

**Acts 19:1-7**

**Happy New Year!!! We're almost done with Acts. I have some new ideas for your consideration. Many of you have asked to study Old Testament scripture. I have used the past few weeks of down time researching scripture from Leviticus, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Ruth, Esther...and a few more.**

**I'm proposing doing selected scripture from each of the OT books noted here. I can do it just as we have been studying Acts and others. I will provide a list of the verses I found that make sense for us to study post Jesus and Paul scripture. I will be more thorough, but here are some of the verses I thought might work get us started:**

**Leviticus 19:1-18**

**Exodus 1-3**

**Exodus 12**

**Exodus 14**

**Exodus 16-17**

**Exodus 19-20**

**Exodus 24**

**Exodus 32-34**

---

**ACTS study continues for today: January 5, 2021!!!**

**Acts 19:1. Paul came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples**

*1. It happened that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper country, came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples.*

**1a. "It happened that, while Apollos was at Corinth**

I skipped Chapter 18 for this study and passed over what Dr. Luke told us about Apollos (18:24-28). Although we met him briefly in chapters 1,3,4,16, it was chapter 18 that gives the following detail.

He was a Jew from Alexandria who came to Ephesus. We can say he was eloquent and full of enthusiasm. He was well-versed in the scriptures, and "taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, although he knew only the baptism of John".

His fellow disciples, Priscilla and Aquila, "took him aside, and explained to him the way of God more accurately". Paul refers to Apollos several times in ways that make it apparent that Apollos was a significant disciple.

For your reading pleasure about Apollos, here are the verses for the chapters I mentioned above: 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4-6, 22; 4:6; 16:12.

**1b. "Paul, having passed through the upper country, came to Ephesus**

Ephesus is an important seaport in the province of Asia across the Aegean Sea east of Greece. If you look at current maps, it is in Turkey.

Paul visited Ephesus on his Second Missionary Journey. That was a short visit, even though the Ephesian Jews asked him to stay longer. But Paul left his traveling companions, Priscilla and Aquila, in Ephesus and promised to return “if God wills”.

Now we have Luke’s record of that return. It is Paul’s Third Missionary Journey.

He will remain in Ephesus for three years, teaching daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus for two of those years. He starts a church in Ephesus, and writes his first epistle to the Corinthian church while living here.

### **1c. “and found certain disciples**

The text does not make say if they are disciples of John or Jesus, and I’ve found the commentary writers enjoy some scholarly debate about it.

Here is a brief summary of the debate: It is clear that they were baptized only into John’s baptism (v. 3), but Paul’s question, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” (v. 2) sounds as if Paul is treating them as if they are believers in Jesus—disciples of Jesus.

I don’t know why it sparks so much interest in Theologians, but the following is the dialogue...

### **Acts 19:2-4. Did you receive the Holy Spirit?**

*2. He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They said to him, “No, we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” 3. He said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.” 4. Paul said, “John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in the one who would come after him, that is, in Jesus.”*

### **2a. “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”**

This question isn’t one he routinely asks of believers wherever he goes. He must have noticed some sort of deficiency in these Ephesian believers that prompted his question.

I think it is significant because you and I have been hearing about the Holy Spirit from the beginning of the book of Acts (1:2).

Jesus promised:

- “you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (1:5)
- “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (1:8).

This promise was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, when the apostles “were all filled with the Holy Spirit”.

I think we can agree

- The Spirit is just as important in today's church.
- It brings the power of God.
- Without the Spirit, we can have pews that are full and financial resources that are running over,

but to have any spiritual power, we must be Spirit-powered.

Now that I started this debate, here are some important references to the way we receive the spirit:

In his Pentecost sermon, Peter told the crowd,

- “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (2:38)—
- so the gift of the Holy Spirit is related to baptism. Acts 2:38 and 19:1-7 suggest that the gift of the Holy Spirit is usually dependent on baptism.
- However, a group of Gentiles received the Holy Spirit prior to baptism. Peter baptized these people shortly after they received the Holy Spirit (10:44-48).
- And Paul received the Holy Spirit when Ananias laid hands on him. “He arose and was baptized” (9:17-18).

Does this explain my oft erratic behavior. I love it actually, but WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS?

## 2b. “No, we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit

Until Priscilla and Aquila took him aside to explain the Way of God to him, Apollos knew only of the baptism of John. These Ephesian believers know nothing about the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was part of the Christian message from the beginning. John the Baptist spoke of “he comes who is mightier than I... He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire” (Luke 3:15).

It seems an unnecessary leap of faith to assume that, because John taught about the Spirit, these believers know about the Spirit. They claim never to have heard of the Holy Spirit, and I accept that at face value.

My tuff question for the day: Where do Christians face this dilemma today (consider inquirers from different religions, people whose culture does not concern itself with religious issues, some of my old neighbors in Kingsmill) what do we say to them to explain?

## 3. “He said, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ They said, ‘Into John’s baptism’

I’m adding in scriptural references for your own reading and research on these questions:

- John the Baptist “came into all the region around the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for remission of sins” (Luke 3:3)
- Jews routinely baptized Gentile proselytes, but John was unusual in that he baptized Jews
- Most good Jews could not imagine that any Jew would need.

John said that he was preparing the way of the Lord (Luke 3:4) so that “All flesh will see God’s salvation” (Luke 3:6). But he made it clear to his followers that he was not the messiah, but was preparing the way for the messiah.

He said, “I indeed baptize you with water, but he comes who is mightier than I, the latchet of whose sandals I am not worthy to loosen. He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire” (Luke 3:16; see also John 1:20; 3:28). The repeated emphasis on the subordination of John to Jesus was made necessary by the fact that John continued to have loyal disciples long after his death.

**SOMETHING MORE TO PONDER:** Some even believe it was John the Baptists “loyal disciples” that wrote the Book of Revelation based on the assumed date it was written and the estimated time of John’s beheading. Historians from the second century attribute the writing to John the Apostle. But the question of which of three John’s actually wrote the last book in the Bible can follow many roads.

Interesting, but the book does start with “I, John, your brother...” and says little more as an identifier of which John it is....Oh Well!

#### **4a. “John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance**

Paul explains that, while John’s baptism was good, it was preliminary and incomplete. It was a baptism of repentance, which is still an important aspect of Christian baptism (2:38).

But Paul initiated this conversation by asking whether they had received the Holy Spirit, which they had not (v. 2). This verse does not say that he goes on to tell them that they need to be rebaptized so they can receive the Holy Spirit, but we can infer from the report of their baptism in verse 5 that he does so.

CONFUSED YET?

ME TOO!

#### **4b. “saying to the people that they should believe in the one who would come after him, that is, in Jesus”**

Paul emphasizes John’s role in pointing to Jesus. As great as John is, he is subordinate to Jesus in every way (Luke 3:15).

#### **Acts 19:5-7. They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**

*5. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke with other languages and prophesied. 7. They were about twelve men in all.*

#### **5. “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**

This is the only rebaptism recorded in the New Testament. Apollos knew only the baptism of John (18:25), but there is no indication that he was required to submit to another baptism.

#### **WHAT IS THE UNITED METHODIST VIEW ON RE-BAPTISM?**

- Jesus commanded his disciples to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19), and that triune formula is used by most churches today.
- Paul baptizes these Ephesian disciples “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” There are two other instances in Acts where people were baptized in the name of Jesus (2:38; 10:48).

## 6a. “When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them

A LITTLE MORE CONFUSION: These people receive the Holy Spirit, not when they are baptized, but when Paul lays his hands on them following their baptism. Earlier, “they (Peter and John) laid their hands on them (a group of Samaritans), and they received the Holy Spirit” (8:17). But there was no standard pattern:

- On the day of Pentecost, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit without any mention of baptism (2:4).
- Then Peter called on the crowd to repent and be baptized to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:38).
- Then we have two instances where people were baptized without any mention of the Holy Spirit (8:12-13, 38-39).
- Then Luke tells us of an instance where “the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word” (including Gentiles)—and these people who had received the Holy Spirit were then baptized (10:44-48).

## 6b. “and they spoke with other languages and prophesied

Speaking in tongues and prophesying are two manifestations of the Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, the apostles

- “were all filled with the Holy Spirit
- began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak” (2:4).

## 7. “They were about twelve men in all

As in the previous scripture in Chapter 18, scholars differ regarding this number.

- that there were *about* twelve of them.

The indefiniteness of the number argues against any symbolism.

NOTE: I chose to stop after Chapter 19 because it is a continuation of Paul’s journeys as recorded by Luke. I believe they are much better served in Paul’s writings to the churches in Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Galatia, Colossae, Philippi, and of course, Rome. The correspondence with individuals, Timothy, Titus, is intriguing, but I have never taught from those letters to friends.