

expanded FAMILY

ACTS 9-12

Acts 1:8 - Be my witnesses

Jerusalem ➡ Judea ➡ Samaria ➡ Ends of the earth

Acts 2 - Jerusalem - Spirit is poured out, thousands of Jews believe, community formed

Acts 3-4 - Jerusalem - Gospel opposed, believers emboldened,

Acts 5-6 - Jerusalem - Through testing, persecution and organisation, gospel continues to be preached

Acts 7 - Jerusalem - Stephen the first martyr

Acts 8 - Samaria - Persecution scatters the believers, expanding the gospel. Phillip preaches in Samaria, to Eunuch

Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen.

A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were **scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria...**

Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison.

ACTS 8:1,3

But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went.

Philip, for example, went to the city of Samaria and told the people there about the Messiah.

ACTS 8:4-5

Acts 9 - *Damascus (Beyond Judea and Samaria)*

**While Paul is hunting believers, encounters the Lord
Peter raises Dorcas and stays “a long time” in Joppa**

Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest. He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them — both men and women — back to Jerusalem in chains.

ACTS 9:1-2

As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?” “Who are you, lord?” Saul asked. And the voice replied, “I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

ACTS 9:3-6

When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but **they were all afraid of him**. They did not believe he had truly become a believer!

Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus.

ACTS 9:26-27

Acts 9 - *Damascus (Beyond Judea and Samaria)*

While Paul is hunting believers, encounters the Lord
Community accepts him.

Peter raises Dorcas and stays “a long time” in Joppa

Acts 10 - 11 - Story of Cornelius and Peter

In Caesarea there lived a **Roman army officer** named Cornelius, who was a captain of the Italian Regiment. He was a devout, God-fearing man, as was everyone in his household. He gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly to God.

One afternoon about three o'clock, he had a vision in which he saw an angel of God coming toward him.

“Cornelius!” the angel said.

ACTS 10:1-3

Cornelius stared at him in terror.

“What is it, sir?” he asked the angel.

And the angel replied, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering!

Now send some men to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. He is staying with Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore.”

ACTS 10:4-6

The next day as Cornelius's messengers were nearing the town, Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners. In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds.

ACTS 10:9-12

Then a voice said to him, “Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.”

“No, Lord,” Peter declared. “I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean.”

ACTS 10:13-14

But the voice spoke again: “**Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.**” The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven.

Peter was very perplexed. What could the vision mean? Just then the men sent by Cornelius found Simon’s house. Standing outside the gate, they asked if a man named Simon Peter was staying there.

ACTS 10:15-18

Meanwhile, as Peter was puzzling over the vision, the Holy Spirit said to him, “Three men have come looking for you. Get up, go downstairs, and go with them without hesitation. **Don’t worry, for I have sent them.**”

So Peter invited the men to stay for the night. The next day he went with them, accompanied by some of the brothers from Joppa.

ACTS 10:19-20, 23

Peter told them, “You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. **But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean.** So I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. Now tell me why you sent for me.”

ACTS 10:28-29

Then Peter replied, “I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right.

This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel — that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

ACTS 10:34-36

Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message. The Jewish believers who came with Peter were **amazed** that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God.

Then Peter asked, “Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?” So he gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

ACTS 10:44-48

Soon the news reached the apostles and other believers in Judea that the Gentiles had received the word of God. But when Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, the Jewish believers criticized him. “You entered the home of Gentiles and even ate with them!” they said. Then Peter told them exactly what had happened.

ACTS 11:1-4

“As I began to speak,” Peter continued, “the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as he fell on us at the beginning. Then I thought of the Lord’s words when he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in God’s way?”

When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, “We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life.”

ACTS 11:15-18

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are **Gentiles** by birth... — remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, **excluded from citizenship** in Israel and **foreigners to the covenants** of the promise, **without hope and without God** in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus you who **once were far away** have been **brought near** by the blood of Christ.

EPHESIANS 2:11-13

For he himself is our peace,
who has made the two groups one
and has destroyed the barrier,
the dividing wall of hostility

EPHESIANS 2:14

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2 - If God has gone through such lengths to bring us near, what barriers do we have that separate us from others?

3 - Do we use our own spiritual growth as a way of making others feel they are not “good enough”? Or are we rejoicing that God’s grace has reached someone so different from me? Do people feel welcome or judged?

RESPONSE

- Get together with one or two more people to share
- Have you ever felt the grace of God that brings you near to Him?
- Did you ever feel “on the outside” and someone brought you in and included you?
- Have we ever experienced a time when someone else’s rules made you feel “not good enough”?
- What kind of community do we want to build ?