



Have you ever considered how the “Seven Wonders of the Ancient World” came to be? In other words, who came up with the idea? Was it someone who lived in ancient times or someone who made the call during a different era?

And ... who decided which—of all the possible “wonders”—would make it into the list of seven (that “magical” number which cannot be further divided)?

Scholars disagree who gets the credit for the idea. One thing we know for sure is the ancient Greeks had a name for these wonders: *Theamata*. In English, that means: “Things to be seen.”

And ... “things to be seen” they were, indeed! All are gone now, except for the Great Pyramid of Giza, in Egypt. But ... back to the original question ... where did the list get its start?

Some scholars think the originator was Callimachus of Cyrene (a Greek scholar at the Great Library of Alexandria who drafted the list in the 3rd Century B.C.) while others think it might have been Herodotus (who lived between 484 to 425 B.C., or thereabouts).

One thing is for sure: Antipater of Sidon created a list in the 2nd Century, B.C., and we can quote from that. He has particularly wonderful things to say about the Temple at Ephesus, which was dedicated to Artemis (known as “Diana” to the Romans):

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.”

Antipater references the locations for six of the seven ancient wonders in that short statement. To recap, they are:

- Statue of Zeus at Olympia (Greece)
- Hanging Gardens of Babylon (today’s Iraq)
- Colossus of Rhodes (Greece)
- Great Pyramid of Giza (Egypt)
- Mausoleum at Halicarnassus (today’s Turkey)
- Temple of Artemis at Ephesus (today’s Turkey)

He substitutes “the wall of lofty Babylon” for the Lighthouse of Alexandria (Egypt).

Let’s focus on the famous Temple of Artemis, seen above in an artist’s interpretation of how it might have appeared. It’s the place which, according to Antipater, “mounted to the clouds,” causing him to believe “those other marvels lost their brilliancy” when he compared them to the “house of Artemis.”

The great temple was built in Ephesus (Efes), near the town of Selçuk in today's Turkey. More precisely, there were several great temples, dedicated to Artemis, because one after another they were destroyed. (The final destruction happened in 401 AD.) What's left, for visitors today, are ruins (including foundations and fragments of sculptures) from the temple's last version.

Historians believe the first sanctuary (*temenos*) was built in the Bronze Age. When Callimachus wrote his *Hymn to Artemis*, he conjectured that Amazons had built it. A disastrous flood, in the 7th century B.C., destroyed the oldest of the several temples.

Another building project took place around 550 B.C., when a wealthy man (Croesus of Lydia) funded a ten-year project designed by Chersiphron (an architect from Crete) and his son Metagenes. That mighty temple endured hundreds of years ... only to be destroyed by a terrible fire set by an arsonist.

On the 21st of July, in 356 B.C., a man called Herostratus thought it would be good if he (and something he did) would live-on in history. Ancient records tell us that it was on that day Herostratus caused a fire which burned the temple to the ground.

That burned-out temple, however, was not the famous Temple of Artemis which became one of the wonders of the ancient world. The replacement temple—designed by Scopas of Paros and still being built when Alexander the Great and his men passed through Ephesus in 333 B.C.—would ultimately be called a wonder of the ancient world.

The new temple was made of marble (believed to be the world's first building constructed of marble). No arsonist would be able to torch the roof of *that* temple.

Coincidentally ... the day of the fire was the day on which Alexander of Macedon (also known as Alexander the Great) was born. Legends say that Artemis, the goddess whose beautiful statue adorned her temple at Ephesus, couldn't stop the arsonist from burning her temple because she was present at Alexander's birth.

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Credits:

Artist's interpretation of the Great Temple of Artemis at Ephesus. Online via Shadow of the Iron.

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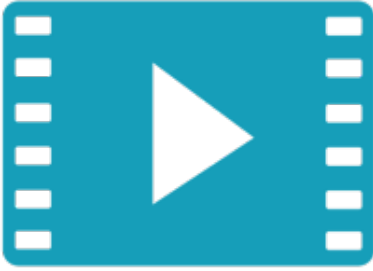
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Pharos Lighthouse

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Colossus of Rhodes

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