

Chapter 9

"The Church"

We will now change the prophetic thread as we switch the focus of our discussion to the Gentiles and the specific missions of Peter and Paul. You may have noticed that a good portion of the Bible references used so far regarding the Jews have come from the Old Testament. It is a treasure trove of details about what is to come for the Jews if we take the time to investigate. [Deuteronomy 4:29-30](#) “²⁹ But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. ³⁰ When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto His voice.” However, the New Testament was written to encourage both the new Jewish and Gentile converts, which will become known as the “church.” The Gospels and first chapter of Acts detail first hand witness accounts of Jesus and His mission. Jesus came to seek and save the lost, regardless of heritage. [Luke 19:9-10](#) “⁹ And Jesus said unto him, “This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch, as he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” He came to fulfill the scriptures of the Old Testament as Messiah while at the same time launching His mission to the world. [Matthew 5:17 \(NIV\)](#) “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” [Mark 1:14-15](#) “¹⁴ Now after that John (the Baptist) was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye, and believe in the gospel.”

At the beginning of this narrative, we mentioned how Christianity’s existence was dependent on Judaism. The question here is, “Is there a connection between the Jews and the church?” The answer, according to Paul, is yes. Paul said that God has not and will not go back on His word with the Hebrews. The Israelites were not cut out of God’s promise of ownership of the land. Abraham’s Covenant still stands. [Romans 11:1-2a \(NIV\)](#) “¹I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. ² God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.” Furthermore, in [Romans 11:25 \(NIV\)](#) “I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in,” clearly implies that when “the fullness of the Gentiles” is fulfilled, the eyes of His chosen people will be opened and they will see Him as their Messiah. Therefore, we Gentiles should not expect God to replace or substitute the church as His chosen people in His plan. God does have a separate purpose and relationship planned for us (the church) which leads us to the second part of the answer. The gentiles are to provoke the Jews to jealousy so they will ignite a loving one on one relationship attitude toward God, which God has desired all along, not just a ritualistic exchange or rule of law constricting relationship. [Romans 11:11-14 \(NIV\)](#) “¹¹ Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. ¹² But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring! ¹³ I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry ¹⁴ in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them.”

To properly understand where we are going, it is imperative we understand from where we started. The New Testament is replete with stories of men spreading the Gospel of Jesus, even though they occasionally stumbled along the way. Peter and Paul are at the top of the list. God still used them, flawed as they were, to bring glory to Himself and spread His message.

He charged Peter to minister to his fellow Jews. [Matthew 10:5-6](#) “⁵ These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: ⁶ But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Peter was a simple fisherman, and he was the first disciple Jesus called. [Matthew 4:18-20 \(NKJV\)](#) “¹⁸ And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea;

for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” ²⁰ They immediately left their nets and followed Him.” Peter also had a special, unique relationship with Jesus. Peter was one of Jesus’ inner circle made up of Peter, James, and John. [Mark 9:2](#) “And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.” Peter showed his tendency to be impulsive when he jumped out of the boat the disciples were in during a storm. As we all know, Peter began to sink when he took his focus off Jesus and looked at his surroundings. [Matthew 14:28-31 \(NIV\)](#) ²⁸ “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” ²⁹ “Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” ³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

Peter was first to recognize Jesus as Messiah through anointing from God directly. Because of this, Peter was the first pastor or missionary to the first church or body of believers. Jesus ordained Peter to build His church. [Matthew 16:13-18 \(NKJV\)](#) ¹³ When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am ?” ¹⁴ So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

As a precursor to the next point about the specific commission for Peter, Jesus refers to Himself as the Good Shepherd. [John 10:11 \(NKJV\)](#) “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” Jesus also says His sheep, referring to believers and in [Matthew 10:6](#) above, will know His voice. [John 10:27 \(NKJV\)](#) “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” [1 Peter 2:25](#) “For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” [Isaiah 53:5-6](#) ⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes, we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way. And the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Peter’s equipping for his mission call is complete by the following interaction. [John 21:15-17 \(NIV\)](#) ¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.” ¹⁷ The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was annoyed because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” After Peter’s declaration, Jesus asked the twelve to keep His identity to themselves. [Matthew 16:20 \(NIV\)](#) “Then He ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah.”

Peter failed Jesus. [Mark 14:66-72 \(NIV\)](#) ⁶⁶ While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. ⁶⁷ When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. “You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus,” she said. ⁶⁸ But he denied it. “I don’t know or understand what you’re talking about,” he said, and went out into the entryway. ⁶⁹ When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, “This fellow is one of them.” ⁷⁰ Again he denied it. After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, “Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” ⁷¹ He began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know this man you’re talking about.” ⁷² Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times.” And he broke down and wept.” As a gesture of redemption, Peter was the only disciple called by name after

Jesus' resurrection even after Peter's failure the night of Jesus' trial. [Mark 16:7 \(NLT\)](#) "Now go and tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died."

Peter was present at the beginning of the church. [Acts 2:1-4](#) "1And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Peter also had the first large scale baptismal service after Jesus ascended to heaven after His resurrection where he preached and over three thousand souls were saved. [Acts 2:41 \(NIV\)](#) "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day."

To be clear, Peter's primary listeners were his fellow Jews but they were not exclusively. [1 Peter 2:9-10](#) "9But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; 10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." Peter also preached to the uncircumcised Gentiles. It caused a little friction with Peter's supporters. Peter admonished them to put their dispute aside. [1 Peter 3:8 \(NKJV\)](#) "Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous." [Acts 10:44-48 \(NIV\)](#) "44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. 45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. 46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, 47 "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." 48 So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days." The Holy Spirit was poured out on those, Jew or Gentile, who claimed Jesus as Lord and quickly spread throughout the known world for the next several hundred years. Peter can be considered one of the first, if not the first, "Christian" even though that term was not coined until Barnabas and Paul did so later. [Acts 11:26](#) "And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

Paul was recruited to reach out to the Gentiles. [Galatians 2:8 \(NIV\)](#) "For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles." He was well educated as he was part of the religious ruling class known as the Pharisees. [Acts 23:6](#) "But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." According to the author of Acts, Luke, Paul acknowledged himself as a zealot. [Acts 22:3-5 \(NKJV\)](#) "3 I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today. 4 I persecuted this way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. 5 As also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished." The conversion of Saul the persecutor to Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles is introduced in [Acts 9:3-5 \(NIV\)](#) "3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied." God specifically sought Saul out. [Acts 26:15-18 \(NKJV\)](#) "15 So I (Paul) said, 'Who are You,

Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶ But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. ¹⁷ I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, ¹⁸ to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’ [Acts 26:22-23](#) ²² Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: ²³ That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.” After Saul’s conversion, he referred to himself as Paul and in several letters as an apostle like in [Romans 1:1-2 \(NIV\)](#) “¹Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God ²the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.” [1 Timothy 1:1](#) “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ which is our hope.” [1 Timothy 2:7 \(CEB\)](#) “I was appointed to be a preacher and apostle of this testimony—I’m telling the truth and I’m not lying! I’m a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.” The “Holy Scriptures” Paul (as all Jews in his time did) refers to in [Romans 1:2](#) are the Torah, Psalm and Proverbs, and writings of the prophets. We now refer to them as the Old Testament. At this point in time the New Testament had not yet been written. Paul penned most of the New Testament as personal letters of encouragement to the early churches which were in Asia Minor either on one of his four missionary journeys or in prison. There are a few short letters by James, Peter, and John before the [Book of Revelation](#) closes out the end of the Bible.

As we saw above with Peter, from time to time he had to struggle with his Jewish supporters questioning the uncircumcised gentiles converting to their new faith system. Paul did not have that issue. As a converted Jewish believer himself, he understood that Christ’s message was open to everyone. [Romans 1:16-17](#) ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” Paul understood that his own salvation was a result of God’s grace extended toward him and not as a result of anything he could have done or deserved. [1 Timothy 1:14-15 \(NIV\)](#) ¹⁴ The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worst.” We also addressed the topic of the Gentiles provoking the Jews to jealousy when we spoke of Christianity’s existence being dependent on Judaism. Both Peter’s and Paul’s missions dovetailed and laid the foundation for the formation of the “church.” This melding was the genesis of the body of believers that would become known as the church. The non-Jewish converts grew under Paul and they soon outpaced the Jewish converts because the Holy Spirit ignited a fire in them. It didn’t help that the Jewish state was broken apart and sent into exile.

Peter and Paul are the Founding Fathers of the “One Holy Catholic (universal) and Apostolic (of the Apostles) Church.” Remember that the New Testament was written in the common language of the day, Koine Greek. The noun the “church” is Strong’s #G1577 “ekklēsia.” In Greek, nouns, like in some other languages, are designated by gender. In this case, it is classified in the feminine. English does not classify its parts of speech as it is gender neutral. This classification reinforces the supposition that church is referred to as the Bride of Christ. In addition, Paul writes in [2 Corinthians 11:2](#) “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy. For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin (as a bride) to Christ.” [Ephesians 5:23-24](#) ²³ For the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴ Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.” [Revelation 21:9](#) “And

there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.”

Here is an abridged version of church history. After the initial ministries of Peter, Paul, and the other Apostles the new religion “Christianity” struggled to survive as they were persecuted and treated violently from the beginning. All of the disciples, except for John the Apostle or as he was also known as John the Revelator, were martyred. John was exiled to Patmos where it is believed to be when he wrote the [Book of Revelation](#) about 90-95 AD. The church consisted of converted Jews and Gentiles including Greeks. In 313 AD, the Roman Emperor Constantine ceased the open persecution of Christianity and eventually embraced it as the state religion. This decree opened the door for the flourishing of the new religion, which now was spoken and written in Latin. However, there was still much in fighting for internal politics for leadership, doctrinal questions, and other liturgical issues. From 325-787 AD, the Seven Ecumenical Councils convened to debate a great many theological issues, rites, canons, and sacraments, and, as we explored in Bible history earlier, which specific writings were to be placed in the Bible. Over time, many other councils convened with the last one in 1962-1965. In 1054, a split happened where the Roman Catholic sect became known as the western church and the Greek Orthodox sect retained the name of the Eastern Church (as envisioned as the legs of iron in [Daniel chapter 2](#)). In 1517, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses which launched the Reformation. Shortly after that, The Anglican Protestant church (where from a great many denominations were derived including Baptists) was created under Henry VIII in 1532. Over the next few centuries, different Protestant denominations broke away from the rigid hierarchal Roman Catholic Church. This time period, from the first century (beginning at Pentecost) to now, is known as the Church Age. Paul calls it when we were talking about deciphering the mysteries of prophecy, “the Dispensation of Grace.” [Ephesians 3:2](#) “If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward.” The Church Age coincided and was overlaid with the time of the Gentiles period referenced above referring to gentile rule over Israel and Jerusalem. Church scholars classify the seven churches listed in [Revelation 2 and 3](#) into seven eras of the church in history. The below list compares the two.

	chapter	city	Church Type	AD	Historical Era
1	Rev 2:1-7	Ephesus	The Loveless Church	33-100	Apostolic Church
2	Rev 2:8-11	Smyrna	The Persecuted Church	100-313	Roman Persecuted Church
3	Rev 2:12-17	Pergamos	The Compromising Church	313-538	Compromising Church
4	Rev 2:18-29	Thyatira	The Corrupt Church	538-1517	Corrupt Church
5	Rev 3:1-6	Sardis	The Dead Church	1517-1755	Reformation Church
6	Rev 3:7-13	Philadelphia	The Faithful Church	1755-1844	Missionary Movement
7	Rev 3:14-22	Laodicea	The Lukewarm Church	1844-present	Apostasy Church

We looked at the seven eras of the Church Age above, the question of “do today’s churches seem to represent the idea of the Laodicean lukewarm church?” I think a case can be argued that yes, they do. There are more concerned with offending man than offending God, and with traditional mainstream church attendance in decline, the “feel good” brand of Christianity is taking hold rather than living by conviction and repentance. Jesus Himself said in [Matthew 10:32-33](#) “³² Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. ³³ But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.”