

The Holy Spirit Comes To Ephesus.

Acts 19:1-7.

Sunday morning, July 10, 2011.

I. Paul comes to Ephesus.

- A. Paul, having made his way via the churches of Galatia and Phrygia, comes finally to Ephesus, thus making good on his promise in acts 18:21 that he would return to Ephesus if the Lord permitted.

Application:

This statement shows us that the Apostle in all things entrusted himself to the Lord's providential dealings with him. He is not presumptive; at the same time he expresses his desire to return to the folks in Ephesus who were eager to learn of the things of the Lord. We would do well to entrust ourselves similarly to the Lord's dealings with us.

- B. Having returned to Ephesus, the Apostle encounters a similar problem Priscilla and Aquila had encountered with Apollos of whom it is said that he only knew the baptism of John (the Baptist). This time it concerned a group of about twelve men in all. There well may have been women and children also who were not counted.
- C. These too seem to have been disciples of John the Baptist, having become such by "the baptism of John." As such they were stuck in the old dispensation, and ignorant of the implications of the finished work of Christ, especially the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- D. How did these disciples of John the Baptist end up in Ephesus? The context would seem to suggest that they were the fruit of the labors of Apollos, prior to his being led into the way of the Lord more perfectly by Priscilla and Aquila. It is less likely that John the Baptist's disciples traveled the world to spread his message far and wide since taking the message to the ends of the earth was something that came about as a result of the Great Commission and the gift of the Holy Spirit along with His gift of tongues.
- E. From these twelve men, and from the life of Apollos, as well as from the gospel narratives we see that there were those who continued being "disciples of John," even after John the Baptist's death. John's message had pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ as the coming one, but not all had gotten the message, and there were those who continued to cling to him and his message and baptism, even after his death, and even at this late hour, more than twenty years later, John the Baptist has his following in Ephesus.

Application:

Was this the reason why the Lord in His providence allowed the "untimely" death of his servant at the hand of Herod? Was it to pry the hands of so many of his disciples away from John and to bring them in the fold of Christ? John had preached saying "He must increase, but I must decrease," but again not all understood his message and these folks were stuck in the old dispensation, prior to the Holy Spirit's coming to the Church.

II. Brought into the fold of Christ.

- A. The Apostle, sensing that something was wrong with these folks, asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed.
- B. To this they answered that they had not so much as heard that there was a Holy Spirit (given as a gift).
- C. The meaning of “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit” can not possibly be taken at face value as the Holy Spirit’s existence is all over the Old Testament, and was well known to the Jewish people.
- D. We are dealing with a way of speaking in the Greek language similar to that found in John 7:39 “This He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet (given), because Jesus was not yet glorified.
The word “given” is implied, but not stated out rightly in both verses. In John 7:39 the translators supply it, here they did not.
- E. At this time the apostle opens up the message preached by John. John preached a message of repentance, baptizing with water, but he pointed to Jesus who came after him, and who would baptize with the Holy Spirit.
- F. Having their eyes opened to the message their old master had taught, they did what their old master had bid them to do, that is to turn to Jesus. John had to decrease, even in the hearts and minds of these disciples at this late hour, and Jesus had to increase and become preeminent.
- G. In turning to the Lord Jesus Christ, and identifying with Him in Baptism, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they prophesied and spoke in tongues.
 - 1. They prophesied. That is they spoke the word of God, directly by the Spirit of God. Their utterances may have pertained to the past, the present or the future. In the utterances of the prophets the Lord often reviews and interprets the past, interprets the present, and tells of things to come.
 - 2. The fact that they did so in tongues (foreign languages) continues to point to the fact that the message is now given to all the nations; not just the Jews.
- H. That the Holy Spirit came by the laying on of the hands of the Apostle was to establish the Apostolic authority of Paul as the official emissary of the court of King Jesus.

Applications:

1. We see here the great tragedy of our Jewish friends who are to this day stuck in the Old Dispensation. They go without the gift of the Holy Spirit, having rejected both the message of John and the revelation of God in Christ. As such the veil of darkness remains on their heart and understanding, for it can only be taken away by the gift of the Holy Spirit in turning to Christ.
2. We too, very often do not appreciate the gift of the Holy Spirit as we should. The Lord Jesus has put us in the custody of the Holy Spirit. It is he who must prepare us for glory, and for living with the Lord forevermore. This is why we are told not to quench and not to grieve the Holy Spirit. If we are to make it to glory at all, it will be by His gracious undertaking in our lives. This is why we are taught to seek and ask and knock on the Lord’s door for the work of the Spirit. As Rebecca was safely brought to Isaac by Eliezer, and as she entrusted herself to him to bring her to Isaac, so we entrust ourselves to the Holy Spirit to bring us to Jesus, and we look to Jesus to give His Holy Spirit to us.