

Who was Apollos?

Apollos was an evangelist, apologist, church leader, and friend of the apostle Paul. Apollos was a Jew from Alexandria, Egypt, described as “eloquent,” “mighty in the Scriptures,” “fervent in the spirit” and “instructed in the way of the Lord” (Acts 18:24). In A.D. 54, he traveled to Ephesus, where he taught boldly in the synagogue. However, at that time, Apollos’ understanding of the gospel was incomplete, since he was “acquainted only with the baptism of John” (Acts 18:25). This probably means that Apollos preached repentance and faith in the Messiah—he maybe even believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah—but he did not know the full magnitude of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Aquila and Priscilla, friends of Paul, spent some time with Apollos and filled in the gaps in his understanding of Jesus Christ (Acts 18:26). Apollos, now armed with the complete message, immediately began a preaching ministry and was used of God as an effective apologist for the gospel (Acts 18:28).

Apollos traveled through Achaia and eventually found his way to Corinth (Acts 19:1), where he “watered” where Paul had “sown” (1 Corinthians 3:6). This is important to remember when studying the first Epistle to Corinth. Apollos, with his natural gifts, had attracted a following among the church in Corinth, but simple admiration was growing into divisiveness. Against Apollos’ wishes, there was a faction in Corinth that claimed him as their spiritual mentor, to the exclusion of Paul and Peter. Paul deals with this partisanship in 1 Corinthians 1:12-13. Christ is not divided, and neither should we be. We cannot love personality over truth.

The last mention of Apollos in the Bible comes in Paul’s letter to Titus: “Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need” (Titus 3:13). Obviously, Apollos was on his way through Crete

(where Titus was) at this time. And, just as obviously, Paul still considered Apollos to be a valuable co-laborer and friend.

Some believe that Apollos eventually returned to Ephesus to serve the church there. It's very possible that he did, although there's no biblical confirmation of this detail. Also, some identify Apollos as the unknown author of the book of Hebrews; again, there is no biblical support for such an identification. The author of Hebrews remains unknown.

In summary, Apollos was a man of letters with a zeal for the Lord and a talent for preaching. He labored in the Lord's work, aiding the ministry of the apostles and faithfully building up the church. His life should encourage each of us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord" (2 Peter 3:18) and to use our God-given gifts to promote truth.