

Храм Артемиды в Эфесе





Seven wonders of the world. The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus

Is it simply a temple? How could it take its place among other unique structures such as the Pyramid, the Hanging Gardens, and the Colossus of Rhodes? For the people who actually visited it the answer was simple. It was not just a temple... It was the most beautiful structure on earth... It was built in honour of the Greek goddess of hunting, wild nature, and fertility. That was the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus.

It was situated in the ancient city of Ephesus about 50 km south of Izmir (Smyrna) in Turkey.

Although the foundation of the temple dates back to the seventh century BC, the structure was built around 550 BC. The great marble temple was decorated with bronze statues sculpted by the most skilled artists of their time.

The temple served as both a marketplace and a religious institution. Recent archaeological excavations revealed gifts from pilgrims including statues of Artemis made of gold and ivory... earrings, bracelets, and necklaces... artifacts from as far as Persia and India.

On the night of 21 July 356 BC, a man named Herostratus burned the temple to ground in an attempt to immortalize his name, which he did indeed. Oddly enough, Alexander the Great was born the same night. The historian Plutarch later wrote that the goddess was "too busy taking care of the birth of Alexander to send help to her threatened temple". And when Alexander the Great conquered Asia Minor, he offered to rebuild the destroyed temple, but the Temple was not restored until after his death in 323 BC.

In AD 401 the Temple of Artemis was torn down by St John Chrysostom. Attempts were recently made to rebuilt the temple, but only a few columns have been re-erected.

The temple housed many works of art, including four ancient bronze statues of Amazons sculpted by the finest artists at the time. When St Paul visited the city, the temple was adorned with golden pillars and silver statuettes, and was decorated with paintings. There is no evidence that a statue of the goddess herself was placed at the centre of the sanctuary, but there is no reason not to believe so.