# The Early Church of Jesus Christ

A Bible teaching commentary
on the Acts of the Apostles
in easy-to-read English
Written by Fred Morris

A voice from Heaven commands Peter to eat forbidden food

## Acts Unit 5 of 12

## Chapters 9:20-11:18

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# Unit 5: Chapters 9:20 to 11:18.

# Saul begins a New Life obeying Jesus.

Saul knew about God but he did not understand that the Old Testament words about the Messiah actually referred to Jesus. Then he met Jesus. This meeting was a miracle from God. From that moment, Saul believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah and the Son of God. Saul was saved through repentance and the grace of God. His faith in the Law of Moses was not enough to save him.

Saul went to the Jewish synagogue and spoke to the people there. He was a changed man. He told them "Jesus is the Son of God" (9:20). The people said he was now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy (9:21). His teaching became more and more powerful (9:22).

Some Jews in Damascus could not argue against Saul's strong words, so they made a plan to kill him. They watched the city gates to catch him leaving. The Christians heard this, so one night they let Saul down from a window in the city wall and he escaped (Acts 9:25). He then preached the gospel in Arabia. Saul tells his own story in Galatians 1:11 to 24, 2:1 and Acts 26:12 to 18.

Later, Saul went to Jerusalem and tried to join the disciples there, but they were afraid of him. Then Barnabas, one of the church leaders, brought him to the apostles. Barnabas told them what had happened to Saul on the road to Damascus and how Saul had been preaching

in the name of Jesus. Saul needed to be humble to say that he was wrong.

From that day, Saul 'spoke boldly in the name of the Lord'. He spoke without fear, and again some Jews tried to kill him. Some of the believers took him to a sea port and sent him by boat to his home in Tarsus (9:30).

At this time the Holy Spirit made the churches in Judea and Samaria strong and brave. The believers had a period of peace and many people became Christians (9:31).

The community of churches grew both in faith and in numbers. They were also united in spirit.

## Peter shows the Power of Jesus.

Peter did not stay all the time in Jerusalem. One day he went to a town in the north-west of Israel. In this town Peter met a man who had been sick for many years. Peter healed him in the name of Jesus. Then all the people who lived in that town believed in Jesus as the Son of God (9:34 to 35). They were mostly Jews.

Many people who lived nearby also believed. A believing woman lived in a nearby town. She became sick and died. The believers sent for Peter urgently. Peter remembered how Jesus raised three people from death (Matthew 9:25; Luke 7:11 to 17; John 11:1 to 44). Peter came to the woman. He sent the crowds away and knelt down and prayed and she came back to life. After this, many more people in that town believed in the Lord Jesus (9:36 to 42). They were amazed and had great fear and respect for Him.

Peter stayed in that town for some time to teach the Jews about Jesus. While he was there, God told Peter to teach other nations as well.

## ACTS CHAPTER 10.

### Peter visits Someone who is not a Jew.

The Romans ruled Israel. Roman soldiers from Italy lived in the towns and the forts. The Roman army was divided into groups of 100 soldiers. The captain of a group was called a 'centurion' (Luke 7:2). A 'regiment' was a larger group, probably of 1000 men; each regiment had a name.

There was a centurion in the Italian Regiment. He and his family were not Jews but they believed in God and prayed to Him (10:2). They did not know about Jesus but were kind and helped people in need.

One day, when the centurion was praying, he saw an angel of God. What is it, Lord?" he asked. God gave him a message: 'Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up like an offering to God (10:4). Send men to a nearby town to bring back a man called Peter who is staying with a leather-worker" (10:6 to 7). The centurion obeyed and sent men to to that town.

Peter was still at the leather-worker's home. While he was praying, he became hungry. He saw a vision from God. He saw what looked like a large cloth coming down from Heaven. It had all kinds of unclean creatures in it, birds and animals, which the Jews were not allowed to touch or eat.

There was no angel, but a voice said, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

"I never eat anything unclean", Peter replied (10:14). Then the voice said, "Do not say anything is not pure that God has made clean" (10:15).

The voice from Heaven came three times. In this way, God prepared Peter to tell the centurion, who was not a Jew, about Jesus.

The centurion's servants came to the leather-worker's house and asked for Peter (10:17 to 18). Then the Holy Spirit spoke to Peter: 'Don't be afraid to go with them, for I have sent them' (10:19 to 20). And so, the centurion and his family heard about Jesus.

The next day, Peter went with them to the town where the centurion lived. The Jewish law said that Jews should not go into a non-Jewish house, but God had showed Peter that He can make anything clean (10:15,28). God wants all people to be saved. He saved Saul. The Roman centurion could be saved by believing and following Jesus.

God wanted the centurion and his family to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. Peter told the man, "Now I know that God treats everyone the same. He accepts people from every nation" (10:34 to 35). God did not want the centurion to reject the Jewish Messiah. God wanted him to know about Jesus. God also wanted to teach Peter new things in addition to the Old Testament Covenant. So Peter preached the New Testament Good News of Jesus Christ (10:36 to 43). He confirmed that the Son of God

came into the world as Judge and as Saviour (10:42 to 43). When Peter said these words, the Holy Spirit 'came down on all who heard the message' (10:44).

When the centurion and his family all heard the Good

**Peter and the Roman family of Cornelius**

News of Jesus Christ, they believed (10:46). The Jewish believers who were with Peter were amazed. They saw the Holy Spirit come upon believers who were not Jews.

Then Peter baptised the new believers 'in the name of Jesus Christ'. The Holy Spirit came on them as on the day it first came on the believers (Acts 2).

On that day, Peter learnt that Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, came to save from sin all people who believe. The

plan of God is to offer salvation to people of ALL nations. We are called to do the same in the name of Jesus.

Then Peter stayed with them a few days (10:48). He had a lot to teach them and a lot to learn himself from God.

## ACTS CHAPTER 11.

### Peter goes back to Jerusalem.

Some Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were not happy with Peter. "You went into the house of people who are not Jews and ate with them", they said (11:3). Their religious traditions caused them to criticise other believers. Their religious traditions hindered their faith in Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Peter told the church leaders about his vision which was given three times (11:5 to 10). He said, "The Holy Spirit told me not to let anything keep me from going with them" (10:12). He told them what happened while he was staying at the leather-worker's house (11:13 to 15). He told them what John the Baptiser had said before Jesus began to preach: 'He (Jesus) will baptise you with the Holy Spirit' (11:16; Mark 1:8).

Peter told the church leaders that the Holy Spirit came down on them 'just as He came down on us at the beginning' (11:15), even before he had baptised them. Then they all praised God together (11:18).

This was the promise of Jesus to all who believe His Good News (John 14:15 to 18; Acts 1:7 to 8). He also promised that many miracles would happen (as in Acts 9: 34, 40).

So then the Jewish believers were happy to worship with the believers who were not Jews. Later on in the early church there were different problems because of religious traditions.

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