
Saturday, February 11, 2023 • Read Acts 18:24–19:7

Questions from the Scripture text: What ethnicity of man does v24 talk about? What was his name? Where was he born? What was his speech like? How does the apostle describe Apollos's Bible knowledge? To where did he come? In what had he been instructed (v25)? What led to him speaking and teaching? What did he teach? With what quality of teaching? But what limitation? Where does he speak in v26? In what manner? Who heard him? What do they do with him? Where/how? To where does he go in v27? What do the brethren from Ephesus do? What does the letter ask the Corinthians to do? What is the result, when he arrives? How does the apostle describe the Christians that Apollos helped? What did he do publicly with the Jews (v28)? In what manner? By showing them what? From where? When Apollos was there, who arrived where (19:1)? Whom did he find there (v2)? What does he ask them? But how do they respond to the idea of the Holy Spirit? What question does this provoke from the apostle (v3)? How do they answer? What does Paul call John's baptism (v4a)? But what does he say that John had preached (v4b)? What baptism do they know receive in v5? Then what does Paul do to them in v6? And what else happens to them? With what effect? How many of them were there (v7)?

How is baptism useful for explaining the way of God to us more accurately? Acts 18:24–19:7 looks forward to the morning sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these twelve verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **baptism identifies to us that it is not we who produce repentance, but the triune God Who saves us, even to the point of giving us repentance and faith through grace by His Spirit.**

It has been part of the joy of the last several paragraphs that the Holy Spirit has been bringing Jews to the Lord Jesus Christ. However, in the passage before us we see one of the weaknesses of Jewish thinking. Even a Jew like Apollos tended to think in terms of the repentance that we need to give God, rather than the repentance that God has provided to us in Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit.

Even a man like Apollos. Praise God for Apollos. He is a Jew, but even God's judgment upon the Jews to scatter many of them has resulted in Apollos being born at Alexandria, a city of learning. By this providence, he himself was eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures. But this was no mere head knowledge. Having been instructed in the way of the Lord Jesus, and knowing the truth about Jesus with some accuracy, the Spirit had blessed him to be fervent—boiling over—with these glorious truths.

Needed the lesson of Christian baptism. The latter half of v25 tells us the weakness in Apollos's thinking. He was full of zeal, but he only knew the baptism of John. We see this corrected in two different ways in our passage. In v26, Aquila and Priscilla hear him, take him aside, and explain to him the way of God more accurately. Note that “the way of the Lord” in v25 and “they way of God” in v26 are the same. The Lord Jesus is God. This much Apollos knew. But what was it about God's way of salvation that he needed to learn better?

We see it in the second correction in 19:4. The implication is that these men have this flaw of only knowing John's baptism because they had been converted under Apollos's preaching before his encounter with Aquila and Priscilla. Apparently, Apollos was preaching clearly that Jesus is God but failing even to mention the Holy Spirit, because these Ephesian “disciples” had never even heard of Him! Of course, they had heard of the Spirit of God; but, they did not know that the Spirit is a Person of the Godhead Who brings people to believe through grace (end of v27), and Whom Jesus has poured out from heaven, just as the water of baptism is poured out upon the earth.

Indeed, Paul reasons that if they have not heard of the Holy Spirit, then they have not received the naming ceremony of Christian baptism, because when we are baptized into the Name of Christ, we are baptized into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Christ is the great self-disclosure of the triune God.

What is the lesson of Christian baptism. Christian baptism does more than just mark off the members of Christ's church, by placing the Name of the triune God upon them, and imitating Jesus's pouring out of God the Holy Spirit. Christian baptism announces that the repentance that we so desperately needed, the triune God Himself has provided.

The apostle describes John's baptism as a “baptism of repentance.” It was an acknowledgement that they had sin that they needed to do something about. But he was not the Christ. The gospel was not that God is angry with sin, and that we need to turn from it and do better. Those things were true, but those things couldn't save. In fact, acknowledging that they needed repentance was unable actually to give the repentance that they knew that they needed!

So John's greater message was not the repentance that they presently needed but the faith that they would soon be able to exercise more clearly. They were to hope in the Messiah Who was coming—the Christ Whom John identified to them as Jesus. The message of the gospel was not that they needed to repent and to be forgiven, but that in Christ Jesus they would find and receive everything that they needed—especially this forgiveness, and including this repentance. In fact, it is the Holy Spirit, Whom Jesus pours out, Who gives both repentance and faith (2:38–39; 11:18; cf. Lk 24:47).

The effectiveness of Christian baptism. The Lord uses baptism both retrospectively and prospectively. In Cornelius's house, Jesus baptized them first by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (10:44–46; 11:15–16), and then the water baptism was poured on the earth (10:47–48; 11:17–18). Here, the sequence is reversed. The water is poured on earth first (v5), and then the Holy Spirit comes upon them (v6).

The efficacy of a believer's baptism is not tied to the time of its administration. It is a sign and seal unto faith, but it often comes after faith—affirming that what the Lord has done was really and truly the work of the Lord. But it always comes before faith. For, the Lord continues to give us increasing repentance and faith throughout this life. And, the pouring out of the waters of Baptism remind us that it is the enthroned Lord Jesus Who keeps pouring out His Spirit upon us to complete the work that He has begun.

So, we may bless God for giving us baptism, which the Spirit (and His servants through whom He teaches us) uses to “explain to us the way of God more accurately.” For, we are always needing more and more to grow in finding our repentance and faith from the Lord Jesus Christ, by His Spirit.

When were you baptized? What does this tell you about the nature of God? What does it tell you about what was happening in your life before you first came to faith, and Who was doing it? What does it tell you about what has been happening in your life since you first came to faith, and Who is doing it? From where do repentance and faith come? In what situations in your life, recently, have you most needed to be reminded of this? How can you make use of your baptism to help at those times?

Sample prayer: Lord, we thank You and praise You for Your glorious, triune nature. Father, we praise You for loving us from before the world began, and determining to conform us to the image of Your Son, so that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. Lord Jesus, we praise You for coming into the world to save sinners, so that You might purchase us and present us to the Father. Holy Spirit, we praise You for Your almighty work and divine fellowship, as You apply Christ to us by His Word. Now we ask, Father, that You would continue to work in us by Your Spirit, through Jesus Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP51B “From My Sins, O Hide Your Face” or TPH193 “Baptized into Your Name Most Holy”

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Acts 18. 24 through 19 verse 7. These are God's words. Now, a certain drew named Apollos born at Alexandria and eloquent, man, and mighty in the scriptures came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the lord and being fervent and spirit. He spoke and taught accurately, the things of the lord.

Though he knew only the baptism of john. So, he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When equivalent priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of god, more accurately. And when he desired to cross to okay, the brethren wrote to exhorting the disciples to receive him.

And when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace. For he vigorously. Refuted the Jew's publicly showing from the scriptures. That jesus is the christ. And it happened while Apollos was at corn. That paul Having passed through the upper regions came to efficism finding some disciples.

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. And he said to them into what then were you baptized? So they said And to john's baptism. Then paul said, john indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance.

Same to the people that they should believe on him, who would come after him? That is on christ, jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the lord jesus. And when paul had laid hands on them, the holy spirit came upon them. And they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

Now, the men were about 12. You know. So far the reading of god's inspired. And an errant church. Sorry, so far the reading of gods. Inspired and inherent.

So, we've seen this passage. That baptism describes to us a work that god Does and a man to bring him. To faith in jesus christ. And A work that the triune God does, as he has named himself in baptism, And marvelously, you don't have to know, Everything about the triune god.

In order for the triune god. To work on you and to save you. You see a palace was Raised up by god. In order to Be a servant and useful in his church. We see in verse 27, he greatly helped one of the reasons. That he was able to greatly help is.

Uh, the place that God had made him to be born alexandria in egypt, a place of great learning. Place with an ancient and great library. Not just the place where he was born, but The character and ability. That he was an eloquent, man. He had skill in thinking and speaking.

And also his experiences his exposure. It was. Uh, taught the bible and had much opportunity to read the bible and was mighty In the scriptures. And not only that, but having read much in the scriptures, He had been instructed in the way of the lord. Now, Ordinarily when it just says, lord.

In the New testament. It often refers or ordinarily refers, especially to jesus. And so, he had had instruction about who jesus is. And, Something that comes only by grace. He was fervent in spirit. So, this fervancy in spirit means That god, the holy spirit had made him alive and brought him not just to speak accurately.

The things about jesus. But to trust in the jesus, whom he accurately knew. And spoke about. And so he first 25, he spoke and taught accurately. The things of the lord, though he knew Only the baptism of john. And so, he's Speaking only. Uh, he's or he's speaking accurately.

The truth about jesus. Jesus is god who has come to earth to save us? Um, From our sin and we must repent. And yet he knew only the baptism of john who knew only a baptism of repentance. He knew only baptism that said, we have to stop doing our former works.

And we have to start doing things. Doing works that are in keeping with repentance. And we do these things. Because jesus is, Our god, he isn't Jesus is the lord, he isn't. Quite there yet. As far as The place of faith. And the Uh, place. Of, and the truth of the triune god.

So, you notice the difference, verse 25, we've spoken taught accurately, the things of the lord. But when aquila and Priscilla, pull him aside in. Verse 26. They explained to him the way of god more accurately. That is to say god the father son and holy spirit. How do we know well?

Paul. Has an encounter with those who have been instructed by a palace. And whom a palace apparently didn't have time. To correct or improve his instruction to them. Before he went to Corinth. So at the end of chapter 18, notice That he Uh he was he receives the instruction from acquella and Priscilla versus 26 and he crosses into akea.

Akaia is where corn is Macedonia, is where Ephesus is? The brethren right to the disciples to receive him and he help, he greatly helps those who are in akaia those who are In Corinth, having been better instructed. But now he's moved on to Corinth and paul arrives in Ephesus.

And he finds some disciples. Uh, they're calling themselves followers of jesus. And their followers of jesus and that they believe jesus is god and they worship jesus as god, and they have repented from their sins to serve, jesus says god, that's all good and well. But apparently. They're trying to do so in their own strength.

Because the apostle asks them. Did you receive the holy spirit when you believed? And they don't even know that there's a holy spirit. The holy spirit who is the one to gives us life and faith who helps us to trust in jesus, when we're doubting, who helps us to understand?

All the things that jesus teaches, who helps us to keep all that. Jesus has commanded the holy spirit by whom jesus is with us. Always even to the end of the age. So not only is the holy spirit named as god in christian baptism. Baptized them in the name singular of the father, son, and holy spirit, the ministry of the holy spirit.

To give us faith to make us disciples to teach us, to, to help our minds so that we understand the scriptures to move us. So that we will keep all that he has commanded. And to minister to us the presence of the lord jesus that he is with us, always even to the end of the age.

It's all about the holy spirit. The christian life is lived by the fellowship of the holy spirit with us and that's one of the main things that baptism teaches And so, Paul meets these people. Who know that jesus is god. And know that they have to turn from their sin and live righteously according to God's law for jesus's sake.

Who is their god? And yet, they don't know. The help and the fellowship of the holy spirit to them. Even ministering to them the presence and fellowship and life of the lord jesus himself. And so he has a question. To these men who are living as if. Uh, the christian life has just Um, Yeah, mastering theology and mastering obedience.

So, did you receive the holy spirit when you believed? And they say to him, we have not so much has heard, whether there is a holy spirit. And since baptism is all about. Christ's pouring out his spirit. It's not the water. That helps us in baptism. As the spirit.

You don't even have to know that it is the spirit because he doesn't need your help. It's not dependent upon your understanding, or your faith. He had made a palace fervent in spirit before a quill and priscilla took him aside and explained, to him, more accurately, the way of god, which is to say, explain to him more accurately.

What had actually happened to him already. And so, They're not having heard that there is a holy spirit into what then were you baptized. Jesus. Says, you baptized with water but i will baptize you with the holy spirit. Um, You've had water poured on you, but you have missed the main thing about the pouring of the water.

Which is the pouring of the spirit. So it says into what then were you baptized? They say into john's baptism And verse 4 gives us the aha moment. Okay. So, they've received baptism. They think that they're a church. But, They perceived john's baptism that says you need to repent.

Not christian baptism, which says jesus gives repentance. By the pouring out of his holy spirit. Jesus.

Washes us with his blood. As the holy spirit of, Unites us to him. And so paul says john indeed, baptized with the baptism of repentance saying to the people that they should believe on him, who would come after him. That is on christ, jesus. So, john gives a baptism that says you need to repent.

But he tells them, there's coming one who will give your repentance He will baptize you with the spirit. And with fire, So, john poured water and said you have to repent, but he also said There's one coming after me. Who will pour not water. But he'll pour his spirit.

And you will be able to repent. Trust. In him, believe on. Him. And when you receive christian, baptism the, the pouring of the water, it displays That jesus is the one who gives repentance jesus is the one who gives faith jesus gives his spirit because jesus gave his blood.

And when he gives his spirit, his spirit works faith in you and you are washed with his blood, jesus did it all? Right. Not just jesus. Paid at all. Jesus, does it all and did it all and will do it all.

When they hear this, they're baptized into the name of the lord jesus. Imagine. Knowing that jesus is god, knowing that you have to be perfectly righteous trying and failing miserably. And someone comes and tells you. About sovereign grace. And the gift of the holy spirit. Who gives you not just the fellowship of himself?

But the life of jesus to be in you, Imagine the joy of hearing those things. They hear this. They're baptized into the name of the lord jesus and what is the name of the lord jesus into which they're baptized? Father, son and holy ghost. It's the same name. It's the same being.

Your baptized into the name of the lord jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the holy spirit came upon them. Probably won't say this in the sermon but they weren't immersed in the holy spirit, the holy spirit came upon them. Paul had poured, the water jesus poured.

The spirit. And they spoke with tongues and prophesied and what a wonderful sign to them. You know, they had not had experience of the church before. Apparently, they're not connected with the church that paul established in FSS. Very rapidly on his way to jerusalem previously. But, There are enough of them for new congregation in ephesus.

There are enough of them for a new congregation in Ephesus. 12, men was what it took. For a synagogue. Now, the men were about 12 and all Verse 7. And so there is kind of a little mini pentecost here. Uh the establishing of a church by the pouring out of the spirit.

And they're immediately speaking in tongues and prophesying would have been to them. Uh, such an encouragement. That repentance is possible. That repentance is possible by the grace and the power and the salvation of jesus christ by his spirit. Uh, just as in the original pentecost brethren, watch shall we do repent and be baptized you and your children for the remission of your sins.

Again here, repent and be baptized repent. And receive the pouring of the water? That shows you that it is christ. Just who gives you repentance. And let's have your children. Receive the pouring of the water? That shows that it is christ. Who will give them repentance. And so you have kind of Pentecost in the northwest.

Maybe we'll change that. Change the title of the sermon to many pentry cost in the northwest. Praise God. My dear family. There's impossible. To. Obey, jesus, as god. In our strength. Put your baptism tells you. That jesus gives you his strength by his spirit. And just a john told those whom he was commanding to repent, he were to believe on him who was to come.

That is upon christ jesus. Live by faith in him, we assured. Of his that he is real, and that he really helps sinners, and that he really is saving them. His completing the work by his spirit is as sure in the presence and present in the future. As his dying in the cross.

And rising again from the dead. Is sure in the past. And baptism communicates to us union with him and all of those things. Let's pray. Our father in heaven. We thank you that you have given us the sun to be our savior and the spirit To be our helper and baptism.

To affirm all of these things about you are trying God. And we pray that you would not allow us to live. In such a way, as to make someone wonder, If we have received the holy spirit, And we pray that you would make us to live in such a way.

That says that we are not just trying to repent. But believing on him who was to come by the help of your spirit. And so keep helping us by your spirit. We pray in jesus name. Amen.