

ACTS 11:20-30

Introduction:

1. We have seen the events in Acts 1-7, culminating with the stoning of Stephen. Then Luke, after the scattering had begun, goes through different issues that took place in Chapters 8, 9, 10, & 11. What Luke was doing in these chapters was bringing up situations that demonstrated that the Kingdom Program - that had been inaugurated at Pentecost (Chap. 2), had been carried on during the early Acts period (Chap. 1-7), and was looking for the earthly program for Israel to happen - was not continuing on after Acts 7. All of a sudden, there was a change in the Prophetic Program. The order does not carry on as the prophets said it would.
2. We can see this change going on in Chap. 8, 9, 10, and 11. God was working to bring Peter and those believers at Jerusalem up to date that a big change was taking place. Luke reminds them to look back in vs. 19 to see what God was doing (replacing the old with the new). Interestingly, he goes all the way back to Stephen. Why?

A. Antioch -

1. The church at Antioch now comes to the forefront. This church-assembly is the church that will

Acts 11:19-21 - Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. Acts 11:20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. Acts 11:21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

send out Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary trip. This is the church that Paul reports back to

about his trip, and it is the church that will have its believers "called Christians first at Antioch".

2. Evidently, after going to Jews only, Cornelius' conversion spread among the Jewish believers. Even though while only going to the Jews, something amazing happened. As they preached, Gentiles started attending and listening. This resulted in many of them coming to faith in Christ and later being called Christians (without Jewish requirements).
 - a. *In vs.21, it says [And the hand of the Lord was with them]. This means that God directly and personally, for a special purpose, intervened. God was directly involved in what was taking place. All of a sudden, they who had gone to Jews only, now not only preach to the Gentiles - but also begin going to the Gentiles!
 - b. This is exactly what is taking place dispensationally at this time period. Here at Antioch there is the beginning of a new thing...Christians!
3. Jewish Message Acts 7 Body of Christ
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 Acts 9
4. In vs.20, it mentions the Grecians. Remember, this is a generic word like wine or church. Context always determines the meaning. Grecians were anyone living under the influence of the Greeks and Greece. This is just like one being Americanized or Westernized.
 - a. Example: Acts 6:1 - [And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.]

*Who are the Grecians in this passage? They are Grecian Jews!

- b. Acts 2:5 - And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

*This is what Alexander the Great wanted to do to the conquered nations. He wanted to make all people Greek-like. He wanted them to have Greek culture, thinking, values, and language. So in Acts 2 and 6, they were Grecian Jews. The Hebrews at Jerusalem did not want to be-

come

Grecian so they resisted being Greek-like, yet both were Jewish.

- c. In Chapter 11, the Grecians in context are Gentiles. If they were Jews there would be no comparison nor surprise at their believing. There would be no reason to send someone from the Jewish Jerusalem Church (vs. 22) to investigate what was happening.

*To show that these were Gentiles, a Gentile church, notice: Acts 15:23, 30 - [And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren *send* greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: Acts 15:30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle:]

they
they

5. So in Acts 11, we see a transition beginning to take place. There is something going on when these Jews go to no one but Jews in vs.19, and then "the Lord's hand was on them" and they begin speaking to the Gentiles - who receive the Lord by faith. The hand of the Lord is what moved them to go to the Gentiles.

B. The Jerusalem Church (Little Flock) -

Acts 11:22-24 - Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Acts 11:23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. Acts 11:24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

1. Why was there a question? Remember, from Jerusalem's viewpoint, the evangelism outreach was to Jews only. But they think there is a different situation going on. Gentiles were being saved!
2. To investigate what was happening at Antioch (in their Jewish thinking-it was wrong), they did not send the 12 or just Peter (he might eat with them). They send Barnabas to find out what was going on.

*Remember, Barnabas is the one who had befriended Saul and helped him be accepted in Acts 9:15, 27.

3. Barnabas was familiar with the area, being from Cyprus. Upon his arrival, he saw that it was undeniable that God was reaching out to the Gentiles in grace. God was saving Jews, but especially moving to the Gentiles apart from Israel. Barnabas encourages Antioch's believers to stay close to the Lord and to decide to keep on keeping on.
4. Vs. 24 shows the godly character of Barnabas and his testimony.

*This is why God could use him, and it resulted in the salvation of many.

C. Apostle of the Gentiles -

Acts 11:25-26 - Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: 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.

1. As Barnabas observes the move of God at Antioch, with Gentiles being saved apart from Israel, he realizes (Holy Spirit enlightened) he needed assistance to help these believers grow spiritually. Having known Saul/Paul's calling to the Gentiles (9:15-16, 27) and knowing of his ministering to Jews and Gentiles (9:28-30), Barnabas knows the man to lead this new movement of God - Saul!

Note: Saul/Paul had a few years of revelations by now, so he would be the one with the needed answers and new doctrine for the Gentiles. After Saul was saved, God benched him for a time that he might become more mature himself!

2. Saul helps to put truth into the Antioch believers for a whole year. Truth within their hearts began to be practiced in their lives. When others from without saw this, they gave them the name-identity of Christians.
3. Question? Why not first at Jerusalem? The Jerusalem Church had been in existence for about 8-10 years. But the Bible never calls them Christians. Why? It is because they were under Judaism, the Abrahamic Covenant. Their salvation consisted of repentance, water baptism, circumcision, Law, and faith that Jesus was the living Christ-Messiah.
4. There is no question that these Antioch believers were saved apart from all these things required of Israel. When they heard that Jesus had died, but was alive, they had faith in Christ alone at that moment.

*And no doubt upon Paul's arrival, he gave fuller explanation of Christ's finished work and the Gospel. Paul differentiates his message from anything that had gone on previously. For nearly 11 chapters, we have seen Israel's history. But now, we will begin to see Christianity's history as a body of believers.

5. As Saul/Paul begins to take center stage, God will use him to proclaim salvation to the whole human race by the Gospel of Grace-Christ (I Cor. 15:3-4) (with Israel temporarily being set aside).

D. Antioch's New Doctrine -

1. The prophets from Jerusalem told these new believers at Antioch about a coming famine that would be upon the land. This famine would be truly hard on the believers in Jerusalem, since they had sold

Acts 11:27-30 - And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. Acts 11:28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Acts 11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Acts 11:30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

most everything. So the Antioch believers take up offerings to help the relief effort for the poor and often persecuted believers in Judaea. Paul and Barnabas took the collected money to these suffering saints.

2. It is interesting that Antioch's Gentile believers were sorry for those in Judaea and accepted these prophets (Jewish) as having authority. Evidently Saul and Barnabas had taught them well about the responsibility of helping other believers.
 - a. *But notice Paul's new doctrine on giving: [according to his ability]. It was not sell all, but only give generously what you could give.
 - b. Even when the truth came to light that the Messianic Church and the Body of Christ were different entities/programs, the Gentile Churches in the following years still did as the Antioch Church and took up offerings for the needy saints (I Cor. 16:1-3; II Cor. 8:1-4, 9:2; Rom. 15:26; Gal. 6:2).
3. I think it is important to remember that, at that moment in time, the Messiah-Law believers still did not know they had been temporarily set aside as a nation. They knew something new and different was happening, but were not sure what. They evidently thought the Gentiles at Antioch were believing in Christ and becoming a part of their church. If not, they would not have sent Barnabas to investigate.
 - a. * It will take a while (Acts 15) for them to somewhat accept God's new Body Church through * Apostle Paul's teachings. But they would always remain with the Messianic Kingdom message * to the Jews.
Galatians 2:7, 9 - But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter; Gal. 2:9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.
 - b. Romans 11:1, 4-5 - I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, *of* the tribe of Benjamin. Rom. 11:4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to *the image of* Baal. Rom. 11:5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.
 - (1) *This is why Paul went to the Jew first, after the Dispensation of Grace began. God used Paul to get this remnant saved. That is a big reason he had signs and wonders at first in order to reach this remnant out of blinded Israel. Peter and the other apostles stayed with their Messiah believers, maintaining a remnant for their time. Paul's preaching won a remnant for the Body's time; and at this time, I believe Paul's Jewish remnant was placed into the Body of Christ.
 - (2) **Upon reaching this Jewish remnant with the Gospel of Grace, Paul then went to the Gentiles.
Acts 28:26-28 - Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: Acts 28:27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Acts 28:28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it.