

# THE FIRST OPEN CHURCH, FOLLOWERS OF “THE WAY”

Part Six, By: Jeffrey Crosby

Sponsored By:

Clifton A. Emahiser's Teaching Ministries  
1012 N. Vine Street, Fostoria, Ohio 44830  
Phone (419)435-2836, Fax (419)435-7571  
E-mail caemahiser@sbcglobal.net

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We have been telling the story of how Joseph of Arimathea, great uncle to our Messiah Yahshua, took Christ's battered body off of the cross and placed Him in a tomb in Joseph's garden in Jerusalem. Yet immediately after it became known that Yahshua had risen from the dead, it was the obligation, the desire of His disciples, of which Joseph definitely was, to bring the good news of the resurrection specifically to the lost flock of the House of Israel who were scattered abroad, including “the Isles afar” to the west, the British Isles.

As legend shows, Joseph and a band of devout followers of Christ were cast off of the shores of the Promised Land in an oarless boat without sails because, as it says in the book of Acts 8:1, 4, “there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles ... Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.” This group of castaways included Joseph; Nicodemus; Luke and Cleopas (who were probably the two men who were walking to Emmaus when Yahshua joined them after He rose from the tomb [Luke 24:18]); Martha, Mary and Lazarus; Joanna and her son who were living with the Bethany family; the man who had been born blind and had been healed by Yahshua; Simon the Cyrenean; the deacons of the first church in Jerusalem (which remained underground at that time due to persecution by the Sanhedrin); and possibly many others that we would not know by name. This was about four years after the Passion of Christ, and Stephen was recently stoned to death at the feet of Saul and a gang of Jewish Zealots. James (Yahshua's blood kin) and many others, in time would be executed in the Name of Yahshua. “[T]he chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus to death, because that by reason of him many of the [Judeans] went away and believed on Yahshua” (John 12:10, 11).

We must go to other sources, secular history, to find the information concerning the disciples, apostles and believers in their travels to the other lands. J.W. Taylor, in his *The Coming of the Saints*, has this to say about these other sources: “Here are traditions, monuments, and even histories, which may carry us further. The

*Recognitions of Clement*, purporting to have been originally written by him in the first century; the *Acts of Barnabas*, which has strong claims to be considered both genuine and reliable; *The Life of St. Mary Magdalene and St. Martha*, purporting to have been compiled from the then existing documents by Rabanus in the eighth century; and several traditions: Sicilian, Venetian, Provencal, Spanish, Cornish, British, or Welch, English, and even Greek, contain references to the origin of Western Christianity, which are at all events worthy of consideration, and have this one great feature in common; the reputed coming of Hebrew disciples of our Lord into the farthest regions of the West in the very earliest years of Christendom” (ibid. p. 56). They came to Marseilles in Gaul, today’s France, where Druidism was the prevailing rule of life for those peoples. These folk were very close to those in Britain – kindred stock – since the Diaspora some seven centuries earlier.

If not for Druidism, whose priests were followers of ‘The Way’, Christianity may never have survived. The Roman Emperors Augustus, Tiberius, Claudian and Diocletian made decrees that the acceptance of the Druidic and Christian faith was a capital offense, punishable by death. As has been shown, the ancient Kymri (a name derived from the Omri dynasty of the northern kingdom of Israel) were bonded in the ancient patriarchal faith of Israel, long before their arrival in the Isles. As mentioned, Druidism was founded by Hu Gadarn, followers of that faith taking on the name ‘Druid’, possibly from the Keltic word ‘Dreus’, meaning ‘an oak’. They worshipped in the open oak groves of the island. A more likely derivation is from ‘Druthin’, meaning ‘Servant of Truth’, thus, their motto: ‘The Truth against the World’. They believed in the immortality of the soul, one God and the coming of the Messiah. They were aware of the prophesied vicarious atonement, and, amazingly, were the only people on earth who knew and used the near-proper name of the Messiah ‘Yesu’ long before His advent, which astonishes theologians. There was a mutual understanding between the Druid and the converted Judean on religious principles, thus followers of ‘The Way’ were easily accepted in Gaul and the Isles.

It was British warriors, giving constant aid to their kinsmen in Gaul, which brought about the Roman invasion of the Isles. The first attack was in 55 B.C., led by Julius Caesar. It was a dismal failure, Caesar withdrawing his troops back to Gaul within two weeks. He was ridiculed by Pompey’s Party of the Triumvirate. Over the next ten years, to 43 B.C., Rome’s best armies and generals fought to establish a foothold in Britain, failing to penetrate more than a few miles inland.

It was much later, during the reign of Hadrian, A.D. 120, that Britain was incorporated by treaty within the Roman dominions. By this, the Britons retained their kings, lands, laws and rights, accepting a Roman army to defend the British realm. So the later invasions by Julius Caesar and the best of Rome’s armies, repelled by the famed British Pendragon Caswallen, cannot be misconstrued as the Britons being naked barbarians who could not defy Rome.

Unlike Britain, mainland Gaul lacked any protection of the sea. This proved to be its downfall against the Roman conquests. But until the later coming of the Franks, Visigoths, Ostrogoths and Vandals (who were all tribes of ‘the dispersed’ twelve-tribed Israel), the Gauls proved to be the major factor for centuries to carry on the great

evangelizing work of Christendom, laying the foundation of the missions which stemmed from Britain. It was the great works and presence of Philip, Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, and the other Marys who would leave their mark in the name of Yahshua Christ with their devotion and sacrifice.

“... Joseph frequently journeyed to Gaul to confer with the disciples, particularly with Philip, who had arrived at Marseilles ahead of Joseph, and was awaiting him and the Bethany family’ (*The Tradition of the Lost Disciples*, pg. 61). Because of his tin mining interests in Cornwall and Devon, Joseph had a longstanding association with the British. Thusly, the connection between Britain and Gaul.

Long before Joseph arrived in Britain, the Passion and the scandal of the cross was known and grieved by the Druids. By their knowledge of prophecy, they recognized in the death of Christ the fulfillment of prophecy. The Druidic delegates immediately journeyed to Gaul to meet Joseph for first hand information of the events. ‘It was an open acceptance that elected Joseph of Arimathea to the head of the Christ-converted British Church’ (ibid., pg. 61). It was from that time that the Druidic name and the old religion in Britain and Gaul changed, thereafter under the Christian name, formally known as ‘The Way’, identifying their acceptance of, and their abiding faith in Christ.

The fact that this Bethany group survived persecution unscathed for Christ is miraculous enough in itself. Still, it fulfilled the prophetic words of our Messiah when He commanded His disciples to “... **go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel ...**” [12 tribes under David] to preach that the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 10:6, 7). This was the beginning of the gathering of the Christian clan which would forever change the world to a better way of life. However, in the ensuing events to follow, millions upon millions would “wade their way through unbelievable tragedy, defying tyranny in its basest and most terrifying form, wholesale massacre and fiendish torture, suffering and brutalities of the Coliseum, the horrors of the fetid prison of the Mamertine, and the dreadful scourging wars in which the British were to make the most colossal sacrifice in blood and life known to history” (ibid. pg. 62).

Records reveal the closeness of the Bethany group who landed in Marseilles. The followers of ‘The Way’ counted Joseph as their leader, holding him in high esteem and with great regard. Throughout his lifetime he would be their salvation against the rising storm of Roman persecution which would soon face them all. He would be the means of raising the first Christian army to battle for Christ on the British Isles to oppose the bestial Romans. As Joseph was the unseen power in Jerusalem before the Sanhedrin on that tragic eve four years earlier, all would now rally around him to proclaim the Word to the lost sheep of Israel.

How many disciples were with Joseph in Gaul is not clear. The Baronius record names, among those on the castaway boat, Mary Magdalene, Martha, the handmaiden Marcella, Lazarus (the same Yahshua raised from the dead), and Maximun (whose eyesight was restored by Yahshua), ‘and others’ (*Annales Ecclesiastici*, vol. 1, pg. 327, quoting Acts of Magdalen and other manuscripts). Other records list Philip and James as accompanying Joseph. Still others list Mary, the wife of Cleopas, and Mary, the mother of Yahshua, were occupants of the boat. Gallic church records note that many

converts had preceded Joseph to Marseilles. They would become banded together to form the flock that founded these early churches.

Philip, one of the original twelve disciples with Christ, was definitely present. Testimony asserts his commission in Gaul, that it was he who received and consecrated Joseph prior to his embarkment and appointment as the Apostle to Britain. This was no act of conversion, as the biblical record states that during the last days of Yahshua's crucifixion, the Apostles referred to Joseph as already being a disciple of Christ. Both his devotion to Yahshua, the biblical facts of his involvement at the time of Yahshua's crucifixion and burial, and the apostolic reference prove that he was an early disciple of Christ. However, to properly ordain an apostolic appointment 'it was necessary for the consecration to be performed by the laying on of the hands by one of the original Apostles' (ibid. pg. 64). Over the following thirty years, Philip would perform this act of consecration two more times for Joseph, and for specific reason which will be discussed in due time. But thus far, in his book *The Traditions of the Lost Disciples*, Jowett has clearly laid out the facts of what occurred in Gaul, the precursor to the first church in 'the Isles'.

"Philip came to Hierapolis with his four daughters. Isidorus Hispalensis, writing about the sixth century (A.D. 560-636), refers to Philip as having first carried the news of the Gospel to the Samaritans, and having preached Christ later to the Gauls, and afterwards in Hierapolis of Phrygia, where he was crucified, and is buried with his daughters. (Isidorus Hispalenses, Vol. vii, 392, quoted by J.W. Taylor in *Coming of the Saints*.)

"Mr. Taylor further writes, 'Messrs. Haddan and Stubbs write of this as referring to St. Philip the Apostle, but (although there is great confusion in all the old writings between the Apostle and Evangelist) there can be no doubt that Isidorus was referring to St. Philip who was 'one of the deacons,' for he expressly says so. See also, *Eusebius Eccles. Hist.* ii, 25: 'And after this there were four prophetesses, daughters of Philip, at Hierapolis in Asia. Their tomb is there, and that too, of their father.'

"There has also been a misunderstanding about the term 'Gaul' and 'Galatia' (which we previously discussed in these lessons). In the Bible, Galatia was a province in Asia Minor, and the people of the area were 'Gauls.' Since Galatia was near to Hierapolis, it was to these 'Gauls' that Philip preached. Before Philip's time, a group of Gauls had left this area, traveled across the Mediterranean Sea and settled in what is now France, and they named the place 'Gaul.' This is the Gaul besieged by Julius Caesar. It was to this Gaul that St. Philip the Apostle came and witnessed for Christ ....

"The Galatians (in both Asia Minor and Gaul) were Israelites ([incorrectly] referred to as 'Gentiles') who had escaped from the Assyrian captivity (some 700 years earlier) and were travelling north and west to their 'Appointed Place.' (2 Samuel 7:10) This is evident from Paul's letter, when he proclaims Christ and the 'Grace of God,' and admonishes them about returning 'under the law' stating 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ... Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made ...' If the Galatians were non-Israelites, they would not understand what Paul was writing about, but being Israelites, they did understand!

Thus, Philip the Evangelist in Phrygia preached to the Galatian-Israelites in Asia Minor, and St. Philip the Apostle preached the gospel to the Galatian-Israelites in Europe. They were obeying the command of Yahshua when He said, 'Go ... to the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel.' And, [after his conversion] St. Paul wrote his letter to the 'Lost Sheep of the House of Israel' when he wrote his epistle to the 'Gentilized' (sic 'ethnos'-nations) Galatian Israelites, whether they were in Asia Minor or in Europe!

"We are told specifically about the length of time that Philip the Evangelist stayed in Hierapolis before his death. We are told by Isadore, Archbishop of Seville (A.D. 600-636): 'Philip ... was stoned and crucified, and died at Hierapolis, a city of Phrygia, and having been buried with his corpse upright along with his daughters rests there.' (De ortu et obitu Patrum, Cap. LXXIII 131, quoted by Dr. William Smith in his *Dictionary of Christian Biography*.)

"We are grateful to and inspired by the life of this layman, who by the example of his life was elected to be a deacon of the first church in Jerusalem. He spent the rest of his life preaching, teaching, and witnessing concerning the Lord Yahshua Christ. Even though persecuted and driven from his home in Jerusalem, still he proclaimed the gospel wherever he went, finally dying for the faith for which he had given his life. His four dedicated daughters reflect the consecrated life which he lived, for they followed him, prophesying about the Lord, until they, too, passed into His presence."

In his book *Recollections*, Clement gives an account of his first acquaintance with Christians through the preaching of St. Barnabas in Rome. Of course this was many years after the fact. Evidently Barnabas had made a visit to Rome to witness to the church there. Those who went with him would also give their witness to the risen Christ. The importance of interjecting this here is because Barnabas later came back to Caesarea (in the Levant) and Clement came with him. While there he met Philip the Evangelist and other Christians who had to leave Jerusalem because of the persecution. Paul (who at that time was one of the main oppressors and not yet converted) later mentions Clement in his letter to the Philippians, listing him as one of his 'fellow laborers, whose names are in the book of life' (Philippians 4:3). The point is that there was a connection between those followers of The Way in Caesarea and the West, Marseilles being their safehaven and meeting place before their journey to the British Isles.

It was after the second period of persecution occurred, when King Herod 'stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church and he killed James the brother of John with the sword ... because he saw it pleased the Jews' (Acts 12:1-3), that he arrested Peter and threw him into prison. Realizing that persecution was imminent, the other disciples fled from Jerusalem and Judea, leaving the country. Hearing of the safety in Caesarea, and later in Antioch to their northeast, they emigrated to those and other cities. It is in Caesarea that we will be introduced to Philip the Evangelist.

Few are aware that there were two Philips involved in the early founding of the ecclesia. We will discuss both; the links between one's home in Caesarea, of whom we read about in the book of Acts 8:26-40, and the other in Marseilles to the west.

St. Clement records in his *Recollections* that the following people came to Caesarea from time to time, and it became a meeting place for the Apostles and other

disciples, and a place where they would counsel together and decide on their places of service: “St. Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, St. Lazarus, St. Zaccheus, and the ‘Holy Women’ who were St. Salome, the mother of St. James, St. Mary, the wife of Cleopas, St. Martha and St. Mary Magdalene, and St. Philip the Evangelist who, after preaching in Samaria, took up his residence in Caesarea.”

Quoting from the book *Dedicated Disciples*, it says “St. Luke [between A.D. 58 and 60] records: ‘We that were of Paul’s company departed, and came unto Caesarea and we entered into the house of Philip the Evangelist and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, and ‘did prophesy’” (Acts 21:8, 9) ..., which could mean that they were teachers, and were led of the Holy Spirit. Philip had a Christian home and was ‘given to hospitality’ and entertained other disciples who came and stayed with him, awaiting their future plans.

“The chief port from which these missionaries sailed was Caesarea, and Philip the Evangelist had a big part in this work. From Caesarea, St. Lazarus was sent to Cyprus to be the bishop or pastor by St. Peter. During this time, St. Zaccheus was the bishop of Caesarea, and the ‘Holy Women’ also stayed in Caesarea for several years ...’ [St. Lazarus would later become the first bishop in Marseilles, Gaul].

“The Apostle Philip could have stayed at the home of Philip the Evangelist during one of his visits there, for he travelled around that area before leaving Europe. Philip the Deacon/Evangelist had been living in Caesarea for eighteen or nineteen years before Paul [would later come] along to stay with him, and during that time he had helped innumerable believers who had come to his home to escape persecution. Then, Herod pursued his plan to persecute the Christians some more, those who had fled from Jerusalem, and especially when Peter had escaped from jail – ‘And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and there abode’ (Acts 12:19).

“With Herod coming to Caesarea and perhaps to renew his persecution of the Christians, Philip decided to move to Phrygia and to the city of Hierapolis. Phrygia was an island province of Asia Minor, having Bithynia and Galatia (not to be confused with Gaul in the west) on the north, Cappadocia and Lycaonia on the east, Lycia, Pisidia and Isauria on the south, and Caria, Lydia, and Mysia on the west. Phrygia’s cities also included Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colossae, and Antioch of Pisidia.” “( )” & “[ ]” mine throughout. (D.D pg. 32)

It should be noted that in his book *The Drama of the Lost Disciples*, Jowett does not make the distinction between Philip the Evangelist and Philip the Apostle. But hopefully the point has been made that it was out of Caesarea, primarily, where the Apostles would gather, and from there be dispersed throughout Asia Minor and Westward from there across Europe, bringing the Word to the “lost flock” of Israel. Marseille, where Philip consecrated Joseph for his mission of Ambassador to Christ in the Isles, was the ‘Caesarea’ in the West. According to tradition, Scripture and secular records, Joseph and other disciples journeyed northward from Marseilles to Morlaix in Brittany, traveling the Rhone river. From there it is a short trip across the channel to Cornwall in Britain, the route well known to Joseph because of the tin trade. From

Cornwall there is an ancient road, remains of which are still evident, leading to the mines of Mendip. The king of that land, Arviragus, and his reception of Joseph and the group, are evidence of a previous acquaintance between the two in that land, which is where we will begin Part Seven.