



# INFORMED AND FAITHFUL

## Lesson 10: The Early Church

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# THE CHURCH IS BORN

- ❖ Pentecost was the birthday of the church because at that time the authority of the risen Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit became available to believers
- ❖ The church is not only an earthly organization of believers, it is an eternal body, the bride, that resides first in heaven and forever in the New Jerusalem
- ❖ **Ephesians 5:25-27** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

# AT CAESAREA

- ❖ **Matthew 16:13-18** 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?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 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 heaven. 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.
- ❖ Church: *ekklesia*: congregation; assembly
- ❖ Church and kingdom of heaven are used interchangeably

# THE CHURCH

- ❖ Local congregations or the entire body of Christ worldwide
- ❖ Many churches met in homes

**Romans 16:3-5** Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; also greet the church that is in their house.

- ❖ The head of the church is Christ
- ❖ **Ephesians 1:19-23** ...the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

# EARLY CHURCH

- ❖ **Acts 9:2**...and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
- ❖ **Acts 19:9** But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.
- ❖ **Acts 19:23** About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way.
- ❖ **Acts 24:14** "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets;
- ❖ **Acts 24:22** But Felix, having a more exact knowledge about the Way, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case."

# THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

- ❖ Headed by James—not the disciple, but the brother of Jesus
- ❖ **John 7:3-5** Therefore His brothers said to Him, “Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world. For not even His brothers were believing in Him.”
- ❖ **1 Corinthians 15:4-8** ...He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He **appeared to James**, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

# PERSECUTION IN JERUSALEM

- ❖ Conflict between Jewish leaders and believers
- ❖ Synagogue of the Freedmen and Stephen
- ❖ **Acts 6:8-11** And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen. But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."

# SYNAGOGUE OF FREEDMEN

- ❖ Jewish men who were "freedmen;" Roman citizenship
- ❖ **Acts 22:28** The commander answered, "I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money." And Paul said, "But I was actually born a citizen."
- ❖ **Acts 7:58-8:1** When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep. Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.



# PERSECUTION PURSUIT

- ❖ **Acts 11:19-20** So then those who were scattered because of the persecution 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.
- ❖ **Barnabas was sent to “check out” the believers in Antioch**
- ❖ Herod killed James (disciple) by beheading and tried to kill Peter

# SAUL COMES OF AGE

- ❖ **Acts 9:1-2** Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
- ❖ **Light flashed, voice: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"**
- ❖ **Acts 9:8-9** Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.
- ❖ **WHAT PAUL BELIEVED, HE BELIEVED FERVENTLY**

# RETICENCE OF THE CHURCH

- ❖ **Acts 9:26-27** When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.
- ❖ **Acts 11:25-26** And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

# OPPOSITION TO THE CHURCH

## ❖ THE JUDAIZERS

- ❖ **Claim:** Paul was perverting the truth and was a traitor to Judaism
- ❖ **Claim:** Paul compromised the gospel to the Gentiles and ignored the Law of Moses
- ❖ **Position:** Christianity is a sect of Judaism; Christians need to be Jewish in all respects; the gospel is an added doctrine
- ❖ **Resolution:** The Jerusalem Council;
- ❖ **Acts 15:19-20** Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.

# OPPOSITION TO THE CHURCH (2)

- ❖ THE GNOSTICS
- ❖ **Claim:** special knowledge for special people
- ❖ **Claim:** separation of matter and spirit; matter evil
- ❖ **Claim:** separate creator (Demiurge) for evil: Zoroastrian in source
- ❖ **Claim:** docetic Christ (not a real body)
- ❖ **Claim:** denial of free will for men
- ❖ **Claim:** what you do with the body doesn't matter
- ❖ **Position:** what you do with your body doesn't matter; special people can tell you what to do
- ❖ **Resolution:** never resolved
- ❖ Although Paul and others refuted the position, it remained for future councils to address

# APOSTLES' CREED

- ❖ **The earliest written version of the creed is perhaps the *Interrogatory Creed of Hippolytus* (ca. A.D. 215)**
- ❖ Supposedly first written by the apostles 10 days after the ascension of Jesus
- ❖ I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. AMEN.

# CHURCH COUNCIL

## ❖ **Nicea: refuted Arianism (325 AD)**

- ❖ **NICENE CREED:** I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. **And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.** And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

# IMPORTANT COUNCILS

- ❖ 49 A.D. Council of Jerusalem (exemption of pagan converts)
- ❖ 325 A.D. 1<sup>st</sup> Council of Nicea (doctrine of trinity; humanity of Jesus)
- ❖ 381 A.D. 1<sup>st</sup> Council of Constantinople (Holy Spirit Clause)
- ❖ 431 A.D. Council of Ephesus (doctrine of incarnation- 2 natures)
- ❖ 451 A.D. Council of Chalcedon (again countered Nestorians)
- ❖ 553 A.D. 2<sup>nd</sup> Council of Constantinople (countered Nestorians)
- ❖ 680 A.D. 3<sup>rd</sup> Council of Constantinople (human, divine will)
- ❖ 787 A.D. 2<sup>nd</sup> Council of Nicea (regulated iconoclasm; regulated the veneration of images)
- ❖ 869 A.D. 4<sup>th</sup> Council of Constantinople (filioque clause)