

3. The Expansion of the Church

I. From Jerusalem to Antioch

A. Persecution

Stephen's sermon provoked not only his own death but also a great persecution against the Jerusalem church (8:1). Saul took a leading role (8:3; 9:1-2). He was driven by zeal for his ancestral traditions (Gal 1:13-14; Phil 3:6). The persecution was probably aimed primarily at the Hellenistic believers.

B. Scattering: a new Diaspora

This persecution forced all the believers except the apostles to flee Jerusalem. The apostolic leadership continued to function, but henceforth the Jerusalem church was almost exclusively Hebraic. This new diaspora (διασπείρω 8:1,4; 11:19), unlike previous diasporas, was under God's blessing.

C. Evangelism and Church Growth

As the believers moved out from Jerusalem, they proclaimed Christ and performed miraculous signs wherever they went:

1. general statement (8:4)
2. Philip in Samaria, on the desert road to Gaza, in the coastal towns from Ashdod to Caesarea (8:5-40).
3. Peter in Lydda, Joppa and Caesarea (9:32-10:48).
4. Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (11:19-21).

The gospel went out to a widening circle of people:

1. Samaritans (8:5-9:25)
2. god-fearing Gentiles (Ethiopian eunuch, 8:26-39; Cornelius, 10:1-48)
3. Gentiles (Antioch, 11:20).

D. Confirmation

The Jerusalem church vetted each new development to ensure it was from God:

1. sent Peter and John to Samaria to investigate conversion of Samaritans (8:14-17).
2. Peter defended the coming of the Spirit upon Cornelius, a god-fearing Gentile (11:1-18).
3. sent Barnabas to Antioch to investigate conversion of Gentiles (11:22-24).

II. Expansion

A. Philip and the Samaritans

B. Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch

The eunuch (εὐνοῦχος), a court official (δυνάστης) of Candace (Κανδάκη, a title), queen of Ethiopians, who had charge of her treasure, had come to Jerusalem to worship (προσκυνέω). As eunuch he was not allowed to approach, nor enter the Lord's assembly קְהָל (Lev 21:20; Deut 23:1). He was damaged; he had a defect (מִזְמוֹם μῶμος, Vg *macula*).

Philip found him reading Isa 53:7-8, the fourth Servant Song. Imagine Philip showing him Isa 56! No defect would prevent this foreign eunuch being baptized into Christ.

C. Peter in Lydda & Joppa

Lydda: Aeneas (9:32-35)

Joppa: Tabitha/Dorcas (9:36-43)

D. Peter and Cornelius

Cornelius: a god-fearer.

Peter's vision of clean and unclean animals

III. Cleanness & Uncleanness in OT

Central to Torah and to Judaism were distinctions: clean/unclean, holy/profane, defect/perfect. These are all based on the notion of separation: the Lord had separated Israel to be his people. They were to follow suit by separating clean from unclean (Lev 20:24-26), distinguishing between holy and common, between clean and unclean (Lev 10:10).

Clean/Unclean

clean: adj. טָהוֹר καθαρός *clean*. vb. טָהַר καθαρίζω *to be clean, purify*. n. טְהוּרָה cleanness. טְהוּרָה καθαρισμός *purification*.

unclean: adj. טָמֵא ἀκάθαρτος *unclean*. vb. טָמַא ἀκαθαρσία *to be unclean*. n. טְמֵאָה uncleanness.

Pollution and contamination were always a threat. When clean and unclean came in contact, the unclean contaminated the clean. Pollution was especially a problem for women, requiring purification.

Holy/Profane

Holy: vb. קָדַשׁ adj. קָדוֹשׁ.

Holiness applied to space, time, people.

Opposite: חָלַל βέβηλος *common, profane*. vb. 1. חָלַל *to defile, profane*; LXX μιάινω, βεβηλώω.

profane < L *profanus* (*pro-* before + *fanum* temple; lit. before the temple, hence not sacred, common).

תּוֹעֵבָה βδέλυγμα *abomination, detestable thing* (NIV, HCSB).

3. The Expansion of the Church

A. Expansion to Pagan Gentiles

Antioch