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:

阿尔卡约斯 λόγος
archaios logos
“ancient” “word”

Archaioi (阿尔卡约斯) 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 1800s, 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.

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Come back next week, starting December 9, and we’ll have Part 2: “The Location and Importance of Ephesus.” This is a longer lesson with a great deal of detail, including related geography, a satellite photo, historical context, and detail on the Temple of Artemis/Diana.

This first unit will cover four weeks. Parts 3 and 4, to come, are: “Understand the Riot in Ephesus,” and “Explore the Archaeological Evidence.”

Your Instructor, Regan Barr

Regan Barr is an archaeologist, educator, published author, and homeschool parent. Besides excavations in Jordan and Greece, his three years on the excavation team at ancient Troy give him unique experience in the Classical world. Regan’s graduate studies include New Testament, Classical Archaeology, Classical Greek, and Ancient History. Regan and his wife Amy cofounded The Lukeion Project, which brings expertly taught Classical studies to learners on six continents via live, online webinars.

Regan teaches Ancient Greek, Greek History, Word Roots, Grammar, Research Writing, and a variety of workshops dealing with archaeological and ancient world topics. Regan co-leads Lukeion Family Expeditions to the Mediterranean each May (Italy, Greece & Turkey).

All photos in this lesson unit are by the author.