

Get The Story Straight

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 May 1994

Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] Well, I got to Saskatchewan last week and walked the stubble fields of Saskatchewan and watched the tulips beginning to come up. But it was 20 above, so I mean, the temperature was 20, so it was pretty warm there.

But it's a wonderful province, and I really enjoyed Saskatchewan. I was at a little town where there's three grain elevators.

I guess that's how you measure towns in Saskatchewan, by how many grain elevators there are. But there are three grain elevators and eight churches.

Very interesting. I visited a friend of mine who runs four parishes. One's in Colt, Foam Lake. One's at Quill Lake. One's at Winyard, which is an Icelandic community.

And one's at Wadena. And, you know, they all have fiercely loyal congregations that keep them going. Very often, everybody at church is related to everybody else at church.

[1 : 16] And anybody who comes to church and isn't related is in trouble. Nothing direct, of course. It's just that we built this church and we paid for it.

And if you think you're going to come here... Little problems like that. But, I mean, it's a kind of wonderful little pot in which to try and work out what the gospel is about in a community like that. Here in the city, we're all anonymous. Nobody knows anybody. And everybody gets along with everybody because they don't know anybody else. And they don't have to deal with things like that. You know, that... Did I ever tell you how my friend John became an Anglican? He came from a small town in Manitoba.

This is a genuine story of conversion to the Anglican church. It was such a good story. I thought I should tell you about it. His father was the town doctor.

[2 : 26] And they lived across the road from the United Church. And the United Church had a steeple. And the doctor, being a good-spirited man, decided that he would contribute some money to rebuild the tower on the church across the road.

And he gave them the money, but he didn't see any action on the tower for a long time. And that was a kind of festering sore.

And then one day, one of his, that is the doctor's chickens, got away and got into the yard of the United Church minister across the road.

The United Church minister got that chicken and picked it up and carried it back across the road up to the doctor's fence and plopped it down and broke its leg.

The next morning, they went to the United Church... the Anglican church, and they've never been back. So, sometimes...

[3 : 34] sometimes... There's not a lot of lessons you can draw from that.

But it's interesting, I thought. Well, anyway. I want to talk about this...

What I want... I want to talk about two things here. There's one word here which says accurate, which I...

in this translation... And then there is a little later on... There is more accurate. Do you see that in the text in front of you?

There it is in... In verse... 25. It talks about Apollos.

[4 : 31] And it says that... He... with great fervor taught about Jesus accurately... accurately... though he knew only the baptism of John.

And when he had finished doing that... subsequently, in verse 26... it says that Priscilla and Aquila took him home... and taught him more accurately.

So, you move from one to the other. And it's interesting because you get... Well, it's interesting because you...

I mean... could you in your life... move from a place where... your thinking is accurate... but it could be more accurate. And how does that happen?

How do you get from a place of being... generally accurate... to being specifically... more accurate in your understanding? Well, anyway... the man about whom they're talking...

[5 : 31] is Apollos... who isn't a... a spacecraft... or anything like that? But that's a strange name.

It sounds... fairly Greek, doesn't it? I mean... wasn't Apollos one of the Greek gods... or something like that? Anybody... What? Well, I know... but I...

Apollo... and... they think Apollos... is a short form for... Apollonius... and that... that he was...

he was a Jew. Now, you know that... when you talk about... a Jew... you're... you're in trouble...

because... because of the association...

we have... with the name... and we use it... not to describe... a person's nationality... but often to describe... his character. It's a... it's a good example... of how...

[6 : 25] a perfectly good... and honorable name... can pick up... a... very difficult... association... and... so you... you have that...

here... probably more... when we read it... than when Luke wrote it... because we have... we have... the accumulated tradition... of several centuries... since that time...

but... Apollos... was... a Jew... and... you can ask... what would a Jew... why would a Jew...

be called... Apollos? There's a sort of... declension... from the true faith... there... not... Abraham... or Joseph... or any of those people... his name was...

Apollos... so you have to think... about that... for a moment... and then as you read... a little longer... you find... not only was that... but he was also... a native of Alexandria... so what was a Jew...

[7 : 22] doing... living in Egypt... you know... the Jews left Egypt... as you remember... that's one of the great... stories of history... is the Jews left Egypt... and here is a Jew... back...

living in Egypt... he's living in a city... called Alexandria... and Alexandria... as you will recognize... immediately... is named after... Alexander...

the Great... who... founded the city... beside another ancient city... that was there... but Alexandria... became the dominant city...

so here he is... a Jew... named Apollos... living in an Egyptian city... founded by... Alexander... the Great...

Greek... and they're all part... of the Roman Empire... and the influence... of the Roman Empire... is it went all the way... around the Mediterranean world... so you can see...

[8 : 18] that... way back here... where you have... a Canadian... multicultural... to the core... you see... that's a...

and... there... there he is... and not only that... but as... before this... little passage ends... he's gone to Asia... which is another... Roman province... dominated by...

remember... Ephesus was the place... where... the Temple of Diana... Diana of the Ephesians... stood... and had... it had an enormous... an enormous... association...

with... that community... they were... they were called... the sort of... temple keepers... to Diana of the Ephesians... that was... who the Ephesians... thought of themselves... as being...

and... not... not... all those things... were... were true of him... Hebrew... Egyptian... Greek... and...

[9 : 18] then... Asian... in the sense... that he was... in the province of Asia... so you... you have that... and... it's probably...

helpful... to realize... that... Philo... who was a contemporary... of Jesus... whose name... you may recognize... but...

maybe not... but we often refer... to the writings... Philo... because they were... contemporary... to the writing... of the New Testament... but Philo... was... was a...

was a Hebrew... who... with a Greek name... tried to... bring together... the... the sort of...

philosophy... the spiritual... philosophy...

of the Greeks... and the... spiritual... inheritance... of the Jews... in the Old Testament... and he... tried to reinterpret... the Old Testament... in the way...

[10 : 13] that the Greeks... had... developed... their mythology... so that... he sort of said... well now... the Old Testament... is... Hebrew mythology... and you compare that...

with Greek mythology... and you draw your... conclusions... by that comparison... which is... an exercise... that's still going on... to try and... mythologize... the Old Testament...

scriptures... so... all those things... about... Apollos... so that he's... a very... interesting... person... but in addition... to that...

you have... another... several things... about him... which are... important... and that is... he was... an eloquent man... he was... bold...

he was... noted... for his... learning... he was... well... educated... and... he sounds like... he was... a fervent...

[11:09] charismatic... with a small c... for reasons... that... you'll see... so... he's quite... a rich character... what... the way I'd like...

to illustrate him... to you... is this... I don't know... whether you'll... buy this or not... but it occurred... to me anyway... and I'll... try it on you... to see...

because of his... learning... and he... he must have... he must have had... a great deal of learning... that's the large head there... which represents that... because he could probably... speak Latin... certainly Hebrew... certainly Greek... and probably Egyptian...

so that... he... he had... a great deal... of learning... he said... it says he was a learned man... it says he was steeped... in the scriptures... and certainly... he carried on...

[12:04] a... a... a... a ministry... in which he was... constantly being called on... to... share the things he knew... now the difference between... modern man...

and... Apollos... is... that... modern man... is sort of built like that... there's his head... now I'm not being... critic...

you see... the... the reality is... that what... modern man can do... that he can't... is he can tap into his computer... and... you can get a limited amount of knowledge...

into any skull... and he had a big skull... and he had a lot of knowledge in it... but... modern man... he doesn't have anything... going right in between his... ears... but he has access...

to... unlimited information... and... so... it... produces a different kind of person... I think... and... and I think that may be one of the... I don't know whether that's one of the great...

[13:02] whether this is a great advance... from... a man who has a great deal... in terms of his personal learning... to a man who... may not have much personal learning... but knows... through his...

all those various things you have... networks and various things... he has... a vast amount of information... so... it's a different kind of person...

and... it may in fact lead... to a different kind of conviction... you know... this... this person... may in fact...

be close to losing his identity... because his identity... isn't in himself... it might be in... that which he has access to... rather than in himself... so...

there's that tension between people... and I... Apollos... was probably a good example of it... when you see how... how great his credentials were... his eloquence...

[13:57] his boldness... his learning... he was a debater... and all those things... now... the interesting thing about all this... is... that...

it says of him... that in addition to that... he was... let me... quote it to you... he was... instructed... in the way... of the Lord... now...

the Acts of the Apostles... talks about... the Christian life... as being... the way... I would like you to stop...

and think for a moment... about... various other... organizations... that use that same analogy... you know... the United... way... which...

suggests something... you... you... can figure out what it suggests... but a lot of people... talk about... the way... the way of... in which we travel... life is considered that...

[14:55] so... it's interesting... that in the earliest days... of the Christian church... when a man who was... learned in the scriptures... and... you know...

you know something interesting... about this thing... where it says... that he was... instructed... in the way of the Lord... everything else... he had learned from books... but this word... implies...

that he was... orally instructed... somebody sat down... and talked to him... about... the way... of the Lord... and... he was instructed in that...

and knew about that... so... the whole of his... vast learning... and education... the richness of his... Roman... Greek... Egyptian... and Hebrew heritage...

and culture... all came together... for him... and... the capstone... was... that he was... instructed... in... the way... now...

[15:50] if you... if you think of... the way... as sort of... like... this... you know... that you're walking... you're walking...

in the way... whatever the way may be... you think of going along... this... this... this way... the way... and... so... it's a... it's a way...

you can think of a way... of... moral betterment... you can think of... the long... road... leading to... the ultimate knowledge... of...

God... you can think of that... as... a way... you can think of... I don't know why they call marriage a sea... instead of a way... but it's a... it's another... the journey you take...

and so... a lot of life... is compared to this... now... the commentators say... that what is implied here... is he's talking about...

[16:46] the way... of... the Lord... Jesus Christ... that's the way of the Lord... this isn't just a... a... a reference to...

God... as he is known as Lord... in the Old Testament... because if you go down... I think it's further... in this chapter... it may be the next verses... it talks about... the way of God... but... this man is instructed... in... the way... and the unique characteristic... of the way... of the Lord Jesus...

is... that it... it's the way that leads... from death... to... life... and... it's not a way...

of... of... moral betterment... it's not a way... of ethical... inquiry... it's not a way...

[17:41] of philosophical speculation... it's not a way... of making a lot of money... or something... it's... it's the way... of the Lord Jesus Christ... which leads from...

the reality of death... to the reality of life... and... that's what... that's what makes it... different... the New Testament talks about... the way of peace...

and it... it also talks about... the way of... in which... the way of blood... that comes in Romans... you know... where that... your... your way is marked... by bloodshed... and violence... but this is... this is the primary reality... of what's happened...

to this man... Apollos... is he has been... instructed... in the way... by which... mankind... is to move... from... death... to life...

[18:37] not from life... to death... which is what... most people think... their life is about... their existence is about... that it's moving from... all the... vitality of youth...

and vigor... and beauty... and achievement... and all those things... downhill... to... the place... where we all end up... down the hill...

to the top of... boot hill... you might say... well... that's... that's... not what he's talking... about here... he's saying... for all your... youth...

vitality... learning... ambition... and all those things... the way you need... to know about... is the way that leads... from... death to life... that's the way... in which...

Apollos... had been... instructed... ah... so... he went to... Ephesus... and... began to speak...

[19:32] boldly... in the synagogue... he seems to have... prepared... in some way... the disciple... the... the initial... Christian community...

in the city of Ephesus... Paul followed him... not long after he was there... and carried on... and... and... this fellow... as you will see... from the passage...

went... across to... Corinth... and began... to work... there... so he was... he was a teacher... he must have been... a kind of teaching... rabbi...

that went around... to various synagogues... teaching them... and he... you see... at this... at this wonderful stage... in the life... of the Christian church... ah... the...

the Hebrew synagogue... and the Christian church... had not yet... separated... you know... it's... it's like having... a good... staid... conservative... orthodox...

[20:27] Anglican church... in which you develop... you know... a little infestation... of charismatics... ah... and... ah... what... what...

what... what happened... what happened... here... is a good... staid... conservative... Jewish synagogue... in which...

there's a little... infestation... of people... talking about Jesus... as though he had... something to do... with the Old Testament... you know... and so... that was... that was what happened...

and... here was this... ah... renowned preacher... from the great... city of... of Alexandria... and it was... a great city... because I... I've told you... this before... but... they had a... they had a... a... a synagogue... in Alexandria... that was... so big... that when it came...

[21 : 23] time to say... amen... there was a guy... at the front... who waved the flag... and everybody said... amen... you know... we don't suffer... from that... well...

of course... we... so... Apollos was... from Alexandria... and he was... a reputable person... and he spoke... boldly... and told them...

ah... about Jesus... accurately... now... it's fascinating... to think... how he knew... about Jesus... coming from...

Alexandria... he wasn't... from Jerusalem... like Peter... and he hadn't... been to Jerusalem... like Paul... as far as we know... he knew... now... whether...

I mean... one of the things... that you can speculate about... and this is pure speculation... is that... whether one of the early... Gospel manuscripts... got to him... and he knew it that way... or whether some...

[22 : 18] migrating Christians... got to him... and told him about it... somehow... he... took the whole... of his vast knowledge... of the Old Testament... as being the explanation...

of who Jesus is... and... he was telling people... this is... what the Old Testament... is about... now... you know... as I do... that... the Old Testament... because God created... the world... and it's... it's made up... of the... the history... because God intervenes...

in history... and it's made up... of the Psalms... and the Proverbs... because... God imparts wisdom... and it's made up... of the story of Job... because God... has to be identified... with the problem... of suffering... and it's made up... of the prophets... many of them... who are all... in history... but seeing the activity... of God... from the midst of history...

[23 : 14] and seeing history... from the perspective... of God... and all those things... come together... and they open up... all the religious questions... of the whole of humanity... I would think...

creation... and suffering... and history... and wisdom... all those are questions... which are raised... by the Old Testament... now you see...

the thing that made... that gave... Christian faith... its impetus... in the beginning... was... that... all that had been taught... in the Old Testament...

was... consummated... in the person... of the Lord Jesus Christ... so that one... even very contemporary... commentator says... the only way...

you can understand... the resurrection... of Jesus Christ... is by reading... the Old Testament... and then you will see... what the significance... of it is... and all the preaching... as Apollos...

[24 : 09] was doing here... was based on... that fact... so... here was a man... who... learned... eloquent... bold...

instructed... in the scriptures... orally... witnessed to... by... by... Christians... who told him... the way... of the Lord Jesus... and he goes to Ephesus... and he starts preaching... and he does it... accurately... as we're told... but then along...

come... a pair... of people... from the church... in Ephesus... and say... Apollos... after church... morning... would you come... to our place...

for lunch... and so... they take him... home... to lunch... and that's... when you get... when you get... that... statement... they invited him...

[25 : 05] to their home... and explained... to him... the way of God... more accurately... now... what it seems... to have done... what seems... to have happened...

I think... is fascinating... because of this... but... we're almost through... so I can leave... them with you... it says... that what... what Apollos knew...

was the baptism... of John... now... the baptism... of John... was... repent... and believe... you know...

that... repentance... for the forgiveness... of sins... was the heart... of... John's preaching... and he preached... it... out in the country... and people...

from all the cities... round about... came out to him... at the river... Jordan... and he preached... at them... and told them... the wonderful stories... he told them... about the axe...

[26 : 00] being laid... to the foot of the tree... that this was... you know... he preached... and as a sign... of their repentance... when they heard him preach... he took the moment... of decision... and said...

you know... if you are genuinely... repentant... I want you to come down... and declare that... in the river... Jordan... and that was the baptism... that... that... was John's baptism... and that told... and he was the... forerunner... to Jesus... and so he was told... what would happen... when Jesus came... is that... people would be given... the gift... of repentance... and what... a glorious... gift it is... if you've never had it... seek for it... it'll tell you... more about yourself... than you ever guessed... the possibility... of repentance... may never have occurred... to you... well... it's... you know... I'd like... it to occur to you... so...

[26 : 56] what happens then... you see... is... that's... that's where... Priscilla and Aquila... took him aside... and said... now there is... a baptism... of Jesus...

and John the Baptist... had said... about... himself... he preached... the baptism... of repentance... for the forgiveness... of sins... the baptism...

of the one... who followed him... would be a baptism... of Holy Spirit... and... fire... and... I don't know... is it... I think it's...

this is... I'm not sure of this... but one of you... can confirm it for me... it's... it's... T.S. Eliot... isn't it... what remains to us... the fire...

or the fire... you know... one... or the other... the fire... of God's wrath... or the fire... of God's Holy Spirit... one...

[27 : 52] or the other... that's what... that's what... that's the big... the big thing... in life... but this man... was told about... baptism...

in the Holy Spirit... and... the fire... that... that... that would happen to him... well... uh... you know... a lot of people... I mean...

a lot of us... are... are... are kind of... John the Baptist... Christians... we understand... the Bible... we know... what it's teaching... but...

our lives are not... touched... by the fire... by the fire... of God's Holy Spirit... I think we need to be... praying... that... that... that fire will... catch...

in our lives... and... we will be... inflamed... and... informed... informed... about the scriptures... and inflamed... with the spirit...

[28 : 48] those are the two things... that... that happen... and that... that's how... that's how I think... uh... Apollos moved... from an accuracy...

about being informed... to... more accurately... being inflamed... with... God's... Holy Spirit... the next time...

you run into... Apollos... and I'll quit... with this... but... the next time... you run into... Apollos... the next time... this guy... is the greatest preacher...

we have ever heard... we really like him... now... we understand him... and... wherever he goes... we go with him... somebody's buzzing... is that me? I don't...

uh... wherever... wherever... wherever... Apollos is... we're with him... we are... we... and of course... that's... that's what happens...

[29 : 43] to us... we're enamored... with the preacher... not with the thing preached... the gospel... we give our loyalty... to the denomination... not to the Lord... of the denomination...

we walk in the way... of our own institutions... rather than walking... in the way... of the Lord... from death to life... and I don't... it doesn't mean... that you don't need...

preachers... and you don't need institutions... and you don't need... those kinds of things... but it does mean... that... that we have to... we have to have... some discernment... about it...

and about our lives... so that we... we walk... in the way... of the Lord... and... we don't give our loyalty... to... a man...

and that's what Paul said... I won't preach... with eloquence... I won't preach... with human wisdom... I will know nothing... among you... save Jesus Christ... and him crucified... because what you've got to know...

[30 : 40] is not me... it's him... and the one you've got to follow... is not me... it's him... and people didn't want to do that... they... they wanted to be loyal... to other things...

and they got all messed up... and Paul had to sort them out... so... it's a great passage... this... and... and I think that... you know... I would like just to leave you with... the way... of the Lord... that... that you might be instructed... that you might instruct... one another... lovingly... and courageously... and boldly... in the way of the Lord... and that the accurate knowledge... which you have... already acquired... may be made more accurate... as you come to know... the greater fullness of God... and as you distinguish between... the fire... and the fire... let me pray... our God... grant that... [31 : 35] as we have read... and thought through this passage... pretty superficially... that you indeed... by your Holy Spirit... will... write it deep... in our hearts... and... help us... as we... take the way... from death to life... through faith in Jesus Christ... in whose name we pray... Amen...