

Acts 18B

- Paul leaves Corinth and is headed back to Antioch
 - But along the way he still has plenty of ministry to perform
 - In particular, Paul is going to visit two cities where the church is growing, though Paul was not the one to found them
 - And we're going to hear about a new character in the spread of the Gospel

[Acts 18:18](#) ¶ Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow.

[Acts 18:19](#) They came to Ephesus, and he left them there. Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

[Acts 18:20](#) When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent, [Acts 18:21](#) but taking leave of them and saying, "I will return to you again if God wills," he set sail from Ephesus.

- Paul is headed East again, back home
 - He travels a short distance to Corinth's eastern sea port on the Aegean Sea, called Cenchrea
 - He brings Priscilla and Aquila with him, though Luke mentions nothing of Silas and Timothy
 - And in Cenchrea, Paul shaves his head because he was keeping a vow
 - Under the Law, a man was required to refrain from cutting his hair when he took a vow to God
 - The vow could be a vow of thanksgiving for something God had given
 - Or a vow could be a petition to God for something the man wanted
 - After the period of the vow was concluded, the person would cut their hair and take it to the Temple in Jerusalem where it would be burned
 - There are two possible explanations for what Paul is doing here

- Either he just finished the period of his vow
 - And he has shaved his head in preparation for his return to Jerusalem
 - We might imagine the vow was a request that his missionary journey would be fruitful
 - And now he departs for Jerusalem with his hair stored for the trip
- Or Paul is making the vow now, and he has cut his hair in preparation to begin the vow (wanting to start with short hair)
 - Then he will cut it in Jerusalem and burn it right away
 - In this case, the vow might be a vow of thanksgiving for the success of his journey
- Paul's taking of Jewish vows under the Mosaic Law reflect the liberty he had in Christ
 - Liberty means freedom to the Law, but it also means
- Ephesus was the gateway to the East and one of the largest cities in the Roman Empire (upwards of 500,000 people)
 - A close second to Corinth for moral corruption with the temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world'
 - The temple was four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens
 - Over 200 columns 6 feet wide and 70 feet tall held up the structure
 - Center of pagan worship in the ancient world, including sacrifices and prostitution
 - Also a center for sorcery and black arts
- After arriving in Ephesus, Paul leaves Priscilla and Aquila to minister in this city
 - While Paul waits for his departing ship for Jerusalem, he spends time visiting Jews in the synagogue

- Once again, Paul is seen reasoning with the Jews from the OT concerning the identity of the Christ
 - To those who have been taught to expect a Messiah are to be shown proof that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies and His death and resurrection were part of the plan
 - Those who don't even know what a Messiah is are told the story of how God made a payment available for sinful men through the sacrifice of Himself
 - And the resurrection is proof of His claims
- Apparently, Paul makes no converts in Ephesus, though there might have been the earliest signs of faith
 - Nevertheless, they beg Paul to stay longer and help them understand better
 - Paul declines, evidently feeling pressed to return to Jerusalem while he has the chance
- Some have guessed that Paul wanted to get back to Jerusalem in time for Passover
 - Others wonder if his vow required him to keep moving
- In any case, he offers to return if the Lord wills
 - He does go back on his third journey
- Finally Paul lands home

[Acts 18:22](#) ¶ When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch.

- Paul's sea journey ends in the port of Caesarea, which is about 50 miles NW from Jerusalem
 - Notice the text says that Paul went "up" to greet the church
 - Then Paul went "down" to Antioch
 - The reference to up and then down tells us that Paul made a stop in Jerusalem before heading back home in Antioch
 - And so Paul's third journey comes to an end in Antioch
 - This will be the final time Paul stays in Antioch

- The start of Paul's third missionary journey begins mid-chapter and with a casual statement

[Acts 18:23](#) And having spent some time there, he left and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

- Paul spends about 6-8 months in Antioch before he decides to head out again in summer AD 53
 - Paul's successive missionary journeys becomes more about discipling existing believers than planting new churches, though Paul never stopped preaching the Gospel
- By saying Paul passed through Galatian and Phrygia, Luke summarizes roughly 1,500 miles of Paul's travels
 - This area includes names we'll recognize like Lystra, Iconium, Derbe
 - There is no indication that Paul stops in any one of these towns particularly, though he likely stopped in a few
 - He was strengthening the disciples rather than planting new churches through this stretch
 - Paul seems anxious to return to the outer limits of his second trip
 - Rather than cover worn ground again

[Acts 18:24](#) ¶ Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures.

[Acts 18:25](#) This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John;

[Acts 18:26](#) and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

[Acts 18:27](#) And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace,

[Acts 18:28](#) for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

- This section introduces a new character, Apollos, with an intriguing story of two baptisms and an incomplete gospel

- I mentioned last week that some Bible students have come to this passage and thought it taught of a second Holy Spirit filling
 - As we'll see tonight, this is not the case
- Apollos was a Jew from Alexandria, Egypt
 - The city was renowned for its universities and the world famous library
 - Alexander the Great founded this city in 332 BC and he brought a significant Jewish population there
 - Eventually, the Jews constituted a third of the city's population
 - They contributed substantially to the city's reputation as an intellectual center
 - The Greek language OT, the Septuagint, was translated here by Jews
 - The famous Jewish philosopher, Philo, lived in Alexandria
- Apollos would have been a Jew trained in the finest traditions and steeped in the Old Testament
 - He may have bested Paul in human accomplishments
 - And the text says Apollos was both eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures
 - Paul was mighty in Scripture, but by his own admission weak in speech
 - Apollos had the makings of a powerful servant in the spread of the Gospel
- On top of it all, Apollos is a self-started and a man who is fervent in spirit
 - The Greek word for fervent is zeo, from which we also get the Greek word for zealous
 - It literally means to boil, as in to boil water
 - Apollos is "boiling" in spirit, suggesting a man who is very zealous for God and for truth

- Looking at what Apollos is doing, Luke says Apollos was teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus
 - To understand what Luke means, we need to look a little further in the passage
 - First, notice at the end of v.25 Luke says Apollos was only acquainted with the baptism of John the Baptist
 - Luke implies that Apollos isn't acquainted with the baptism giving to those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord
 - Secondly, Luke says in v.26 that Priscilla and Aquila had to explain to Apollos the way of God more accurately
 - So clearly something in Apollos' preaching concerning Jesus was incorrect or at least incomplete
 - Putting these two comments together, we come back to v.25 and consider what Apollos was actually preaching
 - When Luke says Apollos was teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, he means Apollos was teaching about the Messiah accurately, but in a limited way
 - Apollos wasn't preaching Jesus by name
 - Rather he delivered OT prophecies accurately concerning the coming Messiah
 - In the same way that the John the Baptist accurately taught concerning the coming Lamb of God
 - In fact, when Luke says that he was acquainted only with the baptism of John, it means that Apollos only understood the message of repentance in preparation for the Messiah's arrival
 - He didn't understand the second half of the gospel message,
 - The good news of Jesus' death and resurrection for sin
 - We might assume that Apollos himself received the baptism of repentance from John himself

- Then Apollos likely returned to the Diaspora before Jesus' appearance, death and resurrection
- When Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos' powerful preaching in the same Ephesus synagogue when Paul had preached a couple of years earlier, they knew they could help this man
 - They inform him that the Messiah did in fact come
 - He was Jesus and He died and was resurrected in fulfillment of the prophecies
 - Armed with this good news, Apollos was now ready to preach the full Gospel
 - At that point, Apollos felt the call to go to Achaia, which was the province that included Corinth
 - The brethren encourage Apollos to make the trip
 - And Luke says that Apollos was a great encouragement to the church
 - He was able to powerfully refute the Jews in Corinth
 - And notice Apollos is now preaching the full Gospel: preaching Jesus is the Christ
 - You might remember Paul's first letter to Corinth when he mentions Apollos by name
 - Apollos was so powerful as a teacher that some in the Corinthian church had taken sides in identifying themselves as his students
 - Others had responded by declaring they remained students of Paul
 - Paul wrote to correct the church by reminding them that we are not disciples of a human teachers
 - We are all disciples of Christ alone
 - Our teachers merely water or plant, but God causes us to grow
- The next chapter in the story of Apollos begins in chapter 19
 - And with chapter 19 comes an error in interpretation for some

[Acts 19:1](#) ¶ It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples.

[Acts 19:2](#) He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."

[Acts 19:3](#) And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism."

[Acts 19:4](#) Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."

[Acts 19:5](#) When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

[Acts 19:6](#) And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.

[Acts 19:7](#) There were in all about twelve men.

- Now Apollos has left Ephesus and traveled to Corinth where he's ministering
 - Meanwhile, Paul has been moving steadily westward toward Ephesus
 - Luke says Paul passes through the "upper country"
 - Paul elected to travel on a road that ran farther north than the more common Roman road
 - This northern route was a more direct path to Ephesus, bypassing many other town along the more southernly Roman road
 - Paul has promised the church in Ephesus he would return and he seems intent on keeping that promise, the Lord willing
 - When Paul arrived in Ephesus, he found disciples, perhaps to his surprise
 - As Paul became familiar with these disciples, he inquired concerning whether they received the Holy Spirit when they were baptized
 - At this point we need to remember something Paul himself wrote in Romans

[Rom. 8:14](#) For all who are being led by the **Spirit of God**, these are sons of God.

- Paul knew that the sign of true faith was the indwelling of the Holy Spirit
 - To receive the Holy Spirit is to become saved

- So when Paul asks if they had received the Holy Spirit, he was essentially testing to see if they were believers
 - To Paul's question, they answer that they haven't even heard of the Holy Spirit
 - This is consistent with Jewish understanding prior to the Gospel
 - Jews then - and today - do not talk about the Holy Spirit and a separate person of God
 - And certainly Gentiles weren't acquainted with the Trinity
 - So it was natural for them to say what they said
- At this point, the question for some is how this group could be unbelieving at this point
 - First, they heard the powerful preaching of Apollos
 - Secondly, they are called disciples in 19:1
 - Third, Paul refers to them "believing" in v.2
 - How can we assume that they hadn't actually believed in the Gospel?
 - One way men have tried to answer these questions is to assume these people were, in fact, Christians
 - But they hadn't received the "filling" of the Holy Spirit
 - And until Paul arrived and lay on hands, they had merely received the Holy Spirit as believers
 - This is one key passage often used to support the errant view that believer should expect a second or subsequent filling of the HS after faith
 - From this perspective, false teaching originates calling Christians to pray for the filling of the HS
 - Some go as far to suggest that we haven't achieved the full measure of faith until we receive such a subsequent experience
 - This is particular common among some Pentecostal and charismatic traditions

- To anyone who looks to this passage to support such a view, let me assure you that this passage teaches no such idea
 - Looking again at this passage, there is easy way to make sense of what's happening here
- First, notice what Paul asks in v.3
 - Having heard that they know nothing of the Holy Spirit, Paul asks the next obvious question
 - What kind of baptism did you receive?
 - There were many forms of baptism practiced in that day for different ritualistic reasons
 - Paul is asking to know why received water baptism
- In answer to Paul, they say they have been baptized into the baptism of John
 - Remember again that John's baptism was a call to repentance in anticipation of the Messiah's arrival
 - It was not a baptism associated with faith in the Gospel
 - We also remember that these Christians in Ephesus were instructed by Apollos who was incomplete in his understanding of the Gospel
 - Only later did he come to understand the full Gospel
- Secondly, in v.4 Paul gives the full description of the Gospel
 - In particular, Paul explains that John's baptism was a call for them to believe in the One Who followed John
 - Paul goes on the explain that this One was Jesus of Nazareth
- Once they learned that Jesus was the One they were waiting for, they believed and were baptized in the name of Jesus
 - This is the only baptism of a believer
 - The earlier dunking performed by Apollos was not meaningful in the matter of salvation
 - Apollo's baptism of John was similar to the modern practice of infant baptism

- It neither had the effect of conveying salvation nor did it satisfy the requirement for water baptism following true faith
- Consequently, those who believed the Gospel as Paul preached it were still required to be baptized
- So they went into the water again
 - And this time the baptism they received was the baptism Jesus Himself commanded
 - The baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
- As Paul baptizes them and lays hands on them, they receive the Holy Spirit
 - In conjunction with the arrival of the Spirit, they begin speaking in tongues and prophesying
- Up to this point, we've seen only three times when speaking in tongues or other outward manifestations accompany faith
 - The first time was with Jews at Pentecost
 - The second was with Samaritans
 - The third was Gentiles
 - All three events were associated with Peter's ministry to open the keys to the kingdom
- But now we see another group of Gentiles receiving outward displays of the Holy Spirit's arrival
 - In the first three times we saw such displays because each represented the arrival of the Gospel to a new group for the first time
 - Here weren't not looking at a new group
 - Instead, we're seeing the Holy Spirit's display being used to distinguish the baptism of John from the full gospel message
- From this example, we learn a couple of principles regarding the way the Holy Spirit works in displays like speaking in tongues

- First, it's clear that even after the church had reached the three primary groups, God was still willing to show Himself through speaking in tongues and other signs
 - So we can't say that such outward signs of the Spirit never happen
 - We must always leave room in our theology for God to be God
 - He can produce whatever signs He wishes in keeping with His word
 - For example, Paul teaches in 1Cor that speaking in tongues is a gift that may be used on occasion but within very specific parameters
 - These parameters limit its use such that we would expect to rarely if ever see it today
 - Nevertheless, we must acknowledge it remains possible under certain prescribed circumstances
- Secondly, God's purpose in showing the Holy Spirit to us in these ways will always be for the same purpose: to glorify Christ
 - Notice here that the effect of these displays in Acts 19 was to confirm the truth of Paul's Gospel message
 - In contrast to Apollo's earlier incomplete Gospel presentation
 - They confirmed to this audience that Paul's message was the true Gospel and Paul preached the true Christ
 - Through this display, the Holy Spirit was directing men's worship to Christ
 - And this is always the role of the Holy Spirit in Creation
 - He will never work in such a way that He draws attention to Himself
 - Instead, He works to draw our attention to Christ, as the Father directs
- Other teaching that speaking in tongues or other displays of the Holy Spirit are necessary for believers to validate their faith is incorrect in interpreting Scripture

- In part because it violate these principles
- When we insist on that these displays will be common for all believer we ignore Scripture's teaching that they are uncommon and purposeful
 - In fact, the uniqueness of the HS's manifestations is what makes them useful to God in communicating that something different is taking place
- Secondly, by making these displays commonplace, we change their purpose from glorifying Christ to something lessor
 - We claim these signs to glorify ourselves: our confession, our faith or our prayer life
 - Or at least we are suggesting that we should seek such displays for the glory of the Spirit Himself, something He would never seek
- Since these purposes are not God's purposes, we can be sure that the Holy Spirit never participates in any supposed display based on these intentions
 - And if the Holy Spirit is not the One instigating such displays, then when they occur, we can be sure they are man-made

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