

My Drift

Title: The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World

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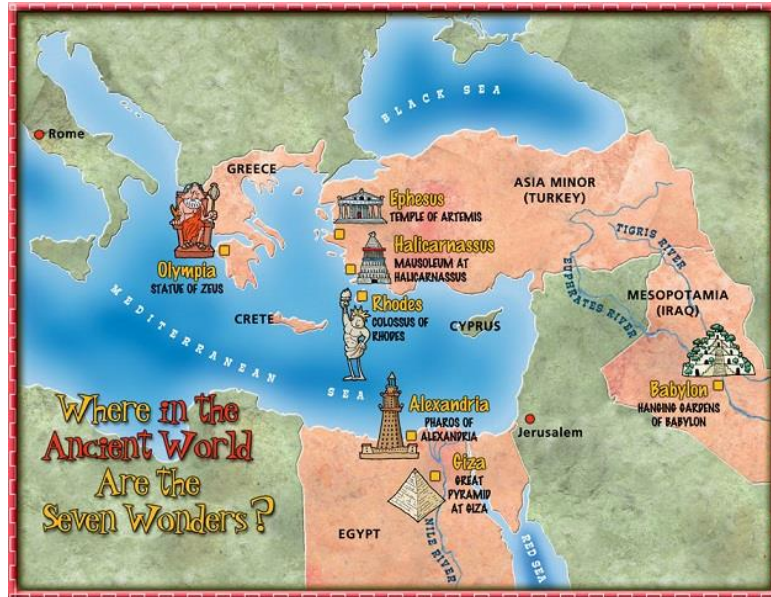
In my last article about Pyramids, we learned all about the Great Pyramid of Giza. We also learned that it was one of the original seven wonders of the ancient world. Remember? Well, that got me thinking about the other six wonders. I didn't have a clue what they might be. It is about time I (and you) learned something about them.



The Great Pyramid of Giza is in Cairo, Egypt. **It** was built around the year 2560 BC making it the oldest and the only wonder that still remains standing from the original list of seven. It is constructed with more than 2 million blocks of stone and believed to have taken about 20 years and 90,000 men to complete. It was built as a tomb for the fourth century Pharaoh Khufu.

Background

The Greek conquest of much of the known western world in the 4th century BC gave Hellenistic travelers access to the civilizations of the Egyptians, Persians, and Babylonians. Impressed and captivated by the landmarks and marvels of the various lands, these travelers began to list what they saw to remember them. The following map will give you a better idea where these wonders are located:



Instead of "wonders", the ancient Greeks spoke of "theamata" which means "sights" or "things to be seen". Later, the word for "wonder" was used. Hence, the list was meant to be the Ancient World's counterpart of a travel guidebook.

The first reference to a list of seven such monuments was given by Diodorus Siculus who lived around or before 100 BC. He gave a list of seven such wonders including six on the present list (substituting the Walls of Babylon for the Lighthouse of Alexandria).

The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus



Built around the year 550 BC by the architect Chersiphron, the great marble **Temple of Artemis at Ephesus** (located in modern day Turkey) was built in honor of Artemis, the Greek goddess of hunting and fertility.

The stunning marble structure was surrounded by 127 Ionic columns that reached to a height of 60 feet. The facade of the temple was adorned with bronze statues attributed to many expert sculptors of the era and overlooked a courtyard that served as a marketplace for people from near and far to trade their goods.



On July 21, 256 BC, the night of Alexander the Great's birth, a man named Herostatus burned the main building to the ground, hoping to make his name immortal. Another temple was reconstructed on the site but this one was destroyed by the Goths in the year 262.

Picture on the left shows site and what is left of the Temple of Artemis near the town of Selcuk in Turkey.

The Hanging Gardens of Babylon

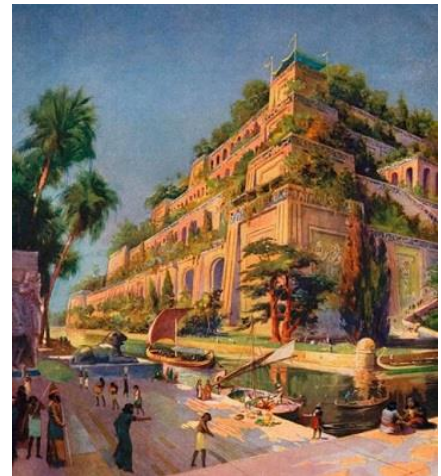


The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were reportedly the centerpiece of the ancient metropolis of Babylon that was located about 50 miles south of the modern day city of Baghdad in Iraq.

Strangely, the historical records of the Babylonians do not mention the wondrous hanging gardens, leading some scholars to doubt that they ever existed. Regardless of the omission, stories of the gardens spread over time throughout the ancient world, and ancient writers recorded numerous descriptions.

The story goes that King Nebudchadnezzar II, who ruled in the seventh century BC, built the hanging gardens to reproduce the mountain scenery that his wife Queen Amytis was accustomed to from her homeland of Medina (The capital of the Al-Madinah Region in Saudi Arabia).

Babylon was in a desert, so there wasn't much water around. This meant that the Hanging Gardens needed their own watering system so that the plants and trees got enough water. One theory is that there was a pumping system to transport water to the top of the gardens – water that possibly came from the nearby Euphrates River. From the top, the water would cascade down over all the plants, trees and flowers.



The Statue of Zeus at Olympia



Standing more than 40 feet tall and constructed of ivory and gold, the Statue of Zeus within the Temple at Olympia (on the west coast of modern Greece) was built by the Greek sculptor Pheidias around 435 BC.

The giant and stunning white statue sat overlooking the grounds where the original Olympic games were held, and people came from around the Greek empire to pay homage to Zeus and participate in the games.

Scholars agree that the statue remained in the temple for more than 800 years. There is some debate about when and how the statue was destroyed. But most historians believe that the statue was destroyed by a fire in the temple in the fifth century.

The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus



Admired for its stunning beauty, the **Mausoleum at Halicarnassus** (located near the modern city of Bodrum in Turkey) was built as the tomb for the Persian King Mausollos of Caria, and was completed around 35 BC, a few years after Mausollos' death.

The **Mausoleum of Halicarnassus**, which no longer exists, was exceptional for its massive size. It was approximately 140 feet tall and its base dimensions were 120 feet by 100 feet. The burial chamber and the sarcophagus, which was built of white alabaster and adorned with gold, sat on top of a stepped podium and was surrounded by Ionic columns. Despite the Mausoleum's size, visitors were most impressed by the beautiful decorations and statues that adorned it.

Sixteen centuries after its construction, the Mausoleum was damaged by an earthquake, and in the early 15th century, crusaders destroyed what remained of the Mausoleum and used the bricks to build a castle that still stands today.

The Colossus of Rhodes

The 110-foot high statue of Colossus overlooked the ancient harbor of the Greek Island of Rhodes for only 56 years, but its size and construction inspired such awe in its visitors that centuries after its destruction it was included on the list of ancient wonders.

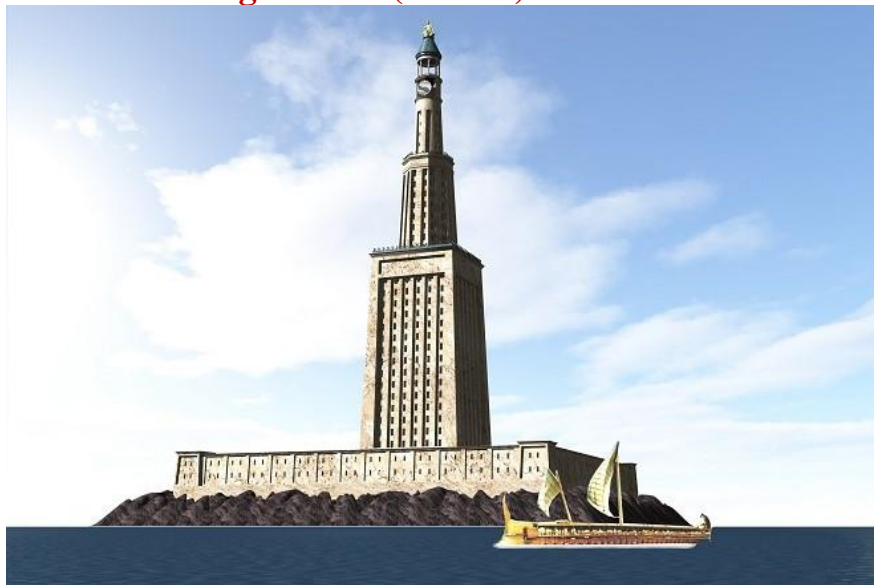


The Colossus of Rhodes

The people of Rhodes commissioned sculptor Chares of Lindos to build the giant bronze statue of their patron deity Helios the Sun God in 294 BC. Sadly, in 238 BC, Rhodes was hit by an earthquake and the city's beloved Colossus fell. However, according to historical accounts, visitors to Rhodes were still awed by the statue even as it laid in ruins on the ground.

In 652, an invading Arab army destroyed the fallen Colossus, and some historical accounts assert that the army then sold off the pieces to "a Jew from Syria" who transported them back to Syria on the backs of 900 camels. Here is a fact you might now know: Camels are very strong and can carry up to 900 pounds for 25 miles a day.

The Lighthouse (Pharos) of Alexandria



The Lighthouse of Alexandria was located on the ancient island of Pharos, just off the coast of the Egyptian city of Alexandria. Designed by Sostratus of Cnidus in the third century BC, construction of the lighthouse did not begin until 305 BC, during the rule of Ptolemy Soter the pharaoh of Ptolemaic Egypt.

The lighthouse, constructed of large blocks of stones, reached a height of about 400 feet and was one of the tallest structures created by man for many centuries. Initially the structure was intended only as a landmark for ships attempting to navigate into the harbor at Alexandria, but in the first century, the Romans transformed it into a lighthouse by lighting a fire at night and using reflecting mirrors during the day.

After 16 centuries guiding ships to safety, two earthquakes severely damaged the revered lighthouse. And in 1480, the Sultan of Egypt, Abu Al-Nasr Sayf ad-Din Al-Ashraf Qaitbay, razed the remaining ruins and built a medieval fort on the site incorporating some of the original stone from the lighthouse.

Honorable Mention



Walls of Babylon

The Walls of Babylon were on the original Seven Wonders of the Ancient World list but for some unknown reason taken off the list.

Art and architecture flourished throughout the Babylonian Empire, especially in the capital city of Babylon, which is also famous for its impenetrable walls. Hammurabi first encircled the city with walls. King Nebuchadnezzar II (605 – 562 BC) further fortified the city with three rings of walls that were at least 40 feet tall.

In addition, he erected another wall, the Median Wall, north of the city between the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers. According to Greek estimates, the Median Wall may have been about 100 feet high.

In 539 BC, the Neo-Babylonian Empire fell to Cyrus the Great, King of Persia, with a military engagement known as the Battle of Opis. Babylon's walls were considered impenetrable, but the Persians were able to breakdown one of the gates to enter Babylon. They conquered Babylon in one day. The Walls of Babylon were destroyed shortly after.

Summary Chart

The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World

Wonder	Year Built	Year Destroyed	How Destroyed
Great Pyramid of Giza	2560 BC	N/A	Still Standing
Temple of Artemis at Ephesus	550 BC	256 BC	Fire
Hanging Gardens of Babylon	605-562 BC	1st Century AD	War
Statue of Zeus at Olympia	435 BC	4th Century AD	Fire
Mausoleum at Halicarnassus	35 BC	15th Century AD	Earthquake
The Colossus of Rhodes	294 BC	652 AD	War
Lighthouse of Alexandria	305 BC	1480 AD	Earthquake
Walls of Babylon	605 BC	539 BC	War

I learned that these countries in the ancient world were able to build some impressive structures. Exactly how they were able to do it has not been fully explained.

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