

APOLLOS IN SCRIPTURE

Apollos is mentioned **ten times** in the New Testament, within **Acts**, **1 Corinthians**, and **Titus**.

ACTS

ACTS 18:24–28

- Apollos, an eloquent Alexandrian Jew, was mighty in the Scriptures and taught accurately about Jesus.
- Knew only the baptism of John; Priscilla and Aquila taught him more perfectly.
- Traveled to Achaia with letters from Ephesian believers and powerfully refuted the Jews.
- Apollos is the only explicitly named Alexandrian in the NT.
- Alexandrian Jews had both adversarial (Acts 6:9) and positive (Acts 18:24–28) roles in early Christianity.

ACTS 19:1

- Mentions Apollos’s departure from Ephesus as Paul arrives, indicating active ministry in Corinth.

1 CORINTHIANS

1 CORINTHIANS 1:12

- Church divisions: some identified with Apollos, Paul, Cephas, or Christ.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:4–6

- Paul and Apollos are described as fellow servants with different roles; God gives the increase.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:22

- All teachers (Paul, Apollos, Cephas) are gifts to the church, not divisive figures.

1 CORINTHIANS 4:6

- Paul uses himself and Apollos to warn against pride and elevating leaders beyond Scripture.

1 CORINTHIANS 16:12

- Paul urged Apollos to visit Corinth; he declined, perhaps to avoid deepening divisions.

TITUS

TITUS 3:13

- Paul instructs Titus to assist Apollos and Zenas, indicating respect and usefulness in ministry.

INTERPRETIVE ISSUES

ACTS 18:24–28 — WHAT DID APOLLOS LACK?

- Described as "mighty in the scriptures" (v. 24) and taught accurately about Jesus.
- Knew only "the baptism of John" (v. 25).
- Priscilla and Aquila taught him "the way of God more perfectly" (v. 26).

WHY WAS JOHN'S BAPTISM INSUFFICIENT?

- Acts 19:4 defines it as a baptism of repentance.
- Not a full Pauline gospel message—additional instruction was necessary.
- Suggests a dispensational shift; Pauline gospel not accessible via Hebrew Scriptures or John's baptism.

WAS THE ISSUE PENTECOST AND SPIRIT BAPTISM?

1. GEOGRAPHIC/CHRONOLOGICAL DIFFICULTY

- Alexandria was well-connected; ignorance of Pentecost (c. 20 years earlier) seems unlikely.

2. TEXTUAL DIFFICULTY

- Acts 19 disciples ignorant of the Spirit; Apollos was "fervent in the spirit" and taught Jesus accurately.

3. LOGICAL DIFFICULTY

- Luke omits any mention of Pentecost teaching; instead, mentions "the way of God more perfectly."

4. CONTEXTUAL DIFFICULTY

- Priscilla and Aquila had spent time with Paul, who taught a unique mystery:
 - Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:9; Galatians 1:11–12; Ephesians 3:2–5.

5. TEXTUAL CLUE IN ACTS 18:27

- After instruction, Apollos helped those who "had believed through grace"—language distinctively Pauline.

CONCLUSION

- Apollos was likely introduced to Pauline mystery by Priscilla and Aquila.
- Theologically, this reflects a clear dispensational transition.

IMPLICATIONS FOR APOLLOS'S SCRIPTURAL EXPERTISE

- Apollos was not deficient in Scripture but unaware of truths hidden until revealed to Paul.
- Highlights that Pauline gospel ("by grace through faith") was not known from the Hebrew Scriptures alone.

Unfortunately, much of Christendom has overlooked these implications. Critics either question Apollos's genuine knowledge of Scripture or suggest he had a "heart problem." In doing so, they fail to acknowledge the legitimacy of the new knowledge he received.

Consider these examples:

Bibleref.com, a ministry of GotQuestions, says-

The text doesn't explain what Apollos doesn't know. Alexandrians did know about the crucifixion and resurrection, and some brought Jesus' offer of salvation to Syrian Antioch (Acts 11:20). Likely, Apollos knew everything John the Baptist taught, including that Jesus is the Messiah (John 1:23, 29–34), but he hadn't experienced the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16).¹

And GotQuestions themselves say,

Apollos' understanding of the gospel was incomplete, since he was "acquainted only with the baptism of John" (Acts 18:25). This probably means that Apollos preached repentance and faith in the Messiah—he maybe even believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah—but he did not know the full magnitude of Jesus' death and resurrection. Aquila and Priscilla, friends of Paul, spent some time with Apollos and filled in the gaps in his understanding of Jesus Christ.²

And the ESV Global Study Bible says,

*Apollos **knew only the baptism of John**. This suggests that he had not heard about the baptism that Jesus commanded after his resurrection (see Matt. 28:19). Apollos **taught accurately the things concerning Jesus** as far as he knew them. He certainly knew about Jesus' life and teachings. He may not have known about Jesus' death and resurrection, or about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.³*

HISTORICAL AND TRADITIONAL CURIOSITIES

ALEXANDRIAN BACKGROUND

- Alexandria was a center of Jewish learning and Hellenistic philosophy.
- Apollos, described as "eloquent" and "mighty in the scriptures," fits this intellectual profile.

ALEXANDRIAN INTELLECTUAL CULTURE

- Likely many Alexandrian believers, though not named.
- Alexandria later produced notable Christian thinkers:
 - John Mark (founder of Alexandrian church)
 - Clement of Alexandria
 - Origen of Alexandria

JEWISH SCHOLARSHIP IN ALEXANDRIA

THE SEPTUAGINT (LXX)

- Greek translation of Hebrew Scriptures, traditionally dated to the 3rd century BC.
- Made the Hebrew Bible accessible to Hellenistic Jews and Gentiles.

¹ "Acts 18:26." *BibleRef.com*, <https://www.bibleref.com/Acts/18/Acts-18-26.html>. Accessed 28 May 2025.

² "Who Was Apollos in the Bible?" *Got Questions Ministries*, <https://www.gotquestions.org/who-Apollos.html>. Accessed 28 May 2025.

³ *ESV Study Bible Notes: Acts 18. Blue Letter Bible*, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/esv-study-bible/notes/act/chapter-18?a=1036024>. Accessed 28 May 2025.

- Scholarly consensus questions the traditional story of its origins.

PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA

- Jewish philosopher who blended Jewish theology with Greek philosophy.
- Promoted allegorical interpretation of Scripture.
- Showed the intellectual environment Apollos would have known.

INTELLECTUAL TRAITS OF ALEXANDRIAN JEWS

- Highly educated and fluent in Greek language and rhetoric.
- Synagogues served as centers for both worship and philosophical discussion.
- Apollos's debating skills reflect this culture.

SUMMARY

- Apollos was formed by a culture valuing Scripture, philosophy, and rhetoric.
- Once instructed in Pauline truth, he became an ideal messenger for this new revelation.

POSSIBLE AUTHORSHIP OF HEBREWS

- Apollos suggested by Luther (and possibly Origen) as author due to eloquence and scriptural depth.
- Traditional attribution to Paul now widely questioned.

Arguments For	Arguments Against
Eloquent Greek style	No explicit historical attribution
Alexandrian Jewish context	Pauline tradition dominates
OT scriptural mastery	Rarely supported before Luther

- KJV translators maintained Pauline authorship by title; if not meaningful, what purpose does it serve?

A LINGUISTIC CLARIFICATION

- **Apologetics** (ἀπολογία) is unrelated to **Apollos** (Ἀπολλῶς).
- Apologetics = "verbal defense," as in 1 Peter 3:15.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FROM APOLLOS'S EXAMPLE

- **Humility and Teachability:** Apollos listened to ordinary believers and embraced further truth.
- **Avoiding Factionalism:** Apollos did not exploit his popularity; seems aligned with Paul's perspective.