

# OpenTheo

## Acts 18:1 - 19:7



### Acts - Steve Gregg

In this Acts 18:1-19:7 discussion, Steve Gregg provides an overview of the Apostle Paul's ministry in Corinth and Ephesus. Despite encountering challenges in Corinth, including a divided church and a lack of indigenous Christians, Paul spent a significant amount of time there before moving on to Ephesus. In Ephesus, he encountered a group of people who had been baptized by John the Baptist but had not yet received the Holy Spirit, leading to a discussion on the significance of Christian baptism and the early church's practice of laying hands on baptized individuals to receive the Holy Spirit.

### Transcript

Let's turn now to Acts chapter 18. Because of danger to himself in Berea, which was stirred up by the Jews who came down from Thessalonica, Paul and his, well Paul alone, had had to leave Berea and go to Athens. He had left his companions Silas and Timothy in Berea, apparently to help minister to those people still after his absence, and he went to Athens alone.

I think he was a little lonely there. He did urge through messengers that Titus and, excuse me, I keep saying Titus, but Timothy and Silas would come quickly to him as soon as possible. And he didn't have much success in Athens.

He had some conversations in the marketplace. He spoke in the synagogue. We don't read very much fruit born there.

He spoke at length in the Areopagus and did not get many converts there either. In fact, perhaps no converts at all. There were some people who were open to him.

A few people wanted to hear more, and only a few names are mentioned, people we don't know anything else about. There's no mention in the Bible of a church being planted in Athens, and it may be that only two or three people were actually sympathetic toward the gospel and maybe not even converted. We don't read of Paul baptizing anyone or planting a church there.

And so he moves on to Corinth. Now, of course, as you look at your map, Corinth is just a

little bit there to the west, and it's in a very narrow isthmus. The peninsula of Greece comes down to a point there, and there's this very narrow isthmus that connects the rest of the peninsula.

The lower part is called the Peloponnesian Peninsula, and above the isthmus is the mainland of Greece. And at that very narrow point, Corinth is placed, and it is the capital city or was the capital city of Achaia, the southern region of Greece. Now, it was so narrow that ships, in order to go from the Aegean Sea to the Adriatic Sea or vice versa, crossing west or east, they would often unload their ships and portage their goods and the ship itself across this isthmus and put it back in the water on the other side, rather than sail down around the southern tip of the Peloponnesian Peninsula, because the waters down there were very, very turbulent and it was very dangerous sailing.

You really took your life into your hands if you sailed around that southern tip of the peninsula, and therefore it was worthwhile, although it was very troublesome, to download or take off the cargo of the ship and carry it across the isthmus and either catch another ship on the other side or else carry a smaller craft across the isthmus. Now, that meant that there was a lot of trade that moved across that isthmus where Corinth was, and it was in the center of trade for east and west commerce, because of that very feature, but also for north and south commerce, because it was the one place where people from the mainland of Greece had to cross through to get to the lower section, and so it was like the crossroads of all commerce there, and it was very a very powerful and a very wealthy city. It was also a very corrupt city.

Corinth was known in the Grecian world as a very corrupt city. They were known for being very, given over to drunkenness and fornication. In fact, there was a temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of love in Corinth, where there were a thousand prostitutes serving as priestesses in the temple of Aphrodite in Corinth.

Now, when you have prostitutes for priestesses of your religion, it's obvious that there's no stigma on fornication in that society. A little hard for those of us who have been raised in the west during a time where Christianity has had influence to understand people who don't think of fornication as having anything slightly even wrong with it. Now, we have younger generations now that are tending to feel that way because the influence of Christianity has waned considerably in western civilization, and now we have younger people who don't have any sense that fornication is wrong.

They just figure, you know, what do you do for fun when you're with somebody you like? You have sex. And it's hard for us older people who are raised under more Christian influence to realize that because we've been so well indoctrinated, frankly, by Christianity for many years, that God has a plan for sexual activity that it should remain only within monogamous marriage, and that any other kind of sexual activity outside of that is immoral. But that was not at all in the thinking of the Greek world.

However, the Corinthians were viewed by the rest of the Greek world of being particularly debased in how the degree to which they were given over to sexual indulgence of all kind. It was a very immoral city. It was also a city that, you know, in the Greek world, the Greeks prided themselves for wisdom, but most of the Greeks thought of the Corinthians as pretenders at wisdom, that the Greek, the Corinthians thought of themselves as very sophisticated, very philosophically wise, and yet most of the Greeks kind of not qualified to see themselves that way, that they were really not as wise as they pretended to be, that they were pretentious in it.

In the Greek world, there were plays, a lot of Greek plays, and many times there were Corinthian characters depicted in the plays, but the Corinthians were always depicted as stumbling drunk, fornicators, stupid people. I mean, that's how that, you know, the Corinthians thought highly of themselves, but the rest of the Greek world looked at them as sort of a debauched, pretentious people. In fact, for a person to live a very morally debauched life, there was a term in it in the Roman Empire for playing the Corinthian, and, you know, Paul wrote two of his letters to the Corinthians.

Not at this point. This, we're reading about his first coming to the Corinthians. It's only after he left them, and it was later in Ephesus, that he sent back two epistles to them.

They are his longest epistles, and in both cases, he is writing because they've got problems in the church. One of the problems was fornication. One was some people getting drunk at communion.

One was that some people thought they were very wise when they were not, and so some of the problems in the local culture of Corinth were hard to get out of the people when they became Christians, and Paul seemed to have a lot of trouble with the churches in Corinth. In fact, even after Paul was gone, Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the Corinthians, and apparently there were still problems there. In the letter of Clement to the Corinthians, he's writing because there's a rebellion against the church leaders there, and so the church, I don't know if, I don't know when the church ever stabilized, but in the first century, it was a high maintenance group for Paul and the leaders of the churches, but Paul didn't know that yet when he came to Corinth.

He knew it was a town that was going to be a challenge. He knew that, certainly, and yet he stayed in Corinth for 18 months, which is the longest time he spent in any church up to this point. Now, on his third missionary journey, he will stay even longer in Ephesus, almost three years, but up to this point, I think Paul has only spent a few weeks or a few months at the most in any of the churches, even in his own home church in Antioch.

He probably didn't spend 18 months. We read of him spending one year at one point with Barbas, but this church apparently needed supervision more than most churches, and the fact that Paul stayed there 18 months is not a flattery to them, but it's probably more an indication that they really needed to be governed with a heavier hand than

most churches because of the problems of character in the town that also were found often in the church. We read about his arrival there in verse 1 of chapter 18.

After these things, Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth, and he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla. Priscilla is a diminutive form of the name Prisca, and she's often called Prisca elsewhere in Scripture, but in most cases, her name is mentioned ahead of her husband's name. Here we read of her husband, Aquila, and his wife Priscilla, but often we read of them as Priscilla and Aquila, which many people think suggests that she was perhaps the more prominent member of the couple.

For example, we will find that they will, at the end of this chapter, they will be correcting Apollos's doctrine, but it's Priscilla and Aquila who do so. It sounds like Priscilla may have been the main spokesperson for the couple. In any case, this was a couple that were Jews.

They had come from Pontus originally and had lived in Rome, but had recently come from Italy because, it says, Claudius, who is the Caesar, had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome, and so Paul came to them, and so because he was of the same trade, which was tent making, he stayed with them and worked for by occupation. They were tent makers, so he found a Jewish couple to live with who had the same trade he had. They probably ran a trade in a shop in their home and lived upstairs or something like that.

They had a room that could lodge a guest, and Paul was of the same trade, so they worked as partners in the trade and lived together. Now, we are not told whether these people were Christians at the time Paul met them or not. They could have been.

The fact that it does not mention anything about Paul leading them to Christ or baptizing them might be taken to suggest that they had become Christians before they left Rome and before they came to Corinth, and that would be another reason for Paul to connect with them because he was coming to a pagan city where Christians would be very few. There would be no indigenous Christians, but there might be some like Roman Christians who would come down and live there, but there was no church there. Either he led these people to the Lord shortly after he arrived, or they had already become Christians.

In any case, they became Christian ministry partners of his. The fact that they had left Rome because of the decree of Claudius has an interesting parallel in secular history. The Roman historian Suetonius mentions that Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome because of constant disturbances over Christus.

Now, Suetonius says Christus, C-H-R-E-S-T-U-S. Now, the Greek form of Christ is Christos, C-H-R-I-S-T-O-S, and Christus could be a Latinized form of Christos. I think most scholars believe that Suetonius is referring to Christ, and that Claudius had expelled the Jews

from Rome because of constant disturbances over Christ, Christus.

We have to assume that the church in Rome had the same problems between the Christians that the churches elsewhere had. Although Paul had not been there yet, and he was often the spark plug that caused problems, but it didn't have to be Paul there to be persecution. Before Paul was converted, there was persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem.

But apparently, the Christians in Rome, in conflict with Jews in Rome, came to the attention of the Emperor Claudius in Rome. There could have even been riots, because we see throughout Acts that the Jews are causing riots to oppose the Christians. And Claudius, not knowing the difference between a Christian and a Roman, or I should say a Jew, because they all worship one God, and to Romans, anyone who worships one God, that's freaky.

And the Christians were following a Jewish guy and reading Jewish scriptures and worshipping one God. To the Roman mind, Christians were just another type of Jew. And so, Claudius had banished all Jews from Rome.

Now, probably Jews that were Roman citizens, like Paul, would not have had to go. It's hard to say. But basically, it was a general decree of Jews have to leave Rome.

Now, we find this confirmed in Luke, inadvertently. Luke has not read Suetonius. Suetonius, in fact, lived later than Luke and wrote later.

But it is confirmed from the secular history that Claudius did banish the Jews from Rome, and another point of connecting Luke's narrative with what is known from totally independent secular sources. Now, the impact this had on the Church of Rome is something to consider when we read the Book of Romans, because Claudius, let's see, his reign, we heard about Claudius back in chapter 11. He reigned from 41 to 54.

And the banishment of the Jews from Rome was probably around 49 AD or 50. So, Claudius reigned for about four more years after that and died. After he died, many of the Jews who had been banished from Rome went back, including Priscilla and Aquila.

We find that when Paul writes the Book of Romans later than this, he greets them. They are back in Rome now. He meets them in Corinth.

They will go with him to Ephesus, and they'll be there for a while. But then eventually, they went back to Rome when Claudius was dead. And when Paul wrote to the Church in Rome, he greets Priscilla and Aquila, who happened to be there.

So, they've made the whole circuit from Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, back to Rome again. But the fact that there was about four years there where the Jews were banished from Rome means that the Church in Rome during those years would be almost entirely

Gentile. And therefore, the Church, which may have originally had more of a Jewish flavor, would have more of a Gentile flavor when these Jewish Christians would come back from their exile when Claudius died.

And this is thought to perhaps have caused the scene that Paul is addressing in Romans where the Jews in the Church and the Gentiles in the Church are in conflict over certain behaviors, like whether to keep a holy day or not, whether to eat all things or only eat herbs. There are certain things the Jews would do that Gentiles would not, and Gentiles would do that Jews would not. And in four years of absence of the Jewish members of the Church, the Church in Rome would have become entirely Gentile in its culture.

And when these Jews would come back after Claudius died, four years later, the Church had ceased to follow any Jewish customs at all. And so we find when Paul writes Romans, right from the beginning, he's talking about the conflict between the Jews and the Gentiles in the Church. And he often, it seems like that's the main milieu of the writing of the Book of Romans, that this, by now the Jews have come back from this exile that was imposed by Claudius.

And they're finding it hard to culturally assimilate in the Church, which is now mostly Gentile. And they're critical of the Gentiles, and the Gentiles are critical of them. And so we see that Paul mentions that several times in the Book of Romans.

But the Book of Romans is not written at this point. And I'm just saying this banishment of the Jews from Rome probably precipitated the situation that later Romans had to address. But it also at this point had caused Priscilla to close, to leave Rome and to come to Corinth and set up a tent making trade there.

And Paul found them and moved in with them and worked with them. But he also preached. And it says in verse four, and he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

And when Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the Spirit and testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. Now this reference to Silas and Timothy coming from Macedonia harks back to chapter 17, verse 15, where Paul had left them in Berea when he went to Athens. But he had left a message for them to come as quickly as possible to him.

No doubt he expected them to come to him in Athens, but he didn't stay there very long. So by the time he got to Corinth, he probably had to send a message back to Berea that they had to join him in Corinth. But they did come.

And now Paul was even more bold. I mean, he had been alone with these strangers, Priscilla and Aquila. They were like-minded people.

But he didn't have his team with him. And now his team has rejoined him and he's

feeling strong in the Spirit and constrained to testify to the Jews about the Messiahship of Jesus. In verse 6, And when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, Your blood be upon your own heads.

I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles. Now this is not the first time Paul has made this kind of an announcement.

We saw in Thucydides and Antioch in chapter 13, when the Jews in the synagogue rejected the gospel, Paul said it was necessary that the gospel should be first preached to you. But since you rejected and count yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we're going to go to the Gentiles. And so he's making that announcement at this point too.

And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justice, one who worshipped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. Now, whether this means he simply held meetings in this house or moved in, we don't know. He had been staying with Priscilla and Aquila, it would appear.

But perhaps they didn't have long-term accommodations that were comfortable for guests, and so he might have moved from there into the house of Justice. In any case, he probably was holding meetings in Justice's house. It was right next door to the synagogue, made it convenient.

And it probably was particularly objectionable to the rulers of the synagogue who hated Paul that he was now holding meetings right next door, making it so convenient for the Jews who wanted to hear him to hear him. He was easy to find, right next door to the synagogue. And so then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household.

Now, by the way, Crispus, Paul refers to later in 1 Corinthians 1 as one of the first people he baptized in Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 1, Paul says, I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius. And then he later corrects himself, says, oh yes, and the household of Stephanus.

I also baptized them. I don't remember who else. But he does mention Crispus as apparently the first baptized believer, and he happened to be the ruler of the synagogue, which was a pretty significant convert.

He believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized. Now, since Paul didn't baptize many of them, but many of them were baptized, we have to assume that Paul baptized the first few and then his companions, probably Silas and Timothy, did most of the other baptizing because he said, I didn't come to baptize but to preach.

He says in 1 Corinthians 1, he says, I only baptized a few of you. Now, the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision, do not be afraid, but speak and do not keep silent, for I am with you and

no one will attack you to hurt you. For I have many people in this city, Jesus said.

So although Paul had not done much evangelism and there weren't many converts yet, Jesus said he had many people in that city, which means that Jesus recognized, even in the pre-converted condition, many of the people in that city to be his and who would come to him and would follow Paul's teaching. So Paul should be encouraged about that. And he continued there a year and six months.

During this year and six months, we don't know at what point in that time, Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians and sent it back to the church of Thessalonica. There were some problems in Thessalonica at this time that he heard about and addressed. One was that there was some fornication in the church.

Another was that some people were not really working much, perhaps because they thought the Lord was coming so soon that they thought they didn't have to work. It's hard to know exactly why. They may have just been lazy.

But some of the Thessalonian Christians were not working as much as they should, not carrying their own weight financially. There were some who were apparently messing around with fornication or at least being tempted to. We don't know if they were doing it, but he warns against it as if it's a danger in 1 Thessalonians 4. And of course, one thing the Thessalonians were doing, were obsessing on eschatology.

They're obsessing about the end times and about the second coming of Christ. And apparently they had some questions or some confusion. One thing they thought was apparently some of the Thessalonian Christians had already died at this early stage, and they were grieving that these people had missed the rapture.

And Paul had arrived back and said, no, they haven't missed out on anything because when Jesus comes back, they'll rise from the dead first, and then the rest of us will be raptured. So that's what he was writing to them about in 1 Thessalonians. Now, later, not much later, a little later, he wrote 2 Thessalonians.

Things hadn't changed much in the Thessalonian church at that point, apparently, because he still had to tell them to keep working. In fact, he's stronger on that in 2 Thessalonians 3 than he was in 1 Thessalonians 4, that they needed to work, and whoever does not work should not eat. Another problem was that they were still obsessing about the end times and confused about it.

They were wondering whether the day of the Lord had come or not. They, and Paul had to tell them, no, the man of sin has to come first before that happens. They apparently were no longer having a problem with fornication because Paul doesn't have to mention that in 2 Thessalonians as he did in 1 Thessalonians.

So this is, we get some, sort of a finger on the pulse of the Thessalonian church from the



things Paul felt like he had to write them. This is during his 18 months stay in Corinth, he wrote those letters. Verse 12, now when Galileo was the proconsul in Achaia, and Corinth being the capital of Achaia, he would be stationed there, the Roman proconsul.

The Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat. Now notice it's always the Jews that are doing this. It's the Jews that are always trying to get Paul into trouble, and they're taking him before the Roman authorities.

Bring him before Galileo, and they're saying this fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law. Now contrary to the law, what law? Now the Jewish law? Well, maybe that was their concern. They couldn't have cared less about Roman law.

They were concerned that Paul seemed to be undermining the Jewish law, but they would have known that Galileo, the Roman, would have no concern about Jewish law, so they were ambiguous enough to make it sound like he's violating Roman law, and perhaps they meant it to that to be their accusation because the Romans, when they conquered these regions, had a policy that they allowed existing religions to continue unmolested by the Roman authority. Any religion that was already practiced in the region before the Romans conquered it could continue to be practiced, but no new religions were allowed to be introduced within Roman jurisdictions. Therefore, technically, Christianity was contrary to Roman law because Christianity arose after Rome had conquered Palestine, and therefore it was a new religion, unlike Judaism.

This is why, actually, the fact that the Romans mistook Christianity for another form of Judaism was good for Christianity because Judaism was legal. Christianity would not have been if it was recognized as a new religion, and that's exactly what the Jews are trying to point out to Galileo. They're saying this is a new religion.

They're violating Roman law, but as we see, Galileo couldn't tell the difference between a Christian and a Jew, as we'll see, and when Paul was about to open his mouth, Galileo said to the Jews, If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves, for I do not want to be a judge of such matters. So, again, as usual, the Romans are not seeing a dime's worth of difference between Jews and Christians.

They all worship one God. It's the same God. They read the same scriptures.

Even the Messiah that the Christians preach is a Jew and said to be the Jewish Messiah. To a Roman mind, it's all the same. And so he just says, This looks like an intramural dispute in your own religion.

You take care of it. If it was a crime, if this man is doing crime or wicked deeds, there'd be reason for you to be in my court, but there's no reason for you to be in it here. Now,

this decision of Galileo is recognized by many Christian scholars as very fortunate because if Galileo had ruled that Christianity, in fact, is a different religion than Judaism and is a new religion, then there would be Roman precedent for all courts throughout the Roman Empire to say this is an illegal movement.

And then Paul and the church would have to go underground. But because Galileo ruled, as it refused to rule and did not declare Christianity illegal, therefore, no precedent was set. And Paul and his companions could continue to preach openly without being accused of really being breaking Roman law.

So this is a good thing. Now, it says he drove them from the judgment seat. Now, all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat, but Galileo took no notice of these things.

Now, that is a very weird verse, and it's very hard to understand what its contents are saying. The people who were upset here were the Jews, upset with Paul, and they would be disappointed that Galileo didn't rule on their side. But this action is taken by Greeks, not Jews, and what their objection was is not known.

And the guy they beat was the synagogue ruler Sosthenes. Now, later, there was a Sosthenes in the church in It may have been this guy. Maybe Crispus and Sosthenes, both rulers of the synagogue, became Christians.

We know Crispus was a ruler of the synagogue, became a Christian. Sosthenes apparently replaced him as ruler of the synagogue. But later, we read of a Sosthenes who's also saved, and maybe he was saved too, the same guy.

But at this point, he was not a Christian, apparently. It would seem. And why is he being beaten by Greeks? This is not really understood.

It's possible that the Greeks were angry at the Jews for having disturbed their courts with this trivia. And Sosthenes was a Jew, the leader of the synagogue, and maybe he kind of took the brunt of the Gentile resentment about this. But it's not clear.

But Galileo just didn't want to even pay attention to the whole thing, even the beating of Sosthenes. So, it's very unclear what verse 17 is describing. The fact that it's unclear is one of the evidences that it's true.

It's true, but it's not obvious what it means. Why would Luke put this in when it doesn't add anything to the progress of the story very well, except to show that Galileo was basically apathetic. So, verse 18, Paul still remained a good while.

Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, which is, of course, where he came from. He's on his way back at the end now of the second missionary journey. And Priscilla and Aquila were with him.

He had his hair cut off at Centuria because he had taken a vow. Now, there was a Jewish vow called the Nazarite vow, described in Numbers chapter 6, which a Jew could voluntarily take, and it did involve cutting the hair. First, it involved growing the hair and then cutting it.

The vow, we're familiar with it in the case of Samson. He was a Nazarite, but so was Samuel, and so was John the Baptist. And who knows who else? Elijah may have been a Nazarite.

He's called a hairy man. But the truth is that Samuel, Samson, and Elijah, and John the Baptist were all apparently Nazarites. In the case of Samuel and John the Baptist and Samson from birth, their parents vowed them to be Nazarites.

Actually, it was an angel who said that they had to be, but it was before they were born. So, these men were Nazarites from birth. Most Jews took a Nazarite vow as mature adults, and that for only a period of time, not for a whole lifetime.

Under the law, I think the shortest Nazarite vow could be a month, but you could go much longer. During your vow, you were separating yourself to God in a way that was indicated by three restrictions. One, you could not come near a dead body during that time, so you couldn't attend a funeral, even of your parents or whatever, if you're a Nazarite.

It would violate your vow. A second restriction was you couldn't eat anything that came from a grapevine, not only wine, but grape juice, or raisins, or grapes. Anything from the grapevine was forbidden to a Nazarite during his vow.

And the other was he could, he or she could not cut their hair. So, a Nazarite would have an uncut beard and hair, unless it was a woman, she'd have uncut hair. I say because number six mentions a man or a woman could take the vow, and Josephus tells us that, I think it was Bernice, one of the queens in Palestine, took a Nazarite vow and shaved her head.

You see, in the Nazarite vow, during your vow, you wouldn't cut your hair, but at the end of it, you would shave your head and burn the hair as an offering to God at the temple. Now, here we read that Paul shaved his head because he had a vow. Ordinarily, this would mean he was finishing up a Nazarite vow.

But you would think since he's going closer to Jerusalem, and he's gonna have to burn his hair there, why doesn't he just wait until he gets there and shave it? I don't know. It's possible, this is not documented anywhere, but it's possible that they also began the Nazarite vow by shaving the head. The hair that you would burn at the end of the vow is called the hair of your separation.

So, it's the hair that grew during the time of your separation to God. It might be,

although it's not stated, that you shaved your head first, and then all the hair that grew during your vow is the hair of your separation. Then you'd shave it at the end and offer it to God.

Some of this is unknown. When Paul shaved his head because of the vow, he's either finishing a Nazarite vow or starting one. To my mind, it would make more sense for him to start one at this point, since he's going to go to Jerusalem.

And this is a Jewish practice. It would be a sign of his being, you know, somewhat pleasing to the Jews by following this practice. We know that when he did go to Jerusalem, the final trip he made, not this trip, but the final one, that he helped some other men who had a Nazarite vow.

He took them to the temple and paid their fees for them at James's request. But at this point, he has a vow. If he is indeed finishing a vow at this point, then he had this vow while he was in Corinth.

How much of the time? Was it the whole 18 months? Maybe. It could have been any length of time. We're not told when the vow began, if this is its end.

This is the first we hear of it. But he may have been growing his hair long the whole time he was in Corinth, which is interesting because he wrote back to the Corinthians in chapter 1 Corinthians 11, 14, it's a shame for a man to have long hair. But obviously, he followed that up by saying in verse 16, if anyone's contentious, we don't have this custom, meaning we Jews and others who are not Corinthians, this is a local custom.

The Corinthians have this custom. We don't. Paul himself may not have, he may have had his hair long even while he was there because he had this vow.

In any case, it's mysterious. Why would Paul take a vow? Is he finishing a vow or starting a vow here? Nothing is told about that. We're just told that he shaved his head because of a vow he had taken or was taking.

Verse 19, and he came to Ephesus and left them there. Who did he leave there? Priscilla and Aquila he left there. They stayed there and they were still there by the end of the chapter talking to Apollos when he came to town.

But Paul moved on. He didn't stay in Ephesus. He's on his way back to Palestine.

He goes first to Syria, which is where Antioch is. Then he goes down to Jerusalem to keep a feast. And it says, he left them there, but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

And when they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, but took leave of them saying, I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem. But I will

return again to you, God willing. And he sailed from Ephesus.

So he sailed across the Aegean from Corinth or Centria, which was the port of Corinth there to Ephesus, but he didn't stay. He left Priscilla and Aquila there. He spoke one day in the synagogue and they wanted him to stay longer.

He said, no, I'm in a hurry to get back to Jerusalem before the festival. I'm thinking this might have been, I don't remember what time of year this was, this could have been before tabernacles. In any case, he hadn't been keeping the feast for several years.

He'd been some years away. So it's not like he was a real strict observant Jew who kept all these feasts, but he wanted to be there for this feast, no doubt, because there's always a good, strong international metropolitan collection of Jews in Jerusalem at the feasts. And that would be a good time to do ministry.

And he apparently felt it's close enough, I might as well try to make it. So he didn't let himself be delayed in Ephesus. And so he sailed away and left Priscilla and Aquila behind.

And when he had landed at Caesarea, which is of course the seaport in Palestine, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch. Now, what church did he go up and greet? Sounds like maybe the church in Caesarea, which is possible. But he had said he was eager to go to Jerusalem for the festival.

And we don't read of him ever doing that at this point. So that may be the church, the Jerusalem church. He went from Caesarea to Jerusalem, probably making it for the festival as he intended, and greeted the church there in Jerusalem, and then went back to Antioch, which was his home church.

After he'd spent some time there, he departed. So we have in a single verse 23, the end of the second missionary journey and the beginning of the third. He spends a little while in Antioch, but then he leaves again.

And this is a third missionary journey. After he'd spent some time in Antioch, he departed and went over all the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order to strengthen the disciples. So this is the third time he visits those churches that he founded on his first missionary journey.

He visited them on his second journey, and he now visits them on his third. But now he's going to... Remember, on the second journey, he wanted to go into Asia, but the Holy Spirit forbade him. And so he went instead over to Greece, over to Europe.

But this time now, he goes to Asia. Whether the Holy Spirit's directly leading him every step to do this, or whether it's just the time, he feels this is an unconquered territory for the And so he's going to go there, as we see. Verse 24, now a certain Jew named Apollos.

And Paul is not in this short story. But in chapter 19, verse 1, Paul comes to... Chapter 19, I should say, yeah, in verse 1, Paul comes to Ephesus. But before Paul gets to Ephesus, meanwhile, in Ephesus, while Paul was away, meanwhile, while Priscilla and Aquila were watching the farm in Ephesus, and Paul's not there, another preacher comes to town named Apollos.

It says, a certain Jew named Apollos, born in Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in 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, as Paul had done when he was there earlier.

And when Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they were Jews too, they were probably attending the synagogue, when they heard Apollos speak there, they realized he knew some things about the Lord Jesus, but he didn't know enough. He only knew the baptism of John. We'll talk about what that might mean in a moment.

They took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately, and when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote exhorting the disciples to receive him, and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, that is when he got to Corinth in Achaia, and he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. Now this apparently, what did he know and what didn't he know when he came to Ephesus? This is very mysterious, because in the next chapter, Paul shows up in Ephesus and finds 12 men there who also only know the baptism of John, probably men who were influenced by Apollos before he met Priscilla and Aquila and got straightened out. Hard to say.

What does it mean to only know the baptism of John, especially when we're told that Apollos was instructed in the ways of the Lord? He knew something about the Lord. Now he was from Alexandria, Egypt. Traditionally, the church in Alexandria was started by John Mark, but I don't know if there's a church there yet.

He apparently didn't know about Christian baptism. He knew about John the Baptist. The news of John the Baptist had spread every direction throughout the Mediterranean through the Jewish community, and we know that Paul finds people familiar with John the Baptist in Pisidian Antioch.

On his first missionary journey, he mentions John as if they know who he is. Here in Ephesus, this man is coming from Alexandria, and he knows about John and John's baptism. He must have known that John had declared that Jesus was the Christ, but he may not have heard about Pentecost.

He may not have even heard about the death and resurrection of Christ. He didn't know about Christian baptism. He knew about John's baptism, which was only for repentance,

and Paul in chapter 19 is going to explain there's a difference between John's baptism and Christian baptism.

He explains it in chapter 19. This is apparently what Priscilla and Aquila had to explain to Apollos. He knew about John.

He knew John was calling people to repentance. He probably knew that John was announcing the kingdom of God was at hand, and he may even have known that John had pointed out Jesus as the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, but he may not have known about the death and resurrection of Jesus, nor Pentecost or the founding of the church, nor the things that Christian baptism emblemizes, which is the death and resurrection of Christ. We die with him and rise with him in baptism.

It's a very different thing than just being baptized as a washing for sins. It's more like a death and resurrection, a burial and a resurrection. Anyway, whatever he knew or did not know, Priscilla and Aquila filled in the gaps for him.

They took him aside, instructed more thoroughly, and he accepted what they said. It was new to him, but he accepted it, and then he apparently gained the confidence of Priscilla and Aquila enough that when he wanted to sail off to Corinth, they, having lived in Corinth and been a vital part of the church in Corinth, they wrote letters back to their friends in Corinth saying, this guy, Apollos, he's a good preacher. Trust him, and so he sailed off to Corinth, and then in the next chapter, Paul arrives in Ephesus.

So Paul had been in Ephesus briefly, and now he comes back to Ephesus where he spends almost three years, but in the interim that Paul was gone is when Apollos came and went, and Priscilla and Aquila were kind of minding the shop. Now, just in closing, when Paul wrote to the Corinthians later from Ephesus, there was a division in the church because some liked Apollos better than they liked Paul. Paul had planted the church.

Paul had ministered in the church for 18 months, but Paul was now gone, and Apollos came with the recommendation of Priscilla and Aquila and minister in the church, and there must have been some were told he was an eloquent man, and there must have been some persuaded by his eloquence to think he was not so much that he was opposing anything Paul said, but he was more of an impressive leader. When you read 2 Corinthians, you find that there were people in Corinth who were not impressed with Paul's oratory. They said in speech and appearance, he's contemptible.

They said his letters are weighty and authoritative, but in person, he's contemptible, weak. His speech is not impressive. So, Paul could write strong letters, but he was apparently not impressive as an orator.

Apollos was. Now, there were some who decided, I'm of Apollos. I think he's my man.

Others were more loyal to Paul. He's the founder. I'm of Paul, and others apparently were saying, well, you know, if we're going to be following these teachers, Peter in Jerusalem, he's the main guy that Jesus left in charge there.

I'm going to be of him. And so, when Paul writes to the Corinthians, there's this division. Some are saying, I'm of Paul.

Some, I'm of Apollos. Some, I'm of Cephas or Peter, and some were saying, I'm of Christ, and Paul, of course, corrects them. They're all of Christ.

None of them are Paul or Apollos or Cephas. He says, Paul didn't die for you, and you weren't baptized in the name of Paul, nor certainly of Apollos or Cephas. So, we see that Apollos going to Corinth at this point was not an unmixed blessing.

He was a blessing. He did refute the Jews publicly and showed from scriptures that Jesus was the Christ, but the church in Corinth, being immature as they were, tended to want to side with their own heroes. Apollos, after all, was there, and Paul was not.

So, some liked Apollos better. Say, I like this guy better than Paul, and others began to feel, that's a little disloyal. I'm of Paul.

I'm going to stick with Paul. But, Paul said, Apollos and I are on the same team. He says, I planted the seeds.

Apollos watered the seeds, and God gave the increase. He said, I laid the foundation of the building. Apollos and others will build on that building.

And so, Paul has to address this reaction the Corinthians had to Apollos, which we don't read of the reaction in Acts, but we do read of in Paul's later writing to the Corinthians. At this point, on Paul's third missionary tour, he's not going to be planting churches so much. He's going to be visiting groups that have already been planted.

He does do some planting while he's in Ephesus. We'll find that he spends almost three years in Ephesus, and during that time, we're told that all of Asia, which is all of Turkey, modern Turkey, was evangelized. And his ministry in Ephesus begins by showing up there and not, apparently, even before he reconnects with Priscilla and Aquila, he finds some men who, it would appear they had been under the influence of Apollos.

And so, he has to, just like Priscilla and Aquila had to fill in Apollos on some missing pieces, so Paul had to do with these men. In fact, we might as well look at that story since we have some time. It's in chapter 19, verses 1 through 7. 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? And 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 whom 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 twelve in all.

Again, we're not told where these people learned what they knew and why they didn't know more. They were obviously not converted through the influence of Priscilla and Aquila, or they would have known more than about John's baptism. And obviously Priscilla and Aquila would have made it a priority to teach them because they did so when they met Apollos, and he didn't know more than John's baptism, so they didn't leave him in ignorance.

They certainly would not have left these people in ignorance. And yet these people had heard about John, and they are called disciples. Now does this mean they were disciples of John the Baptist? It could be, because there are people in the Gospels referred to as disciples of John the Baptist, John's disciples.

Or were they some kind of Christian disciples? Generally speaking, the word disciples, without any modifiers, is referring to Christians in the book of Acts. So it's not entirely clear where these people are, but they didn't know what they should know about Jesus. They may have known there was a Jesus, but they didn't know there was a Holy Spirit.

Now this saying they didn't know that there was a Holy Spirit probably doesn't mean that they didn't know that in Jewish theology there is such a thing as the Holy Spirit. They apparently didn't know that the Holy Spirit had been given yet, because Paul said, have you received the Holy Spirit? They said we didn't, hadn't heard about that. Now this may tell us something about what Apollos knew and didn't know.

It may be that, as I said, Apollos didn't know that the Holy Spirit had been given, and that's a very key thing, because being a Christian doesn't mean you simply accept doctrines about Jesus. It means that you experience Jesus through regeneration, through being born again, through the Holy Spirit of Christ coming to live inside you, so that you know him internally, not just as an external set of propositions that you believe in. Now Apollos was mighty in the word and knew the scriptures, but it would appear he didn't know about the infilling of the Holy Spirit, and these people who I believe had been baptized probably by Apollos in John's baptism didn't know either.

Now in Christian baptism, people are baptized in the name of Jesus, and then as we see in this passage, hands would be laid on them and they'd be filled with the Spirit. That

was the normal procedure. That wasn't always done.

Philip, of course, in Samaria hadn't done all of that, and apparently Apollos hadn't done that, but these people, Paul could tell when he met them they were disciples of some kind. They were following something related to the movement he was a part of in some way, but they were very ignorant about something, and he picked up apparently that they didn't seem to have the Holy Spirit. Now how would he notice that? Is it because they didn't speak in tongues and he did? I doubt if he spent a lot of time speaking in tongues in front of people.

He says in 1 Corinthians 14 that he speaks in tongues more than them all, but in the public meeting he doesn't. Paul's speaking in tongues must have been more or less private, and he wouldn't be expecting these people to be speaking in tongues in his presence necessarily. I doubt if that was the sign.

I have a feeling he could just sense that these people were kind of on the right track, but they were missing something essential in their experience with God. They didn't seem to have the fruit of the Spirit. They didn't seem to be spiritual.

They may have been simply legalistic and religious in their beliefs. In any case, whatever he saw in them, he said he was prompted to ask, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Which in Paul's mind was something that that'd be strange if you didn't, because that's the normal thing to happen. Didn't it happen to you? And they said, no, we have never heard of such a thing.

And so he instructs them, because they said they knew John's baptism. He said, John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, verse 4. Okay, so the baptism of John is just signifying you're repenting. It's not signifying that you're being born again into a new life.

It's not seen as a burial and a resurrection into Christ's life. So John's baptism didn't have the same meaning as Christian baptism. And they had repented and been baptized.

They'd obeyed what they knew. They'd followed the life they had, but there was more that they didn't know. He said, and John said that people should believe on him who would come after him, that is on Christ Jesus.

Now, how much they knew about Jesus, we don't know. But Paul seems to introduce Jesus as an unknown quantity at this point, like they didn't know. Though it's, again, they are called disciples.

And they may have been very much like the disciples were before the Pentecost. When Peter, James, and John and the disciples walked around with Jesus, they had been baptized by John's baptism. They were obedient to Jesus.

They believed in Jesus, but they had not received his spirit. His death and resurrection was still unknown to them. The spirit being given was not experienced by them.

These people might have been people who knew about Jesus somewhat. And when Paul says, John said that people should believe in this Jesus, perhaps it was news to them that John wished for them not to be thinking about him, but about Jesus instead of him. I don't know.

There's much that is not explained in this passage, and commentators don't really know either. Obviously, in every time there are people on the periphery of the Christian community who have this or that defect in their belief or knowledge. And these people had some kind of defect.

And Paul said he straightened them out. And when they heard that, they got baptized in water in the name of Jesus. Now, I haven't commented on this up to this point, but I probably should have, because we've seen many people baptized.

And from the very beginning, in Acts 2.38, when the people said, what must we do? Peter said, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ. And you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. He said, for the remission of sins, for you received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Later, we see that Philip's converts, who had not received the Holy Spirit, says the Holy Spirit had not fallen on any of them, but they'd only been baptized in the name of Jesus. And now we see these people, when they're re-baptized, specifically says they're baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Now, baptism in the Bible is in the name of Jesus.

Now, on the other hand, when Jesus commanded baptism in Matthew 28, 20, or 19, he said, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. So, most Christians have been baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. I was.

I think that's the most normal practice. But everywhere in the book of Acts, we never read of anyone being baptized in that formula. They're always baptized in the name of Jesus.

Therefore, there are some people who believe that it's wrong to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But the apostolic practice is to be baptized in the name of Jesus only. And we sometimes call them Jesus only.

These would be the United Pentecostals. They believe that you should only baptize in the name of Jesus. And if you're baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you're not baptized properly.

You have to be baptized again in the name of Jesus. This, however, I think is mistaking

the way the data should be understood. It is true that Jesus said to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The name is singular. He didn't say in the names of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He said the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I believe that is the name of Jesus. In Colossians 2.9, speaking of Jesus, Paul said, in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. The name of Jesus encompasses the entire Godhead bodily incarnated in Christ.

And I think the apostles understood that. I think they were obeying Jesus. They weren't baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which was the name of Jesus.

What that would mean is it doesn't matter which term is used. It's the same person. The important thing is not the formula, but the person into whom you're being baptized.

You're being incorporated into Christ. I would think that any synonym for Christ would be okay, and that it's not wrong. Because sometimes the expression in the book of Acts is be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

In this case, in the name of the Lord Jesus. Well, that's a slightly different formula. Jesus Christ is not the same words as the Lord Jesus, but it's the same person.

It's not important, the formula, as much as the person. And if the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is another reference to the name of Christ, then it doesn't matter which formula is used. It's the same baptism.

And anyway, I bring that up. And then it says that Paul then laid his hands on them. And when that happened, the Spirit came upon them, obviously, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

So it would appear that the normal practice of leading people to Christ was this. You tell them the gospel. When they agree that they want to participate in Christ, you baptize them in water, and then they lay hands on them, and they be filled with the Spirit.

Some of these elements were not practiced, for example, by Philip. But the fact that Paul did this, it doesn't suggest he's doing something new and innovative. He's just bringing these people into the same fold as all the other Christians are through the same initiation.

And it was strange to him that they had not received the Holy Spirit when they were baptized, when they believed. And so it would appear that normally this was done. You baptize them in water, then lay hands on them, to be filled with the Spirit.

It can't be proven that this was always done, because the book of Acts doesn't record every case. But that Paul did so in this case, to bring these people from a subnormal

Christian experience into a normal one, suggests that he was doing the normal thing that was usually done. Now one other point, and then we'll be done.

There was a great controversy in the church in the 16th century in the Reformation between the Reformers on the one hand, and what people called the Anabaptists on the other. The Anabaptists, as they searched the Scriptures, could find no evidence for infant baptism. And yet everybody in Europe over the previous thousand years had been baptized as infants.

The Roman Catholic Church baptized infants, and since it dominated Europe for a thousand years, everyone in Europe was a member of the Catholic Church and was baptized as an infant. The Protestant Reformers were also baptized as infants, and continued to baptize infants into their Reformed movements. One of those Reformers was Zwingli, who had a group of students in Geneva, not Geneva, in Zurich, Switzerland, and he was teaching Greek to them, and they were reading the Greek New Testament, and they read the Greek and said, we don't see anything here about baptizing infants.

Everyone in the Bible got baptized after they believed, and this caused a movement called Anabaptists, their critics call it, which means re-baptized. Everyone had been baptized as a baby, but some of these people got re-baptized as believers. This was so controversial at the time that the Reformers and Roman Catholics together put these people to death.

The Reformers would drown them. The Catholics would burn them at the stake, and this group, for no other reason than that they felt that they should get baptized again, since they didn't believe that their infant baptism had been a legitimate biblical baptism. It seems like a non-controversial thing to do, but it was very controversial, and it was considered to be heretical.

Well, of course, a lot of evangelicals don't baptize infants today, though some still do. It's still controversial, but from time to time, somebody who is baptized as an infant and then later becomes a believer, they feel like they want to be baptized, and they wonder, should they be baptized again? And I think many would just say, well, I got baptized as an infant, we'll just let that count as my baptism, although I wasn't a believer then, I am now, but I got baptized then, so it's done, one and done. And, you know, this story seems to indicate that when these people realized that their original baptism was not authentic Christian baptism, they did get re-baptized.

They didn't just say, well, now that we're believers, we'll just count that our earlier baptism was our Christian baptism, but they got baptized again. Now, I'm not here to say, to settle things about infant baptism and re-baptism, but I'm saying that if a person has concluded that their baptism as an infant, since they were not a believer at the time, was not a normative Christian baptism, then being re-baptized as a believer does have a scriptural precedent. And so the fact that the Anabaptists got re-baptized was following

this precedent, and yet they got themselves martyred for it, to a large degree.

Although many groups that are not the original Anabaptist groups do baptize only believers now, there are still some of the original Anabaptists. They are the Amish and the Mennonites and the Hutterites. Those are the three groups that are the modern successors of the Anabaptists, but of course Baptists and many other groups now also follow that practice.

But Paul did re-baptize them when they got saved, and that might be considered instructive to those who have questions in their minds about that kind of a decision. Anyway, we'll stop here and we'll continue Paul's ministry in Ephesus next time.