

Acts 18:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

Analysis

Apollos: Eloquence and Scripture Knowledge

This verse introduces one of the early church's most influential figures: Apollos. Luke identifies him with four key descriptors. First, he was "a certain Jew" (Ioudaios tis)—establishing his Jewish heritage and covenant background. Second, he was "born at Alexandria"—the great center of learning in Egypt, home to the famous library and a large Jewish community. Alexandrian Jews, influenced by scholars like Philo, were known for sophisticated biblical interpretation.

Third, Luke calls him "an eloquent man" (anēr logios). The Greek logios (λόγιος) means "learned, cultured, eloquent"—someone skilled in rhetoric and persuasive speech. This wasn't mere oratory skill but cultured intelligence combined with effective communication. Fourth, and most importantly, he was "mighty in the scriptures" (dynatos ὃν en tais graphais)—powerful, capable, skilled in the Old Testament writings. His scriptural knowledge formed the foundation for his eloquence.

The combination of learning, eloquence, and scriptural knowledge made Apollos uniquely equipped for ministry—yet Acts 18:25-26 reveals he needed further instruction from Priscilla and Aquila. This demonstrates that even considerable gifts and knowledge require refinement through the church's teaching. Apollos models teachability: despite his impressive credentials, he humbly received correction and became even more effective in ministry.

Historical Context

Alexandria's Influence on Early Christianity

Alexandria, Egypt's Mediterranean port city founded by Alexander the Great (331 BC), was the ancient world's second-largest city (after Rome) and its premier intellectual center. Its famous library housed hundreds of thousands of scrolls. The Jewish community there numbered in the hundreds of thousands, producing the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) around 250 BC. Alexandrian Jewish scholars like Philo developed sophisticated methods of biblical interpretation, blending Hebrew thought with Greek philosophy.

Apollos arrived in Ephesus around AD 52-54, during Paul's third missionary journey. Ephesus, capital of the Roman province of Asia, was a strategic city with a famous temple to Artemis. The Christian community there was still developing, having been established by Paul during his second journey (Acts 18:19-21). Apollos's arrival brought Alexandrian learning and biblical expertise to this growing church.

His subsequent ministry in Corinth (Acts 18:27-28) was so effective that some Corinthians formed an "Apollos party" (1 Corinthians 1:12), though Paul clarifies that both he and Apollos were merely servants working together (1 Corinthians 3:5-9). Apollos represents how God uses diverse backgrounds—Alexandrian scholarship, Jewish heritage, rhetorical skill—in building His church.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How did Apollos's Alexandrian background and education prepare him for effective ministry, and what limitations did it have?
2. What does Apollos's willingness to receive correction from Priscilla and Aquila teach about humility despite having significant gifts and knowledge?
3. In what ways can eloquence and learning serve the gospel, and when might they become obstacles if not properly grounded?
4. How does the account of Apollos demonstrate the importance of accurate biblical knowledge beyond mere rhetorical ability?
5. What role does cultural and educational background play in equipping believers for ministry while still requiring spiritual formation?

Interlinear Text

Ἰουδαῖος δέ τις Ἀπολλῶς ὄνόματι Ἀλεξανδρεὺς τῷ
Jew And a certain Apollos named at Alexandria G3588
G2453 G1161 G5100 G625 G3686 G221

γένει ἀνὴρ λόγιος κατήντησεν εἰς Ἔφεσον δυνατὸς
born man an eloquent came to Ephesus G1415
G1085 G435 G3052 G2658 G1519 G2181

Ὥν ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς
and mighty in the scriptures
G5607 G1722 G3588 G1124

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 16:12 (Parallel theme): As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

1 Corinthians 4:6 (Parallel theme): And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

Titus 3:13 (Word): Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.

1 Corinthians 1:12 (Parallel theme): Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

Acts 6:9 (Parallel theme): Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

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