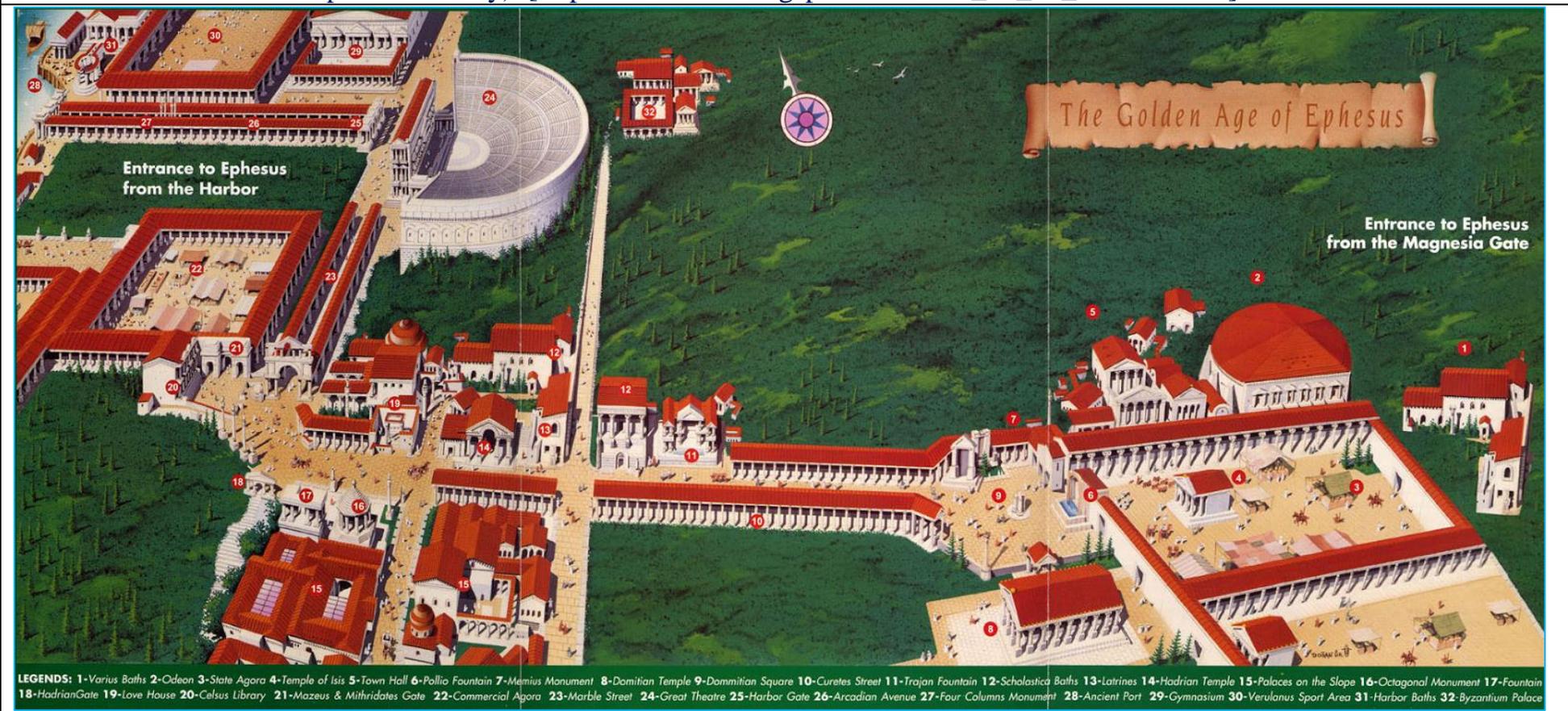


## EPHESUS IN THE 1<sup>ST</sup> MILLENNIUM CE: WAS IT DESTROYED THREE TIMES, OR ONLY ONCE?

by Gunnar Heinsohn (15-08-2016<sup>1</sup>)

Readers who are investigating my theories on the chronology of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD/CE are now searching even more intently for towns in which evidence of the three epochs we call Antiquity, Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages lie one on top of

**Downtown Ephesus around the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. CE** (partial reconstruction; the Artemis temple was located in another part of the city) [[http://izmir2013.blogspot.com/2013\\_05\\_01\\_archive.html](http://izmir2013.blogspot.com/2013_05_01_archive.html)].



<sup>1</sup> Thanks for editorial assistance go to Clark Whelton (New York).

### Ancient Ephesus within the 1<sup>st</sup> c. Roman Empire

[<http://www.gracepointdevotions.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Pauls-Voyage-to-Rome-Map.png>]



the other in three distinct layers that show an evolution of building styles. Probably no town other than Rome is better suited for such a search than Ephesus in Asia Minor.

In the 1st – 3rd centuries AD, with 200,000 to 250,000 inhabitants and surrounded by a wall 9 kms long, Ephesus was “one of the most prosperous and populous cities of the Roman Empire” (Ladstätter 2011, 6). Scholars started digging there in 1863, hoping to find fame by rediscovering the mighty Temple of Artemis (137 x 69 m.) which – following its third and final phase of construction

**Reconstruction of the last phase (late 4<sup>th</sup> c. BCE onwards) of the Artemis Temple at Ephesus (one of seven wonders of the ancient world; 137 x 69 m.; 127 columns of 18 m. each)).** [<https://victortravelblog.com/2014/12/17/sailors-superstitions-and-ancient-ephesus-turkey/>].



in the late 4th century BCE – had 127 columns 18 meters high. In 1869, after six years of searching, John Turtle Wood (1821-1890) won the race and found one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

Ephesus was a place of great importance for Christians, too. Jesus' mother Mary and Mary Magdalene are said to have spent their last years there. The Apostle John, and the John who wrote the Book of Revelation (possibly the same person), worked there for a long time and are probably buried there, as well. Whether Luke the Evangelist, martyred in Thebes, was buried there, too, is more controversial. St. Paul, however, lived at Ephesus from 535 to 556 CE, spreading his vociferous sermons all over Asia Minor.

For the famous Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, the city was home to their very profitable sanctuary that catered to pilgrims, though the number of sleepers (7, 10 ...) varied, as did the time spans of how long they slept.

However, despite more than 150 years of research in Ephesus, the city still lacks “firm archaeological dates for important monuments as well as a way to link archaeological and historical sources” (Zimmerman 2011, 171).

This is to be expected because researchers are certain that the ruins of Ephesus are hiding a luminous history of 1000 years. They expect impressive development deposits in thick layer packets, one above the other, representing Antiquity, Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. But this evidence is not readily apparent. In particular, evidence for the port – the largest and most important in Rome's province of Asia – appears to be downright crazy. Already in Antiquity (the 1st to 3rd centuries AD) it reached its highest state of completion. But around the year 230, “devastation in the city took on an ever larger scale [...] that is assumed by a more or less extensive destruction of the city, causing fundamental changes in the cityscape” (Ladstätter 2011, 3 /1).

Nevertheless, the city – which had been elevated by Augustus to both capital and Proconsul of the province of Asia – was again raised by Diocletian 300 years later to be capital and Proconsul of the province of Asia. Once again the supposed founder of the so

**Ephesus in the 2nd/3rd c. CE whose port – after the 3<sup>rd</sup>. c. flattening of the city – could, miraculously, maintain its form in Late Antiquity (4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> c. CE) [Koob et al. 2011, 244].**



**Ephesus in Late Antiquity. Serious albeit not lethal destructions lead to a reduction of the city with shorter walls (red) partially constructed by material taken from abandoned buildings [Koob et al. 2011, 245].**



-called *Dominate* (imperial power structure of Late Antiquity; term unknown in Roman time) wants to do everything exactly like Augustus, the founder of the *Principate*, 300 years before him. But there is still more. After the demise of Antiquity and Late Antiquity, Ephesus in the Early Middle Ages becomes, for the third time, the main city of Asia Minor.

Even after the damage (vaguely dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. annihilation) of the once-great city caused several of its districts to be abandoned, its population to decline, and its city wall to be shortened, the port remained unchanged. Text sources prove that Ephesus could hardly have looked any different in the 4<sup>th</sup> century than it had looked in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. “As early as the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the

province of Asia and its capital city of Ephesus are, again, praised for their wealth of wine, oil and grain” (Ladstätter 2011, 7/24). “Now the whole Empire, out to its furthest periphery, was supplied with wine from Asia” (Ladstätter 2011, 7/24).

Did some higher power somehow overcome the “extensive destruction” of Ephesus to make it look in Late Antiquity very much as it was known 300 years earlier during Antiquity? Or did the non-lethal damage to the city already occur **during** Antiquity (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> c.) when, in spite of the losses, there came a new prosperity that still looks definitely Antique? “Many new buildings arose whose representative styles were in no way inferior to those of the period of the emperors [1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.]“ (Ladstätter 2011 1). This new architectural flowering supposedly culminated in the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century, though the new buildings barely differed in form and design from 300-year- earlier structures of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Evolution seems to have stopped for 300 years. Ephesus is thus similar to Constantinople where, likewise, the material culture of Late Antiquity cannot be distinguished from that of Antiquity 300 years earlier, that supposedly did not even exist there. Since Constantinople’s late 4<sup>th</sup> century, “conventional engineering techniques already have prototypes in the second and third centuries in Ephesus (1)” (Krautheimer 1986, 106).

If one now looks in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century for a catastrophe that could have caused the undisputed damage to Ephesus, one encounters the plague years of Marcus Aurelius in the 160’s, years that are accompanied by Antonine fires and which often result in cities being reduced in size due to the high loss of human life. This in turn brings about reductions in the length of city walls, with construction material for this work coming from the spoil of abandoned buildings. In this time of fear, many survivors become Christians. If new buildings were constructed immediately following the Marcus Aurelius crisis, their resemblance to buildings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century should no longer come as a surprise. Thus, since buildings employed to furnish Late Antiquity (5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> c.) actually belong to a later (2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> c.) period of Antiquity, one cannot help but wonder why Antiquity and Late Antiquity look the same.

In Ephesus, it is only in Late Antiquity that an “influence-winning church” begins to emerge and a “lively pilgrim life begins, largely due to the mission of Paul and to the city’s reputation as the final resting place of Mary” (Ladstätter 2011). Since both figures are dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century, one might ask why the pious didn’t start visiting Ephesus until many centuries later and why churches built during Antiquity (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries) are completely missing. Then, in Late Antiquity, the expected construction appears and again

it looks completely Antique: “Numerous chapels and churches (were created) and in most cases buildings of the emperors’ period [1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.] were reused or buildings of that period were adapted” (Ladstätter in 2011, 17/28).

This suggests that the Christian buildings arise during the latter part of Antiquity (2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> c.), i.e. after the Marcus Aurelius crisis of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, and not 300 years later, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. This also applies to the so-called Tomb of Luke. It supposedly was created in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century by transforming a Monopteros fountain “built around the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century” (Pülz 2011, 55), which had survived mysteriously intact through the disaster of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. If, however, the Tomb of Luke was built after the Marcus Aurelius crisis of the 160s ff. in which many Ephesians converted to Christianity, the Monopteros fountain of the 150s would fit perfectly.

Last but not least, the famous St. Mary’s Church (“stratum 5”), supposedly from the 5<sup>th</sup> c., is built into a section of the 265 m. long Olympieion of the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century. It is not found several strata higher up to as one would expect for a structure erected some 300 years later.

“The masonry in the Church and the reused pilasters etc. in the church and the Episcopium testify that at least part of the [2<sup>nd</sup> c.] hall was standing upright when they were chosen for the construction of the church. The destruction of the imperial basilica can certainly be attributed not only to an earthquake, but rather to systematic demolition by Christians” (Karwiese 1989, 17).

However, not only are churches of Antiquity missing, followed by the surprise of amazingly Antique-looking churches in Late Antiquity. The famous Temple of Artemis, which should have long been in ruins, “continued to attract cultic worshippers during the 5<sup>th</sup> c.” (Ladstätter 2011, 13). Likewise, the apartment buildings of the 5<sup>th</sup> c. are not new developments that stand **on** ruins from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, they are found **within** the layer of Antiquity. The people of Late Antiquity, therefore, must either have lived **in** Antiquity or lived without houses. The indisputably new residential buildings in the harbour area have, in the traditional style of Antiquity, “luxurious features such as peristyle homes with opus sectile floors, painted wall murals and polychrome mosaic floors“ (Ladstätter 2011, 13), which were typical of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD. No excavator in Ephesus has found any peri style houses from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries underneath peristyle buildings dated to Late Antiquity, whose origin in Antiquity, instead of “Late” Antiquity,

would therefore be difficult to disprove. The excavators do not deny this possibility. Instead, they emphasize ambiguities or the failings of former colleagues:

**Aerial view of ancient port of Ephesus some 6km away from the seashore**

[Ladstätter 2011, 12].



"An exact chronological classification of the [Late Antique] buildings or their conversions, uses and destruction phases is not without problems, as the area had already been uncovered by Austrian excavations in the late 19th century. These 'late' layers very often lack exact descriptions of what was found, which makes interpretation difficult and in some cases impossible" (Ladstätter 2011, 12).

Even the troubling lack of a Late Antique forum in Ephesus is usually explained as being "an already existing Forum (Pülz 2011, 61) of Antiquity, which once more indicates the parallelism of the two eras. This parallelism is also suggested by the fact that Late Antique Ephesus does not have "its own water pipes" (Wiplinger 2011, 122). Hydraulic systems that are currently dated Late Antique show "no differences in design" to "Roman aqueducts" of the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c. (Wiplinger 2011, 122). This general agreement is repeated even regarding the statues of gods. In Late Antiquity, which should have been long dominated by Christians, the people of Ephesus used sculptures from Antiquity. As everything fell to pieces in the 3rd century, these sculptures somehow endured. Ephesus' Late Antiquity has "generally hardly any mythological sculpture of its own" (Auinger/Aurenhammer 2011, 205). The *Dominate* of Late Antiquity uses statues of the emperor "Augustus" (Auinger/Aurenhammer 2011, 205) from the beginning of the *Principate*. Thus, in this category of art, too, Late Antiquity is really Antiquity.

The devastating extinction of Ephesus in the 3rd century at the end of Antiquity was followed by a next "downfall" (Ladstätter 2016, 48) at the end of Late Antiquity "due to a very long-term natural disaster" (Ladstätter 2016, 47) supposedly caused by an ecologically-foolish deforestation of the surrounding hills some 600 years earlier.

This 2<sup>nd</sup> – equally catastrophic – downfall led to the silting up of the port, which was now 6 km away from the sea. The port's ancient outline is easily identifiable today. Thus, its fate resembles Rome's hexagonal port of Trajan at Ostia, which today is around 4 km from the sea, which, however, is not blamed on carelessly cut-down forests. "From the 7th century a ruralization of the region" of Ephesus occurs (Ladstätter 2011, 16). More than 400 empty years would pass in this city turned into pasture before the emergence of a new „settlement horizon in the 11th century“ (Ladstätter 2011, 26).

And yet, according to text sources, before that new settlement in the 11th century a miracle must have taken place, because in the Early Middle Ages of the 7th to 10th centuries the city has returned to its old magnificence on land and is once again located on the

Rome's hexagonal port of Traian at Ostia (1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> [=8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup>] c. CE) at a distance of some 4 km away from the seashore.

[<http://www.pbase.com/isolaverde/image/144481934>].



sea. There are also thermal spas, one of which was used in the 8th c. as a prison for icon-worshipping monks in icon-hostile Ephesus (Külzer 2011, 44).. As the main city of Asia Minor, "Ephesus also remains in the 8th century a trade centre of supra-regional importance that, next to Smyrna, is home of one of the main ports on the coast of Asia Minor" (Külzer 2011, 34), where even an emperor — like a Theodosius III — spent his monastic old age.

The Anglo-Saxon traveller Willibald embarked from the port of Ephesus in the Holy Land in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. He reported nothing about a destruction of the world-famous Temple of Artemis: "The local economy seemed at the time (again? still?) to be in flower" (Külzer 2011, 35).

In Andreas Külzer's "again? still?" we see a kind of honest admission that is only rarely encountered. The astuteness of Stefan Trinks recognizing Early Medieval Oviedo's entirely Antique design is in the same league. Whoever asks such questions must have mentally passed the chronology of the entire 1st millennium in review. Attempts to somehow belittle the importance of Early Medieval Ephesus "should be rejected by our current state of knowledge" (Külzer 2011, 34). Yet, there are no material traces for an Early Medieval metropolis at Ephesus

Just as the Early Medieval citizens of Aachen or Zurich in the time of Charlemagne, who had only 700 year older dwellings of Antiquity for living and cooking or none at all, Early Medieval citizens of Ephesus, too, had to find shelter in homes built some 700 years earlier. Their prayers were said in churches of Late Antiquity that, however, were structures of Antiquity, too.

They became rich and powerful, with a harbour that should have been buried in mud already by the monstrous destructions of the 3rd century. Yet, if it was still flourishing in the Early Middle Ages, its devastation and removal by about 6 km from the sea must have taken place as late as the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The penalty for the alleged ecological violence would therefore not occur after a swift 600 years, but only after more than 900 years. The High Middle Ages, with its impoverished new beginnings in 1000 AD would not be some 700 years away from Antiquity's catastrophic end in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century but its direct successor.

This logical – albeit hard to digest – conclusion may, for the time being, still require too much imagination. But the most convincing insights for placing Antiquity in the same time-span as the Early Middle Ages have been painstakingly put together by the Austrian experts excavating Ephesus. Their results show that material evidence for the Ephesus of Antiquity, Late Antiquity and Early Middle

Ages exists in one phase only. Lasting for about a quarter of a millennium – roughly between 700 (=1=300) and the 930s (=230s=530s), and suffering a first major blow in the 860s (=160s=460s) – this phase ends in the early 10th century. It exhibits the expected internal evolution with setbacks and – especially after the blow of the 860s (=160s=460s) – new upswings, but it always keeps the appearance of Antiquity.

Ephesus was, of course, smaller than Rome or Constantinople, but in terms of stratigraphy all three cities have to do with just one layered cake for Antiquity, Late Antiquity, and the Early Middle Ages. It is this compression of history along stratigraphic lines that makes 1<sup>st</sup> millennium history readable for the first time by splicing together artificially separated sources.

At Ephesus such a recombination of sources proves especially prolific for St. Paul. So far, his sojourn in the city is located in the 1st century but his pilgrims do not come flocking until the 4th century. However, his determined Paulician followers do not form their movement until the 8th century. Paul, of course, lives before the codification of the New Testament in which his epistles will figure prominently. Yet, nobody understands why the Early Medieval Paulicians of the 8<sup>th</sup> c., again, live prior to the New Testament whose codification is currently dated to the late 4<sup>th</sup> century of Hieronymus (347-420). By bringing all three facets of Paulinism into the 8<sup>th</sup> (=1<sup>st</sup>) century its history suddenly makes sense, and its bizarre aspects disappear.

If we find the same Antique style and the same stratigraphic horizon during Antiquity, Late Antiquity, and the Early Middle Ages, as well as a catastrophic downfall that annihilates the civilization of Antiquity, Late Antiquity, and the Early Middle Ages, then the cause of this enormous devastation must also be the reason for the fall of the Roman Empire. The destruction that takes place at the end of the Early Middle Ages (early 10<sup>th</sup> c.) coincides with the end of Antiquity and Late Antiquity. These three time periods run in parallel and end in the same horrendous catastrophe after which we witness the modest and primitive new beginnings of the High Middle Ages in the 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> c. CE.

The following table summarizes the history of Ephesus in a stratigraphy-based manner (contemporary periods are indicated by identical colours). It explains mysterious repetitions as the result of chopped up sources whose re-combinations allow for much more complete narratives.

| Mysterious repetitions in the history of Ephesus can be explained by the stratigraphic parallelism of Antiquity, Late Antiquity, and the Early Middle Ages! |   |                       |   |                        |   |
|---|---|-----------------------|---|------------------------|---|
| 10th/11th c.  | HIGH MIDDLE AGES IS CONTINGENT WITH ALL THREE PERIODS   |                       |   |                        |   |
|   | ANTIQUITY<br>(1st-3rd c.)   |                       | LATE ANTIQUITY<br>(4th-6th c.)  |                        | EARLY MIDDLE AGES<br>(7th/8th-10th c.)  |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> c. CE   | >“ <b>Natural catastrophes</b> [cause] <b>groundbreaking changes of Ephesus’ urban appearance</b> “ (Ladstätter 2011, 1)  | 6 <sup>th</sup> c. CE | > <b>Harbour silt up by “long-lasting natural catastrophe</b> “ (Ladstätter 2016, 47), and moved <b>6 km away from seashore</b> .   | 10 <sup>th</sup> c. CE | > <b>PRIMITIVE RURAL BEGINNINGS AFTER 1000 CE.</b><br>> <b>Harbour</b> again silt up, and terminally moved <b>away 6 km from seashore</b> .   |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> c. CE   | >170s with <b>plague</b> -crisis and Antonine fires under Marcus Aurelius cause <b>population losses</b> and the <b>reduction of cities</b> all over the Empire<br>>Conversions to <b>Christianity</b> .<br>- <b>ARTEMIS</b> -Temple active.  | 5 <sup>th</sup> c. CE | > <b>Earth quakes</b> etc. cause <b>population losses, ruins, and the reduction of Ephesus with a shorter interior wall</b> .<br>>Dominance of <b>Christians</b> .<br>- <b>ARTEMIS</b> -Temple active.  | 9 <sup>th</sup> c. CE  | > <b>Weakness</b> of Ephesus. A <b>plague</b> is dated to the 8 <sup>th</sup> rather than the 9 <sup>th</sup> c.<br>>City is conquered by <b>Paulician Christians</b> .<br>> <b>Harbour</b> still holds “ <b>large number of ships</b> “ (Külzer 2011, 35).<br>>No word on ruined <b>ARTEMISION</b> .   |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> c. CE.  | >Ephesus has <b>many bishops but no metropolitan (chief-bishop), and not a single church for 300 years</b> .<br>> <b>St. Paul</b> lives (53-56) in Ephesus: no material traces!<br>> <b>Standard technology</b> of Antiquity for <b>buildings, aqueducts, thermal baths</b> .<br>>Several <b>FORUMS</b> .<br>>Ephesus, under Augustus, becomes <b>CAPITAL</b> (with Pro-consul) of Roman <b>Province ASIA</b> . | 4 <sup>th</sup> c. CE | -Ephesus has <b>metropolitan bishop, and many churches using „buildings of Antiquity</b> “ (Ladstätter 2011, 17).<br>- <b>St. Paul’s grotto</b> 300 years after apostle’s life.<br>- <b>Technology of Antiquity</b> for <b>buildings, aqueducts, thermal baths</b> .<br>> <b>FORUMS</b> only of Antiquity.<br>-Ephesus, under Diocletian, become <b>CAPITAL</b> (with Pro-consul) of Roman <b>Province ASIA</b> . | 8 <sup>th</sup> c. CE  | > <b>Ephesus’ bishops</b> support Iconoclasm. Anglo-Saxon <b>Willibald</b> describes Ephesus as <b>flourishing city</b> for which there no new buildings.<br>>Emergence of <b>Paulicians</b> who, like <b>Paul</b> , have no New Testament yet.<br>>A <b>thermal bath</b> is used as prison for pro-icon monks in anti-icon Ephesus.<br>-Ephesos is <b>CAPITAL</b> of <i>Thema Thrakesion</i> with one of the “ <b>most important harbours</b> “ (Külzer 2011, 34). <b>City is again located on the sea shore</b> . Artabasdos plunders <b>ASIA</b> . |

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