

Scripture: Acts 18:18 to 19:7. There are three things in these scriptures that are edifying to you and to me. There are interesting historical things and fascinate the historian, but they may not be as edifying as other things. I will not dwell on the history, interesting though it is, and simply call your attention to some things that will be edifying, I think.

By way of introduction, I would point out that these things took place in a time of transition for the people of God. The Temple at Jerusalem still stood, where the people of God had offered sacrifices for hundreds of years. They did this in obedience to God and their sacrifices of love and praises were accepted of God because their sins were forgiven through faith in the promise of the coming Redeemer. But that was passing away, as Hebrews tells us in Hebrew 8:13; that old covenant was waxing old and ready to pass away. In a few years the temple would be destroyed, the priesthood destroyed, and the sacrifices would cease, because Jesus had come and suffered for sins, risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, and is even now ruling His kingdom from heaven by His word and Spirit. Those things in Jerusalem would be no more observed by the people of God. But there are some things which are powerfully instructive, I think.

- I. Paul looking back to his people. He took a vow because he was going to Jerusalem. Chapter 21 shows the purpose for this rite, which was connected to purification.
  - A. This was part of the OT worship, and still legal for the Temple still stood.
  - B. We do not know what the vow was, but I suspect it was connected to the conversion of His people. Numbers 6 shows that it was part of the purification of the Nazarite, which might be for a limited time or for a life time.
  - C. Paul said that He was willing to become as a Jew to win the Jew, and was willing to remove any offense to the preaching of the Gospel. We find in chapter 21 what it didn't work, but Paul was not to be blamed for it not working.
  - D. Just one thing: The taking of vows was not forbidden, but the way they were to be done would be changed, and the way of law is not followed by Christians today. But it has been the practice in the church for a long time to record marriages, baptismal vows, ordinations, confirmations, and other vows, and the sacredness of the vow in calling upon the name of the Lord, according to the Third Commandment is not changed.
  - E. There is much more that could be said, but this is enough.
- II. Apollos, transitioning to Christ vs. 24-28.
  - A. Compare with 19:2. We have here some interesting things concerning the way Paul treated those who had been baptized of John and followed John's teachings. One size didn't fit all.
  - B. Concerning Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos, there is no record of them being rebaptized or no record of them receiving extraordinary gifts.
    1. It doesn't even say that Paul gave special instructions to Aquila and Priscilla, but that he simply worked his trade as tentmaker there and that they became powerful in their

reasonings with the Jews. They also instructed Apollos. It doesn't say how they came to know what they knew, if anything when they came from Rome, being expelled by Emperor Claudius. That they were baptized is certain, but whether of John's disciples or of Paul, we do not know. It doesn't matter. They were mighty in their witness for Christ and the Holy Spirit was upon them.

2. We know a bit more about Apollos. He was fervent in spirit and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. This is what we do not know about Priscilla and Aquila. But we he wan't rebaptized, for he had the Spirit, but needed knowledge concerning the teachings of the apostles.
3. Apollos was a powerful enough teacher and preacher that he had a denomination named after him in Corinth, along with Paul, Peter, and Jesus. Paul embraced him as a faithful minister of Christ and so did Luke. Acts 18:28
4. Again, there are many more things that are interesting, but we will not speak of them, but make a few applications later.

### III. John's imperfect disciples 19:1-7

#### A. We are puzzled then at what we find at Ephesus.

1. Twelve “disciples” had been baptized by John's disciples but did not know there was a Holy Spirit. This was a terrible hole in their knowledge, for John had taught from day one that one would come after him who would baptize with the Holy Ghost.
2. When Paul laid his hands on them, they received the Holy Ghost. Acts 8:16-18. I do not think that they received a second water baptism, and I have Calvin with me on this. It was called a baptism, because the giving of the Spirit was what baptism was all about. This was the Samaritan principle. Paul, by the laying on of hands fulfilled what baptism promised, the Spirit of God according to the measure of Christ.
3. This also showed that Paul's apostleship was equal to that of Peter and John,
4. They had not received all of John's teachings, but what they knew was true, and they were called “disciples” by Luke.
5. Apollos already had this anointed and he was not baptized in water again.

#### B. The key is the Holy Spirit.

1. Those baptized by John were baptized in anticipation of Christ's coming.
2. Those baptized by Philip in Samaria were not rebaptized but received the Spirit by the laying on of the apostle's hands.
3. Most received the spirit at the same time they were baptized, as the new believers on the day of Pentecost.
4. The gentiles with Cornelius were baptized because they had already received the Spirit.

## Application.

1. What happened here at Ephesus. I do not know, but I do know that whatever it was, there were 12 spirit filled Christians that were the beginning of the harvest in Ephesus.
2. The whole purpose of baptism is to make visible the purification of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Where this is before, during, or after baptism is up to the Father.
3. Wonderful promise of Jesus Christ which applies to all Christians at all times and all places.
  - 9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
  - 10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.
  - 11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?
  - 12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?
  - 13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?
4. The transition times of the apostles and the days of John the Baptist have long passed away, and we have nothing today that resembles those days. But we do have this precious promise of the Savior. You are not expected to live the Christian life all by yourself.
  - A. If you have already been baptized, as a child, an infant, or as an adult, you have the wonderful privilege of calling upon God for the Holy Spirit to lead you in faith and obedience.
  - B. If you have not been baptized, follow Christ in obedience and receive the promise of God. Then go back to A after you have begun your new life in Christ.
5. Do not get the ceremonies mixed up with the realities. All man can do is baptize you with water. God commanded us poor minister to do that, and we do the best we can with all the confusion and sects and parties and clamour. But the reality is the Holy Spirit, and He is given by Christ alone. In the Scriptures you will find the voice of the Holy Spirit who spoke through the apostles. The apostles have gone to heaven, but we still have their words that were breathed of the Holy Ghost. Amen and Amen.