

Come to Understanding

**They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24**

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Fables and Endless Genealogies

Paul asked Timothy to remain in Ephesus and warn other teachers against teaching any other doctrine than that which he had taught:

- 2 To Timothy, *my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Yahshua the Messiah our Lord.*
- 3 As I sought you to remain still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that you might charge some that they teach no other doctrine, -1 Timothy 1

Furthermore, Paul warned Timothy that he must not “give heed to fables and endless genealogies.” Rather than causing a godly increase in faith, such teachings only bring about more questions:

- 4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: *so do.* -1 Timothy 1

A fable is “a short fictitious narrative intended to convey some moral; an idle story or falsehood” and a genealogy is “a family pedigree; lineage” (see Noah Webster and Harry T. Peck, *New Websterian 1912 Dictionary: Based Upon the Unabridged Dictionary of Noah Webster*, New York: Syndicate Publishing Company, 1912, pp. 315, 367). What “fables and endless genealogies” were they teaching in Ephesus that caused Paul to give such a warning to Timothy?

When Paul had previously visited Ephesus, he found that the people had become very confused about their faith. Well-meaning and learned people, who did not yet understand the fullness of the gospel, were zealously teaching an incomplete gospel. Among these was an eloquent Egyptian Jew named Apollos:

- 24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, *and* mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. -Acts 18

He was born in Alexandria, Egypt, which was the well-known center of scholarly study. This is where the great library was located for which the Hebrew Scriptures were first translated into Greek during the reign of King Ptolemy Philadelphus (also known as Ptolemy II) in the third century B. C. (see Charles Rollin, *The Ancient History of the Egyptians, Carthaginians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Grecians and*

Macedonians, Vol. 6, R. Lynam, Trans., Philadelphia: Brown & Peters, 1829, pp. 42-44). With his credentials of being a Jew, being born in Alexandria, and being “mighty in the scriptures,” there are few that would dispute the credibility of his teaching.

If anyone had any doubts about Apollos’ teaching, they were likely put aside when it was learned that he was “instructed in the way of the Lord” and was also “fervent in the spirit.” His only limitation seemed to be that he knew “only the baptism of John”:

- 25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. -Acts 18

Fortunately, a husband and wife team, Aquila and Priscilla, took Apollos aside and taught him more clearly concerning the fullness of the gospel:

- 26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them*, and expounded to him the way of God more perfectly. -Acts 18

Unfortunately, as Paul learned, much damage had already been done among the Christians of Ephesus. As a result of teachings, such as those of Apollos, they did not know anything about the Holy Ghost, which is received through the name of Yahshua;

- 2 He said to them, Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? And they said to him, We have not so much as heard whether there is any Holy Ghost.
- 3 And he said to them, Unto what then were you baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism.
- 4 Then said Paul, John truly baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on the Messiah Yahshua.
- 5 When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Yahshua.
- 6 And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spoke with tongues, and prophesied. -Acts 19

Even though Apollos seemed to have excellent credentials for teaching, he was ignorant of the power of the Spirit of God. Consequently those whom he taught knew only what they had received from him.

**So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading. — Nehemiah 8:8**

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There was much religious confusion in Ephesus. False teachers abounded, having very limited knowledge of the power of the name of Yahshua and the Holy Ghost. For example, “vagabond Jews” that had apparently learned from Paul about the power of the name of Yahshua tried to use His name to cast out evil spirits:

- 13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Yahshua, saying, We adjure you by Yahshua whom Paul preaches.
- 14 And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. -Acts 19

However, without having the power of the Holy Ghost, the evil spirit only scoffed at them and overcame them, knowing that they had no authority over him:

- 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Yahshua I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?
- 16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. -Acts 19

The Jews who did not truly believe in the name of Yahshua failed to understand the meaning of His name, as Yahweh the Savior. Even Apollos, who was apparently a well-meaning and well educated Jew, bore a name that suggested that his family did not believe in the importance of the name of Yahweh, which means He is the only God that exists. He was not named after Yahweh, as were so many great prophets of Judah before him, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah (the -iah at the end of these names means Yah, which is the short form of Yahweh).

Instead, Apollos was named after Apollo, which was the god worshipped by both the Greeks and the Romans. As the “god of inspiration and prophecy, he [Apollo] gave oracles at Didyma, Patara, Claros, and other places. His temple at *Delphi*, and the oracle connected with it, was the most celebrated...” (see Johann J. Eschenburg and Nathan W. Fiske, *Manual of Classical Literature*, 3rd Ed., Philadelphia: Frederick W. Greenough, 1839, p. 418).

The oracles of Apollo, which were prophetic utterances that were supposedly received from the god, were delivered through a priestess known as Pythia. Apollo was also called Pythius, from Python, the serpent

god whom he reportedly overcame. (see John Potter, *Archaeologica Graeca: or, The Antiquities of Greece*, vol. 1, 6th ed., London: Knaplock, et al, 1740, p. 272). The goddess Artemis, who was known as Diana to the Romans, was said to be the sister of Apollo and her worship was often associated with his worship (see Edward T. Cook, ed., *A Popular Handbook to the Greek and Roman Antiquities in the British Museum*, London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd, 1903, p. 57).

Artemis (Diana) was not only called the sister of Apollo, but she was said to be his older twin. Consequently, many of the myths of Apollo were transferred to her. Women were particularly attracted to worshipping Artemis (Diana). Young girls were brought to the goddess for worship and, once they were married, the brides believed themselves to be under her special protection. In particular, she was known as the patron of women and their protector in childbirth. (see Arthur Fairbanks, *The Mythology of Greece and Rome: Presented with Special Reference to Its Influence on Literature*, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1907, pp. 134-140).

Ephesus was central to the worship of the goddess Artemis (Diana), which was particularly important among women. It was warlike women, called Amazons, that reportedly not only founded and dominated Ephesus, but that also established the ancient temple of Artemis (Diana). (see George Grote, *History of Greece*, Vol. 1, 2nd Ed., New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1853, pp. 212-213). The worship of this goddess was not only dominant in Ephesus, but it had spread not only throughout Asia, but also the world. It is no marvel that Paul caused a great stir in Ephesus when he taught that there is no god that is made with hands. The silversmith, Demetrius, enflamed the Ephesians over the loss of idol-making business:

- 26 Moreover you see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are no gods, which are made with hands:
- 27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nothing; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana *Artemis* should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worships.
- 28 And when they heard *these sayings*, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana *Artemis* of the Ephesians. -Acts 19

Religious chaos was breaking out in Ephesus. The people had become enraged and riotous at the thought of Diana’s demise. Even learned Jews, such as Apollos and others, had been teaching the gospel in error. Knowing that the Ephesian women had very strong spiritual attractions to the goddess because of “fables and endless genealogies,” should Paul now tell Timothy to permit them to also become teachers of the gospel? Paul concluded that, instead of usurping (seizing) the authority to teach, they should learn in silence:

- 11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.
- 12 But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. -1 Timothy 2

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