

Expansion of the Church Continues

Acts 8; 9; 10; 11

Outlines

Witnesses in Judea and Samaria — Chapters 8-9

- 8:1-3 | Persecution of the church begins and it disperses; Saul is a principle persecutor
- 8:4-8 | Philip preaches in Samaria
- 8:9-13 | Simon, a magician, believed and was baptized
- 8:14-24 | Simon seeks to “buy” the ability to perform miracles from Peter and John
- 8:25 | Preaching in Samaria’s villages
- 8:26-40 | Philip preaches to an Ethiopian eunuch
- 9:1-9 | Saul confronted by Jesus on the way to Damascus
- 9:10-19a | Ananias sent to Saul and he baptized Saul
- 9:19b-22 | Saul begins preaching
- 9:23-25 | Saul escapes from a death plot in Damascus
- 9:26-30 | Paul initially feared in Jerusalem, but aided by Barnabas (a man worthy of the name)
- 9:31 | Summary statement about the Church and its growth at that time
- 9:32-43 | Peter’s ministry in Lydda and Joppa

Witnesses in the World — Chapters 10-11

- 10:1-8 | Cornelius’s vision
- 10:9-16 | Peter’s vision
- 10:17-23a | Cornelius’s servants arrive
- 10:23b-29 | Peter travels to and is welcomed by Cornelius
- 10:30-33 | Cornelius relates his vision to Peter
- 10:34-43 | Peter’s sermon to Cornelius’s household
- 10:44-48 | Holy Spirit falls on the household and Peter baptizes them
- 11:1-18 | Peter reports the events at Cornelius’s house to the church in Jerusalem
- 11:19-26 | Barnabas is sent to Antioch and goes to get Saul from Tarsus
- 11:27-30 | The Antioch church sends an offering to the church in Jerusalem to support them during the famine prophesied by Agabus

Reflections

Persecution continues to expand and as a result many of the disciples begin moving out of Jerusalem. This results in the spread of the gospel. This expansion followed the location that Jesus told His disciples where they would be witnesses for Him: Jerusalem > Judea - Samaria > the World.

Acts 1:8 NASB "...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

While the message spread to other parts of the world, it was still largely Jews or Jewish converts who were receiving the message. Many were active in carrying this message to other places but some of the apostles, Peter in particular, would usually travel to these new converts to validate their conversions. This also fulfills Jesus' message regarding Peter's leadership in the church.

Matthew 16:13-19 NASB Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" **14** And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." **15** He *said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" **16** Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." **17** And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in

Expansion of the Church Continues

heaven. 18 I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

It was through Peter's vision and subsequent visit to Cornelius that direct evangelism to the Gentiles, or Greeks, is given God's "stamp" of approval. While he was preaching, the Holy Spirit fell upon the household and they began speaking in tongues as the rest of the disciples did on the Day of Pentecost. This happened before they were baptized. As a result, Peter recognized that the gospel of Jesus was for all peoples and not just those who were of Jewish descent or were Jewish converts.

It is true that Cornelius was a "God-fearer" but the text doesn't indicate that he was a proselyte or convert. This is underscored when Peter makes clear that he was forbidden under the Law to even be in the house of a Gentile. So when they received the Holy Spirit just as he had, he could no longer deny them access to the Gospel and baptized them immediately.

Peter returned to Jerusalem and reported to the other apostles and church elders what had happened and how God had opened the door for all peoples to receive the gospel. This didn't solve all of the problems of accepting non-Jews into the church but it was a beginning.

The focus of the rest of the book now begins to move away from Peter to God's apostle to the Gentiles, Saul/Paul.

Key Words: New Testament, Gospels, Acts, Philip, Simon the magician, Ethiopian, Saul/Paul, Peter, Aeneas, Dorcas, Cornelius, Barnabas, Samaria, Damascus, Lydda, Joppa, Caesarea, Jerusalem, Antioch

Note: This was originally published by me on studythebook.org on November 25, 2015.
