



WHY THE CHURCH?

PART 1

PART 3 OF A 3 PART SERIES

WHY THE CROSS

WHY THE RESURRECTION

WHY THE CHURCH

THE BEGINNING OF AN UNFINISHED WORK

- And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)
- Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:18-20)
- But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

INTRODUCTION

The book of Acts is our first record of church history and comes on the heels of what has been considered the final words of Jesus prior to His ascension to heaven; **“but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)**

INTRODUCTION

What is also taught in the book of Acts is the central doctrine and core teaching of the apostles that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah and the only way to the Father. Peter will declare this to the religious leaders of his time;

“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)

INTRODUCTION

- The book of Acts is somewhat of a *transitional* book
 - The Scriptures move from the teachings of Jesus (recorded in the 4 gospels) to the teaching of the apostles and that teaching is the same.
 - All authority rested with Jesus Christ and He passes that authority to the apostles through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is recorded in the book of Acts.

HERE ARE A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CHURCH:

The day of *Pentecost*, in which the miraculous works of the Holy Spirit were evidenced and the subsequent outward manifestation of His power as seen through the various acts/works of the apostles. (Acts 2:1-13)

HERE ARE A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CHURCH:

- Peter's dynamic sermon in Acts 2:14-36 in which he declares:
 - "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know - this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power" (Acts 2:22-24)

HERE ARE A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CHURCH:

- Peter's dynamic sermon in Acts 2:14-36 in which he declares:
 - "This Jesus, God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore, having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear" (Acts 2:32-33)
 - "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:34)

HERE ARE A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CHURCH:

- The church grew rapidly:
 - "So then, those who received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:41-42)
 - "Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:46-47)

HERE ARE A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CHURCH:

- The actions of Peter in the healing of the beggar who was lame and his scathing rebuke to the Pharisee's and religious leaders continued to solidify the authority of the Apostles:
 - "But Peter said, I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene - walk! And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were strengthened. With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God" (Acts 3:6-8)
 - "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate when he had decided to release Him. But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murdered to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of life, the One whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses" (Acts 3:13-15)

HERE ARE A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CHURCH:

- The first arrest of Peter and John for preaching the gospel (Acts 4)
 - This begins a series of confrontations with the religious leaders of the temple in Jerusalem in which they totally object to the teaching about Jesus Christ (specifically about His resurrection) by the apostles. (Acts 4:1-2)
 - "Peter and John are subsequently thrown in jail for preaching (Acts 4:3)
 - The Sanhedrin is convened, and they warn the apostles to stop preaching about Jesus – but they don't, and the church grows even larger. (Acts 4:4-37)

HERE ARE A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CHURCH:

- There is a second incarceration in which all 12 apostles are thrown in jail and the Lord miraculously opens the gates of the prison allowing them all to be free.
 - Upon leaving the prison, the apostles do as they were commanded by the Lord and go out into the city and preach the gospel.
 - There was a great deal of confusion by the guards and religious leaders as to how the apostles were able to get out of prison.
 - The Sanhedrin reconvened and once again instructed the apostles to stop preaching about Jesus.

HERE ARE A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CHURCH:

Peter and the other apostles responded with these words; "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him" (Acts 5:29-32)

HERE ARE A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CHURCH:

- Gamaliel (a well-respected Pharisee and teacher) said this to the members of the Sanhedrin in response to the actions and words of the apostles; **"So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God"** (Acts 5:38-39)

HERE ARE A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CHURCH:

The apostles were released, and this is what Luke records took place after; "So they went on their way from the presence of the council rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

And every day they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:41-42)

HERE ARE A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CHURCH:

The *Jerusalem* church experiences **enormous growth** and the need to effectively minister to all those who were coming to faith in Jesus became an important component that the apostles needed to address. The decision was made (Acts 6) to delegate the daily affairs (shepherding duties) to others who were gifted to perform those tasks so the apostles could devote themselves to prayer and preaching the Word. **This immense growth of the church also brought added persecution.**

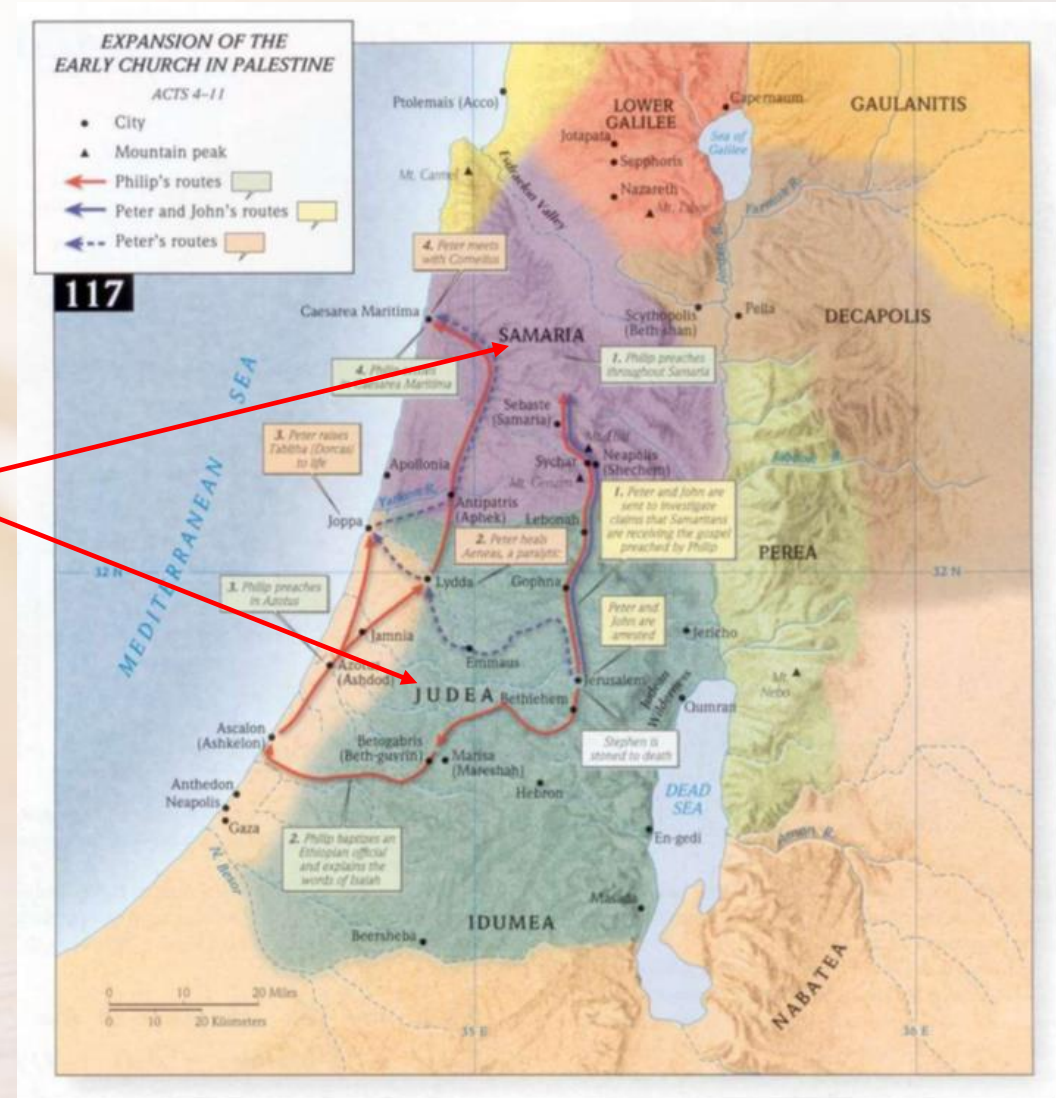
THE CHURCH EXPANDS:

- “The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7)
- All of this attention surrounding the Jerusalem church brings about an immense amount of opposition from those who didn’t agree with the message that Jesus rose from the dead and was the only Way to God.
- The Jewish religious leaders will engage a man whose name was Saul of Tarsus to hunt down and arrest these ones who were preaching about Jesus. The Lord will intervene, and Saul (also known as Paul) will submit to Jesus and his ministry will spread throughout the Gentile world.

THE CHURCH EXPANDS:

As the persecution of the church in Jerusalem intensified - the apostles and others began to go to other regions to proclaim the Gospel message.

Taking the Gospel to Judea, Samaria and beyond (Acts 8-11)

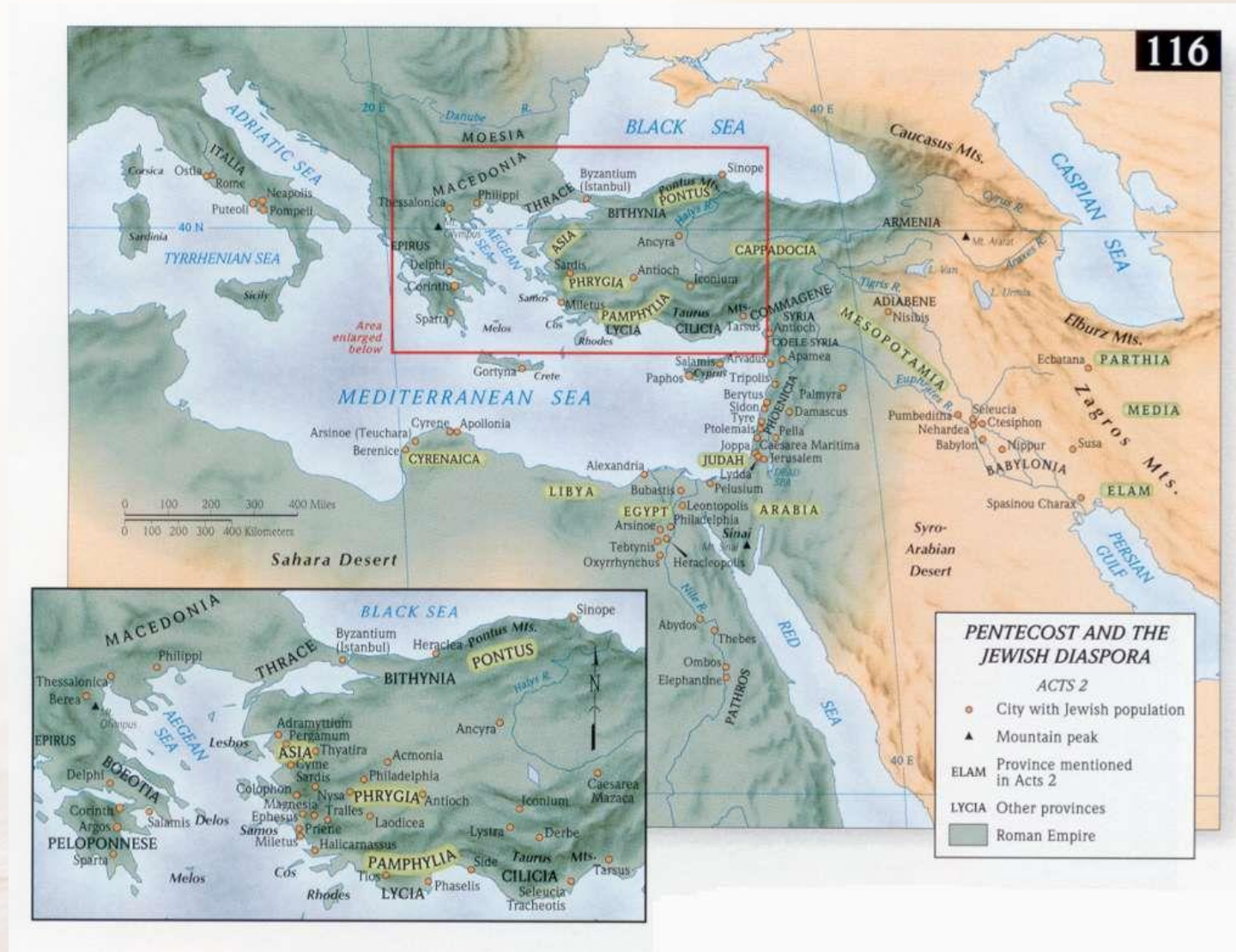


THE CHURCH EXPANDS:

- The gospel also spread to the region of Antioch (Syria)

- “So, then those who were scattered because of the persecutions that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:19-21)
- It was at Antioch where the disciples were first called **Christians** (“little Christ’s”) which identified them as followers of Jesus. (Acts 11:26)
- Antioch also became the **sending** church for the missionary activity of Paul and Barnabas as the Gospel spreads to the **uttermost** regions of the world (Acts 13:1-3)

THE MINISTRY OF THE APOSTLES



SIMON (PETER)

- He was born in Bethsaida in Galilee
 - His father was Jona
 - His brother Andrew also became an apostle
 - He became a fisherman just like his father and eventually partnered up with his brother and another fisherman by the name of Zebedee along with his two sons James and John. These are the same two men (James and John) who also follow Christ and are later referred to as apostles.
 - Peter faithfully follows Jesus along with the other 12
 - Peter makes this bold declaration about Jesus; “You are the Christ the Son of the Living God” (Matthew 16:16)

SIMON (PETER)

- Here are some of the significant works of Peter that are recorded through the **first four chapter of Acts**:
 - He preaches to the masses in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. (Acts 2)
 - He was used by God in the healing of a man who had been crippled since birth. In response to the request for alms from the crippled man; Peter responds with the powerful declaration; “I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene – walk” (Acts 3:6 – NASB)
 - Peter continues to preach the Gospel and suffers persecution from the Jewish leaders. His second sermon is recorded in Acts 3.
 - Peter is subsequently arrested for preaching and refuses to stop declaring that; **“There is salvation in no one else**; there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved”. (Acts 4:12 – NASB)

SIMON (PETER)

- Peter begins to travel throughout the region of Judea where he will witness and confirm that Gentiles were coming to faith in Jesus
 - He will be used by God to heal a paralytic man named Aeneas (Acts 9:32-35). This took place in the town called Lydda which is modern day Lod (close to Tel Aviv).
 - From Lydda; Peter will travel to Joppa and the Lord will use him to raise a woman by the name of Dorcas (Tabitha) back from the dead. (Acts 9:36-43)
 - Acts 10 records the account of the vision by Cornelius and Peter that results in the acceptance of Gentiles becoming converts to Christianity.
 - This will spark great controversy but in the end it will be Peter who is instrumental in helping to solve the dispute over whether Gentiles could be saved. (Acts 11)

SIMON (PETER)



SIMON (PETER)

Peter will return to Jerusalem and helps to get the discussion going to help resolve the conflict over whether Gentile converts needed to be circumcised in order to be saved. The decision is made that they do not need to be circumcised but should abstain from their former pagan practices. (Acts 15:19-20, 28-29)

SIMON (PETER)

- Other noteworthy events in the life of Peter the apostle
 - Due to the emergence of persecution and various imprisonments from the Jewish religious leaders as well as various Roman leaders; Peter will leave the territory of Judea and minister in various regions of the Middle East and eventually find his way to Rome.
 - He will write the Epistle of I Peter
 - Peter's second Epistle is a more direct plea to guard against false teachers and prepare for persecution from all fronts

SIMON (PETER)

- Peter's ministry in Rome

- While he is in Rome he will help to establish/strengthen the church there
- While in Rome he will influence/mentor Mark who will write our earliest Gospel account of the ministry of Jesus. It is believed that Peter will dictate his own first-hand account of the life of Jesus which is known to us as the Gospel of Mark

SIMON (PETER)

- Peter's final days

- Peter spent his last day in a prison called the Mamertine prison. Tradition claims he was incarcerated for nine months and forced to remain in an upright position chained to a column
- Church tradition also claims that Peter was crucified upside down by order of the Emperor Nero
- The traditional date for Peter's death was 67 or 68 A.D.

ANDREW

- His birth, occupation and early days with Christ and the Apostles
 - He was the brother of Simon (Peter) and his father was Jona (John)
 - His occupation was a fisherman
 - He was a disciple of John the Baptist before following Christ
 - He was the first of the Apostles to follow Christ (John 1:35-42) and was instrumental in introducing Peter and others to Christ
 - You will find him mentioned in a few places in the Gospel accounts
 - The only place he is mentioned in the Book of Acts is in the list of the apostles and he is not mentioned in any of the Epistles or Revelation

ANDREW

Andrew settled in the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains (present day Georgia in Russia), and while there he ministered to the Scythians.



ANDREW

- Notable contributions from the apostle Andrew (according to church tradition)
 - It is also believed that he (like Paul) had an itinerant ministry as he traveled to Byzantium (modern day Istanbul, Turkey), then to Greece, Thrace and Macedonia
 - He eventually ends up in Patros (located on the Corinthian Gulf) and it is there where he is martyred
 - Andrew seemed to have considerable influence in the region of Russia for he is recognized as their chief patron

JAMES (SON OF ZEBEDEE)

- Although James was considered one of the inner circle (Peter, James, John), there is actually very little known about him
 - We know his father was Zebedee and his brother was John (The apostle)
 - It is possible that he (James) may have been a cousin to Jesus but the evidence is inconclusive
 - This is not the same James who wrote the Epistle of James nor is this the same James who presided over the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15

JAMES (SON OF ZEBEDEE)

- It is believed that sometime after witnessing the resurrection that James found his way to Spain and may have ministered there for a season. This information is taken from Josephus and other historians as well as some early church writings
- He was the first of the apostles to be martyred and was done so at the hands of Herod Agrippa I in 44 A.D. (Acts 12:2)

JOHN

- Also, a son of Zebedee and the brother of James....his mother was Salome which is believed to be Mary's sister
- Some conclude that the meeting between Nicodemus and Jesus took place in John's house.....although we don't know for sure
- John is responsible for writing a total of 5 New Testament books which is second only to Paul who wrote 13:
 - The Gospel of John
 - I, II, III John
 - Revelation
- He moved to Ephesus sometime prior to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (A.D. 70) and he became the Pastor of the church, probably sometime after Timothy's ministry there had ended

JOHN

During his time in Ephesus, he developed a sort of regional ministry and had an influence over the churches in the area. We derive this from his mention of the “seven churches of Asia” in the Book of Revelation and his apparent unique relationship to them



JOHN

- He was exiled to the Isle of Patmos due to the ruling of the Roman Emperor Domitian – and was later released and allowed to return to Ephesus
- He lived until the time of the Roman Emperor Trajan and during that time would have witnessed a significant amount of persecution against Christians
- He is considered a Pastor committed to loving the people and work of God, for church tradition has him often quoted saying; “Little children love one another” and when questioned by his disciple as to why he would so often say those words his reply was; it is the Lord’s command, and if this alone be done, it is enough!”
- His ministry spanned a number of years in which he probably established several churches throughout Asia, and it is estimated that he didn’t die until approximately A.D. 100. There is no evidence that he was martyred, and it is believed that he died a natural death

PHILLIP

- There is very little information about him but one significant notation worth mentioning was his response to Nathanael after meeting Jesus; “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph”. (John 1:45)
- He was from Bethsaida of Galilee – just like Peter and Andrew
- Some confuse him with the Philip the Deacon/Evangelist (Acts 6:1-5, Acts 21:8), but these would have been two different people
- Various church traditions claim that he was involved in the Apostolic College
- It is believed that he ministered in the region of Galatia (in Turkey) and tradition has him being martyred at the age of 87

BARTHOLOMEW

- His is also known as Nathanael. It was Nathanael who said this to Jesus; “Rabbi, You are the Son of God, You are the King of Israel” (John 1:49)
- Jesus (after His resurrection) appeared to Bartholomew along with several other disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, also known as the Sea of Galilee. (John 21:2)



Armenia is the primary area where Bartholomew ministered.



BARTHOLOMEW



BARTHOLOMEW

- Here are a few of the recorded events from various church traditions that are written about Bartholomew:
 - The historical record along with church tradition shows that while in Hierapolis; Bartholomew and Philip were responsible for the wife of a high Roman official (proconsul) coming to faith in Christ. This apparently enraged the Roman official and he ordered the two men (Philip and Bartholomew) to be crucified, but Bartholomew escaped after being taken down from the cross and subsequently dismissed for some reason
 - From Hierapolis Bartholomew traveled to the East and visited India and then eventually settled in the region of Armenia. According to their tradition, he joined up with the apostle Jude (Thaddaeus) who already had a ministry there

BARTHOLOMEW

- Here are a few of the recorded events from various church traditions that are written about Bartholomew:
 - Tradition also claims that on his missionary journey's that he carried the Gospel of Matthew with him, and it is believed that he left a copy behind in India. The book eventually ended up in the hands of a stoic philosopher by the name of Pantaenus who had previously become converted to Christianity. Pantaenus was responsible for founding the Catechetical School of Alexandria (in Egypt) and was a mentor to a very influential thinker, apologist and writer by the name of Clement of Alexandria (more on him at a later time)
 - The primary ministry of Bartholomew took place in the area of Armenia, and he labored there until his death. There is wide agreement that he was martyred while ministering in Armenia. Some traditions claim he was beheaded while others claim he was skinned alive and then crucified. The date of his death is commonly placed in A.D. 68 and the location is modern day Azerbaijan

THOMAS

- He is also known as Didymus (the twin); he was a fisherman by trade, and a native of Galilee
- Here are a few traditions about this apostle:
 - He traveled to Babylon (modern day Iraq) and established the first Christian Church there
 - From there it is believed that he evangelized in the region of India and may have traveled as far as China
 - While in India it is believed he was martyred and was killed with a lance. He was buried in Mylapore, India

MATTHEW

- He is also called Levi
- He was a tax collector before being called By Jesus to come and follow Him
- After the resurrection it is believed that he initially stayed in the region of Jerusalem, and after about 15 years, he began a series of missionary journeys
- He went to Persia and ministered there for a season and Catholic tradition has him traveling to Ethiopia in Africa and eventually being martyred in Egypt. There is another tradition that has him being martyred in Parthia.
- We have Matthew to thank for a well penned Gospel account of the life of Christ. He was known as a gifted writer, a dedicated disciple, and probably the best educated of the original 12 disciples

JAMES (SON OF ALPHAEUS)

- He is sometimes referred to as James the Less
- There are two basic traditions that about this James:
 - He helped to establish the Syrian Church and was their first bishop
 - He was stoned to death in Jerusalem for preaching Christ
- This is also not the same James who wrote the Epistle of James

JUDE (THADDAEUS)

- Jude was one of the first apostles to leave Jerusalem and head to a foreign country. Tradition claims he was the first to witness directly to a foreign (Gentile) king.
- Most traditions have him ministering in the region of Armenia (some of his time being spent with Bartholomew and possibly some with Thomas), specifically in the city of Edessa.
- Some traditions also place him in Syria and Northern Persia where it is believed he was martyred.

SIMON THE ZEALOT

- Tradition has him ministering primarily in the region of North Africa and possibly even into Britain
- There are two basic traditions about his death:
 - One version is that he was crucified in Britain by the Romans in A.D. 61
 - Another version claims that sometime after leaving Britain he traveled to Persia and was martyred there by being sawed in two

THE OTHER APOSTLES

- Matthias

- He was the replacement for Judas Iscariot
- Tradition places him in the region of Armenia and may have been assisted by the apostle Andrew
- Most all traditions agree that he was martyred but the location of his death by martyrdom is unclear

- Paul (more on him in our next lesson)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

We have no concluding Biblical evidence of a “perpetual” continuation of the office of Apostle (as some teach) and therefore within our basic system of belief it (The office of Apostle) ceased upon their subsequent deaths

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

The influence of each of these men within Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth goes beyond what we are capable of absorbing in our finite minds. If the subject matter is of interest to you, there is a host of writings that record a plethora of information. The reliability of that data may be difficult to verify as it eventually becomes skewed toward a particular theological or philosophical bent as the church begins to expand in the later centuries. This is what will later lead to “denominations” and various “orthodox” positions (i.e. Eastern Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Coptic Christianity, Russian Orthodox etc.) that are too numerous to list.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

We should applaud the early work of these Apostles for without them and their missionary efforts, where would our world be today

In our next lesson we will explore an overview of the ministry of Paul, along with several other key leaders who carry the torch in spreading the gospel during the times of the apostles and the early days of the first century.....stay tuned!