

Conversions of Apollos and Those at Ephesus—Acts 18, 19

The latter part of Acts 18 and the early part of Acts 19 describe the conversion of Apollos and 12 men at Ephesus. Paul had met and worked at tent making with Priscilla and Aquila in the early part of Acts 18. Paul sailed for Syria, leaving Priscilla and Aquila behind at Ephesus where they met Apollos. After going to Antioch, Paul took the interior road back to Ephesus. Both of these episodes of conversion occur in Ephesus, but at different times.

Apollos and the twelve men in Ephesus had in common that they all knew only the baptism of John. These examples of conversion illustrate that only the one baptism will do. Indeed, Ephesians 4:5 teaches emphatically that there is one baptism, just as there is one God and one Lord. Men are not free to design their own manner or purpose of baptism, as is the common modern practice.



The Gospel Goes to Apollos—A Scholar and Powerful Preacher

Acts 18:24-28: *24 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.*

27 When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. 28 For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

Apollos was a Jew from Alexandria who by name was a Greek, and thus a Hellenistic Jew. That he was a learned man was typical of those from Alexandria, the seat of Hellenistic, Jewish scholarship—the most famous product of which was the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament. This Greek version of the Old Testament is a version of a Hebrew text that precedes by about 1,000 years the earliest dated Hebrew manuscript (916 AD). The Septuagint was the Bible of most writers of the New Testament. Not only are the majority of their citations from Scripture borrowed from it, but their writings contain numerous reminiscences of its language. Its words were household words to them. Alexandria itself was a cosmopolitan city located on the Nile Delta [Some notes are taken from the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright © 1996, 2003 by Biblsoft, Inc.]

Although Apollos had received instruction in the way of the Lord, and although he was an eloquent speaker, something was missing. In main, his teaching about Jesus was accurate, but again, there was something missing. The scriptures say that he knew only the baptism of John. The example of Apollos and the example of the Ephesians show forever that the kind of baptism one has and teaches is important to the very salvation of the soul. Why else would Priscilla and Aquila take him aside and explain to him the way of God more adequately. These same inadequacies in John's baptism are true of many baptisms today.

Twelve Men of Ephesus Know Only the Baptism of John

Acts 19:1-7: *While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples 2 and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"*

They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

3 So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"

"John's baptism," they replied.

4 Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. 7 There were about twelve men in all.

The twelve men of Ephesus in this passage knew only the baptism of John. Here, Paul teaches emphatically that the baptism of John was of repentance. Furthermore, John had taught Jesus was the one on whom they should believe. Upon hearing the word from Paul, they responded immediately, being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. From baptism they received the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Paul conferred the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues on these penitent, baptized, believers by the laying on of his hands (See the Samaritans of Acts 8 and 1 Cor 12).

How the Baptism of John Differs from the Baptism of Jesus

John's baptism was not in the name of the Lord. In Paul taught in Acts 19:4-5. "'John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.' 5 On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus." The true baptism will be in the name of Jesus. In Matt 28:19-20, Jesus required baptism in the name of Godhead, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." According to Paul in Col 2:9-12, Christ is the fullness of the Godhead (Deity): "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. . . . 12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead." The Lord had not yet commanded his baptism when John was baptizing.

John's baptism did not provide for the forgiveness of sins. As Paul stated, John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. It looked forward to the remission of sins in Christ and in his blood, but could supply neither. Peter attested to the necessity of one's being in Christ to be saved, when he said in Acts 4:12, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." When Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, he connected his blood forever to the forgiveness of sins. In Matt 26:28-29, he said, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." The Hebrew writer reinforced this connection in Heb 9:22: "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." Only by the baptism into Christ and into his blood can one be the recipient of the redeeming power of Christ's death and blood. Christ's baptism and not John's baptism provides the "putting off of the body of sin." Paul wrote in Rom 6:3-7

3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. 5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

The baptism of John was never a baptism into the body of Christ, the church. In Matt 14:10, Matthew records the account of the beheading of John. In Matt 16:18, Jesus the Lord, said, "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." John the Baptist could not have established the church since he was long dead when the Lord said that he would build it. Any church that claims to be the Baptist church cannot be the church that Jesus built. When Jesus did build his church beginning in Acts 2:40-41, baptized believers were added to the church: "With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day." The Lord added to this church these saved people in Acts 2:47: "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." Paul confirms this teaching in 1 Cor 12:13, "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." The one body into which true believers are baptized is the church according to Eph 1:21-23: "And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."

Conclusion

In this lesson, Apollos and the twelve men of Ephesus illustrate emphatically that the kind of baptism people have

is the difference in being saved or lost. Otherwise, why were they taught about the true baptism and why did they quickly obey the teaching about the new baptism. For baptism to be the true baptism, it must be "in the name of the Lord" and not in the name of any other including John the Baptist. The baptism must be for the forgiveness of sins as one is buried with Christ in the likeness of his death and raised to walk in newness of life, putting off the old body of sin. True baptism baptizes one in the body of Christ, the church of Christ, where Christ himself is the savior of the body. Eph 5:23-33 teaches:

Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. . . . Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Study Questions

1. Describe Apollos as the man we first meet. _____
2. What was missing in his religion? _____
3. What did Priscilla and Aquila do about Apollos' condition? _____
4. What should we do today when we met those inappropriately baptized? _____
5. What was missing in the conversion of the 12 men at Ephesus? _____
6. How did they respond to Paul's teaching? _____
7. What three elements from these examples are necessary for a scriptural baptism? _____

Map of Alexander's Empire

