

Phase		Events Some dates shown are disputed	Note:	Est Date	
Birth of the Church	Acts 1	Christ's Ascension		30 AD	
	Acts 2	Pentecost: Peter's Sermon			
	Acts 3	Lame Man Healed			
	Acts 4	Persecution - Peter and John in Prison			
	Acts 5	Annas and Saphira			
	Acts 5	Angel Opens the Prison Doors for Peter and the other Apostles			
	Acts 6	7 Deacons Chosen			
Gospel to the Gentiles Begins	Acts 7	Stephen's Sermon and Stoning		35 AD	
	Acts 8	Simon Tries to Buy the Holy Spirit			
	Acts 8	Philip and the Ethiopian; Philip's Ministry			
		Matthew @ Judea by Matthew the Apostle		37 AD	Possibly 50 AD
	Acts 9	Saul (Paul) Converted on the Damascus Road			
	Acts 9	Saul Becomes a Follower: Ananias			
	Acts 9	Saul Escapes Damascus in a Basket: Barnabas in Jerusalem			
	Acts 9	Peter's Ministry: A Man is Healed of Palsy			
	Acts 9	Peter's Ministry: Dorcas is Raised From the Dead			
	Acts 10	Peter's Ministry: Cornelius Receives the Gospel			
	Acts 10	Holy Spirit to Gentiles		40 AD	
	Acts 11	Barnabas and Saul at the Antioch Church			
	Acts 12	Herod's Persecution: An Angel Again Releases Peter From Prison Rhoda and the Prayer Meeting Barnabas and Saul at the Antioch Church		45 AD	
James		James @ Jerusalem by James, Jesus half-brother		45 AD	
	James 1	Faith Tested by Trials			
	James 2	Faith Shown in Deeds			
	James 3	Controlling the Tongue			
	James 4	Worldliness Rebuked			
	James 5	Patience in Affliction			
Barnabas and Paul: 1st Missionary Journey	Acts 13	Cyprus			
	Acts 13	Antioch			
	Acts 14	Iconium			
	Acts 14	Lystra: Lame Man Healed Paul and Barnabas Mistaken for Gods			
	Acts 15	Paul and Barnabas Disagree and Go Separate Ways			

Acts 11

PETER ON HIS DEFENCE

Acts 11:1-10

"The apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judaea heard that the Gentiles too had received the word of God. So when Peter came up to Jerusalem those of the circumcision criticized him because, they said, 'You went in to men who had never been circumcised and you ate with them.' So Peter began at the beginning and told them the whole story. He said, 'I was praying in the city of Joppa; in a trance I saw a vision. I saw a kind of vessel coming down like a great sheet let down by the four corners from heaven; and it came right down to me. I was gazing at it and trying to make out what it was and I saw on it the four-footed beasts of the earth and the wild beasts and the creeping animals and the animals that fly in the air. And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter, kill and eat.' I said, 'By no means, Lord, because food which is common or unclean has never entered my mouth.' Again the voice spoke from heaven, 'What God has cleansed do not you reckon as common.' This happened three times; and they were all drawn up into heaven again."

Chapter 11 shows God establishing a new direction and understanding within the young church. Notice how much space Luke devotes to it.

Luke is writing a defense 'brief' to Rome -- summarizing why the Jews had brought charges against Paul.

In Luke's day, bound books were rare. Writers still used papyrus rolls -- scrolls, which were awkward and unwieldy to handle.

The longest scroll that could be used was about 35 feet long.

35 feet is about the length necessary to contain the book of Acts.

Being a legal document, written on a scroll, the space available to Luke was limited. The contents had to be selected with care.

Even given those restrictions, Luke tells the whole story of Peter and Cornelius twice, in full.

At first, all Christians were Jews.

Christianity was viewed as just another Jewish sect.

The first Christians kept all the traditions of Judaism.

It was incredible to them that Gentiles could become Christians without first becoming Jews and keeping the Jewish law and tradition.

A controversy in Jerusalem begins and ends

Peter is confronted with his association with Gentiles

1) The apostles and the brothers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. 2) So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him 3) and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them."

In Jewish thought the world was divided into two groups: Jews and Gentiles.

In God's plan, the Jews were to be a witness, an example to the Gentiles, pointing the Gentiles toward God.

Isaiah 42:6 "I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles,

a light:

(Isa 42:6) I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

(Isa 49:6) And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

(Isa 60:1) Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. 2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. 3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

Joh 8:12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

(Luk 2:32) A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

(Act 13:47) For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

(Act 26:23) That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

1Pe 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Gen 12:2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

(Gen 18:18) Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

(Gen 22:18) And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

(Gen 26:4) And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;

(Gal 3:8) And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

Over time instead of seeing themselves as God's chosen witness to the world, the Jews saw themselves as exclusively God's people.

They mistook themselves as the light rather than the light bearers

The Gentiles were dogs despicable and to be avoided at all costs.

Now the Jewish Christians hear that Peter, one of their primary leaders, had actually gone into the house of Cornelius — a Gentile — and shared a meal with him slept under his roof.

(They seem to have forgotten about Simon the Tanner.)

In their culture, sharing a meal together was a special sign of fellowship.

1 Cor. 5:11 *But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.*

1Co_5:13; Mat_18:17; Rom_16:17; 2Th_3:6, 2Th_3:14; 1Ti_6:5; 2Jo_1:10

This "failure" of Peter's, was worse in their minds than the failures of Christian leaders we are hearing about and seeing today.

Even though many Jewish Christians would be confused and offended, God's work among the Gentiles and Christ's command to go to all the world would not and could not be halted.

The charge against Peter was that he had eaten with Gentiles (**Ac.11:3**).

By so doing Peter had violated the ancestral oral Law and traditions of his people.

PETER EATING WITH GENTILES – THE 1st CHRISTIAN INQUISTION

Ancient God given Jewish Laws (Torah) forbade any uncircumcised males in the household to eat the Passover with the Jews

Exodus 12:48 *"An alien living among you who wants to celebrate the Lord's Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat of it.*

The Law also warned the Israelites not to adopt any of the 'heathen' nation's traditions and practices. They were not to pick up their traits. **See also: Lev_18:24-30; Deu_7:3-12; compare Ezr_9:11-12.**

The Jews took God's command, intended to keep them from adopting the traditions and practices of the heathen nations around them and expanded it so that their own traditions and practices (Oral laws – Talmud = Mishnah / Gemara) excluded them from being a light and a witness of God among the nations.

So, over time, Jewish tradition and fear caused the Jews to refuse **any and all contact with Gentiles** – this included sitting at any meal with what they called a

'sinner' – which is what they considered any and all Gentiles to be. This was one of the charges they brought against Jesus.

Luke 15:2 *But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."*

It was such a 'tradition' in NT times that it is the offense that the church brought Peter and for which they demanded an explanation for his actions.

The importance of this 'tradition' is highlighted by Peter when he first met the messengers from Cornelius at Simon the Tanner's home in Joppa.

Acts 10:23 *Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along.*

Acts 10:28 *He said to them: "You are well aware that **it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him.** But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean.*

Acts 10:48 *So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.*

Peter and even Barnabas eventually succumbed to the pressure over this and Paul himself chastised and called them to task for their hypocrisy.

Gal 2:11 *But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. 13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.*

This thought carried over to the early church but with a different focus when Paul admonished the Corinthian church not to eat with any one who claims the name of Christ but who did not live or reflect his Christian faith in his lifestyle.

1 Cor. 5:11 *But now I am writing you that **you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother** but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. **With such a man do not even eat.***

Paul was not alone in this. John and others had a very similar admonishment for the churches who claimed the name of Christ but whose life did not reflect Jesus Lordship.

2 John 1:10 *If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him.*

But if any man be in Christ he is a new creature...

2Co 5:16 Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. 17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Gal 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. 26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Peter's defense was not an argument or debate;

it was simply a statement of the facts.

Whatever else his critics might say, the Holy Spirit had come upon these Gentiles in the same way he had come upon them.

Seeing the reaction of the Jerusalem based Jewish Christians to Peter's ministry among the Gentiles, it was now clear that it was the Holy Spirit's leading that had caused Peter to take those 6 additional witnesses along with him to Caesarea from Joppa (**Acts 10:23; 11:12**).

Counting himself, that made for 7 Jewish persons present at Cornelius home in Caesarea.

Egyptian law, which the Jews would know well, said, seven witnesses were necessary completely to prove a case.

In Roman law, which they would also know well, seven seals were necessary to authenticate a really important document.

Peter was not arguing with them. He simply stated the facts. Facts to which there were seven witnesses. Now you decide for yourself. Was It of God or not?

The proof of Christianity always lies in facts.

I doubt whether anyone has ever been argued or debated into Christianity by verbal proofs and logical demonstrations.

Christianity's proof is that it works.

That it does change men,

that it does make bad men good,

that it does bring the Spirit of God's presence into men's lives

It is when a man's deeds do not match his words, we must doubt the sincerity of his Christianity.

It is when a man's words are proven and confirmed by his deeds that the world is presented with an argument for Christianity which cannot be argued were debated away.

Peter recounts how he came to minister to Gentiles

4) Peter began and explained everything to them precisely as it had happened: 5) "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. 6) I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds of the air. 7) Then I heard a voice telling me, 'Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.'

8) "I replied, 'Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.'

9) "The voice spoke from heaven a second time, 'Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.' 10) This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again.

11) "Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. 12) The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man's house. 13) He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. 14) He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.'

15) "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning.

Peter's account of the events while staying with Simon the Tanner in Joppa is a condensation of Acts 10:9-43.

(The fact that this "righteous Jew" was staying with a Tanner seems to be lost on his accusers. Or, Peter simply did not mention it in the subject never came up.

When presenting the facts, always tell the truth, don't always tell it!)

'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels,' (Isaiah 61:10).

God has cleansed us, why not others ?

Sometimes it's very hard for us to receive the grace of God graciously.

There's something in us that seems to say,

'I don't deserve that kind of unconditional, unmerited love. I've got to earn it. I've got to prove myself worthy of it.'

That often leads to the thought,

if I don't deserve God's cleansing, you certainly don't.

If I can barely be saved, given your condition, it's hopeless!

We make the same mistake as the Jews did in Peter's day.

Jesus payment for sin and God salvation is not exclusive.

What God has cleansed, we have no right to call unclean.

It is the Holy Spirit presence in them, and us, that is God's stamp of approval.

Verse 15: the Holy Spirit came on them is he, us at the beginning. That was the stamp of approval for Peter's ministry to the Gentiles;

If God has approved them, how could these believing Jews withhold their own approval?

We must not try to justify ourselves by comparing our past or present with others.

We can't make others worse than we were – apart from Christ we can't make ourselves better than they.

It is only when we remember that it is only in Jesus work and sacrifice on our behalf that anyone – self included – has standing before God that we will begin to see that there is 'Hope for all the world'

Peter interprets these events

16) Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17) So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?"

18) When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life."

Peter's defense was: If God was moving His ministry out to the Gentiles, who am I to withstand God?

And, for that matter, who are you to set yourself against God?

It is critically important for us to sense where God is going, and then head in that same direction.

It is not a matter of trying to convince God to go your way, but for us to go His way.

The Jewish believers in the Jerusalem church are stunned.

There is silence. No one raises any more objections.

Their reaction was one of amazement, almost resignation to the inevitable and they submit themselves to God's plan.

But, it would it would not be too long until the traditionalists, would raise their voices in objections, trying again to impose Jewish tradition -- and in so doing justify their own past mistakes -- on the new Gentile believers.

3 fights the Judaizers fight and lose:

- 1] Keep the Christian faith exclusively Jewish – do not admit Gentiles – focal point: eating/mixing with gentiles
- 2] Force the Christian Gentiles to observe Jewish law and tradition – focal point: circumcision
- 3] Force the Christian Jews to continue to observe Jewish law and tradition

The church in Antioch multiplies with Gentile believers

19) Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to 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.



Phoenicia: strip of Mediterranean coast between Caesarea, northward 100 miles, 1/2 way to Antioch.

Cyprus: rich and productive island Southwest of Seleucia.

Cyrene lay on the south shore of Mediterranean, between Carthage and Egypt.

Simon of Cyrene, who carried Jesus' cross, was from here.

Antioch was founded about 300 BC Seleucus I, one of Alexander the Great's generals.

He had an Obsession, founding 15 cities, naming them all after his father, Antioch

This city of Antioch was called "Syrian Antioch" or "Antioch on the Orantes." It was considered by many the third greatest city in the Empire, behind Rome and Alexandria.

She stood near the mouth of the river Orontes, 15 miles from the Mediterranean Sea. Flowing some 200 miles, it bends westward by the mountain chain of Amanus, after flowing Southwest it empties into the Mediterranean.

It was at the bend of this river, on its left bank, that Seleucus Nicator, one of Alexander's greatest generals and successors, and the founder of the Seleucid dynasty of Greek kings of Syria, built the city of Antioch. It was the capital of the Syrian empire then extended into what we know as Turkey.

Enjoying unequalled advantages—natural and geographical—it rose to be the Queen of the East. (Harbor at Seleucia on the Mediterranean; open country lay to the east of Lebanon range) called the Grove of Daphne; Antioch's main street was 4 miles long...

Syrian Antioch was known for its sophistication and culture,

but it was also known for its immorality

Antioch was famous for her chariot-racing

and for a kind of deliberate pursuit of pleasure which went on literally night and day;

Antioch was most famous for the worship of Daphne whose temple stood five miles out of the town amidst its laurel groves.

The legend was that Daphne was a mortal maid with whom Apollo fell in love.

He pursued her and for her safety Daphne was changed into a laurel bush.

The priestesses of the Temple of Daphne were sacred prostitutes and nightly in the laurel groves the pursuit was reenacted by the worshippers and the priestesses.

"The morals of Daphne" was a phrase that all the world knew for loose living.

It was here where the ancient Syrian worship of Astarte (from which we get the name Easter) and her consort, with its ritual prostitution, was carried out.

In Luke's day it was a city of more than half a million;

today it is a Turkish city of about 3,500.

As Christians scattered over the Roman Empire they initially preached only to Jews.

Eventually they began to present Christ in the gospel to the Gentiles as well.

Remember what God has done so far. It is incredible that he chooses Antioch to begin the Gentile church

- o First, Philip preached to the Samaritans; but the Samaritans after all were half Jewish and formed, as it were, a bridge, between the Jewish and the Gentile world.

- o Second, Peter accepted Cornelius; but it was Cornelius who took the initiative. It was not the Christian Church who sought Cornelius; it was Cornelius who sought the Christian Church.

Further, it is stressed that Cornelius was a God-fearer and, therefore, on the fringes of the Jewish faith.

- o Third, in Antioch the Church did not go to people who were Jews or half Jews, nor wait to be approached by Gentiles seeking admission; of a set purpose and without waiting for the invitation, it preached the gospel to the Gentiles.

Christianity is finally launched on its world-wide mission.

We do not even know the names of the people who took this latest critical step. All we know is that they came from Cyprus and Cyrene.

One of the tragedies of the Church is that churchmen have desired to be noticed and named when they did something worth while.

What the Church -- the body of Christ -- needs, is people who never care who gains the credit for it so long as the work is done.

These men may not have written their names in men's books of history; but they have written them forever in God's Book of Life.

The unnamed disciples from Cyprus and Cyrene are the real first missionaries.

Although they fled Jerusalem due to persecution following Stephen's death, they began the first mentioned "mission to the Gentiles" (Hellenists) in Antioch. In Antioch

Even though they couldn't see it at the time, God had a plan and purpose for them to fulfill.

Here, we have the first Christians deliberately targeting Gentiles for evangelism - and God blessing their witness with great results.

Notice that the Christian work at Antioch commenced without Jerusalem.

It began as a result of Christians fleeing persecution.

It began almost unknowingly and unintentionally.

It began by Christians simply living their lives in front of watching world -- being holy; different and unique.

The ministry of Barnabas in Antioch

22) News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23) When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, 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.

When the leaders of the church at Jerusalem got word of what was going on at Antioch they naturally sent down to investigate the situation.

Of all the people they could have sent, they sent the man with the biggest heart in the Church.

Barnabas was known for his generosity (4:36-37) and

His warm acceptance of Saul of Tarsus after he was converted was unique (9:26-28).

While Barnabas certainly adhered to laws and traditions he was not bound were limited by them.

Once at the church in Antioch, when Barnabas saw the grace of God, he was glad.

How does someone see the grace of God in us?

What does it look like? What do they look for?

Can people see the grace of God at our church?

Or do they see a legal relationship with God?

Remember the lesson God taught Peter on Simon the tanners roof. What God has cleansed, don't you reject.

Grace – God's Riches at Christ's Expense

Undeserved favor and blessing

Mercy – withholding deserved condemnation, judgment and punishment

A gracious hostess bestows care, and favor, and welcome because of who and what she is – not because of who and what her guest is.

Barnabas rightly focuses on the main job of a leader of a congregation -- strengthening the church itself,

The result was -- and will still be today -- that a great many people are added to the Lord.

23] Exhorted them.

Barnabas = "son of comfort," "son of exhortation."

23] ...he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

It's the heart that's important, not the mind,

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," (Romans 10:10).

Why is the Lord so interested in the heart, because the mind can change very quickly, and very easily.

I can change my mind about something 100 times in a given day.

I can go back and forth and back and forth depending on what I hear, the conclusions I make, the information I have.

The Lord is not after an intellectual assertion.

He desires heartfelt unification.

The Lord knows that if my faith is intellectual only, academic arguments about evolution or existentialism will cause me to get confused and to vacillate.

But if my heart is His, even though I may not be able to counter intellectual assaults, my relationship with Him will remain secure.

Barnabas was the first to recognize the genuineness of Saul's conversion.

As the church in Antioch grows, the work becomes too big for Barnabas alone. He remembers Saul who is still in Tarsus.

Barnabas goes to Tarsus to get Saul to bring him back to Antioch to help in the ministry there.

Interesting: that when he goes to Antioch and sees he needs help, he does not return to Jerusalem. Instead he tracks down Saul in Tarsus.

Our last contact with Saul was when he was escaping by way of Caesarea to Tarsus (Ac.9:30).

It has been about 9 years (not days, weeks, or months, but **years**) since we last met Saul In the pages of Acts

Note: These years were not "wasted" or "lost," but spent in quiet ministry and preparation for future service.

This was not 6 weeks of a 1 hour Bible study that they undertook:

Once they returned to Antioch, they spent another year teaching the new Christians the "basics" of life in Christ.

Together they teach a great many people, which has the effect of making the church in Antioch strong.

V26] The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

It was in Antioch that the followers of Jesus were first called "Christians."

The title began as a nickname.

It was a contemptuous nickname; but the Christians took it and made it known to all the world.

By their lives they made it a name not of contempt but of respect and admiration and even wonder.

"Christians": a Greek word with a Latin termination

...no longer a sect of Hebraism.

The suffix "ian" designated "the party of";

A Christian was "of the party of Jesus".

Soldiers under particular generals in the Roman army would identify themselves by their general's name by adding "ian" to the end;

a soldier under Caesar would call himself a Caesarian.

Christ's soldiers are Christians.

The term probably began as a derision of believers, calling them "Little Jesus People,"

the believers appreciated the title so much that it stuck.

"Christians" is sort of like saying "Jesusites" or "Jesus people"

Christian means: "These Christ-folk". Those belonging to the party of Christ.

A prophetic word comes, announcing a famine

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, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. 30) This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

In the early Church, broadly speaking, there were three sets of leaders.

- (i) There were the Apostles. Their authority was not confined to one place; their writ ran through the whole Church; and they were looked upon as being in a very real sense the successors of Jesus.
- (ii) There were the Elders. They were the local officials and their authority was confined to the place where they were set apart.
- (iii) There were the Prophets.

Perpetual variety Apostolic gift, evangelistic gifts, prophetic gifts, and the pastoral gifts (Cf. Eph 4:11). No one man can win a soul.

Here the prophets come upon the scene.

In the early Church they were very important. They are mentioned again in Ac.13:1; 15:32; 21:9-10.

"Prophet" means both a fore-teller and a forth-teller.

They foretold the future; but even more they foretold the will of God.
They were not attached to any one local church.
They were held in the highest honour.

The ancient book from that time. Come "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles", dates to about A.D. 100. It contains the first order of service -- the weekly bulletin, if you will -- of the Church.

The order for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is laid down.

Then it is said that the prophets are to be allowed to conduct the service as they will.

Men knew that the prophets had special gifts. But the gift carried special dangers too.

The career of prophet was one which a man might undertake not from the highest but from the lowest of motives.

False prophets existed, men who simply battered on the charity of the Church.

The same book, "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" warns against the prophet who in a vision asks for money or for a meal.

It instructs that prophets should always be given hospitality for one night but says that if they desire to stay longer without working they are false prophets.

The Christians take the word seriously, and begin preparations to meet the needs.

Secular sources document that Claudius's reign was marked by a succession of bad harvests and consequent scarcity in various parts of the empire - 1st & 2nd years, at Rome 4th year, in Judea 9th year, in Greece 11th year, in Rome

But the high regard that Barnabas and Saul were held in is evident by the fact that they were trusted with the relief fund.

Notice who sent support to who.

Remember, the church at Antioch was not a church plant from the church at Jerusalem.

The church at Jerusalem was still struggling with the whole idea of Gentile Christians.

This is the first spontaneous gathering of voluntary relief for the brethren in Judea.

It was unthinkable that one part of the Church should be in trouble and that another should do nothing about it. Even though they were still far away from a congregational outlook; they had that width of vision which saw the Church as a whole.

When love for and trust of God takes over in a born again life all things are made new. Old ideas grudges and prejudices are dropped. A new attitude of love and compassion for God's family -- even those you've never met or who may have offended you -- takes their place.

The result is a new way of living.

“One Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is in all, and through all” (Eph 4:5,6).