

Acts 19:1-7 The “Almost” Christians

- I. Paul Finds Some “Disciples” in Ephesus (1)
 - A. At the Time Apollos was in Corinth
 - 1. After being instructed by Pricilla and Aquila, Apollos went to Achaia (where Corinth was located)
 - 2. As Apollos ministered in Corinth for some time (he is mentioned in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians (1 Co. 1:12; 3:4)
 - B. Paul meets some disciples in Ephesus
 - 1. Paul (on his third missionary journey returned to Ephesus
 - 2. Paul had previously told the Ephesians he would return if it was God’s will (See Acts 18:21)
 - 3. We will soon see that these “disciples” are followers of John the Baptist
- II. These “Disciples” Were Not Born Again (2-5)
 - A. They Had Not Yet Received The Holy Spirit (2)
 - 1. Paul Questions Them about the Holy Spirit
 - 2. Paul evidently saw or heard something deficient in their testimony
 - 3. Paul asks if they received the Holy Spirit when they believed
 - a. The text literally says, “The Holy Spirit did you receive, having believed?”
 - i. He is asking if they received the Spirit when they believed
 - ii. He is not asking if they received the Spirit “since” or “after” they believed.
 - iii. For Paul, this is the test of whether they have trusted in Christ – The question itself shows that Paul sees something deficient in them as if they should have received the Spirit
 - b. Some use this as a proof text to show that the reception of the Spirit comes after salvation
 - i. We will see that Paul will actually explain the gospel to them
 - ii. They will be baptized into Jesus – signifying their faith in Christ
 - iii. The coming of the Holy Spirit upon them is not a second work, it is their salvation
 - 4. They Did Not Know The Holy Spirit Had Come
 - a. They answer Paul by saying they are ignorant of the Holy Spirit
 - i. This doesn’t necessarily mean they had never heard of the Holy Spirit
 - ii. The Holy Spirit is clearly spoken about and His coming is prophesied in the Old Testament

- iii. As disciples of John's teaching, they would have known that John looked forward to the Messiah who would baptize believers in the Holy Spirit and with fire.
 - b. They are most likely saying they have not heard of the Holy Spirit's coming
 - B. They Had Not Been Baptized Into Christ (3)
 - 1. Paul's first question after they say they are ignorant of the Holy Spirit is "Into what were you baptized?"
 - a. Paul's question assumes that if they had been baptized into Christ they would have received the Spirit
 - b. Paul is not equating baptism and salvation, but their baptism is the outward expression of their faith
 - c. Paul cannot comprehend someone trusting Christ, being baptized into his name (his authority) and not receiving the Holy Spirit.
 - 2. They Had Been Baptized into John's Baptism
 - a. They only knew the Baptism of Repentance that pointed forward to a coming Messiah
 - b. In essence, They were OT believers living in a NT age. They had faith but it was not faith in Jesus Christ.
 - c. The Christ had come and the Holy Spirit had been poured out in fulfillment of the prophecies, but they had not yet been informed – They had been converted to John but not yet to Christ
 - d. NOTE: I think this is different from Apollos who we saw in the last chapter. Apollos was said to have been instructed in the way of the Lord.
 - C. Paul Preached The Gospel To Them (4)
 - 1. Paul explains John's Baptism
 - a. John baptized the repentant in anticipation for the Messiah
 - b. John's baptism was the fulfillment of the coming of the Messiah's forerunner (Spirit of Elijah)
 - 2. Paul explains the Reality of Jesus as Messiah
 - a. He explains that John's message has been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth
 - b. No doubt, Paul told them of the death, burial, resurrection, and the fulfillment of Pentecost
- III. The "Disciples" Come To Faith in Christ (5-7)
 - A. They were Saved and Baptized in Jesus' Name (5)
 - 1. The text says, "When they heard this" – they responded to the message that Paul gave them concerning Jesus
 - 2. They submitted to be baptized into Jesus' name
 - a. This doesn't just mean they were re-baptized

- b. This shows they had come to faith in Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of John's prophecy
- B. They were Filled With the Holy Spirit (6)
 - 1. Paul lays his hands on these disciples and the Spirit came upon them
 - 2. As the Spirit Indwells them, they Prophecy and Speak in Tongues
 - a. This same phrase is used exactly of the believers at Pentecost in Acts 2
 - b. "The Holy Spirit came on them and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying" (Acts 2:4; Acts 19:6)
 - 3. Question: Is it a normal event for those being saved to prophecy and speak in other languages?
 - a. Answer: No. There is no mention of this at Paul's conversion, Lydia's conversion, the Philippian Jailer's conversion, or the Ethiopian Eunuch's conversion
 - b. No mention of tongues or prophesying is mentioned in the conversion of the 3000 on the day of Pentecost, or the 5000 converted in Acts 4:4
 - 4. Question: Why did their conversion manifest in these signs?
 - a. In Acts 1, Jesus tells the disciples they will be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the Earth.
 - b. Every time salvation moves to a new people group in fulfillment of Jesus' words, the Holy Spirit comes upon the believers in this significant way – and it is always under the direct supervision of an Apostle.
 - i. Acts 2 – Pentecost – The first indwelling of the Spirit among the Jews – accompanied by tongues and prophecy
 - ii. Acts 8 – The Samaritans (half Jew half Gentile) are also included in the gospel – The Holy Spirit tarries until Peter and John come lay hands upon them (we are not told specifically but their conversion was probably accompanied by these signs as well.)
 - iii. Acts 10 – Cornelius, a Gentile who worshiped the God of Israel and lived in Judea, is converted and the sign of tongues and prophecy appear as the Holy Spirit indwells them
 - iv. Acts 19 – These Gentiles who live in Gentile lands are converted and experience the sign of tongues and prophecy.
 - c. So notice what we have here in these four instances. We have the gospel moving to new people groups. First to Jerusalem, Samaria, Judea, and the ends of the earth.

- d. Each time the gospel moves to include a new people group, the Holy Spirit produces these signs and it is always under the supervision of an Apostle.

IV. Excursus – What is the Gift of Tongues?

- A. Many disagree on this issue and it is not something believer should divide over
- B. A solidly biblical case can be made that “tongues” were actually unlearned languages.
- C. If you would like more information on the case for tongues being actual languages see www.jasonvelotta.com/speaking-in-tongues/

