



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

First—They are Christians in their Capitol!

FEBRUARY 18, 2016

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Acts 11:19-30 *“Therefore those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen went through as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, constantly speaking the Word to no one but the Jews only. 20) But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, came to Antioch, continuously speaking also to the Greeks, proclaiming the Lord Jesus. 21) And the hand of the Lord was continually with them and especially a great number, believing, turned to the Lord.*

22) But the report was heard about them in the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to Antioch. 23) Who, arriving and seeing the grace of God, was glad and constantly encouraged them all to continuously cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. 24) Because he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and faith. And a large crowd was brought to the Lord. 25) So he went out to Tarsus to search for Saul. 26) And finding him, he brought him to Antioch. So they came, even a whole year, to be assembled in the church, to teach the large crowd, and especially to first call the disciples Christians in Antioch.

27) Now in those days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28) So one of them named Agabus, stood up and showed through the Spirit that there was about to be a great famine upon the whole inhabited country; which came upon Claudius Caesar. 29) But the disciples themselves, as anyone continually had resources, each of them decided to minister (financially) and to send it to those brothers dwelling in Judea. 30) Which they also did, sending it to the elders through the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

“THEY ARE *CHRISTIANS*. THIS IS THEIR PECULIAR NAME; BY THIS THEY ARE KNOWN; THIS AT ONCE SUGGESTS THEIR CHARACTER, THEIR FEELINGS, THEIR DOCTRINES, THEIR HOPES, THEIR JOYS. THIS BINDS THEM ALL TOGETHER—A NAME WHICH RISES ABOVE EVERY OTHER APPELLATION; WHICH UNITES IN ONE THE INHABITANTS OF DISTANT NATIONS AND TRIBES OF MEN; WHICH CONNECTS THE EXTREMES OF SOCIETY, AND PLACES THEM IN MOST IMPORTANT RESPECTS ON A COMMON LEVEL; AND WHICH IS A BOND TO UNITE IN ONE FAMILY ALL THOSE WHO LOVE THE LORD JESUS, THOUGH DWELLING IN DIFFERENT CLIMES, SPEAKING IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES, ENGAGING IN DIFFERENT PURSUITS OF LIFE, AND OCCUPYING DISTANT GRAVES AT DEATH.”

ALBERT BARNES

Why did the early Church initially only share the Word of God with the Jews? What was the reason for these Hellenistic Jews to begin sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the Greeks/Gentiles? How was it such a big deal to the Jerusalem church that they chose to send Barnabas? Why not Peter and John again—Barnabas? For what reason does he leave this great work to get Saul? What is the first priority of this pastoral team in their first year together in Antioch? How does this racially mixed church prove that they are Christians?

FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES:

- FEBRUARY 25: ACTS 12:1-11 *OVERCOMING THE IMPOSSIBLE BY PRAYER*
- MARCH 3: ACTS 12:12-19 *ANSWERED PRAYER IN THE CAPITOL—UNLIKELY?*

“*The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans*” because they were not purely Jewish—they had intermarried with Gentiles. How much more then, did they despise the heathen Gentiles? Such is made evident when Jesus preached in His own synagogue in Nazareth to all His friends He had known all His life. Little do they realize

BIBLE STUDIES

THURSDAY @ 6:30 AM –PRAYER MEETING – GAB 3RD FLOOR EAST CONFERENCE ROOM

THURSDAY @ 7:00 AM –BIBLE STUDY – GAB 3RD FLOOR EAST CONFERENCE ROOM

Virginia

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who Christ is referring to by the “*poor*” and “*oppressed*” when He reads the passage in Isaiah and says that it is fulfilled. They are amazed at His “*gracious words*” as He explains the fullness of God’s compassion. But suddenly they realize that the Gentiles were included while God’s chosen people in Israel were excluded from God’s grace when He says, “*many widows were in Israel ... but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath*” in “*Sidon.*” “*And Many lepers were in Israel ... but none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian*” (Luke 4:25-27). These familiar friends of Jesus respond with seething rage and with gang violence they try to kill Him. Thus, what Selma, Alabama became to racism in America in the 1960’s is what Nazareth was to Israel in the beginning of Christ’s ministry. Such a universal compassionate God was not welcome in Judaism (Acts 22:21-23).

“DELIBERATELY AND OF SET PURPOSE, SPONTANEOUSLY AND WITHOUT WAITING FOR THE INVITATION, IT PREACHED THE GOSPEL TO THE GENTILES. CHRISTIANITY IS FINALLY LAUNCHED ON ITS WORLD-WIDE MISSION.”

WILLIAM BARCLAY

I. FIRST LOYALTY TO CHRIST ACTS 11:19-26

The fact that these believers were scattered in the persecution against Stephen proves their loyalty to Christ. Some Jewish believers thought that their Messiah was only for the Jews and they only shared the good news with Jews. But others understood the racism-erasing Great Commission to “*disciple all the nations*” (Mt. 28:19-20) witnessing “*to the end of the earth*” (Acts 1:8), and even Saul’s scandalous commission to bear Christ’s name before “*Gentiles, kings, and the sons of Israel*” (Acts 9:15). So, without being asked, these from Cyprus and Cyrene boldly proclaim the Gospel to the Greeks in Antioch. That’s big news to the Church in Jerusalem and they send Barnabas to investigate. Can millennia old racism be annihilated in an instant and Jews and Gentiles get along

immediately? Only through one person mentioned five times in this passage. First—their loyalty was to Him!

“A LARGE NUMBER WHO BELIEVED TURNED TO THE LORD. AGAIN, AS IN ALMOST ALL PLACES WHERE JESUS CHRIST WAS BEING PREACHED, THE RESPONSE WAS GREAT. PEOPLE NOT ONLY BELIEVED INTELLECTUALLY BUT ALSO TURNED FROM THEIR SINS TO THE LORD. AS ALWAYS, BELIEVING IS INSEPERABLE FROM REPENTANCE MANIFIESTED IN A CHANGED LIFE.”

JOHN MACARTHUR

With encouragement the church grew again and Barnabas went to get help. When he found Saul, they joined forces in this third largest capitol of the world. And for a year they focused on three things: the church assembled, the crowd taught, and the disciples proclaiming first their loyalty to Christ. First—they are Christians in Antioch!

“BUT WHOEVER HAS THIS WORLD’S GOODS, AND SEES HIS BROTHER IN NEED, AND SHUTS UP HIS HEART FROM HIM, HOW DOES THE LOVE OF GOD ABIDE IN HIM?” 1 JOHN 3:17

II. FIRST LOVE TO CHRISTIANS ACTS 11:27-30

When Agabus, in the days of Claudius Caesar, prophesied that there was a coming famine to the inhabited country, this church did not begin to stockpile wealth and goods for themselves in order to prepare for the coming dearth upon the land. Instead, as a unified body, they decided individually to minister financially to their beleaguered brothers in Jerusalem and began immediately to scrimp and save as they could to meet the needs of the mother church. But they didn’t just decide, and they didn’t just save, when the opportunity came, they willingly gave!

Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Those in this church loved one another and were a witness for Christ in their capitol—Are you a loving witness?
- 2) Is witnessing for Christ not for you because you have never repented of your sin and turned to the Lord?
- 3) Does your loyalty to Christ and your love for other believers prove that you are first—A Christian?