

And They'll Know We Are Christians

Session Nine

Acts 11:19-30

Geography: Phoenicia, Cyprus, Antioch, Cyrene, Tarsus. We're not in Jerusalem anymore, Toto!

The historian Josephus called the city of _____ “the third city of the empire”, after Rome and Alexandria (p. 203). It was very cosmopolitan with a mix of cultures from around the world. Also, second century tradition also holds Antioch is the home of _____.

What is the relationship between believing and turning to the Lord (v. 21)?

Why was sending Barnabas an excellent choice?

“When we see ‘the Lord adding to the Lord’, so that he is both subject and object, source and goal, of evangelism, we have to repent of all self-centered, self-confident concepts of the Christian mission” (p. 204).

Why was Saul in Tarsus (v. 25)? Review Acts 9:28-30 which occurred 7-8 years previously, according to Stott. What did he do during this time (Gal.1:21)?

In Antioch, the disciples were first called _____. How long did Barnabas and Saul stay there (v. 26)?

What did the prophet Agabus predict during the reign of Claudius (41-54 AD)? According to Stott, historians do not record a single severe and world-wide famine during this period. F.F. Bruce suggests the term “great dearth” as there was a series of bad harvests and famines in parts of the empire. How did the church in Antioch respond to the church in Jerusalem? See Romans 15:27b.

‘The church of Jerusalem had sent Barnabas to Antioch; now the church of Antioch sent Barnabas, with Saul, back to Jerusalem’ (p. 206). This cooperation is a sign of Jewish/Gentile solidarity.

How does the “taking up a collection” in Antioch (v. 29) inform/inspire your giving today?

Acts 12:1-5

“Luke is about to describe that great leap forward we call the first missionary journey. But first he has to chronicle a serious setback in the death of James and the imprisonment of Peter, both of whom were apostles and leaders of the Jerusalem church” (p. 207).

A beheaded James (brother of John; son of Zebedee) is the first of the Twelve to be martyred.

12:1. This is not the Herod (37-4 BC) of the Christmas story. It’s his grandson, Herod Agrippa (37-44 AD). He is also the nephew of Herod Antipas (4 BC-39 AD), who beheaded John the Baptist. Was Herod Agrippa popular with the Jews?

“This is Luke’s final Peter-story before his leadership role is taken over by Paul, and Jerusalem is eclipsed by the goal of Rome” (p. 200).

James, John and Peter were all present with Jesus at his _____. (See also Matt. 20:20-23.) James is now dead. John will be exiled to the island of Patmos. And Peter...well, “The situation looked extremely bleak, even hopeless. There appeared to be no possibility of Peter’s escape. What could the little community of Jesus, in its powerlessness, do against the armed might of Rome? The church turned to prayer which is the only power the powerless possess” (p. 208-9).

Acts 12:6-19

Talk about security! And what a jail break! Where does Peter the jail bird go?

This John Mark (v. 12) is the author of the Gospel of Mark. This James (v. 17) is Jesus’ brother.

Acts 12:20-25

The Word goes forth! Compare v. 24 with 6:7 (Jerusalem), 9:31 (Judea/Samaria) and 19:20.

“Indeed, one cannot fail to admire the artistry with which Luke depicts the complete reversal of the church’s situation. At the beginning of the chapter, Herod is on the rampage—arresting and persecuting church leaders; at the end he is himself struck down and dies” (p. 213). Josephus confirms Luke’s account—a royally dressed Herod was at a festival to honor Caesar when he died.

“The chapter opens with James dead, Peter in prison and Herod triumphing; it closes with Herod dead, Peter free, and the word of God triumphing. Such is the power of God to overthrow hostile human plans and to establish his own in their place” (p. 213). All to God’s glory!