

Acts 18:24-28 NIV

“Why we don’t know everything”

“Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John.

“²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. ²⁷ When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him.

“When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. ²⁸ For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.”

People prize knowledge.

Pierius Mountains in Thessaly region of Greece



In his *Essay on Criticism*, Alexander Pope wrote:

“A little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep or taste not the Pierian spring . . .”

According to legend, Mt. Pierius in Thessaly, northern Greece, was said to have bubbly springs that gave knowledge to those who drank from them.

Alexander Pope evidently based his saying on that old Greek legend.

Some achieve success with their knowledge and feel quite at ease at a certain plateau.

**We easily get to a place where we think:
“I know all I need to know.”**

Corinth in Achaia

Approx. location of Mt. Pierius

Ephesus
Phrygia was a region to the west of Galatia (area in light color below).

Antioch of Syria.
Jerusalem

Alexandria had largest library in the 1st century world.
Adapted from a map in one of Bob’s old Bibles.

We feel comfortable in our present knowledge.

Today's text brings that assumption into question.

Before we deal with this supposition, let's trace some developments covered in Acts chapter 18.

After he spent a year and a half in Corinth, Paul, accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla, went by ship from Corinth to Ephesus.

For a brief time, Paul reasoned with the Jews in the Ephesus synagogue.

He left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus and boarded a ship bound for Caesarea on the coast of Israel.

From Caesarea, Paul went up to Jerusalem to visit God's people there.

From Jerusalem, Paul traveled north to his "sponsoring church" in Antioch of Syria.

From Antioch, Paul left by land on his third missionary journey through the region recently shaken by violent earthquakes (S.E. Turkey and N.W. Syria).

Paul wanted to visit churches established in his earlier missions



Ruins of ancient Ephesus;
Library of Celsus (left);
main broad way on right.

to Galatia and Phrygia.

On the map provided, you can trace Paul's journey as described Acts 18: 18-23.

As scholar F.F Bruce noted in his *Acts* commentary, just a few verses cover Paul traveling over 1,500 miles.

In the meantime, Apollos arrived in Ephesus.

"He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue."

Apollos received a superb education for his time.

We don't know how he felt about his knowledge.

Apollos understood the *Old Testament* and he knew the teachings of John the Baptist.

The Holy Spirit selected John the Baptist to be Jesus' advance man.

As the new Elijah, John began preaching exactly as the Prophet Isaiah predicted:¹

¹ See Isaiah 40:3-5

“One more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”²

As people confessed their sins and decided to change their lives for God, John immersed them in the Jordan River for the forgiveness of their sins.

The Lord had John immerse Jesus in the Jordan River to “fulfill all righteousness.”
Jesus preached the same message John did.

- God’s Kingdom is at hand.
- Quit doing wrong.
- Live to please God; His Judgment nears.

John had faithfully fulfilled his assignment.

Apollos fervently believed that John correctly taught about Jesus.

Why should there be a problem with Apollos teaching the truth about John?

Ruins of ancient Ephesus
Entrance to the Agora



Apollos preached powerfully and convinced many in Ephesus, one of the greatest cities of the time.

“He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.”

Note that Priscilla and Aquila recognized Apollos’s deficiency, but they didn’t publicly correct him.

They invited him over for “dinner” and privately explained to Apollos, “the way of God more adequately.”

As some might do, they didn’t publicly rebuke Apollos accusing him of being a false teacher.

Priscilla and Aquila followed Jesus’ Matthew 18 principle; first try to privately resolve matters with others (see Matthew 18:15-20).

² Luke 3:16 NIV

If he taught about Jesus as John the Baptist had, what did Apollos lack?

Apollos believed that Jesus fulfilled the plan God announced through the prophets.

When King Herod imprisoned John for criticizing the king's morals, John began to doubt Jesus' mission.

John sent some of his disciples to ask Jesus if he were the Messiah.

"Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor."³

Why did Jesus give this reply to John?

John the Baptist knew about Jesus' miracles.

John would realize that Jesus was fulfilling Old Testament prophecies stating that certain miracles will signify God's presence on earth.

Here's what Isaiah predicted 700 years prior:



Isaiah 35:2c-10 NIV (see also Isaiah 29:18)

"They will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God . . . say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come . . . Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. . . Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away."

Jesus performed these very miracles.

Apollos likely went to synagogues and read aloud the Isaiah scrolls and those of other prophets. Then he probably told of Jesus' healings:

the blind saw;

the deaf heard;

mute folks shouted with joy!

Apollos convinced many people that Jesus fulfilled these prophecies and that they should repent and give their lives to God.

³ Matthew 11: 4, 5 NIV

Both John the Baptist and Jesus preached these truths.

What was inadequate about Apollos's message?

John the Baptist knew that Jesus the Messiah brought God's presence to earth.

Jesus' miracles proved his identity as Messiah.

John the Baptist recognized that Jesus lived an exemplary, Spirit-filled, sin-free life.

What John never saw, and what Apollos never knew until he met Aquila and Priscilla was what happened after John died.

On the cross, Jesus paid the cost of all sin.

After being in a tomb three days, Jesus came back from death and is now at God's right hand. Jesus will return to earth to judge you, me and all people by the life-standard he set.

All will be raised to face Judgment.



Isaiah scroll written about 100 BC; now in Shrine of the Book Museum, Jerusalem

You probably know what church leaders say about Jesus and their rules for living right.

How familiar are you with what Scripture says about Jesus--what he taught and did?

The powerful teacher Apollos thought he knew enough. He wasn't there, was he?

He didn't know enough to teach about Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and the Judgment.

Peter urged: "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen." 2 Peter 3:18 NIV

When we follow Jesus, we don't set out to "make the world a better place" as many teach.

That's like trying to rehab a garbage dump.

We look: "forward to a new heaven and new earth, the home of righteousness." 2 Peter 3:13NIV

Sin and death don't exist there.

In the meantime, Christ says: "repent, learn about me, love and serve others, and praise God."

No matter your age or circumstances, keep growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

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