

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM APOLLOS

The Bible is not just a Book of Teachings, it also contains the stories of people, and their reactions to those teachings. As the old saying goes “A picture is worth a thousand words.” This is very true. And a life is one of the best kinds of “pictures” we can have.

One of the most interesting characters in the New Testament is a man named Apollos. He is first introduced in Acts 18:24: “Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures.” Notice what we see here:

1) He was a Jew who was born in Alexandria. Alexandria was in Egypt, and it was one of the greatest centers of learning of its day. There was a vast library there, and it contained, among other treasures, the Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Old Testament. There was an amazing amount of other material in the library at Alexandria, much of which has been discovered in recent years. There were also great teachers at Alexandria, and Apollos had apparently sat at their feet and been trained.

2) He was an “eloquent” man. This means that he had an ability to speak and to teach others what he had learned. Not everyone has this gift, but Apollos did. It also seems that he had been impressed with the importance of sharing his knowledge with others. That may have been one of the main reasons he was at Ephesus.

3) He was “mighty in the Scriptures.” Not only was Apollos eloquent, he had learning in the Scriptures behind that eloquence. He knew what he was talking about—he had “put in the time” to learn God’s Word, and he was willing to teach others what he knew.

We see that there was a void in Apollos’ education, though, for Acts 18:25 says: “This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John...” So, here is a well-educated Jew who is teaching in the synagogues, but he’s not teaching Judaism, he’s teaching Christianity! He understood what many Jews of his day did not—that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Law of Moses; that He was truly the Messiah! So, he is “teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus,” but there was a problem, he was acquainted only with the baptism of John. His information about Jesus was a bit outdated. Apollos knew a lot, and he was not afraid to teach what he knew. The problem was that he didn’t know everything he needed to know.

Next we see Aquila and Priscilla entering the picture. They have been introduced earlier in Acts 18. Paul first met them at Corinth, and has now brought them to Ephesus. They realize that there is a gap in Apollos’ understanding, so they take him aside and “explain to him the way of God more accurately” (Vs. 26). What we need to see about Apollos though, is that he was not too proud to accept teaching from someone else. He realized that there was more he needed to know, and was willing to be the student, as well as the teacher.

Apollos is a powerful example to all of us. Are we willing to imitate him?

Ken Dawdy, Dahlia St. church of Christ, Denver, CO