Ephesus, located in modern-day Turkey, was an ancient Greek city renowned for its cultural, religious, and commercial significance. Founded around the 10th century BCE by Ionian colonists, it thrived due to its strategic location near the Aegean Sea. Ephesus is perhaps most famous for the Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, attracting pilgrims from across the ancient world.

The city flourished under the rule of the Lydians and later the Persians until it was liberated by Alexander the Great in 334 BCE. During the Hellenistic period, it became a center of Greek culture, art, and learning. In 133 BCE, Ephesus became part of the Roman Republic, reaching its peak during the Roman Empire. Under Roman rule, the city became one of the largest in the empire, with monumental structures like the Library of Celsus, the Great Theater, and extensive aqueducts.

Ephesus was also significant in early Christianity. It is mentioned in the Bible as one of the Seven Churches of Asia, and the Apostle Paul spent time preaching there. Tradition holds that the Virgin Mary spent her final years near the city, and John the Apostle is said to have written his Gospel there.

The decline of Ephesus began in the 3rd century CE due to invasions, earthquakes, and the silting of its harbor, which diminished its role as a trading hub. By the 15th century, the city was abandoned, leaving behind its ruins, which are now a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a major tourist destination.