

Acts of the Apostles: Acts 19 Pt 1
Lesson 31 by Faber McMullen, Union
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GOD'S SPECIAL GIFT

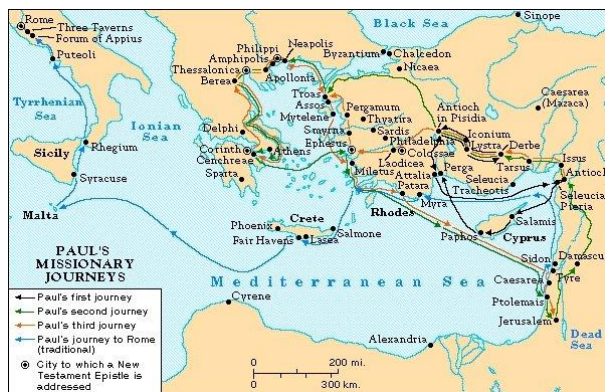


Paul at Ephesus



19 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples² he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”³ And he said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?” So they said, “Into John’s baptism.”⁴ Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying

to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.”⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.⁶ And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.⁷ Now the men were about twelve in all.⁸ And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.⁹ But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.¹⁰ And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.



You will remember last week we discussed Apollos and his incomplete understanding of the scriptures. What he understood and knew, he taught with great accuracy. He was knowledgeable and he was eloquent. But his learning had gaps in it because he had not yet heard of Jesus the Messiah's death for our sins and His resurrection from the dead. He had been busy in ministry preaching for people to repent because the Messiah was coming soon, just as John had taught him. Priscilla and Aquila took him

aside in their home, and they explained to him that the prophecies he was preaching about had already been fulfilled, and with great joy, he accepted their message.



The twelve people we've just read about in Ephesus (the "Ephesus 12") likewise had been baptized with John the Baptist's baptism, repenting of their sins in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. They were called believers ("disciples" in Greek) because they believed in the prophecies of the Old Testament that said He was coming. They and Apollos were in the same boat, believing He was coming but not being aware that He had already come, and Apollos may have even been the one who brought them the message. From this, it is evident that Apollos, and probably many others of John's disciples, had traveled the world and brought this message of hope in preparation for Paul and others to visit and inform them that indeed the Messiah had come.

Let's say that you hear the president is coming to town, and that he wants to personally visit some homes in Navasota. You clean up your yard, paint your house, wash the dogs, and rearrange your clutter. After a while, your neighbor comes by and informs you that the president already came last week, and he gave out a special gift to everyone he visited. You learn that he is willing to come visit your home also if ask him to do so, and he will give you the same gift he has given to the others.

These "disciples" were not Christ Followers. In fact, they were not even Christians. They were followers of the teachings of John the Baptist. They were "waiting for a special guest". Upon hearing that Jesus had already come, they received Him as Messiah and Savior, and the text tells us specifically that they were then baptized in the name of Jesus. It was not the baptism that saved them, rather it was their **faith**. They followed their faith being baptized in the name of Jesus. John the Baptist's ministry was one of calling hearts to repentance in preparation of receiving the Messiah. (Mark 1:2). As the people repented, they showed their changed hearts by going down into the water for an outward cleansing. But repentance alone is not enough. To be saved, we each must personally choose Jesus and His work on the cross. John was clear that there was much more to come. He said, ¹¹ *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.* (Matthew 3:11 NKJV)



Scripture is very clear that when a person is born again, they are given the Holy Spirit immediately. (1 Corinthians 6:19). If a person does not have the Holy Spirit of God living within them, they do not belong to Christ. (Romans 8:9) THESE TWELVE MEN might have believed that Jesus the Messiah was coming, but they did not YET know about His saving work on the cross nor had they received that work as substitution for their own sin. How do we know this?

- 1) They did not have the Holy Spirit nor had they ever heard of it.
- 2) They were “disciples” of John, but not of Jesus.
- 3) They had taken the first step of repentance of sin, but they had never put their faith in Jesus, the Messiah, as a substitute for the penalty of their sin.

In summary, the “Ephesus Dozen” were still living under the Old Testament system. They had repented, but they were awaiting the Messiah. They really did not know or understand the gospel. It also gives us a clearer understanding of exactly what Apollos knew (and didn’t know) when Priscilla and Aquila took him aside to explain the gospel more fully. (Acts 18:26) Apollos only knew what John the Baptist had told him about Jesus’ coming. He knew that Jesus would be the Messiah, but he did not know that Jesus’ sacrificial death and resurrection had already taken place. After Apollos learned this and received Jesus, he became a great evangelist and Christian apologist. (Acts 18:28)

Apollos and the “Ephesus Dozen” had stopped halfway on their spiritual journey. They were like the folks who had prepared their house for the president, but they had no idea that the president had already come, and was waiting to visit them as well, and to give them the gift that he had for them. Once Priscilla and Aquila and Paul had explained the full details to these disciples of John, they believed and received the promised gift of the Holy Spirit in a public way that all understood, and that connected them to the entirety of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let me now address verse 6. We are told that Paul laid hands on them, they received the Holy Spirit, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. By some denominations this is seen as a prerequisite for receiving the Holy Spirit. However, a person does not have to lay hands on you for you to receive the Holy Spirit, nor does a person have to speak in tongues or prophesy to give evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit. What is the only way to be saved? The only way is to believe in Jesus as Savior, and to invite Him into your heart. Think back on our earlier studies in Acts. There was no delay in the Holy Spirit coming on Cornelius when he believed. Likewise, there was no necessity for the “laying on of hands” for Cornelius to receive the Holy Spirit. (Acts 10:44) No where in the New Testament is there an incidence of a person being a Christian without having the Holy Spirit. (John 3:5; Acts 11:17; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Galatians 3:2; 1 Thes. 1:5; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 6:4; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 3:24; 4:13).

Likewise, the incidences of receiving the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts follow all sorts of patterns. Some involve laying on of hands and some do not. Some involve tongues or prophesying or both, and some do not. The Day of Pentecost involved visible “tongues of fire” resting on the heads of the people in the Upper Room. The Spirit came into believers before baptism (Acts 10:44), at the time of and/or after a believer’s baptism (Acts 8:12-16; 19:6). Yet Paul is clear in Romans 8:9 that no one can be a Christian without the Holy Spirit. During the Book of Acts, the dispensing of the Holy Spirit is seen in a variety of ways that suited the moment in which the Kyrygma (explosive

teaching) was taking place. The bottom line is that the Holy Spirit comes into every believer at the time of their belief. The more they open their hearts to be guided by Him, the more their lives are “filled” with His presence.

The above passage also speaks of the group prophesying and speaking in tongues. (Acts 19:6) The word “prophesying” does not mean the same to us today as it did back then. Back then, it meant explaining the scriptures, telling the truth about God and the Messiah Jesus, and praising the Lord, as well as telling the future. These men were joyfully telling others what they had just learned; they were “prophesying”.

This same verse also mentions that they “spoke in tongues”. Ephesus was a fully cosmopolitan city with a huge number of languages being spoken there. The gift of tongues on this day in that place insured that the gospel was heard in known languages by an array of people present. This is just as the Day of Pentecost when people from all nations came to Jerusalem for the feast. And, they heard the works of God spoken of in their own languages. God can use whatever gifts He wants to use whenever He wants to use them AND with whomever He wishes to use them. However, they must be used in accordance with scripture, and Paul warns that the more “spectacular” gifts are not to be the focus, and should never eclipse love itself. (1 Corinthians 12:31)



The bottom line is that God is sovereign. He uses the gifts of the Holy Spirit as He desires for His own ends. The key here is that we must accept the sovereignty of God, and be willing to give ourselves to the operative indwelling of the Holy Spirit to do what He wills to do in each of our lives. Should we pray expectantly for a healing

and/ or other things we desire in our hearts, even though the results are fully in His hands? Yes. Should we **demand** a healing, a miracle, or expect the answer to come to us a certain way in other matters? No. Should we **accept** God’s sovereign will in our lives? Yes.

Verse 8 tells us that Paul went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. We can and should do likewise. Some will be hardened. Some will believe. Some will speak evil of us and our “way”. We should work at it until our work is done. Verse 10 tells us that he persisted until “all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” Do not grow weary in doing good! (Galatians 6:9)

Remember my analogy of preparing for the president’s arrival. Both Apollos and the Ephesus 12 were prepared and in a state of waiting and watching for their special guest with His special gift. They awaited the Messiah and His Holy Spirit. They had studied the scriptures about Him, and they contemplated His coming. They wanted to be sure to recognize Him when He came, and they had prepared their hearts to receive Him. They

had heard about the gift He was bringing, the Holy Spirit, but they had never received Jesus as Savior receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit which followed their belief.

Aquila, Priscilla, and Paul gave them the joyous news that Yeshua Ha Masshiach, Jesus the Messiah, had already come, and they immediately invited Him into their hearts, receiving the priceless gift of His blood in payment for their sins, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit to comfort and guide them.

You have also heard about this Jesus. You might have thought about Him. You may have studied about Him. You may in fact know a whole lot about Him. You might have even prepared your heart to receive Him, but you have never actually invited Him into your heart and life. You have never sat down with Him in person to fellowship with Him, receive His love and forgiveness, love Him, worship Him, and receive that special gift of His Holy Spirit from Him. Don't let your indecision be your decision. Softly, gently, Jesus is calling. Will you come today and receive this special gift from God, Jesus the Messiah Spirit, into your soul and your life? Apollos and the the Ephesus 12 did so, and so can you!

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.