

# *Acts*

## *Lesson #15*

### *3rd Missionary Journey*

*(18: 24 – 19: 40)*

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# Review

**On the 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey, Paul & company left Philippi and continued westward to Thessalonica and Berea. After trouble in Berea, Paul's companions put him on board a ship and sent him to Athens for safety, while Silas and Timothy stayed behind and finished up the work in Thessalonica and Berea. After a brief stay in Athens, Paul continued southwest to Corinth, and there he remained for 18 months, heading back home toward the end of A.D. 52. Corinth was a double-seaport town on the isthmus that links the mainland of Greece to the Peloponnesian Peninsula, a modern, sophisticated and very prosperous commercial center.**

**Corinth was St. Paul's most difficult and troublesome church, both in its founding and in its ongoing operation. While in Corinth, Paul wrote 1 & 2 Thessalonians and Galatians, his first epistles.**

# Preview

On the way home from Corinth St. Paul stopped in Ephesus, the major deep-water port on the west coast of Asia Minor; one of the largest cities in the Roman Empire; one of only three cities with street lighting at night; and the home of the Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. It was a fabulous city, in every way. It was also the “hub” for the Roman Empire’s maritime trade routes, with traffic from all parts of the Roman world sailing into and out of its harbor. Paul immediately saw its potential.

Until now, Paul’s “evangelization strategy” focused on traveling from place-to-place founding churches. His strategy was effective, but it was not efficient. On his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey, A.D. 54-57, Paul travels to Ephesus . . . and he stays there, letting the people to come to him. Ephesus was St. Paul’s most effective missionary journey. At its end Luke writes that *“all the inhabitants of the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord, Jews and Greeks alike”* (19: 10).

While in Ephesus St. Paul writes 1 & 2 Corinthians in A.D. 54 and Romans in A.D. 57, perhaps his most important epistle.

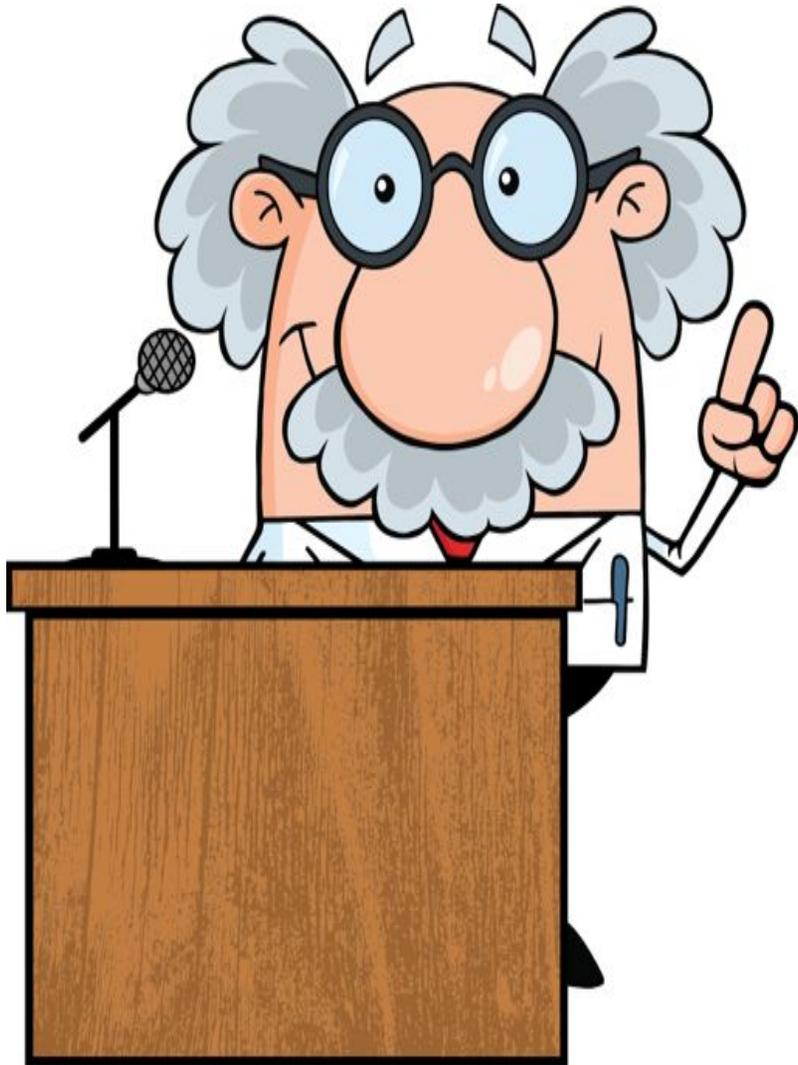
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**So, off we go on the 3rd missionary journey!**



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**This time St. Paul travels alone. We read in Acts 18: 23, 19: 1—**

***“After staying there [in Syrian Antioch] some time, he [Paul] left and traveled in orderly sequence through the Galatian country and Phrygia, bringing strength to all the disciples . . . Paul traveled through the interior of the country and came [down] to Ephesus.”***

**Paul left Syrian Antioch and followed the initial stages of his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey, encouraging the churches in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch and Galatia, then he passed through Phrygia and approached Ephesus from the northeast, a journey of about 1,500 miles.**

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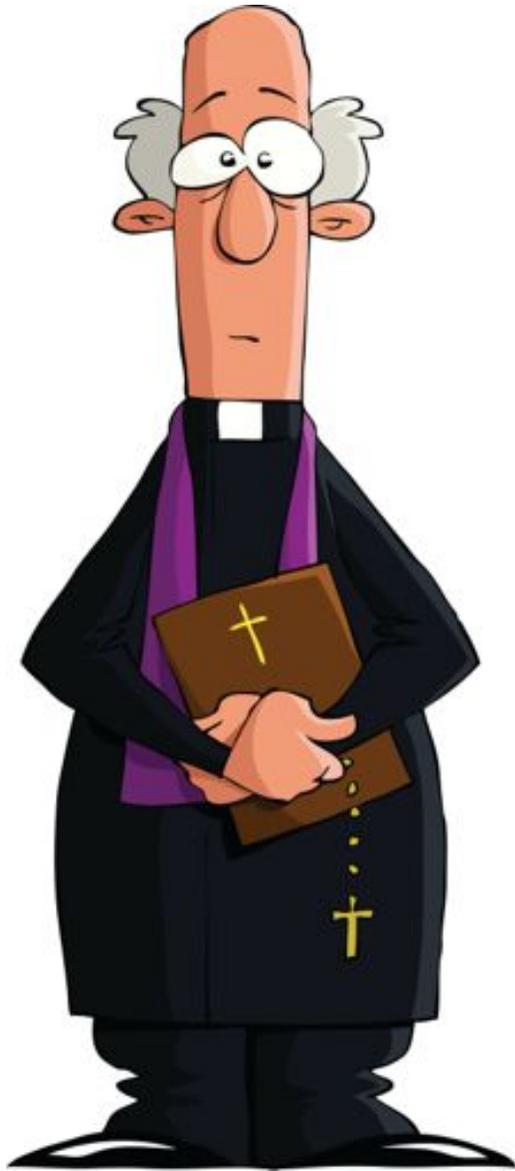
- Ephesus was founded as an Attic-Ionian colony in the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C. A natural deep-water port, Ephesus was one of twelve cities in the Ionian League during the classical Greek period.
- In Roman times Ephesus was a magnificent city, with a population of 150,000 - 250,000. Along with Rome and Syrian Antioch, Ephesus was one of only three cities in the Roman Empire with street lighting at night, the splendor of the city beckoning sailing ships and illuminating the night skies.
- Around 550 B.C. the Temple of Artemis (or Diana to the Romans) was built in Ephesus. This staggering structure was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. Antipater of Sidon compiled the Seven Wonders in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., and here is what he said about the Temple of Artemis:



*“I have set eyes on the wall of lofty Babylon on which is a road for chariots, and the statue of Zeus by Alpheus, and the hanging gardens, and the colossus of the sun, and the labor of the great pyramids, and the vast tomb of Mausolus, but when I saw the house of Artemis [in Ephesus] that mounted to the clouds, those other marvels lost their brilliance, and I said, ‘Lo, apart from Olympus, the sun never looked on anything so grand.’”*

**Greek Anthology IX, 58.**

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**On 27 February A.D. 380, by decree of the Emperor Theodosius I, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.**

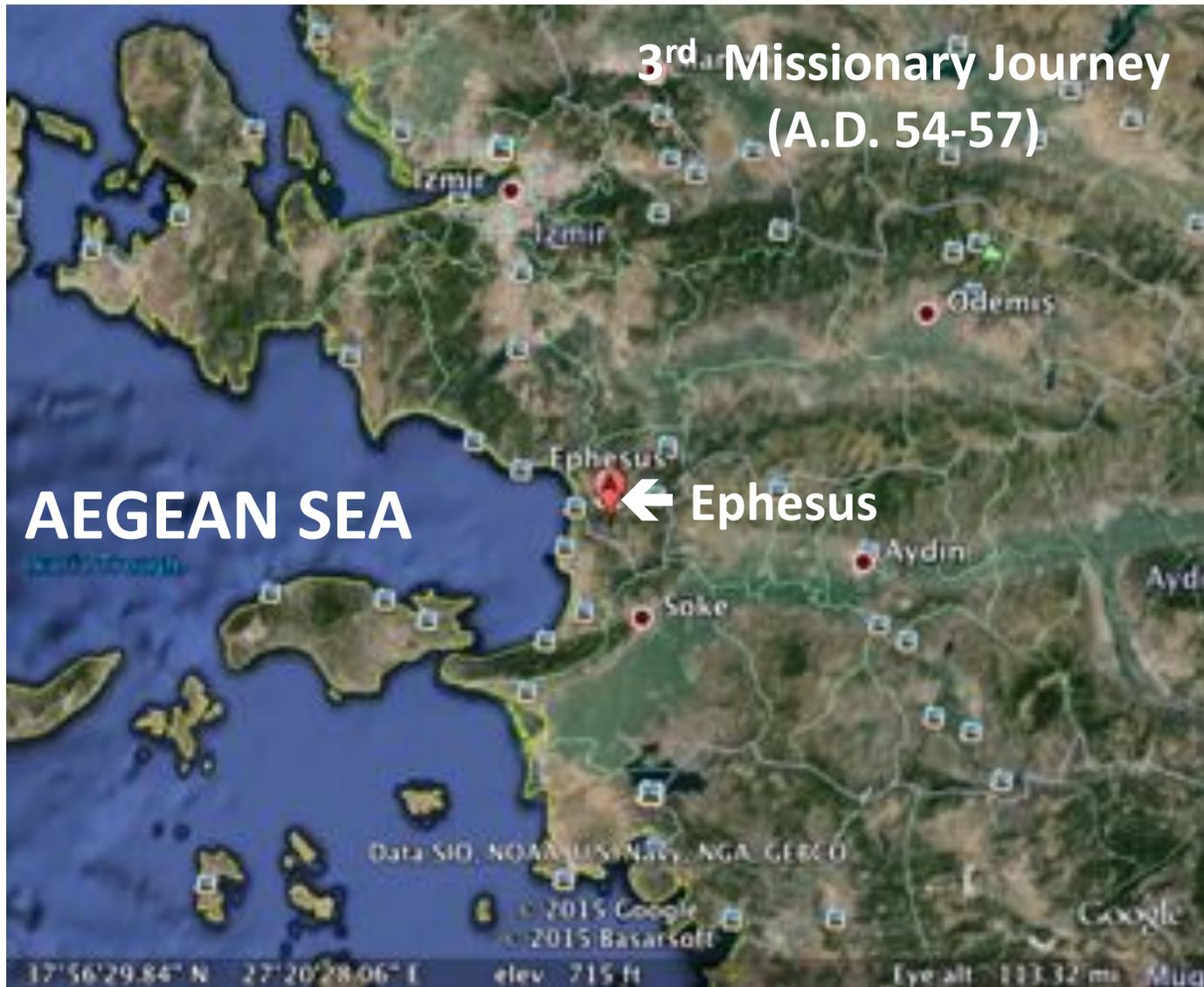
**Unfortunately, after this monumental step, Theodosius began to stamp out the pre-Christian religions in his lands. Sadly, twenty-one years later, in A.D. 401, a mob led by St. John Chrysostom, who was then Bishop of Ephesus, destroyed the Temple of Artemis.**

**All that remains of the temple today is a single column of random fragments erected on the site, along with a few intact columns brought by the Emperor Justinian in A.D. 532 to modern-day Istanbul; these columns were used in building the great church of Hagia Sophia.**

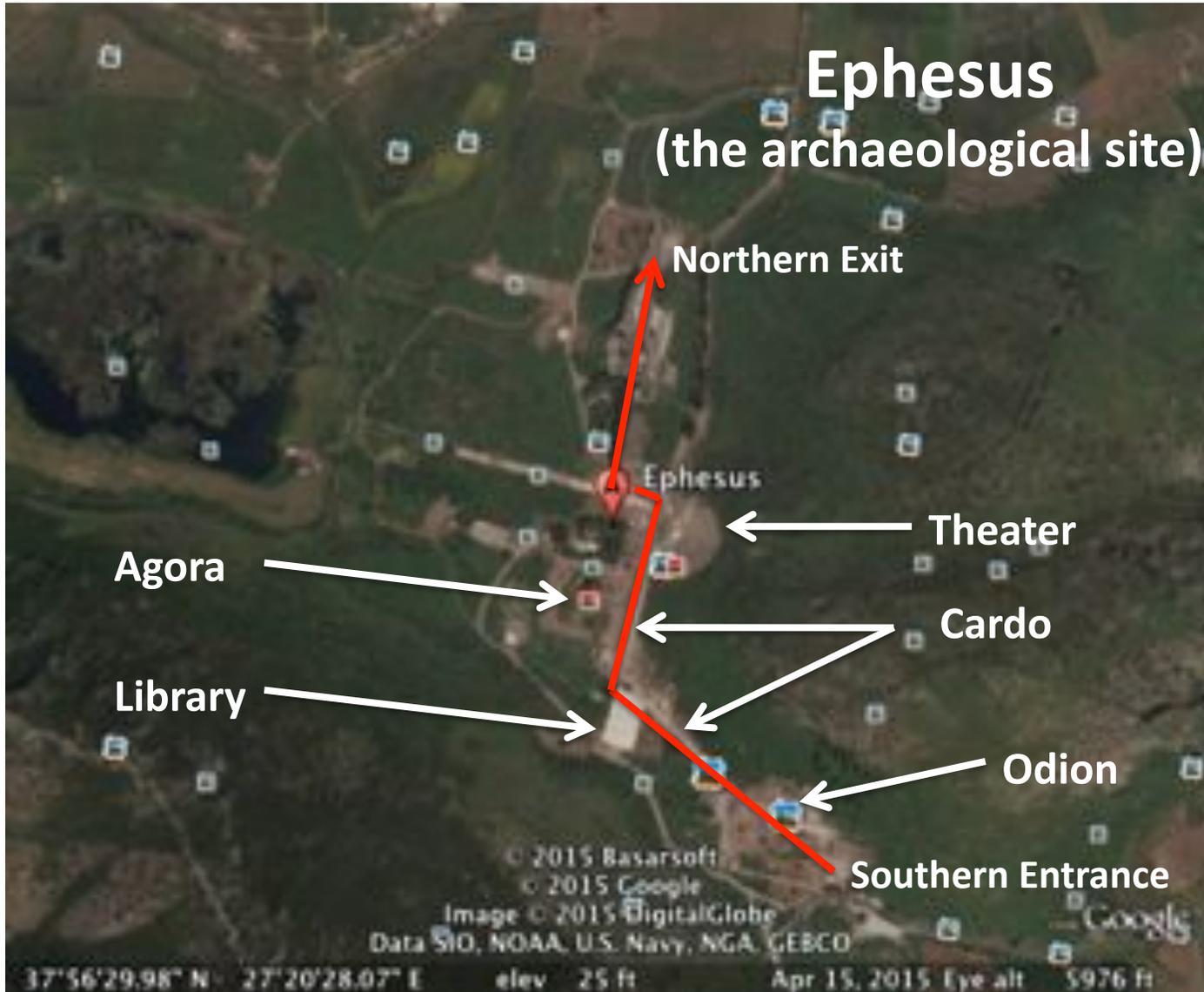


- Adding to the splendor and intellectual importance of Ephesus, in A.D. 132 Gaius Julius Aquila erected the Library of Celsus, in honor of his father, a Roman Senator.

- The library housed 12,000 scrolls, making it one of the three great libraries of the ancient world, along with Alexandria in Egypt and Pergamum in Asia Minor. In A.D. 262 a fire devastated the library and destroyed its contents. Only the façade survives today, a reminder of the achievements of one of the most dazzling cities of the ancient world.



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**Southern entrance to the archaeological site of Ephesus.  
The Odion is further down on the right, the goddess Nike on the left.**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

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**The Odion is not a theater, but a civic auditorium where public policies were debated.**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

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**Nike, the winged goddess of victory. We saw a similar image of Nike at Corinth.**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

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**The Cardo, “Main Street,” Ephesus.**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

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**Further along the Cardo is the Fountain of Trajan, on the right.**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

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**The public toilets, our chance to “go where St. Paul went!”**

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**The Cardo was the “Rodeo Drive’ of Ephesus. On the left, past the Fountain of Trajan, was the “ritzy” residential neighborhood. This the exterior of a beautiful home.**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

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**And this is the interior, with mosaic floors and frescoes on the walls.  
Perhaps St. Paul was a dinner guest here?**

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**A beautiful mosaic pavement runs parallel to the Cardo through the wealthy residential neighborhood.**

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**Logos Bible Study visits the Library of Celsus.**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

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**Continuing along the Cardo, the Agora is just past the library, on the left.**

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**A paving stone on the lower Cardo points the way to the local brothel, just across the street from the library!**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

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**The enormous theater at Ephesus seats 25,000 people.  
This is the scene of the riot in Acts 19: 23-40.**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

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**A fragmented pillar, all that remains of the great Temple of Artemis,  
one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world.**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

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**A stork makes her nest atop the pillar.**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

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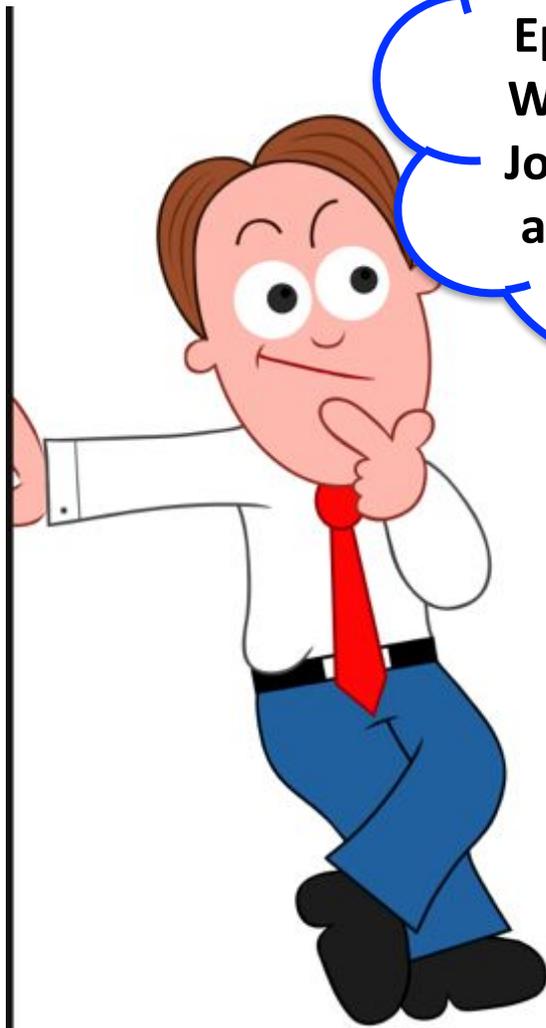
“A Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, an eloquent speaker, arrived in Ephesus. He was an authority on the scriptures. He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord and, with ardent spirit, spoke and taught accurately about Jesus, although he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the Way [of God] more accurately. And when he wanted to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. After his arrival he gave great assistance to those who had come to believe through grace. He vigorously refuted the Jews in public, establishing from the scriptures that the Messiah is Jesus.”

(18: 24-28)

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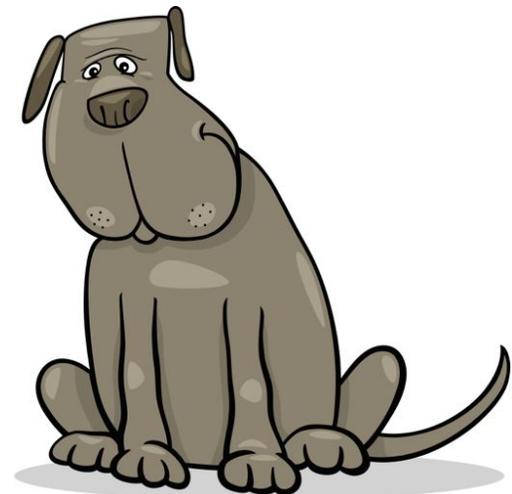


**Between the time St. Paul left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey and the time he arrives back in Ephesus on the 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey, another visitor arrived in Ephesus: Apollos, a Jew from Alexandria, Egypt.**



Now, that's really interesting!  
Another "evangelist" arrives in  
Ephesus, preaching about "the  
Way," but he only knows about  
John the Baptist's message, not  
about Jesus' death, burial and  
resurrection.

With a name like  
Apollos, I bet he was  
handsome and had a  
suntan!



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• John the Baptist preached a message of repentance, saying *“I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals”* (Luke 3: 16). And that’s the message Apollos brings to Ephesus.

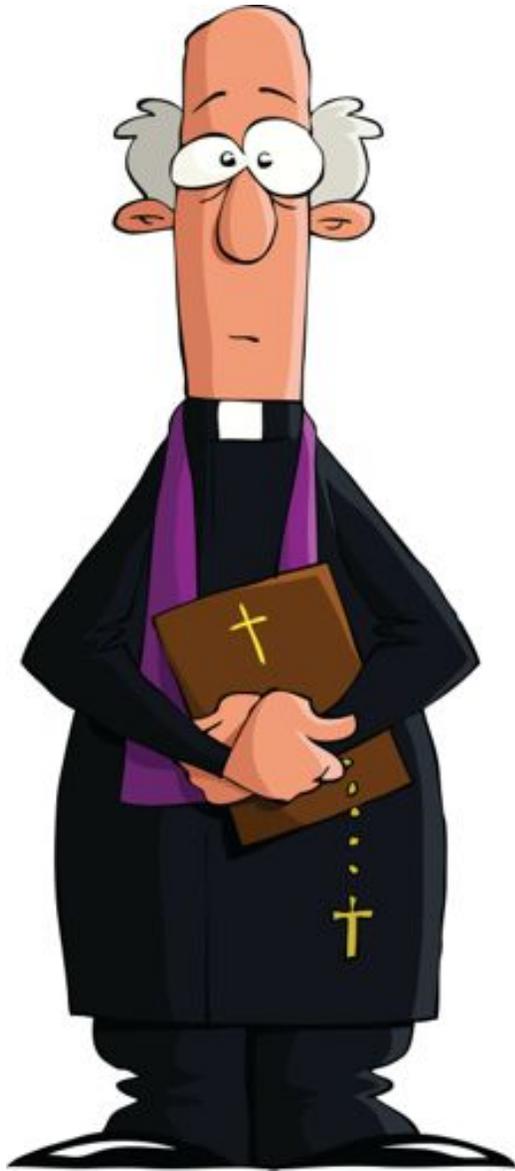
• The great Dominican scholar, Fr. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, speculates that Apollos’ eloquence mirrored the allegorical teaching style of the popular and influential Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria (25 B.C. – A.D. 50), a contemporary.\*

• When Priscilla and Aquila hear Apollos speak in Ephesus, they take him aside and politely “update” him on the more recent events.

• After confirming the news, Apollos then leaves Ephesus with the full gospel message and sails to Corinth, where he speaks with power and eloquence, developing a following among the believers there.

\* *Paul, a Critical Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 275.

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**Yes, he does, but with unfortunate consequences! When St. Paul writes from Ephesus to the church in Corinth in the winter of A.D. 54, we learn that factions and divisions have formed within the church at Corinth, some people saying *“I belong to Paul,”* others countering, *“I belong to Apollos”* (1 Corinthians 1: 12).**

**St. Paul is horrified at this, writing to the church in Corinth: *“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”* (1 Corinthians 1: 13).**

“While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior of the country and came [down] to Ephesus where he found some disciples. He said to them, ‘Did you receive the holy Spirit when you became believers?’ They answered him, ‘We have never even heard that there is a holy Spirit.’ He said, ‘How were you baptized?’ They replied, ‘With the baptism of John.’ Paul then said, ‘John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.’ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid [his] hands on them, the holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. Altogether there were about twelve men.”

(19: 1-7)

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**When St. Paul arrives in Ephesus, he is quite surprised to find believers there; after all, there were none during his brief earlier visit. Had another Apostle evangelized Ephesus in the interval?**

**Of course, at this point Paul knows nothing about Apollos.**



**Once St. Paul understands the situation, he sets the folks straight, baptizing them in the name of the Lord Jesus, and after laying hands on them, they receive the Holy Spirit!**



“He entered the synagogue, and for three months debated boldly with persuasive arguments about the kingdom of God. But when some in their obstinacy and disbelief disparaged the Way before the assembly, he withdrew and took his disciples with him and began to hold daily discussions in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years with the result that all the inhabitants of the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord, Jews and Greeks alike. So extraordinary were the mighty deeds God accomplished at the hands of Paul that when face cloths or aprons that touched his skin were applied to the sick, their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.”

(19: 8-12)

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- Ephesus was a sophisticated, cosmopolitan city, much more open to a variety of religious and philosophical propositions. St. Paul lasted three months in the synagogue at Ephesus, compared to a mere three weeks in Thessalonica.

- Once he is asked to leave, however, Paul relocates to the public “lecture hall of Tyrannus,” where he teaches daily. The hall has not yet been discovered at Ephesus.

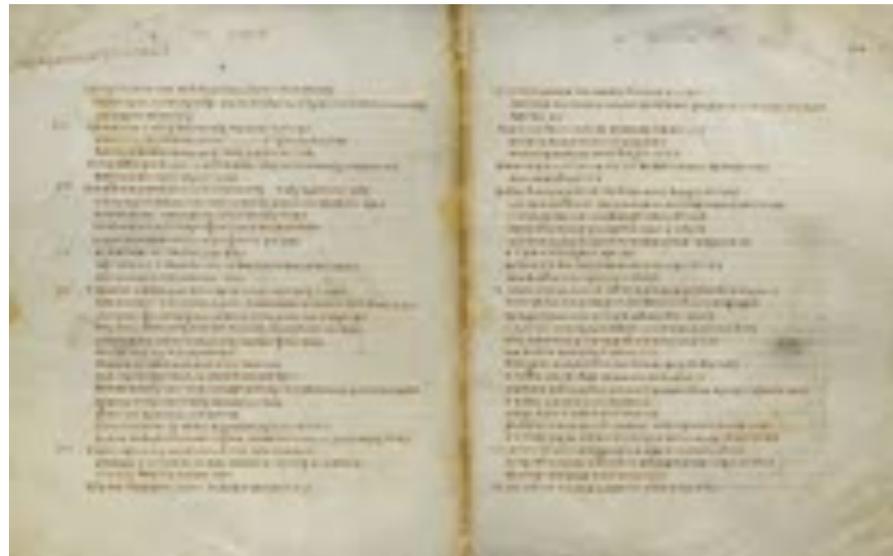
- Martial, the Roman poet and satirist (c. A.D. 40-100), writes in his *Epigrams* that from “the first and second hours of the day” (6:00/7:00 AM) until the sixth hour (11:00 AM) Romans worked at their various occupations. Then “the sixth [hour] brings rest” (4. 8. 3).

- As in Mediterranean countries even today, shops close in early afternoon and reopen around 4:00 PM, the time when St. Paul would have taught.

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Indeed, *Codex Bezae*, a 5<sup>th</sup>-century New Testament manuscript in both Greek and Latin on facing pages, now at the Cambridge University Library, suggests that St. Paul's discussions were, indeed, held between 11:00 AM and 4:00 PM.

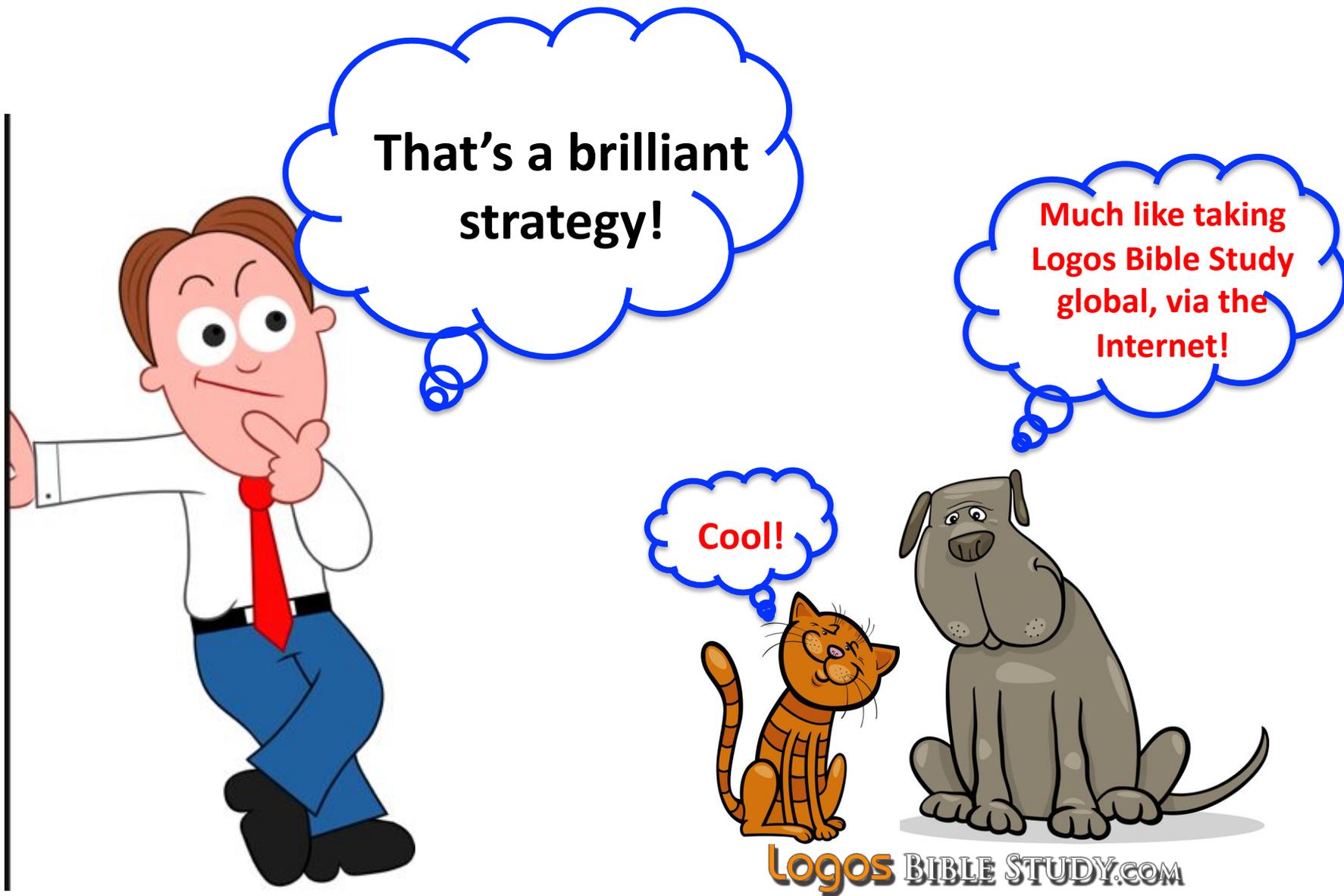


See a digital facsimile of *Codex Bezae*:  
<http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-NN-00002-00041/1>

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- St. Paul experienced extraordinary success on his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey in Ephesus. He spent three years there, and Luke writes that by the end, *“all the inhabitants of the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord, Jews and Greeks alike”* (19: 10).
- On Paul’s previous missionary journeys he would go to a city or town where no other Apostle had been; start preaching and teaching in the local synagogue; get thrown out of the local synagogue; teach and debate in the marketplace; form a small church community, meeting in someone’s home; put leadership in place; and then Paul would move on. *This was an effective technique, but not an efficient one.*
- When Paul saw Ephesus, he changed his strategy: rather than go to the people, Paul stayed in Ephesus and let the people come to him. After hearing Paul, the merchants and travelers in transit would take the gospel message back home with them.



“Then some itinerant Jewish exorcists tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those with evil spirits, saying, ‘I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.’ When the seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish high priest, tried to do this, the evil spirit said to them in reply, ‘Jesus I recognize, Paul I know, but who are you?’ The person with the evil spirit then sprang at them and subdued them all. He so overpowered them that they fled naked and wounded from that house.”

(19: 13-16)

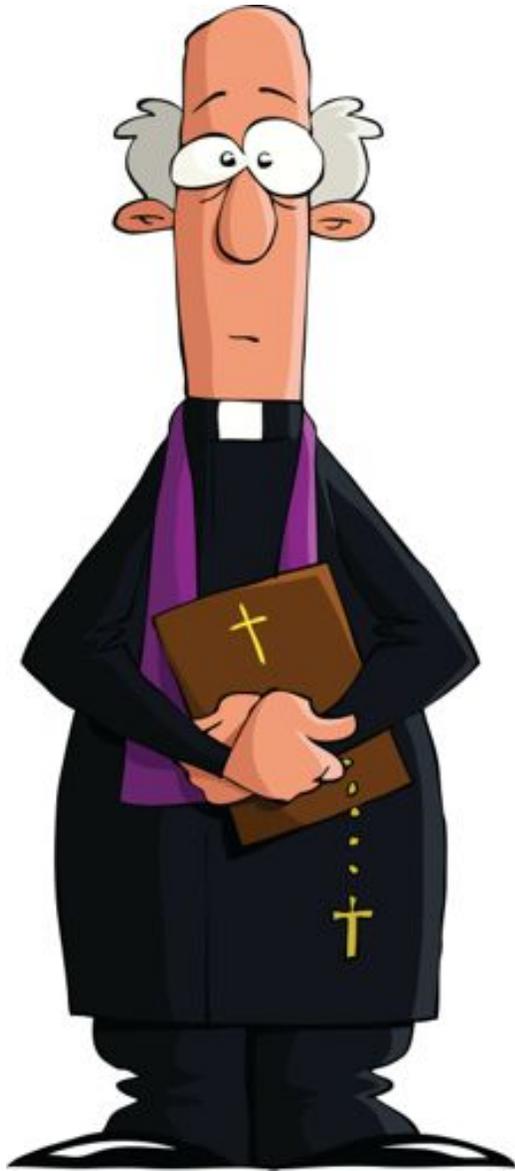


- The miraculous signs and wonders that accompany Paul's teaching in Ephesus draws "magicians" and religious charlatans like flies, just as Simon the magician was drawn to Philip, Peter and John in Samaria (8: 9-25).
- Here, the seven sons of Sceva see a great opportunity to make a few extra shekels, so they imitate what they saw Paul do.
- The results are hilarious; the consequences are not.

“When this became known to all the Jews and Greeks who lived in Ephesus, fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in great esteem. Many of those who had become believers came forward and openly acknowledged their former practices. Moreover, a large number of those who had practiced magic collected their books and burned them in public. They calculated their value and found it to be fifty thousand silver pieces. Thus did the word of the Lord continue to spread with influence and power. When this was concluded, Paul made up his mind to travel through Macedonia and Achaia, and then to go on to Jerusalem, saying, ‘After I have been there, I must visit Rome also.’ Then he sent two of his assistants, Timothy and Erastus, while he himself stayed for a while in the province of Asia.”

(19: 17-22)

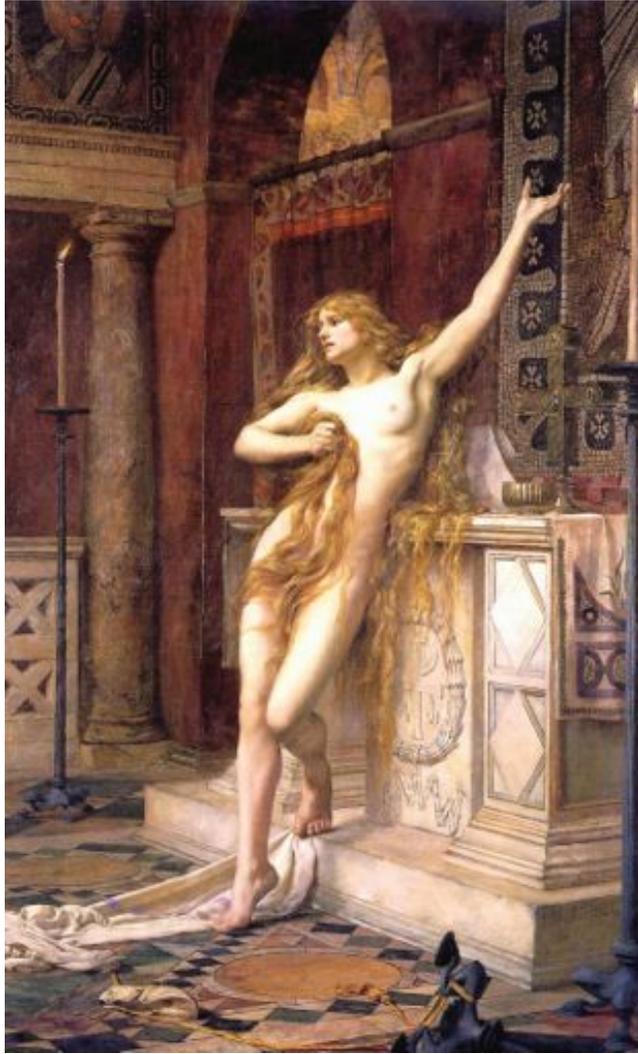
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**The response to the seven sons of Sceva episode is shocking: a public book burning!**

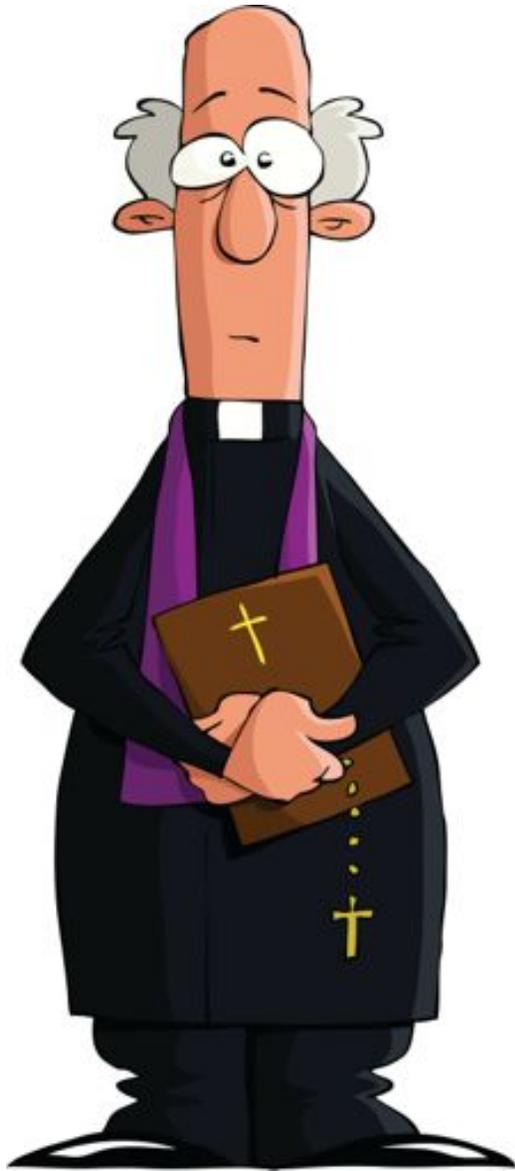
**As we learned in the story of “Simon the Magician,” the term “magician” translates the Greek word μάγος (*magos*). In Matthew 2: 1 the term refers to the three “kings” or “wise men” from the east who visit Bethlehem at Jesus’ birth. Μάγος could refer to malicious deceivers like Simon the Magician, but to ignorant minds it could also apply to anyone learned in pre-Christian religion, philosophy and literature.**

**Such a misapplied application occurs in A.D. 314 with the brutal murder of Hypatia, the brilliant mathematician and philosopher accused by St. Cyril of Alexandria of “magic” and of beguiling young minds. Hypatia was head of the Neoplatonic school of Alexandria, where she taught philosophy and astronomy. Among her many discoveries, Hypatia anticipated the elliptical orbits of the planets, confirmed 1,200 later by Johannes Kepler.**



**Charles William Mitchell. *Hypatia* (oil on canvas), 1885.  
Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, England.**

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**Although the great library of Celsus would not be built until A.D. 132—75 years after the book burning—the new believers in Ephesus burned scrolls valued at 50,000 drachmas—about \$10,000,000. Tragically, priceless and irreplaceable Greek and Roman literature no doubt went up in smoke.**

**St. Paul is deeply troubled, and he leaves Ephesus shortly afterward.**



Many argue that St. Paul was very satisfied with his work in Ephesus and assert that the book burning episode illustrates Christianity's triumph over paganism. I don't think so. After Paul leaves Ephesus he seems deeply troubled and soul-searching.



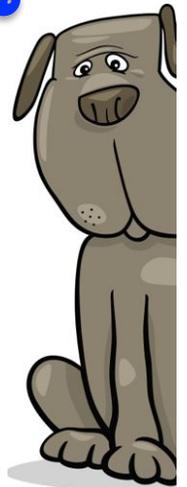
I think you're right about that.

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**But before Paul leaves  
Ephesus, bigger trouble  
erupts!**



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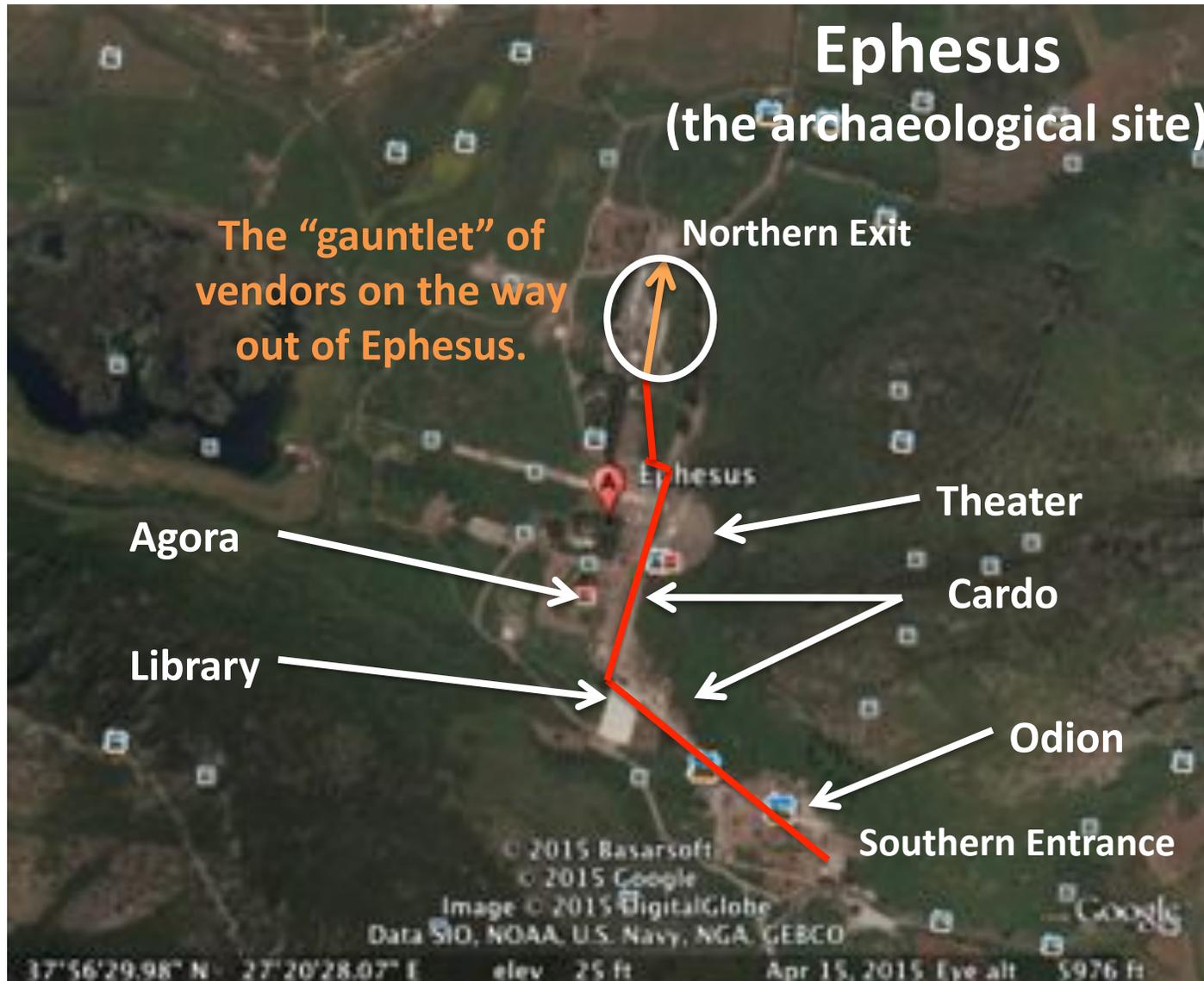
**“About that time a serious disturbance broke out concerning the Way. There was a silversmith named Demetrius who made miniature silver shrines of Artemis and provided no little work for the craftsmen. He called a meeting of these and other workers in related crafts and said, ‘Men, you know well that our prosperity derives from this work. As you can now see and hear, not only in Ephesus, but throughout most of the province of Asia this Paul has persuaded and misled a great number of people by saying that gods made by hands are not gods at all. The danger grows, not only that our business will be discredited, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be of no account and that she whom the whole province of Asia and all the world worship will be stripped of her magnificence . . . .**



**As we noted earlier, the great Temple of Artemis was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, and it attracted tens of thousands of visitors to Ephesus each year.**

**And like all tourists, those visiting Ephesus bought souvenirs of their trip—silver statues of the goddess, Artemis.**

**The craftsmen, merchants and vendors made a good income from their trade.**



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**Running the gauntlet of vendors at Ephesus. This one is priceless!**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

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### **Artemis of the Ephesians.**

*This reproduction of Artemis stands behind the library of Celsus façade in a small niche. The original is in the Vatican Museums, an ironic turn of events: the great pagan goddess is housed in the shadow of St. Peter's basilica, arms rather timidly open to the crowds.*

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

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“When they heard this, they were filled with fury and began to shout, ‘Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!’ The city was filled with confusion, and the people rushed with one accord into the theater, seizing Gaius and Aristarchus, the Macedonians, Paul’s traveling companions. Paul wanted to go before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him . . . . Meanwhile, some were shouting one thing, others something else; the assembly was in chaos, and most of the people had no idea why they had come . . . . They all shouted in unison for about two hours, ‘Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!’ Finally the town clerk restrained the crowd and said, ‘You Ephesians, what person is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image that fell from the sky? Since these things are undeniable . . . .

“. . . you must calm yourselves and not do anything rash. The men you brought here are not temple robbers, nor have they insulted our goddess. If Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a complaint against anyone, courts are in session, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. If you have anything further to investigate, let the matter be settled in the lawful assembly, for, as it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of today's conduct. There is no cause for it. We shall [not] be able to give a reason for this demonstration.' With these words he dismissed the crowd.

(19: 28-40)



**“Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

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# Questions for discussion and thought

1. **Apollos is one of the intriguing minor characters in the New Testament. Why do you think he traveled from Alexandria, Egypt to Ephesus with his pre-gospel message?**
2. **St. Paul lasted three months in the synagogue at Ephesus, as opposed to three weeks at Thessalonica. Why do you think that is?**
3. **The book burning in the wake of the seven sons of Sciva episode can be read in several ways. How would you argue in support of the book burning? How would you argue against it? How do you think Paul felt?**
4. **What was the motivation for Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen in objecting to St. Paul and his teaching?**
5. **How do you explain the crowd's overwhelming presence in the theater during the riot that follows?**

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