

- A Study in Acts -

Chapter Nineteen – Third Journey of Paul

ACTS 19:1-3:

We began the third journey in **Chapter 18:23**. Paul returned from the second journey to Antioch of Syria and then went out again to the region of **Galatia** and **Phrygia** strengthening the brethren in these locations; Luke tells us.

Please use this map provided.

Now that we have a good understanding of the environment of Ephesus, we can engage in the events of Paul's coming to **Ephesus**.

Text #1:

Acts 19:1-3 “And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples ² 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.””

Before we get into the text, just as a reminder, at the end of the **18th chapter** (Vs. 24-28 to be specific); we had the interlude by Luke concerning Aquila and Priscilla better instructing Apollos about the Christ as he only knew the baptism and instruction of John the Baptist. This interim was a prelude to the fact that Paul would additionally find and work with many more in Ephesus who had the same understanding as Apollos, as a starting place to teach about the Gospel of Jesus as the Christ. The exercise then is to combine both instances for a complete understanding and picture. Luke also includes in the first verse of our text that Apollos is at Corinth already when Paul arrives at Ephesus (desiring to cross to Achaia – the Roman province of southern Greece, where Corinth is the capital; **18:27**).

Additionally, Luke reminds us that Paul had already gone through Galatia and Phrygia (the upper regions), prior to arriving in Ephesus. This is his first time to work in the Roman province of Asia, as he was forbidden to go here by the Spirit of God early on the second journey (**Acts 16:6**); and could not stay when he came through here at the end of the second journey (**Acts 18:19-21**).

Finding Some Disciples: Luke does not share the logistics of how Paul came across these disciples of John the Baptist, just that he does (it is plausible that he may have come across them when he entered the synagogue of Ephesus on his way back to Jerusalem on the second journey – **18:19-20**; but he did not have time to stay). There are twelve of them in total (**Vs. 7**). These

would be Jews who having traveled to Jerusalem for the mandatory feasts, would have additionally been subject then to the masses that went to John to learn from him. As the feasts would conclude, they would return to the various parts of the world they had made their pilgrimage to Jerusalem from.

Questions: The obvious comprehension from **verse one** to **verse two**, is that disciples is used of these men in a very loose sense. As Paul begins to question them concerning certain specific markers of disciples of Jesus as the Christ, we will see that they have no idea of any of them. How did this happen?

First, John's work was preparatory. He preached "**Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand**" – **Matthew 3:2**. In addition, he was sent to prepare for the One who would come after him – "**The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**" – **John 1:29-34**. John further acknowledged that he must decrease and the One to follow must increase, note:

John 3:30-36 "He must increase, but I *must* decrease. ³¹ He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. ³² And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. ³³ He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. ³⁴ For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. ³⁶ He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Like many of these who would have to leave and return home, they waited patiently for the One. They knew John's baptism of repentance, and now looked for the kingdom and King spoken of.

Holy Spirit: Paul asks leading questions to ascertain the knowledge and condition of these who claim to be disciples of the Christ (the One John said would come after him). One of the leading questions concerning their relationship with Jesus as the Christ was, "**Did you receive the Holy Spirit**"?

All who have heard that Jesus is the Christ had been baptized into Christ Jesus, and as such received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

What is this gift of the Holy Spirit? First, it is important to note that Peter does not state that it was the Holy Spirit as the gift in **Acts 2:38**, but a gift of the Holy Spirit. This would be best described as the Apostles doctrine in **Acts 2:42**; the educational process by which Christians continue to walk guided by the Spirit of God revealing the mind of Christ (**1 Corinthians 2:10-16**).

We additionally know that these early Christians were given gifts of the Spirit, to do for them, what the word does for us (**1 Corinthians 12:4-11**; nine to be exact).

We know that Paul was referring to these, as he would lay his hands on them (the method they were bestowed, by apostolic power – **Acts 8:14-17; 19:6**), after their true conversion and they then displayed two of the nine gifts.

Remember that the written word would come after saints were already in the kingdom, these pre-written word saints would need to know the edification, exhortation, and comfort that the written word gives us – **1 Corinthians 14:3**; this is how they were kept by the Spirit until the mystery was completely revealed, which is through the hearing of faith (faith comes by hearing the word of God; **Romans 10:17; Galatians 3:2, 5**).

Into What? The final leading question of Paul explains beyond a shadow of a doubt that baptism into Christ puts you into something!

Galatians 3:26-27 “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

Colossians 2:11-12 “In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”

Paul reminds these Christians in Galatia (where he had been before Ephesus), and in Colossi that their baptisms had put them into Christ (I might add that Paul calls them acts of faith!).

John’s Baptism: These disciples had only known the baptism of John. This is going to bring Paul to the exact starting place he needs to begin to now detail how to “**Explain to them the way of God more accurately**” (**18:26**).

We can accurately see that both Apollos and these twelve could easily be those who were looking for the Christ by John’s instruction. To even know beyond a shadow of a doubt concerning the prophecies of the Messiah’s coming (**18:25**); yet still not know that it was Jesus who was the Messiah, or what the Spirit of God through the Gospel of Jesus as the Christ requires in order to enter the kingdom.

So, we can additionally know with certainty that it is more than just faith in a name, or a generic understanding of the Son of God that puts an individual into Christ! Unless we can be taught and come to the point of the Ethiopian to state:

Acts 8:35-38 “Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. ³⁶ Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”

³⁷ Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.”

And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

³⁸ So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.”

It is easy to note the similarities in the two accounts, and in the next lesson, Paul will additionally instruct concerning Jesus as the Christ to the same result!

Next: “Baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus!”