

THE BOOK OF ACTS | GOD'S REVELATION OF TRANSITION

SESSION 60 ACTS 18:26-19:7

ACTS 18:23-28 | THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY: EPHESUS

- Verses 23-25 – see session 59
- Verse 26 –
 - Aquila and Priscilla had long been followers of Paul, but, as Jews, they were still **in the synagogue**. Chances are that there was not even an “Ephesian church” at this time, only Jewish believers who met in the synagogue with other Jews.
 - Apollos **spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord** but Aquila and Priscilla **expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly**. While Apollos had an accurate message (the word **diligently** (v. 25) is the same words as **more perfectly** (v. 26), except for an intensifier), his message needed “the rest of the story” in order to be *perfect*.
- Verse 27 –
 - Now Apollos adopts Pauline theology and is not only a good teacher of the Kingdom, but also of grace. Going through Achaia with his new dispensational knowledge, he **helped them much which had believed through grace**.
 - A teacher who understands the place and standing of the Kingdom (v. 28) *and* the place and standing of grace is of great benefit!
 - Notice that **Achaia** is the region of Athens and Corinth. Later, at the Corinthian church, some would say, **I am of Apollos** (1 Cor. 1:12).
- Verse 28 –
 - Displaying the overlap of the two dispensations at that time (but not at our time), Apollos **mightily convinced the Jews...that Jesus was Christ**.
 - This was the Jewish message: Jesus as Messiah. The grace-age message is Jesus as Savior.
- A NOTE ON VV. 23-28: How can one read these verses and not recognize that the message of Jesus Christ must be understood dispensationally? Without the distinction that Aquila and Priscilla bring to Apollos, he was not preaching the saving Gospel. He was preaching Jesus, even as the One who died, buried, and rose again. But his *kingdom message* was inadequate for *personal salvation*.

ACTS 19:1-12 | THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY: EPHESUS, PART 2

- Verses 1-2 –
 - There were **about twelve** (v. 7) who were **certain disciples**.
 - We would assume these to be Jewish men, since we have not seen Gentile believers in Ephesus, and these men are disciples of the teaching of John the Baptist (v. 3).
 - Paul wants to know if they had **received the Holy Ghost**, which came at Pentecost, but was still given only by Apostolic authority, not automatically upon belief.
 - Their reply is **We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost**.
 - Since John the Baptist taught of a baptism by the Holy Ghost (Mark 1:8), their lack of knowledge, therefore, cannot be whether there *is* a Holy Ghost, but whether the Holy Ghost *is*.
 - That is, they do not know whether or not the promised Spirit has come. The key to interpretation being the present form of the verb.
 - Because this is now approaching 20 years after Pentecost, and because Apollos had preached in the synagogue, we are left wondering how these men had not heard of the events at Pentecost and beyond. There is no indication that the other Jews in Ephesus were in such ignorance.

- Verse 3 –
 - Notice that there is the *assumption* on Paul’s part that they had had some kind of baptism.
 - This is because, unlike many Christians understand, baptism was a Jewish ritual that represented cleansing and repentance.
 - It appears that later water baptism was used by Gentiles to display the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but that is not its origin.
 - These disciples said they were baptized **Unto John’s baptism**. Whether baptized by John himself or one of John’s disciples, they certainly knew of the promise of a *coming* Messiah and were living righteous lives in expectation of His arrival.
- Verses 4-5 –
 - Note once again that a dispensational change is required in the mind of the reader. John’s baptism was not sufficient in Paul’s gospel.
 - Here is a very important issue in interpretation of vv. 4-5. These verses must be read together.
 - Notice that *John* was **saying unto the people, that they should believe**. Then Paul continues speaking in verse 5, saying, **when they heard this**.
 - The interpretive question is *who is they?* It is not (as many assume) the disciples in Ephesus. It is, in context, *those to whom John was speaking*.
 - This helps explain why **they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus** when Jesus commanded the apostles to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (Matt. 28:19).
 - The baptism of verse 5 is the baptism which John was doing, and which the Ephesian disciples had previously received under John.
- Verse 6 –
 - This verse gives two important clues.
 - First, Paul did not re-baptize them, He only “brought them up to speed” by giving them the Holy Ghost. These men did not need to be baptized. When the Holy Ghost came upon the Apostles at Pentecost, were they re-baptized? The 3,000 who were baptized on that day were presumably not previously baptized by John. The baptism of Peter (Acts 2:38) and the baptism of John are not different. Furthermore, the Holy Ghost did not come upon a person at Baptism, but at the laying on of hands by the apostles.
 - Second, Paul carried out the Pentecostal formula of the laying on of hands to convey the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost *only* came upon a person with apostolic authority. When the Holy Ghost came, there were visible manifestations, which Paul later taught that every believer had (1 Cor. 12:7).
 - Clearly this shows that Paul’s ministry in Ephesus is *kingdom oriented* at this point. Such evidence requires one of the following:
 - The evangelical solution: Mix kingdom and grace in the church today.
 - The Bullinger solution: start the Kingdom after Acts 28.
 - The Randy White solution: recognize an overlap in the time of the Kingdom offer and the beginning of the age of grace. This overlap would have ended with the destruction of the nation in 70 AD.
- Verse 7 –
 - Did these 12 become the “charter members” of the Ephesian church? We do not know.
 - At this point there is only a group of Messianic believers within the Ephesian synagogue.