

God's Diverse Agenda for People

Acts 11:19-30

August 16, 2020

Acts Series: Taking the Message of Jesus' Kingdom Everywhere

Acts 11¹⁹ Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews.²⁰ Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.²¹ The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

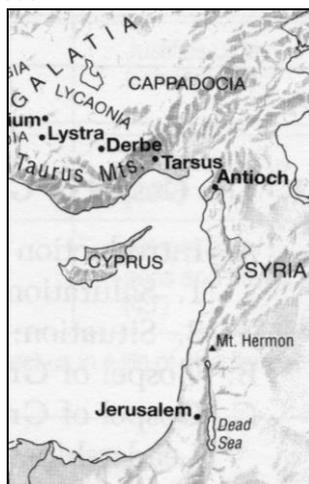
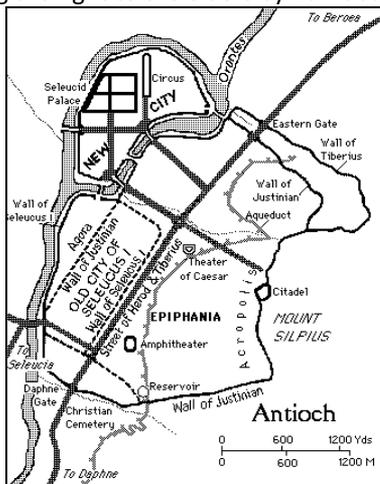
²² News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.²³ When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

²⁴ He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,²⁶ and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

²⁷ During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

²⁸ One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)²⁹ The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea.³⁰ This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.¹



About 700km Jerusalem to Antioch
About 200km Antioch to Tarsus

¹ The New International Version. (2011): Zondervan.

1. Overflow

Acts 11:19-21

Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. Verse 20

A. Reconnecting to the Scattering

Picking up the action from Acts 8:2

Persecution is a tool in God's redemptive, recreating work

Cyprus is a place we should keep in mind

A limited audience

B. Resuming God's mission to non-Jews

These are 'lesser' Gentiles

The Ethiopian Eunuch and Cornelius we actively searching

How does God show his approval (especially in Acts)?

Antioch is another place that we should keep in mind

2. Oversight

Acts 11:22-24

News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. Verse 23

A. Jerusalem church feels the obligation to investigate

They are genuinely interested, curious and possibly bothered

What is Barnabas' mission?

Observe and report?

Observe, engage, encourage and report?

B. Why Barnabas?

He is from Cyprus and knows 'Gentiles' and Greeks

He was trusted in Jerusalem

Recognized as an encouraging kind of person

Proven ability to quickly recognize God's involvement
Acts 4:36, 37; 9:27

C. Discovery

Evidence of God's blessing

People believed and turned to the Lord

Barnabas is commended by Luke in verse 24

Response to God's Blessing

Filled with Joy

Encouraged the believers

Result of the Discovery

Barnabas was true to who God had made and called him to be

Even more people were brought to the Lord

3. Overboard

Acts 11:25, 26

When he found him, he brought him to Antioch. Verse 26

A. What moved Barnabas to go to Tarsus?

200km one way would take about a week to walk one way

B. Why Saul?

Barnabas was there in Acts 9:27

Where did Luke leave off with Saul?

What did Barnabas know about Saul?

What did Barnabas see in Antioch that said 'Saul'?

How do we know that the Holy Spirit is part of this?

Verse 24 precedes verse 25

Verse 26 follows verse 25

Christian

Christian - Χριστιανός (*Christianos*) noun; Christian. Used only 3x in the NT. Acts 11.26, 26.28 and 1 Peter 4.16. In the early church the term was not used by the early believers to describe themselves. It is used by others to describe them. It would appear that it was a term that could have been unkind. By the second century it was adopted as a term by believers as a matter of identification and honour. Today the term is overused with such broad meaning it creates confusion.

Disciple - μαθητής (*mathētēs*) noun; disciple, follower, pupil. 261x only in the gospels and Acts in the NT and 28x in Acts. Other common NT terms are church, believers (69x), brothers; sisters included (almost 350x in NT) or saints (God's people made holy) (59x)

By reclaiming Saul from the discard pile God is the ultimate recycler

3. Overabundance

Acts 11:27-30

The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. Verse 29

A. Travelling prophets

Motivated it seems by the Spirit and not by Jerusalem

Agabus makes a prediction by the Spirit (fulfilled)

Agabus will reappear in Acts 21:10

B. A recognition of kinship

Did the Jerusalem church see them as in the family?

Gentile believers seem more ready to accept Jewish

C. A full circle of blessing

The giving was immediate, sincere and significant.

Barnabas returns with Saul

God's Diverse Agenda

God moves us to take the Gospel beyond our 'near and dear'

Unmotivated Gentiles and a failed and evicted preacher

Barnabas shows us how to see God's hand in a situation

Saul shows us how to serve and bless freely