

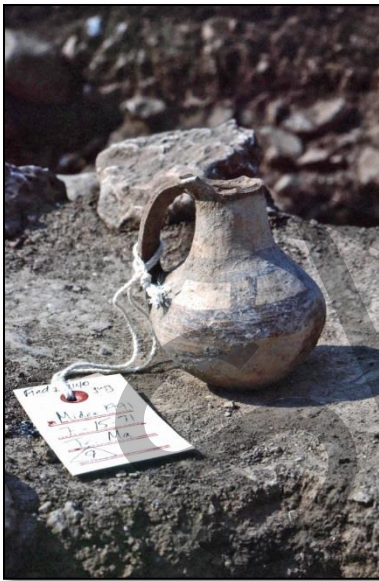
# Classical Archaeology

## The Riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41)

### Goals of this Lesson

The student will be able to:

1. briefly explain what archaeology is, as well as its use and limitations
2. locate Ephesus on a map, explain the significance of its location, and give a brief account of its history
3. explain the major factors involved in the riot recounted in Acts 19:23-41
4. explain at least three types of archaeological evidence that help us understand the riot in Ephesus



### Part 1: Archaeology – Its Use and Limitations

The term “archaeology” comes from two ancient Greek words:

ἀρχαίος λόγος

archaios      logos  
“ancient”      “word”

**Archaios** (ἀρχαίος) means *ancient*; this is the same stem from which we get the word *archaic*.

**Logos** (λόγος) has a rich and complex range of meanings. Though its most basic meaning is “word” or “speech,” it also includes the reasoning and thought behind speech. The form **-logy** is widely used today to indicate a body of knowledge, academic discipline, or field of study (**biology**, **ecology**, **geology**).

The etymology of the word *archaeology* suggests a broad “study of ancient things,” but today the term has a much more specific meaning. Today’s archaeologists examine the **physical remains** of ancient cultures in an attempt to understand them better. They integrate the physical evidence with other kinds of evidence, like written accounts and inscriptions.



This has profound implications for the uses and limitations of archaeology. Consider a question like “did the Trojan War really happen?” The site of Troy has been identified, and archaeological work has been conducted there, off and on, for over a century. But what sort of evidence would be needed to answer the question? Battles can certainly leave physical evidence behind, but what sort of evidence could tie a battle to the events related by Homer in the *Iliad*? Could we find evidence of a woman named Helen and a warrior named Achilles? Even if we found armor and weapons from the right time period, how could we know they belonged to Achilles?



Consider the following events. What sort of archaeological (physical) evidence, if any, would they leave behind for discovery by an archaeologist?

- the destruction of a city by human aggressors
- the birth of a child
- a shipwreck
- the resurrection of a dead person
- the destruction of a city by volcanic activity or earthquake
- the migration of a large group of people

In the late 1800’s when archaeology was in its infancy, excavations were little more than treasure hunts. Things have changed dramatically in the last century. Today’s archaeologist uses a variety of scientific techniques and on-site experts to glean every bit of data from an excavation, from architecture and statues, to ancient pollen and patterns of disease.

## Part 2: The Location and Importance of Ephesus

### Geographical Context



Follow these steps to locate Ephesus on a detailed map of the Roman Empire:

1. Click on this link: <https://web.archive.org/web/20190606032018/http://pelagios.org/maps/greco-roman/>
2. Zoom out until you can see the entire Mediterranean Sea.
3. Locate the boot-shaped peninsula of Italy in the center of your map. It is labeled with Roman numerals. To the right of Italy you'll see **Achaia** (modern Greece) and **Asia** (modern Turkey). The body of water between them is the **Aegean Sea**.
4. Move the map until the **Aegean Sea** (between **Achaia** and **Asia**) is in the center; the body of water in between them is the Aegean Sea. Zoom in until you can see Achaia on the right of your map and the
5. Now look for “**EPHESUS**” about halfway down the west coast of Asia. Keeping Ephesus in the center of the map, zoom in – but not too far – until you can see the entire bay and island of Samos on the west, and the mountain ranges and valleys on the right.
6. If this map does not work, you can locate Ephesus on the map in the World Book article on Ephesus here <https://www.worldbookonline.com/advanced/article?id=ar182660&st=ephesus#tab=homepage>.

Now that you've positioned your map, refer to it as you read through the following notes on the location of Ephesus.

- To the east of Ephesus, the land rises to a high plateau in central Turkey. A number of fertile valleys gently ascend through the rugged mountain ranges on the western end of the plateau, allowing the easiest access from the sea to the interior. Heavily traveled trade routes lead up through these valleys and across this highland to the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. Ephesus sits at the entrance to one of these valleys, giving access to important trade routes. **Take a moment to follow several of the valleys and ancient roads from the Aegean Sea up through the mountains to the east.**
- Ephesus occupied a privileged location on the Aegean coast because she possessed a protected harbor for sailing vessels, but maintaining the harbor proved to be one of the Ephesians' greatest challenges. Ephesus was located near mouth of the Cayster River, which ran west from the interior and emptied into the Aegean Sea. Through the centuries the silt

being deposited by the Cayster River was adding to the coastline, causing it to steadily advance west, farther out into the Aegean Sea. Each year, Ephesus found itself farther from the coast. The Ephesians fought the effects of nature by maintaining an artificial harbor. A canal connected the harbor to the Cayster River, which in turn provided access to the Aegean Sea. Regular dredging was necessary to maintain the harbor and the connecting waterways. **Zoom in as tightly as you can on Ephesus, and notice its distance from the sea.**

Now click on [this link](#) to view a satellite photo of the **Harbor Road** (later known as the **Arcadian Street**) that led from the harbor into the city.



- Follow the street to its eastern end to see the **Great Theater** that figures prominently in the riot.
- Now zoom out a little and scroll west (to the left). You'll see that the **Harbor Road** leads toward a dark lake. At one time, this was the harbor of Ephesus, though today it is completely landlocked.
- Zoom out a little more, if necessary, until you can see a dark ribbon extending out of the west end of the lake. This is the ancient channel that connected the harbor to the **Cayster River**. The harbor and the canal together look like a large paddle.
- Follow the canal to the west until it disappears near the point where a major road crosses over a small river. This is the **Cayster River** that connected the channel to the Sea in antiquity. Follow the course of the river west to where it empties into the Aegean Sea.

### Historical Context

Ephesus was founded as a Greek colony, though not in the precise location where the Roman site sits today. The Hellenistic general Lysimachus, one of the successors of Alexander the Great, is responsible for moving the city to the current location. Although the silting of the original, natural harbor of Ephesus created marshes that led to outbreaks of malaria, residents resisted any

relocation effort. Lysimachas forced the issue by blocking the drains and flooding the city with sewage. The inhabitants had no choice but to move to the site where the magnificent Roman ruins can be seen today. They would eventually dig the artificial harbor that would make Ephesus the most important port in the eastern Mediterranean. In 133 BC Ephesus came under Roman rule when Alexander's last successor died and willed his kingdom to the Romans.

By the time that Paul visited, nearly 200 years later, Roman Ephesus had become the leading city in all of Asia Minor, and one of the largest cities in the entire Roman Empire. Her location at the critical intersection of important land and sea routes had already made her a wealthy and vibrant city, so when the Roman Emperor Augustus made Ephesus the capital of the province of Asia, her preeminence was indisputable.

### The Artemisium (Temple of Artemis/Diana)

The most famous of all temples to the Greek god Artemis (called Diana by the Romans) was located in Ephesus. The temple site, however, did not move when Lysimachus relocated the city, so in Paul's day it was a short walk from the city gates. Renowned throughout the Mediterranean, Pausanias claimed the **Artemisium** was the largest building ever built (4.31.8). Antipater includes it in his list of the Seven Wonders of the World:



*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, Greek Anthology IX.58, translated by W. R. Paton (Loeb Classical Library, 1917)*

The first **Artemisium** was destroyed by flood, and a second construction was destroyed by a fame-seeking madman named Herostratus. He set fire to the roof beams in 356 BC, and tradition claimed that this happened on the very night that Alexander the Great was born. Artemis was apparently unavailable to defend her temple because she was attending to the future conqueror's birth.