

~ACTS~

Lesson 60- Transitioning from the Old to the New

Acts 19:1-7

Today we begin chapter 19 in our study through the book of Acts and we find another example of the transition from the Old Covenant to the New. And in many respects, we are shocked at the length of time it has taken for the good news to spread about Jesus Christ. Last week we saw that even 22 years later, in 54ad, there are still learned Jewish men like Apollos who were mighty in the Scriptures and yet they were still searching and waiting for the Messiah to come. And here in Ephesus we see 12 more men who are still professing the ministry of John the Baptist, waiting for their coming King. In these next seven verses, Paul finds these men and tells them the good news that our Messiah has come! Salvation is here! Believe on Him and you will be saved!

As we study the book of Acts, we are clearly seeing that this book is a book of transition. A transition from the Old Covenant to the New, showing and laying out perfectly the plan of redemption in Christ Jesus. We saw this last week with Apollos. Once he learned the key to the Scriptures from Aquila and Priscilla, and that key is Jesus, this explained the fulfillment of Judaism, the fulfillment of Old Testament Scriptures and the ushering in of our Christian faith, namely Christianity and our Salvation in Jesus. As we read the book of Acts, we see examples of how God moved on the early church and how people all over the world were hearing the Gospel and being saved. And all these accounts of the early church begin forming our heritage and creating a foundation of Christian doctrine that we can stand on even 2,000 years later. And then, in connection with the book of Acts, we can overlay these real-life examples with the doctrinal epistles of the New Testament, and we start to form True Biblical Doctrine based on the whole council of God. This is what we will be doing today. This section of Scripture gives us a unique insight into the transition of the early church and then by overlaying the teachings of Paul, we can determine the process of Salvation for the believer. Let's begin by reading our text today, **Acts 19:1-7**.

19:1) And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus.

Remember at the end of chapter 18 we were introduced to Apollos. And while Paul was still in Galatia, Apollos came to Ephesus and begin preaching in the synagogues the message of John the Baptist. Aquila and Priscilla heard him preaching Truth, but not the complete Truth. Apollos was missing Jesus. So this power couple took him aside and explained the Way of God more accurately. Apollos received it and was born again. And because he was so fervent in spirit, he goes to Corinth and begins preaching over there, edifying the believers, and also refuting the Jews by putting to proof through the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

Now Paul, after traveling through Galatia, comes to Ephesus. Paul had been here a few months earlier, but he only stayed for one Sabbath because he was trying to get back to Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost. The Jews in Ephesus were receiving the Gospel and asked him to stay longer, so Paul promised to return, God willing, Acts 18:20-21. So Paul returns a few months later and finds believing disciples.

19:1) And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples...

Paul didn't have time to establish a church in Ephesus the first time he went there, but he left Aquila and Priscilla in this city, and they began preaching the Gospel. They led Apollos to Jesus and started their own house church in Ephesus, 1 Corinthians 16:19. But these disciples that Paul finds are not believers in the sense that they are followers of Christ, because as Paul begins speaking with them, he realizes they know nothing of Jesus.

19:1-2) ¹ ... And finding some disciples ² he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

Paul was looking for believers. This word “finding” is εὐρίσκω, to find after searching for. Paul comes to Ephesus and finds these twelve men who must have introduced themselves as believers. So Paul, not knowing anything about these guys assumes they believe in Jesus and asks them if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed. That might seem like an odd thing to ask but Paul’s not asking if they are born again, he is asking if they had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Everyone who is born again immediately is born of the Spirit and receives the promise of the Spirit and the Holy Spirit is residing in that believer. But as we have learned in the book of Acts, there is an additional filling of the Spirit that comes after being born again. Sometimes this happens instantly, as with Cornelius and his family, [Acts 10:44-46](#), but other times it happens later as we saw in Samaria, [Acts 8:14-17](#). So Paul is asking if they had been filled with this additional filling of the power of the Spirit when they believed. But notice their response in the remainder of verse 2...

19:2) ...So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”

Because of this answer, Paul begins to question what they believe and if they are even saved because he finds out they had not even heard of the gift of the Spirit. It is not that they didn’t know if Holy Spirit existed because the Spirit of God is continually active in the Old Testament. But the idea of receiving the Holy Spirit when you believe as a gift was a foreign concept to them. Although this was prophesied in the Old Testament, Ezekiel 36:26-27; Joel 2:28-29.

The Holy Spirit is a vital key to Salvation. It is through the power of the Spirit that we are resurrected from death to life. This is called being born again or being born of the Spirit. And then as He wills, we are filled with His power as we yield to Him and His gifts work in and out through us manifesting themselves through the gifts of the Spirit for the purpose to glorify the name of Jesus. Sometimes this happens immediately, sometimes it is later just as we saw in the examples above, but someone who does not know if there is even a Holy Spirit is lacking in the Truth. So Paul asks another question to find out what they believe...

19:3) And he said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?” So they said, “Into John’s baptism.”

Paul now discovers that they were believers in the sense that they believed in the Messiah to come as John the Baptist taught, but they hadn’t heard of Jesus. They were like Apollos only knowing the baptism of John. And it is quite possible that they were followers of Apollos before he was born again because Apollos had been preaching in the synagogues for some time before Aquila and Priscilla found him. The baptism of John was a baptism of repentance with the expectation of the coming Messiah. The baptism of John was preparing people’s hearts for their coming King. It was a call to repentance in anticipation for the Messiah’s arrival. And the outward expression of baptism was a confession of need, the need for a Savior, by saying I am a sinner and I repent with the expectation of the coming Messiah who will cleanse me. Paul sees that these men have expectant hearts for the Messiah, so he preaches the Gospel telling them that the Messiah has come and His name is Jesus.

19:4) 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.”

The message of John the Baptist was not to exalt himself, but to exalt and to believe in the Messiah who was to come after him, Luke 3:4, 15-16; John 3:30. These twelve men tell Paul that they were baptized into John’s baptism, so Paul tells them that this was fulfilled in the man Jesus Christ, [saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus](#). Jesus is the Messiah whom they have been waiting to come. Now after hearing the Gospel of Jesus, notice their response...

19:5) When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

These twelve who originally were baptized into John's baptism, waiting for the Messiah, were believers in the sense that they believed in the Messiah to come, but now after hearing the Gospel, they are baptized in the name of Jesus and born again, and they are made a new creation in Christ. Before this, they were like the Old Testament saints who had faith in the Messiah to come but were not truly born again while they were still waiting for the Messiah, they just didn't know He had come. So this brings us to the question I posed last week. What would have happened to their souls if one of these 12 men died before hearing Paul preach? Is it possible that they were accounted Righteous like Abraham and the Old Testament saints because they had faith in the Messiah to come? Remember how Paul describes Abraham in Galatians 3:6- *Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for Righteousness*. Notice those words, it was "accounted," not that he "became" righteous. He didn't become Righteous until Jesus became the final sacrifice for sin, so instead he was accounted Righteous in expectation of Jesus' fulfillment. Now on this side of the cross, all who believe in Jesus have become Righteous, **2 Cor 5:21**. All who believed in the coming Messiah by faith before the cross were accounted Righteous, they did not become Righteous. Therefore, when they died before the cross, they went to Abraham's bosom and then when Jesus paid for sin on the cross, He went to hell and rescued the "accounted Righteous" held in captivity, and brought them up to heaven with Him at His resurrection and they received the promise of the Spirit and became Righteous, **Heb 11:39-40**. Thank God I don't have to be the judge on these grey areas. Jesus is Righteous and Just and I have faith that He will judge rightly. But this I know... Jesus is the ONLY WAY to the Father, John 14:6, and the promise of the Holy Spirit unto Resurrection Life is only given to those who believe in Jesus, Acts 2:38, and there is no other Name under heaven by which we are saved, Acts 4:12. This shows the urgency to proclaim the name of Jesus to the world. Notice Paul solves this problem of people not knowing about Jesus in Asia, **Acts 19:10**.

To explain this promise of Salvation, there is a consistent pattern that Luke uses through these first 5 verses that gives us a little more insight into how we become a child of God, specifically becoming immersed into the Name of Jesus. Our English translation gives us the impression that these twelve men were baptized in water in the authority of the name of Jesus, **Acts 19:5**. Water baptism may have happened, but I personally don't think so because they were already baptized by water into John's baptism of repentance. And as I have been reading the text, I think there is something far deeper than water baptism going on here. I believe Luke is telling us they are being baptized or immersed into the Name of the Lord Jesus apart from water. That their spirits are being immersed into the Name of Jesus being brought into the body of Christ and being immersed into His Name. Water baptism is just an expression of what we are truly immersed into... into His Name... into the family of God as children of God. This is made very clear in the Greek with the use of the preposition εἰς, meaning "into," and Luke uses this preposition 5 times in 3 verses (3-5) to make this point.

Acts 19:3–5-³ εἶπέ τε πρὸς αὐτούς, **Εἰς** τί οὖν ἐβαπτίσθητε; οἱ δὲ εἶπον, **Εἰς** τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα. ⁴ εἶπε δὲ Παῦλος, Ἰωάννης μὲν ἐβάπτισε βάπτισμα μετανοίας, τῷ λαῷ λέγων **εἰς** τὸν ἐρχόμενον μετ' αὐτὸν ἵνα πιστεύσωσι, τοῦτ' ἔστιν, **εἰς** τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν. ⁵ ἀκούσαντες δὲ ἐβαπτίσθησαν **εἰς** τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ.

Acts 19:3–5-³ And he said to them, "**Into** what then were you baptized?" So they said, "**Into** John's baptism." ⁴ Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe **on (into)** Him who would come after him, that is, **on (into)** Christ Jesus." ⁵ When they heard *this*, they were baptized **in (into)** the name of the Lord Jesus.

Luke is not saying they were baptized in the authority of Jesus, but rather baptized into His Name. This is exactly what Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 12:13- For by one Spirit we were all baptized into **εἰς** one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into **εἰς** one Spirit.

Being baptized into one body and into one Spirit is describing us who have been born again, being born of the Spirit. This is the promise of the Spirit given to those who believe in Jesus Christ, Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Cor 1:21-22; 5:5; Gal 3:26-29; 4:4-7. Notice that this promise of the Spirit and being born of the Spirit and becoming a child of God, it all has to come through Jesus. And remember Paul says this promise was promised to the Seed who is Christ. So the question is... when did Jesus receive this promise? The answer... at the Resurrection, Acts 2:32-33, 38-39.

Jesus is our High Priest who administers the promise of the Spirit unto Resurrection Life to all who believe in Him, and then out from the Spirit living within us is the continual filling of the Spirit with this manifested in the gifts of the Spirit flowing through us as He wills to bring glory to Jesus Christ. Notice this in the next verse...

19:6) And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

That is this additional filling of the power of the Spirit after one is born again of the Spirit. To the twelve men here, this filling of the Spirit was manifested in the gift of tongues and prophecy, and it came after they were born of the Spirit and baptized into the Name of Jesus. The Holy Spirit gave these men the gifts of speaking in tongues and prophecy as an outward manifestation of His power working within them. These are the same gifts at Pentecost and God did this to show as a sign that it is the same power and the same Spirit working throughout. God used the gift of tongues to the Jews on Pentecost, to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius, and now again 22 years after Pentecost to these Hellenistic Jews in Ephesus showing again the oneness of being baptized into one body by one Spirit in Christ Jesus.

****Speaking in tongues is NOT the ONLY manifestation of being filled with the Spirit. It is certainly "a" manifestation but not the ONLY manifestation. There are nine total gifts that the Spirit can work in and out through a believer, and they are always given as He wills, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.*

These verses help demonstrate in a practical way the progression of our salvation as we humble our hearts to Jesus, believe that He is the Christ who has died and paid the price for our sin, and that He rose again for our salvation in Him. And as a result of this faith, Jesus administers the promise of the Spirit to those who are immersed into the Name of Jesus by faith, and we become children of God. And then as the Holy Spirit is abiding in us, and we yield ourselves to His will, we are filled with His power to bear witness that Jesus is the Risen Savior.