

## 66. The Church Spreads in Asia

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the Word of God accurately so that they can help others come to Christ and then grow in their spiritual understanding. We saw that Aquila and Priscilla helped Apollos and other brethren in Ephesus learn about Christ and put their trust in Him. Then, they helped them grow in their understanding. In our topic today, we will see that Paul returned to Ephesus and that he met certain disciples who knew only about the teaching of John the Baptist. They had heard nothing about the death and resurrection of Christ.

Acts 19:1-4 says, “And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And 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, ‘Into John's baptism.’ Then Paul said, ‘John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.’” Apollos had been taught by Aquila and Priscilla and had then traveled from Ephesus to the city of Corinth. Sometime after Apollos left, we see that Paul returned to Ephesus.

When Paul came to Ephesus, we read that he found some disciples. The word translated “disciple” means *a learner or a follower*. In John 1:35-36, we read, “Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God!’” Here, we see that John and Andrew were disciples of John the Baptist, because they were learning from John and following his teachings. Once they met Christ, they began to follow Christ instead. John the Baptist also had other disciples who had learned from him and followed his teachings. Here, we see that that these men in Ephesus were followers of John the Baptist and they knew that he was preparing the way for Christ. However, they had learned nothing about the coming of Christ, His teachings, His death or His resurrection. As a result, they were still disciples of John the Baptist and were actually Old Testament saints.

Paul asked these saints if they had received the Holy Spirit. This question gave Paul the opportunity to understand quickly how much they knew about Christ. They said that they had not even heard if there was a Holy Spirit. Then, Paul asked them into what they had been baptized. They said that they had been baptized by John the Baptist. Paul immediately knew that they had never heard the death and resurrection of Christ explained to them. However, Paul began with what they understood in order to teach them further. He reminded them that John had said his baptism was a baptism of repentance. John had told people to believe on the One that would come after him. John had taught that Christ Jesus was the One who would come after him. This then gave Paul the opportunity to tell them about the life, death and resurrection of Christ so that they could understand how Christ had paid the penalty for sin.

Acts 19:5-7 says, “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 twelve in all.” John the Baptist had said that he was

preparing the way for Christ. Now, these men had heard how Jesus had paid the penalty for sin and that the Father had showed He was satisfied with that payment by raising Christ from the dead. Once these men understood that Jesus was the Christ that John had promised, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Here, we see that they immediately wanted to be identified with Jesus, the One about whom John the Baptist had preached.

Then, we see that Paul laid hands on them and they became the last group in the book of Acts to receive the Holy Spirit as a group. In Acts 2, we see that the one hundred and twenty Jews gathered in the upper room received the Holy Spirit as a group. Then, in Acts 8, we saw that the Samaritans who were part Jewish and part Gentile received the Holy Spirit as a group. In Acts 10, the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius received the Holy Spirit as a group. Now, here, in Acts 19, we see that the followers of John the Baptist (Old Testament saints) were the last group that received the Holy Spirit as a group.

When these men received the Holy Spirit, as a group, we read that they spoke with tongues and prophesied. 1 Corinthians 1:22 says, “For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom.” We see that the Jews required a sign. In fact, John 20:30-31 says, “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” Christ did certain signs for the Jews to prove that He is the Son of God. God used tongues (known languages) as a sign to the Jews in the book of Acts that the Gospel is for all people. Each time a new group of people received the Holy Spirit as a group, we see that there were apostles present to verify what had happened. Here, we see that this is the last group that was provided a sign to show that the Gospel is for all people. This group of Old Testament saints was the final group that received the Holy Spirit as a group and was about twelve men.

Acts 19:8-10 says, “And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” Aquila and Priscilla had led a group of people to Christ in Ephesus and now Paul had returned to begin his public ministry in that city.

The Jews in the synagogue had earlier asked Paul to return and teach him more about Christ. As a result, the first place that Paul began his public ministry in Ephesus was the Jewish synagogue. Paul later asked the Ephesians to pray that he would speak with boldness when he said in Ephesians 6:19-20, “And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Paul could speak with boldness, because others were already praying that prayer for him.

We see that Paul was reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. The word translated “reasoning” means *to discuss, to compare different thoughts or to talk together*.

The word translated “persuading” means *to persuade to believe, place confidence in or to trust*. The Lord caused the people to really talk and think about the things that Paul was explaining before they either accepted or rejected the message about the death and resurrection of Christ. However, during that three-month period, the hearts of some became hardened and they chose to reject the message of the Gospel. Then, they began to speak evil of the Way to the rest of the people in the synagogue.

Instead of trying to argue with those who rejected and were speaking evil about the Way, Paul chose to move out of the synagogue and separate the disciples from those who rejected. The schools in that day took a break during the hottest part of the day and so Paul was able to obtain the use of the school of Tyrannus during those hours. There, he continued to reason daily with those who had believed. Paul explained how he trained the disciples the rest of the day in Acts 20:20-21 where we read, “How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Putting these verses together we see that Paul taught in the school of Tyrannus during the heat of the day and answered the questions of the disciples. Then, he trained them and showed them how to do effective ministry as he took them with him to the homes of people in Ephesus.

We see that Paul combined this ministry of teaching and training in Ephesus for a period of two years. In Colossians 2:1, we read, “For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.” Those who were taught in the school of Tyrannus and trained and shown how to minister effectively in the homes of people in Ephesus were then able to take what they learned and go back to share what they learned with the people of their home areas. The cities of Colosse and Laodicea were located about 100 miles from the city of Ephesus. Colossians 4:12-13 says, “Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.” Here, we see that Epaphras took what he learned and was shown and shared that message in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

We see the results of Paul teaching and training many different people in Ephesus. These people took what they had learned back to their home town and the surrounding area. That is what made it possible for the Gospel to spread throughout the entire province of Asia while Paul was teaching and training in Ephesus. Paul developed godly, reproducing Christians, because he taught them the Word of God; he showed them by his own example how to develop godly character; then he showed them how to develop ministry skills as he showed them how to minister in the homes of people. Here, we see a key example of how we teach and train our physical and spiritual children. As we follow this pattern, our children will learn to serve the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you do these same things to help your children become godly, reproducing Christians.