click the topics for more photos and descriptions.

-For a good description of Paul's time in Ephesus: <https://toursaroundturkey.com/apostle-paul-in-ephesus/>