

I. CHURCH AT DAMASCUS

- A. When Saul got Saved, he submitted to Scriptural Baptism (vs. 18)
 - 1. This is the natural response of Salvation
 - a. Baptism creates CHURCH MEMBERS not HEAVEN GOERS!
 - b. I remember the day Pastor Gray came to see me...
 - c. Baptism is the first step of obedience for the Christian
 - i. 1 PETER 3:21 – “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:”
 - ii. I’ve met many people who I believe are Saved
 - iii. But they seem to be stuck in their Christian Walk
 - iv. God won’t bless the next step until we take THIS step
 - d. Baptism was the FIRST thing Jesus did in His ministry
 - i. MARK 1:9-11 – “And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. (10) And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: (11) And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”
 - ii. He came a long way for Baptism. IMPORTANT to Him
 - 2. Baptism requires FOUR Elements
 - a. The Proper Candidate – one who is Saved
 - b. The Proper Aim – not FOR Salvation but because OF Salvation
 - c. The Proper Mode – enough water to picture
 - d. The Proper Authority – a New Testament Baptist Church
 - 3. Church baptism always means WATER BAPTISM
 - a. There is no “Holy Spirit” baptism that creates church members
 - b. Turn to EPH. 4:5 – This is important to see
 - i. That is speaking about church baptism there
 - ii. Not the word “immersion” or baptidzo
 - iii. That was a common word, like washing hands.
 - iv. MARK 7:4 – “And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.”
 - c. Nor are we baptized into ALL churches – turn to 1 COR. 12:13
 - i. A COMMONLY misunderstood verse

- ii. One means one... or a SINGLE
 - iii. Either there is a universal church or local churches
 - iv. We cannot be members of two at once
 - v. And there is only ONE baptism...
- B. This church took care of its own – Saul was one of them
 - 1. He joined that church by BAPTISM
 - 2. They knew it. He knew it. It was OFFICIAL.
 - 3. He preached in the Synagogues under their authority and approval
 - 4. I love this: He CONFOUNDED the Jews
 - a. They couldn't answer him.
 - b. They didn't know what to say!
 - c. WEBSTERS 1828 – “To perplex with terror; to terrify; to dismay; to astonish; to throw into consternation; to stupify with amazement. Also, To abash; to throw the mind into disorder; to cast down; to make ashamed.”
- C. After many days were fulfilled – we don't know how long
 - 1. May have been three years – GAL. 1:18 – “Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.”
 - 2. But Paul made a huge impact in the ministry of that church
 - a. He jumped right in and worked
 - b. It was his nature as we'll see throughout these verses
 - 3. But then the Jews rose against him – wanted to kill him
 - a. But this was not a city in Judea, they had no governmental power
 - b. So, they had to lie in wait for him
 - c. But one of the faithful found out and the church acted!
 - 4. They let him down by night, far away from the gates, so no one could see
 - 5. And Saul went to Jerusalem

II. CHURCH AT JERUSALEM

- A. Saul was moved by God to another city
 - 1. As Christians must wait upon God's will in our lives
 - a. When we moved to North Carolina, I said no many times
 - i. And God kept showing me the open door
 - ii. My default position is to be still and wait upon God
 - iii. God made it clear that He wanted me there
 - b. God made it clear to Saul that He was moving him to Jerusalem
 - c. We need that kind of clarity in our lives
 - d. Let's just hope it isn't running from a band of murderers!
 - 2. Saul's FIRST move after coming to Jerusalem was joining a church (vs. 26)
 - a. I remember when we joined Mount Calvary Baptist
 - b. And the day we joined here! As the pastor? Yes!
 - c. I don't know if Saul came forward during the invitation or not...
 - 3. They were afraid of him at first, but Barnabas spoke for him (vs. 27)

- B. He was “with them” (vs. 28)
 - 1. What the church did, Saul did. Comings and Goings.
 - 2. Saul could always be counted on, he was always there
 - 3. And despite the fact that he had been run off from one city already
 - a. He never dipped his colors
 - b. He didn’t spend a moment in depression (woe is me)
 - c. He never stopped!
- C. He spoke boldly in Damascus (vs. 27) and he spoke boldly in Jerusalem (vs. 29)
 - 1. And now more people want to kill him (the Grecians)
 - 2. These Hellenistic Jews were born in other lands
 - a. Probably considered themselves to be “people of the world”
 - b. Probably very self-important
 - c. Much like our elites today – and just as murderous!
 - 3. So the church acted once again to take care of its own

III. CHURCH AT CAESAREA

- A. Many disciples went there
 - 1. We saw in ACTS 8:40 that Philip would end up there
 - a. He was taken from the Ethiopian Eunuch (who saw him no more)
 - b. And preached all the way from Azotus to Caesarea
 - c. In fact, Philip takes up residence there
 - i. He builds a house there and has children there
 - ii. And hosts Saul (by then Paul) decades later
 - 2. Peter went there
 - 3. Paul returned there often
 - a. Act 18:22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.
 - b. Act 21:8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.
- B. This church (perhaps a mission work in Acts 9) existed
- C. The disciples handing Saul off to protect him from Caesarea to Tarsus (vs. 30)

IV. CHURCHES THROUGHOUT THE REGION

- A. We see in these short verses at least THREE churches
 - 1. The New Testament tells us not of “one big” church
 - a. But many individual bodies of baptized believers
 - b. These were never Universal and Invisible
 - c. But VERY LOCAL and VERY VISIBLE
 - 2. The only invisible church Paul ever met was before Ananias touched him!
 - 3. In the beginning of the Book of Acts

- a. There was only one church, the one at Jerusalem
- b. Now there are several. Soon there will be many.
- c. Throughout Judea, into Galilee, and Samaria (vs. 31)
 - i. Think about God's wonderful plan there!
 - ii. Only a few years earlier, it would have been impossible to join together those three regions in ANYTHING!
 - iii. Samaria!?!? People walked AROUND Samaria!
 - iv. But now, God lists them among the faithful churches
- B. The churches have REST from Persecution
 - 1. Now Saul the Persecutor has become Paul the Preacher
 - 2. He was ONE OF THEM
- C. The churches were:
 - 1. Edified (built up)
 - 2. Walking in the fear of the Lord (living up)
 - 3. Comforted by the Holy Ghost (prayed up)
 - 4. And Multiplied (growing up)
 - 5. God was blessing a persecuted but faithful people!

V. CHURCH AT AUTUMN OAKS

- A. Churches are not built with bricks but with members
 - 1. And church membership provides rest
 - 2. It is an umbrella of protection from the wilderness of the world
 - 3. It is a place of serenity in a chaotic life
- B. You can have rest too
 - 1. The doors of this church are open to new members
 - 2. We accept new members by Baptism here (like Saul at Damascus)
 - 3. Or by baptism of another church of like faith order and practice
 - a. Like Saul at Jerusalem
 - b. We usually call that joining on the promise of a letter
- C. But there is one PREREQUISITE to church membership
 - 1. And that is Salvation
 - 2. And only the blood of Jesus can provide that
 - a. He is the only way to Heaven
 - b. He is the only way to have your sin forgiven
 - c. He is the only way to get to the Father
 - d. Jesus is the only way
 - 3. Be saved today!