

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 18:24-19:1 | Session 50 | Apollos in Ephesus and Corinth

A.D. 54-55

Paul departed from Antioch, on his third missionary journey, backtracking through provinces and cities he has previously visited, *strengthening* (*episterizo=establish, strengthen more, confirm*) *the disciples* (probably referring to the Jewish disciples here as in Acts 14:22). This should be a goal for every believer since we are being bombarded by humanism. We must, through the word of God strengthen those around us in the faith; not only in our church, but parents should make this a priority in their homes (1 Thessalonians 3:2,13).

Verse 24—

The city of **Alexandria**, established by Alexander the Great, was located on the western edge of the Nile River Delta on a peninsula between the mainland of Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea. The city was one of the largest and most famous cities in the Roman empire. It was known for having the greatest library in the world, for its museums, and tremendous architecture, as well as ship building (Acts 27:6; 28:11). This massive structure stood upwards of 300 feet tall. A fire was lit each night to guide ships into the harbor. **Alexandria** was home to one of the *Seven Wonders of the World*, the Lighthouse at Alexandria. The lighthouse was damaged by an earthquake around A.D. 796 and then completely destroyed about 500 years later. In 1994, divers discovered structures and statues associated with the lighthouse and the city of **Alexandria**. It was in this great city that a **certain Jew named Apollos was born**. There was apparently a large Jewish population in Alexandria. Earlier in Acts, the first martyr, Stephen, *disputed* with Jews from **Alexandria** (Acts 6:9).

Later **Alexandria** began to rival Christian thought that was being taught in *Antioch*. The strong literal biblical teaching taught by the apostles in Antioch began to be replaced by *symbolic and metaphorical teaching* in **Alexandria**. Some of the thinking that was presented to students taught there was no literal future resurrection of the body.

There is a similar transition going on in our own country. Our nation is not necessarily a Christian nation, but there *were* two distinctives throughout our 245-year existence which made us unique from other nations. Any remnants of these distinctives but are in grave jeopardy and for all intents and purposes gone: 1) Our Bible-based form of government and, 2) Our unique Bible-based educational system. Both taught with principles from the Old Testament (Judaean) and New Testament (Christian). Today our government and our educational system is overrun by secular humanists. Humanism and Christianity are in direct opposition to one another. Add to this the lack of biblical teaching in churches and we have the complete recipe for the fall of the United States. Even Christian parents today, for the most part, fail to make strong biblical teaching a part of their family's life. We have become a nation, and a church that desires entertainment and relaxation. Like Alexandria and Antioch, we are tottering between two distinct philosophies, The wisdom of God vs. the wisdom of man. By A.D. 200 Alexandria thought won the day.

Nevertheless **Apollos**, born in Alexandria, was an **eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures** (i.e., The Hebrew Scriptures, what we call the Old Testament). He **came to Ephesus**.

Verse 25—

This man was instructed in the way of the Lord. Whether his instruction came while he was in Alexandria, or he learned of the Lord Jesus upon his arrival to Ephesus we do not know. It is most likely he learned of the Lord Jesus in Ephesus and it caused him to be **fervent in the spirit**. Here the word spirit (*pneuma*) can refer to a person's own spirit, or the Spirit of God. Most translations, like the KJV do not capitalize the word **spirit**¹ The word **fervent** has the idea of boiling or being hot; he was *enthusiastic in his spirit!* **He spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord**. In verse 24 he was *eloquent* (*Greek=logios*), that is he taught rationally, his words made sense to the hearers. **Diligently** is the idea of correct speech. Apollos was a speaker we would want to listen to! But enthusiastic and diligent teaching does not mean correct teaching. We can sit in a church service and be completely engaged by the pastor's delivery and not be getting accurate biblical teaching.

Likewise, Apollos, though a tremendous speaker, did not have the complete gospel message. He taught **only knowing the baptism of John**. The baptism of John was the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4).

Verse 26—

Fortunately for Apollos, the Lord had sent **Aquila and Priscilla** from Corinth. They knew the gospel of the Kingdom (repentance and baptism), but they also knew the gospel of grace, having been with Paul in Corinth and sitting under his teaching for at least 18 months. **And he** (Apollos) **began to speak boldly in the synagogue**. In Ephesus, unlike Corinth, they were meeting in the synagogue still. It is likely there was no *church* yet as we understand the word. From the synagogue he was taken aside by **Aquila and Priscilla** and they **expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly**. They knew the gospel of grace and took him aside so he could understand the rest of the story. He needed to know about the gospel of grace so he could teach others correctly.

Verse 27,28—

Apollos now understood the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of grace, and as such he would become a much better teacher of the Scriptures. **He was disposed to pass in Achaia, the brethren wrote**. The **brethren** are those in Ephesus who **exhorted** (or, encouraged him to go) **and wrote to the disciples in Corinth to receive him**. When he arrived, he **helped** those who had **believed through grace** (this could read, *through grace he helped greatly through grace those who had believed*). He was able to preach to the **Jews publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ**. Apollos taught to both groups.

Chapter 19: Verse 1—

¹ The NIV doesn't even translate the word *pneuma*. They just decided to leave out that word. The publishers tout the NIV as the *most read and trusted translation*. Can we trust a translation that leaves out a word completely?

And it came to pass that, while Apollos was at Corinth. He was probably their main teacher in Corinth. We read about him again in 1 Corinthians in the context of division within the church. Some in the church were focused on the one presenting the message of Christ. Some were correct in saying they were “Of Christ” but others were saying, “I am of Paul” or “I of Apollos” or “I of Cephas.” (See 1 Corinthians 1:12). Apollos didn’t cause the division, but it seemed to be centered around him. So much so that later, after leaving Corinth, Paul could not convince him to come back (1 Corinthians 16:12).