

## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 11:19-28 | Session 30 | Scattered Jews and New Testament Prophets

Last time we saw the Gentiles receiving *repentance unto life* (vs. 18). Notice it is not everlasting life by grace through faith. This life is by grace via repentance. If we are honest (and we should be!) we would have to say there is a difference. One requires an *action* (repent/work) and the other *acceptance of a gift* (by faith).

Verse 19—

The gospel of the circumcision continues to spread, going out to **they which were scattered abroad**. These were Jews who had been **persecuted** in Jerusalem because of the martyrdom of **Stephen** (Acts 8:1,4). Their preaching of believing in Jesus as Messiah went to **none but unto the Jews only**.

Verses 20,21—

Some of these who were preaching the good news travelled far and wide around the Mediterranean to spread the national salvation or Kingdom message. These disciples came to **Antioch** and spoke to the **Grecians**. **Antioch** appears to be the base of operations for the disciples.

The translation of the Greek conjunction *de* of verse 20 adds some confusion as to who was being preached to, Jews or Gentiles. The conjunction can be translated as *now, but, or and*. The KJV translates it as **and**, but other translations use *but*. Were the **Grecians** Jews, or were they Gentiles? The Greek word for **Grecians** is *Hellenistas*, which can be a Greek speaking Jew, or non-Jew. By translating *de* as **but**, it presents more of a contrast; they were **preaching the word to none but to the Jews only. But some of them spake unto the Greek speaking non-Jews**. The question that is difficult to answer is *who were the great number who believed and turned to the Lord?*

I lean toward these being non-Jews, or Gentiles who believed as we continue to see the transition taking place.

Verses 22-24—

**Tidings** = *logos*, the word/report of what was going on up in Antioch was heard by the **church** (assembly) **which was in Jerusalem, they sent forth Barnabas**. Why send Barnabas if these new believers were merely Jews? It appears something different was taking place; that is the **grace of God** was being bestowed upon the *Hellenists* too. This is likely not referring to *salvation by grace through faith alone*, but God's grace which has always been an inherent part of God's dealings with people.

If we take these as being non-Jews, then they, like Cornelius are coming into the *commonwealth of Israel*, that is they are becoming Jews who believe in Jesus as Messiah and his return to set up his kingdom. They would have believed and repented and been

baptized like the Jews had done. The *Christian assembly of Jewish believers (including proselytes) took another step forward*.

Verse 25—

**Barnabas**, seeing what is happening with the Gentiles seeks out **Saul** who has been in **Tarsus**. The last we heard from him was in Acts 9:30. Why bring Saul? Because he was God's *chosen vessel, to bear his name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel* (Acts 9:15). We still do not hear of the good news of salvation by *grace through faith alone*. And yet both Barnabas and Saul **taught** those in the **church** (assembly) for a **whole year**. What were they teaching? Presumably that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he was killed, but is now alive. And, to *observe everything Jesus had commanded the disciples* (Matthew 28:19-20).

The **disciples were called Christians first in Antioch**. They were called **Christians** because they were following the teachings of Christ. This is a difficult concept for those of us living in the dispensation of grace to grasp; that is, we do not follow the teachings of Christ. This statement seems heretical to our ears. Yet, if we followed all of the teachings of Christ, then we would be living under law. Jesus was a minister to the *circumcision* (Romans 15:8). Jesus came **but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel**, (Matthew 10:6; 15:24). However, the apostle Paul stated, rather clearly, in 1 Corinthians 11:1, *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*. In essence, if we follow Paul for our Christian doctrine, and our pattern for Christian living, then we are in effect following Jesus Christ. If we only follow the teaching of Jesus as found in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) we would have a completely *works oriented faith*. We would also have to pick and choose which commands of Jesus we are to follow, for example do we follow the command (imperative in the Greek) of Matthew 10:8?

Therefore, Paul followed Christ, in that he was able to not only preach the gospel of salvation by grace through faith to the Gentiles, but could also, during the transition period, preach the Kingdom Gospel to the nation in anticipation of Christ's return if they would believe.

Acts 11:27,28—

These were still prophetic days, which would last through the close of the New Testament. A prophet named **Agabus** (also mentioned in [Acts 21:10](#)), prophesied of a **great dearth** that would cover **all the world**. The prophecy, according to Luke, **came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar**, who was emperor from 41-54 AD.

Josephus, "...when Claudius was emperor of the Romans, and Ismael was our high priest, and when so great a famine was come upon us, (Antiquities, 3.320-321)