

Having left Corinth with Aquila and Priscilla, they arrive in Ephesus, where we encounter a man by the name of Apollos. Verses 18-28 describe the ministry of Paul (vv18-23) and Apollos (vv24-28).

I. Paul in Ephesus (vv18-23)

II. Apollos in Ephesus (vv24-28)

I. Paul in Ephesus (vv18-23)

1. Having eventually left Corinth, Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila sailed for Syria, stopped at Cenchrea, and came to Ephesus.
2. Cenchrea was a little sea port on the eastern side of Corinth, which would have been the place he left for Ephesus (according to Romans 16:1, a church would be planted there).
3. Luke tells us he had his hair cut off because of a vow which refers to a solemn promise made to God.
4. It seems this was a Nazirite vow which involved abstinence from drinking wine and from cutting one's hair for a period of time.
5. Thus, it's likely that Paul had made the vow earlier, and was now ending it as his hair was being cut.
6. If this is true, and it seems it is, it wasn't the cutting of his hair that constituted the vow, but previously not cutting it.
7. John Stott—"After the hair was cut it was then burned, along with other sacrifices, as a symbol of self-offering to God. If the vow was completed away from Jerusalem, the hair could still be brought there to be burned."
8. Howard Marshall—"Jews made vows to God either in thankfulness for past blessings (such as Paul's safekeeping in Corinth) or as part of a petition for future blessings (such as safekeeping on Paul's impending journey)."
9. And so, it's probable that Paul made the vow back in Corinth and refused to cut his hair for those 18 months.
10. This would mean he made the vow in gratitude for the Lord's protection and blessing upon his ministry.
11. The fundamental purpose of these vows is stated in Num.6:2—"that he may separate himself to the LORD."
12. Either way, it was evident that Paul's conscience permitted him to continue some of the OT positive laws.
13. John Stott—"Once Paul had been liberated from the attempt to be justified by the law, his conscience was free to take part in practices which, being ceremonial or cultural, belonged to the 'matters indifferent.'"
14. V19—"And he came to Ephesus and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews."
15. Seemingly Paul left Priscilla and Aquila somewhere in Ephesus and then entered the synagogue by himself.
16. According to vv20-21, while they asked him to stay longer, he refused, but he promised to return soon.
17. V21—"I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem, but I will return again to you. God willing."

18. Now the first thing that needs mentioning about v21 is, there's a textual variant so some of your Bibles has a much shorter verse.
19. For example, the ESV and NASB says—"But on taking leave of them he said, 'I will return to you if God wills,' and he set sail from Ephesus."
20. The phrase "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem" is disputed as it's not in every ancient manuscript.
21. As usual, I will assume that it's original and attempt to expound it as found in the Old and New King James.
22. There were seven OT yearly feasts and we don't know for certain which of the seven Paul here refers to (most believe it was the Passover).
23. Why he wanted to be present at the feast in Jerusalem is also unclear (two possibilities have been suggested).
24. (a) He wanted to fulfill (complete) his vow he previously made—as I said Nazirite vows entailed refraining from alcohol and cutting your hair for a specific time, all of which would come to an end in various sacrifices.
25. Rom.14:5—"One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind."
26. Gal.4:10-11—"You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain."
27. (b) He wanted to be present at the feast to preach the gospel—thus, the word rendered "keep" simply means "make."
28. Paul was desirous to make the feast or to make it to the feast, as Jerusalem was filled with people during these feasts.
29. This is the view of Calvin and many others—"Paul did not mean he had any duty to be present at the feast, but he desired to be present, that he might do more good than at any other time of the year."
30. This view is strengthened by other places in the book of Acts where Paul was desirous to be at various feasts.
31. Acts 20:16—"For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible on the Day of Pentecost."
32. He wanted to be, if possible, in Jerusalem by the Day of Pentecost, in order to minister to the multitudes.
33. Verses 22-23, describe what Paul did when he arrived in Caesarea (which was about a 3wks boat ride from Ephesus).
34. V22—"And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch."
35. While Paul landed at Caesarea, it appears he then went to Jerusalem, where he visited and greeted the church.
36. From there he went down (that is, he went down from Jerusalem), and actually travelled north to Antioch.
37. If you remember, the church at Antioch was Paul's sending church, and so he spent some time there (v23) giving an update on his ministry.
38. He then departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

39. Thus, v23 actually describes the beginning of Paul's third missionary journey (the longest of the three - about 5yrs).

## II. Apollos in Ephesus (vv24-28)

1. Beginning with v24, we are introduced to a very interesting Jewish person (man) by the name of Apollos.
2. His name is obviously Greek (given by Apollo), which means he was a Jew entrenched in Greek culture.
3. (1) His character, v24—"Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus."
4. (a) An eloquent man—Apollos is first described as "an eloquent man" a word which literally means "learned" or "educated."
5. It can be translated eloquent in that it means articulate or able to express oneself clearly without confusion.
6. He was a man, because of his learning or education, who could articulate or communicate effectively.
7. (b) Mighty in the Scriptures—the Greek word rendered "mighty" literally refers to "a strong ability."
8. Thus, this implies two things—he had a vast understanding of the OT and a strong ability to explain it.
9. From v25 we learn that he had been "instructed in the way of the Lord" which refers to the doctrines of the Bible.
10. We are not told where he was from or who instructed him, but only that he taught accurately the things of the Lord (v25).
11. (2) His ignorance, vv25-26—v25 says—"though he knew only the baptism of John"—that is, he only knew about the ministry of John the Baptist.
12. This doesn't necessarily mean he heard John for himself, but that he was familiar with the doctrine John taught.
13. Seemingly, knowledge of John and his teaching was spreading from place to place through the synagogues.
14. If you remember, John the Baptist taught that people should repent for the long-awaited Messiah had come.
15. Thus, Apollos was a believer as he believed the promised Christ had come, though he was ignorant of the details.
16. V26—"So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately."
17. They heard him boldly speak the truth and befriended him in order to instruct him in the truth more fully.
18. The word rendered "more accurately" in most translations doesn't imply his teaching had error in it.
19. It actually means "more perfectly" or "completely"—while his teaching was true it was not yet complete.
20. (3) His ministry, vv27-28—"And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed

through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ."

21. If you remember, Achaia was a Roman province in which Athens was the capital (about a week's trip by boat).
22. Thus, it's most likely Apollos wanted to visit Athens, and so the brethren wrote a letter of recommendation.
23. In the NT, when one person left one church for another, had to bring with them a letter from their previous church.
24. Luke tells us he greatly helped the believers—"for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ."
25. The Jews didn't deny the OT Scriptures foretold a coming Messiah, but they denied that Jesus was the Christ.
26. Because they were primarily concerned with their nationality, they were looking forward to a Messiah who would liberate them from the Romans.
27. It's for this reason, the humiliation and suffering of Christ was a stumbling block to the average Jew.
28. The notion of a humble Messiah who suffered and died upon a Roman cross was abhorrent to a proud Jew.
29. The word *Christ* is the Greek counterpart of the Hebrew word *Messiah* which simply means the Anointed One.
30. Apollos vigorously refuted the Jews publicly (in the synagogue and elsewhere), that their doctrine was wrong.
31. To refute is to prove false—he showed from the sacred Scriptures that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ.
32. Thus, he refuted their teaching by showing them from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ (the promised Messiah).
33. Now, keep in mind, the Scriptures that he used were the OT, which repeatedly foretell the coming of the Messiah.

### III. Observations

1. Here I want to suggest three summary observations, largely taken from Apollos (as found in vv24-28).
2. But before I come to these, I want to take a few minutes and remind you of an important homiletical principle (homiletics refers to the art or discipline of sermon making or preaching).
3. Having explained the basic meaning of the text, the theology laden in the text must be opened and applied (by this I mean, we must bring the rest of Scripture to bear upon the text) – it's connected to the rest of Scripture and together form a whole).
4. (1) All Christians believe in Christ—I take this from the fact that Apollos believed in Christ with little knowledge.
5. He had heard about John the Baptist who came preaching and exhorting the people to make way for the King.
6. But where did he get the information needed to believe on Christ, but from the 39 books of the Old Testament.
7. Everyone, from the history of the world, that means Adam onward, had sufficient knowledge of Christ.

8. How else were people saved in the OT? They were saved as they placed their faith in the promised Christ.
9. This means, the OT Scriptures were sufficient to give them a true and saving knowledge of God in Christ.
10. Now, this knowledge may have been in many cases be very basic and simple, but every OT saint had it.
11. Lk.24:44—"These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."
12. 1Pet.1:10-11—"Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow."
13. By "the prophets" Peter refers to more than what we commonly refers to as prophets but includes all the writers of the OT (For example, both Moses and David are expressly called prophets).
14. (2) All Christians need to learn more about Christ—this of course is an evident fact learned from Apollos.
15. Stop and think for a second—Apollos had the OT Scripture and thus had a saving knowledge of Christ.
16. And yet, his knowledge of Christ wasn't complete—he had need of filling that knowledge more fully.
17. Thus, he had need of Priscilla and Aquila to fill that knowledge out—to give him a complete understanding.
18. Perhaps we can say, while Apollos had God's OT revelation, he had need of God's NT revelation (and this he received from Priscilla and Aquila).
19. They filled him in on all that transpired in Jerusalem 20 years before (as they no doubt learned it from Paul).
20. And remember, while Paul wasn't one of the original apostles, he was educated by Christ Himself for three years in the dessert.
21. All that happened in Christ's earthly ministry (all that He did and said) was communicated to Paul by Christ Himself, and Paul no doubt taught this to Priscilla and Aquila, who then taught it to Apollos.
22. Thus, here's my point—Christians need to grow in their understanding of how Scripture points to Christ.
23. Put another way—Christ is the scope of Scripture—He is what all 66 books aim at—He's the intended goal.
24. First Helvetic Confession of 1536 (Herby Bullinger)—"The principle intent of all canonical Scripture is that God wishes to be good to mankind, and that He has declared that benevolence through Christ, His only Son."
25. William Ames (1629)—"The Old and New Testaments are reducible to these two primary heads. The old promises Christ to come and the New testifies that He has come."
26. Augustine (fourth century)—"The New Testament is in the Old revealed, and the Old Testament is in the New revealed."
27. (a) The OT prepares for the NT—this means, it fundamentally foretold the events of the NT Scripture (and it did so with progression).

28. This began in Gen.3:15 with the first gospel promise—"The seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent through suffering."
29. 2LBC (7:3)—"This covenant is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by further steps, until the discovery therefore was completed in the New Testament."
30. Thus, while the whole of the OT foretells of Christ, it does so in a progressive way which builds in clarity.
31. (b) The NT completes the OT—this means, while it basically reveals the same things it does so more clearly.
32. The OT, as wonderful as it is, ends openly—it ends with a clear anticipation of a further and final revelation.
33. Put another way—as bright as the OT Scriptures are they are but like the moon in comparison to the sun.
34. Matt.11:11—"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist: but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."
35. (3) All Christians need to defend what Scripture says about Christ—this is what's called apologetics.
36. Apologetics is the art or discipline of giving a defense of the truth—of clarifying it from all and every error.
37. Now there have been and there remains to be, certain men who are uniquely gifted in the work of apologetics.
38. This was true of Apollos, who was uniquely packaged to refute false teaching and to defend the Scripture.
39. Obviously few if any of us are equipped like him—Apollos (and others like him) are far and few between.
40. Furthermore every pastor is specifically called to refute false teaching and to defend and proclaim the truth.
41. Tit.1:7-9—"For a bishop must hold fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict."
42. And yet, the responsibility to defend the gospel isn't limited to pastors, but extends to every Christian.
43. 1Pet.3:15—"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."
44. This is a calling that's placed upon the church as a whole—she must earnestly contend for the faith that's been entrusted to her.
45. Apollos used the OT to prove that the historical Jesus, the son of the virgin Mary, was the promised Christ.
46. Now as we saw from Paul's ministry in Athens, we can begin our defense either with creation or the OT Scripture.
47. But regardless if we start with creation or the OT Scripture, eventually we have to get to the historical Christ.
48. And unlike Apollos, we have before us the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments, that combine to tell us of Christ.
49. According to the Old and New Testaments, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.