

- I. Introduction. After the believers were scattered from Jerusalem because of the persecutions, the number of churches began to increase.
- II. The New Testament gives several accounts of the beginning of these churches.
 - A. Philip, one of the deacons at the church of Jerusalem, preached at Samaria. Many were saved and baptized thus forming a church at Samaria. Read Acts 8:5-12. **The Church in Judæa and Samaria**

⁴Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. ⁵Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. ⁶And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. ⁷For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. ⁸And there was great joy in that city. ⁹But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: ¹⁰to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. ¹¹And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. ¹²But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.
 - B. History reveals the beginnings of a church in Ethiopia which started with the returning eunuch who had been baptized by Philip. Acts 8:26-40.

Philip and an Ethiopian

²⁶And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. ²⁷And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, ²⁸was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. ²⁹Then the Spirit said unto

*Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. ³⁰And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? ³¹And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. ³²The place of the scripture (**Isaiah 53:7**) which he read was this,*

*He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;
And like a lamb dumb before his shearer,
So opened he not his mouth:*

*³³In his humiliation his judgment was taken away:
And who shall declare his generation?
For his life is taken from the earth.*

³⁴And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. ³⁶And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? ³⁷And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. ³⁸And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. ³⁹And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cæsarea.

- C. After the success of Philip was known, the apostles themselves left Jerusalem on missionary tours. Read Acts 8:14.

¹⁴Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

¹⁵who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive

the Holy Ghost: ¹⁶(for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) ¹⁷Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

D. Soon there was no place or city of importance without a church.

III. The first Gentile received into a church. Read Acts 10.

Conversion of Cornelius

1There was a certain man in Cæsarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, 2a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. 3He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. 4And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. 5And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: 6he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. 7And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; 8and when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

9On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: 10and he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, 11and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: 12wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 13And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. 14But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. 15And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. 16This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

17Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, 18and called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. 19While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. 20Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. 21Then Peter went

down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? 22And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. 23Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

24And the morrow after they entered into Cæsarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. 25And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. 26But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. 27And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. 28And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. 29Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? 30And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, 31and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. 32Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. 33Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God. 34Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. 36The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) 37that word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judæa, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; 38how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. 39And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: 40him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; 41not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. 42And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of

quick and dead. 43To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. 44While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. 46For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? 48And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

- A. God used Peter to open the doors of salvation and the church to the Gentiles.
- B. The importance of this incident cannot be exaggerated.
 - 1. Up to this time, Christianity had been a religion of the Jews only.
 - 2. Now those of all nationalities were to be received.

IV. The church at Antioch. Read Acts 11:19-30

The Church in Antioch

19Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. 20And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

22Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. 23Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. 24For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. 25Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: 26and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

27And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar. 29Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judæa: 30Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

- A. Some of the Christians, fleeing from the persecution in Jerusalem came to Antioch and established a church.
 - B. This church at Antioch was to become the center of the early missionary efforts.
 - C. The disciples were first called “Christians” at Antioch.
 - 1. This name was given to them to distinguish them from the Jews.
 - 2. This is the same manner that the name “Baptist” came to identify the true church.
- V. The method followed by these early Christians in the establishing of new churches.
- A. The New Testament reveals that all these early Christians followed the same procedure.
 - 1. Upon arriving in a town, they would preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their first and foremost effort was to get folks saved.
 - 2. The converts were always baptized. This is the constant record throughout the entire New Testament.
 - 3. These baptized believers were then organized into a church.
 - B. These new formed churches would then become missionary and would be instrumental in starting other new churches. Thus, Christianity grew.

VI. The death of James. Read Acts 12:1-2

Peter Imprisoned in Jerusalem

¹Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

²And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. ³And because he saw it pleased

the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) ⁴And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. ⁵Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

- A. Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great, was appointed by the Emperor Claudius to be the king of the Jews.
- B. Herod, to please the Jews, began to persecute the Christians.
- C. Herod Agrippa ordered James to be killed by the sword.
- D. Shortly before Herod Agrippa died “eaten of worms” and the churches had peace. Read Acts 12:20-25.

¹⁸Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. ¹⁹And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judæa to Cæsarea, and there abode.

²⁰And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country. ²¹And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. ²²And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. ²³And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

The Call of Barnabas and Saul

²⁴But the word of God grew and multiplied. ²⁵And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.