

Antioch, City of Faith

The book of Acts records the history of the early church and the spread of the Word of God and the Gospel. We read of the work of the Apostles under the direction of the Holy Spirit preaching, teaching, copying and distributing Scriptures, and building churches.

A very important city God used during this time was **Antioch** in Syria. The Church that was founded by the Apostles in Antioch became a training center and missionary headquarters of the early church.

Let's read what the Bible says about Antioch:

Acts 11:21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

The first half of Act chapter 11 tells of Peter ministering to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius in Caesarea and the ministry of Stephen in several other places. In Acts 11:21 reports from these ministries came in to the Church of Jerusalem.

Acts 11:22 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.

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.

The church at Jerusalem had a meeting and read all these reports. The commissions Barnabas to go to Antioch. Verse 23 tells us Barnabas was glad. He felt the call of God for Antioch. He was ready to go.

Notice what kind of man Barnabas was:

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. **Good** man
2. **Spirit filled**
3. Man of **Faith**
4. Effective **soul winner**

Barnabas then went to Tarsus to find Saul (later known as the Apostle Paul). They went together and spent a year teaching, preaching, and building the church of Antioch

25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:

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.

Later Paul and Barnabas went out from Antioch and made a journey to many other cities in the area. You can read about that missionary journey in Acts 13 and 14.

(Acts 13:2-3) As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. (KJV)

Let's take a tour of Paul's First Missionary Journey.

The first stop is Seleucia. (Acts 13:4)

Next, they traveled to the island of Cyprus. (Acts 13:4-13)

In Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas Preached in the cities of Salamis and Paphos. In Paphos, they were opposed by a sorcerer (false prophet) who was trying to destroy people's faith. Paul rebuked the sorcerer and told him God would bring blindness to him. The Sorcerer immediately lost his sight for several days.

The next stop on Paul and Barnabas' journey was the city of Perga in Pamphylia.

From Perga they travelled north to another city called Antioch. This Antioch was in the province of Pisidia.

In Antioch of Pisidia, Paul preached a powerful sermon and stirred up so much interest in the Gospel that almost the entire city gathered on the next week to hear him preach again.

(Acts 13:44) And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. (KJV)

Antioch of Syria was where Paul and Barnabas started their journey. Now in Antioch of Pisidia, the Gospel really began having a powerful impact on the

entire region. Both cities are very important in early church history and in God's preservation of the Bible.

Acts 13:49 is a very important key verse.

(Acts 13:49) And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. (KJV)

The description of Barnabas we read earlier became true of the people of Antioch who were under his influence.

They became Good, Spirit Filled, Full of Faith, and Powerful soul winners just like Barnabas.

From Antioch and the surrounding areas, the Scriptures were hand copied by faithful people of God who were filled with the Holy Spirit. They were under the direct influence of Paul and Barnabas.

This region was the perfect place for God to continue the process of preserving His Word to every generation.

1. It was in a **central location**
2. The people were Spirit Filled
3. They worked directly with the **Apostle Paul and Barnabas**
4. They were missionary minded

The Jewish leaders in Antioch were envious of Paul and Barnabas and ran them out of town, but God's work could not be stopped. (Acts 13:50)

Leaving Antioch, Paul and Barnabas moved on to Iconium. In Iconium, some believed others fought against them. The opposition was so strong, some were threatening to kill Paul and Barnabas. (Acts 14:5)

Paul and Barnabas continued their journey through Lystra where they met with some who believe and more who hated them. In Lystra, evil men stoned Paul and left him outside the city thinking he was dead. (Acts 14:19-20) Paul recovered and they moved on to Derbe.

To read the entire account of Paul's journey, Read Acts 13 and 14.

Acts 13:27 is the wonderful KEY VERSE that gives us the results of what the Word of God did during this journey.

(Acts 14:27) And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. (KJV)

The Word of God OPENED the door of FAITH unto the Gentiles.

How was the door of faith opened to the Gentiles?

By the Word of God.

(Romans 10:17) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Because the Antioch church in Syria believed and honored the Scriptures, the entire region heard the Gospel. Paul and Barnabas believed what they preached and were willing to risk their lives to preserve and preach the Word of God.