

1. Persecution scattered the Jerusalem believers throughout the regions of the Mediterranean
 - a) at first they preached only to Jews
 - b) believers from other areas began speaking to the Gentiles (Greeks) as well (Ac 11:19-20)
2. In spite of ongoing persecution the scattered believers continued to preach and teach
 - a) the word of the Lord
 - b) the good news about the kingdom of God
 - c) the name of Jesus Christ (Ac 8:4, 12; 15:35)
3. Paul always followed a particular pattern as he brought the gospel to many Gentile locations
 - a) he went to the synagogues first, to persuade Jews and Gentiles from the Scriptures that
 - Jesus is the Son of God
 - Jesus is the risen Messiah
 - b) only then he went to preach to the Gentiles (Ac 9:15, 20-22, 17:1-4, 17; 18:4)
4. When the believers in one geographical area assembled to fellowship, worship and grow in faith, they became a "local" church (Ac 11:19-26)
5. In order to become an accepted member of a local church a person had to join him/herself to the church (Ac 9:26-28)

6. There is only one universal church but many local churches (Ac 15:41, 16:5; Ro 16:16)
 - a) these small groups of believers met from house to house
 - b) the concept of a building particularly for believers to meet in is foreign to the NT (Ac 8:3; 12:12; 16:15-40; 20:20; Ro 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15)
7. Even the earliest local churches victoriously faced some severe difficulties or obstacles
 - a) leadership changes and transitions
 - Jesus is the ultimate yet unseen head of the church
 - Stephen, the church's faithful defender, was killed
 - James, John's brother was killed
 - after some time elders were appointed for every local church

→ these challenges did not hinder the churches' faithful commitment (Eph 1:22; Col 1:18; Ac 7; 12:1-2; 14:21-23)
 - b) sin and immorality within the church
 - lying / deception
 - sexual immorality

→ the churches under the direction of the apostles dealt with these situations with "church discipline"

 - for the good of the sinner
 - for the reputation of the church (Acts 5:1-11; Col 3:9; 1 Cor 5:1-6)

- c) complaining and discontentment
 - the church under the direction of wise leadership defused a continuing member dispute
 - the believers were involved in finding the perfect solution
 - the church kept growing (Ac 6:1-7)
- d) false teaching from within
 - e.g. – circumcision necessary for salvation
 - the apostles and leaders sent a correcting message to many churches
 - they continued to teach truth
 - the church was strengthened (Ac 15:1, 5, 28-29; 16:4-5)
- e) remaining unified in spite of differences in background, culture, social status etc.
 - this is a powerful testimony to the world of a new creation (Gal 3:26-29)
- f) ongoing persecution
 - persecution can't destroy the church
 - the very powers of hell will never be able to prevail against the church (Ro 8:35; 12:14; 1 Cor 4:12; Mt 16:18)