

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS 11

Ver. 1. *And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea*, etc.] The rest of the twelve apostles, and the private members of the churches that were in Judea, for there were in it now more churches than that at Jerusalem, (~~408~~ Acts 9:31)

heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God; as well as Samaria, (~~408~~ Acts 8:14) the news by some means or other were quickly brought to them, and no doubt but they also heard that they had received the Holy Ghost, his extraordinary gifts, as well as his special grace, though no mention is made of them.

Ver. 2. *And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem*, etc.] From Caesarea, after he had stayed some certain days in Cornelius's house; so a journey from Caesarea to Jerusalem is called an ascending from the one to the other, (~~420~~ Acts 25:1) because Jerusalem stood on higher ground, as well as was the metropolis of the country; and this was a journey of six hundred furlongs, or seventy five miles, for so far, according to Josephus ^{f547}, was Caesarea distant from Jerusalem:

they that were of the circumcision, which phrase designs not only the circumcised Jews that believed in Christ, for such were all they of the church at Jerusalem, or at least proselytes that had been circumcised, for as yet there were no uncircumcised Gentiles among them; but those of them, who were most strenuous for circumcision, and made it not only a bar of church communion, but even of civil conversation:

these contended with him; litigated the point, disputed the matter with him, complained against him, and quarrelled with him. Epiphanius says ^{f548}, that Cerinthus, that arch-heretic, was at the head of this contention.

Ver. 3. *Saying, thou wentest into men uncircumcised*, etc.] Into the houses of such, and lodged with them, and familiarly conversed with them:

and didst eat with them; which, according to the traditions of the Jews, were unlawful; (See Gill on “~~4108~~ Acts 10:28”) they say nothing about his preaching to them, and baptizing them, because these were so manifestly agreeable to the commission of Christ, in (~~4139~~ Matthew 28:19 ~~4165~~ Mark 16:15) and yet how these could be without the other, is not easy to say.

Ver. 4. *But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning*, etc.] Of the vision at Joppa;

and expounded it by order unto them; or related every particular, in a very methodical and orderly manner: he did not insist upon his authority as an apostle, and much less pretended to a primacy to the rest of the apostles; but submitted to have his case heard, examined, and judged of by the body of the brethren.

Ver. 5. *I was in the city of Joppa*, etc.] And so it is called by Josephus ^{f549}, and in the Apocrypha:

“And he pitched his tents against Joppa: but; they of Joppa shut him out of the city, because Apollonius had a garrison there.” (1 Maccabees 10:75)

“The men of Joppa also did such an ungodly deed: they prayed the Jews that dwelt among them to go with their wives and children into the boats which they had prepared, as though they had meant them no hurt.” (2 Maccabees 12:3)

here he was praying in an house of Simon the tanner, upon the top of it, and about the sixth hour of the day, or twelve o’clock at noon, which was one of the times of prayer with the Jews; (See Gill on “~~4400~~ Acts 10:9”),

and in a trance I saw a vision; with the eyes of his understanding; for the organs of his body were quite senseless and useless, which was as follows:

a certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet; a vessel which looked like a great sheet,

let down from heaven by four corners; to the earth, which four corners were knit, and perhaps were held and let down by angels, and in this visionary way were seen by Peter, though not expressed:

and it came even to me; descended upon the housetop where Peter was praying; and which was necessary, that he might see what was upon it, and

receive instruction from it; and that it was very near him is evident from what is after said to him, when he was bid to arise, and kill and eat what was upon it; and therefore it could not be hanging in the air, but must be let down upon the very spot where he was.

Ver. 6. *Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes*, etc.] Not of his body, but of his mind; for this was only in vision presented to him, when he was as Paul was, not knowing whether in the body or out of it:

I considered: being intent upon this object, he considered in his mind what it was, and what it should mean; it being something strange and unusual; which came down from heaven, and out of it, and came so close and near to him, that it engrossed all his thoughts, and was the subject of deep meditation:

and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air; not pourtrayed upon the sheet, but standing or walking upon it; the Syriac Version leaves out, “the wild beasts”; and the Ethiopic versions, “the creeping things”; but both are in the Greek copies, and in other versions.

Ver. 7. *And I heard a voice saying unto me*, etc.] As he apprehended in his mind; and this voice he heard in the same sense and manner, as the Apostle Paul heard when in a trance, (~~4027~~ Acts 22:17,18 ~~4710~~ 2 Corinthians 12:4).

arise, Peter, slay and eat; that is, get up and slay some of these creatures upon the sheet, and dress them and eat them.

Ver. 8. *But I said, not so, Lord*, etc.] For he took the voice he heard to be the voice of the Lord, and yet he was not obedient to the heavenly vision, and even though he was an hungry; which shows what a strict observer he was of the ceremonies of the law, and how much he was prejudiced in favour of them:

for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth; he had not suffered anything to come within his lips; he had not even tasted, and much less ate anything that was forbidden by the ceremonial law, so strictly had he observed it.

Ver. 9. *But the voice answered me again from heaven*, etc.] From whence the former voice came, and was the voice of the Lord, or of an angel of the Lord, and which answered him again, or

a second time; not that it said to him a second time kill and eat, but what follows;

what God hath cleansed, that call not thou common; that is, had declared to be clean and fit for use, and did not defile, and could not defile the man into whose mouth it entered, and therefore ought not to be pronounced unclean, and of a defiling nature; this Jesus Christ did, who is God over all blessed for ever, and by whose death an end was put to the ceremonial law, and the distinctions of meats by it; (<4051>Matthew 15:11 <5144>Romans 14:14).

Ver. 10. *And this was done three times*, etc.] That is, the voice from heaven answered three times, and encouraged Peter to kill and eat; and so the Ethiopic version renders it, “and he likewise said unto me the third time”; the words as before:

and all were drawn up again into heaven; the sheet with all the creatures upon it, by the same hands that let it down; the Syriac version renders it, “and all betook themselves to heaven”; as if it all went up to heaven of itself; and the Ethiopic version, “and the whole returned again to heaven”; (See Gill on “<4006>Acts 10:16”).

Ver. 11. *And behold, immediately*, etc.] The moment the vision was over; *there were three men already come unto the house where I was*; they stood before the gate, as in (<4007>Acts 10:17) and as the Syriac and Ethiopic here have it, and were inquiring for Peter, whether he lodged there; and these men were

sent from Caesarea unto me; the Syriac version adds, “by Cornelius”: now this incident being just at the close of the above vision, served greatly to explain it to the apostle, and encouraged him to do what he had done; and besides which, he had also the express order of the Spirit, for his going with them to Cornelius’s house, as follows.

Ver. 12. *And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting*, etc.] (see Gill on “<4008>Acts 10:20”),

moreover, these six brethren accompanied me; it seems by this, that the six brethren that went along with Peter from Joppa to Caesarea, came also with him from thence to Jerusalem, and were now present, whom he points to; so that it looks as if Peter was aware, that he should be called to an account for his conduct, when he should come to Jerusalem; and therefore

brought these six brethren with him, to be witnesses for him, of what they had seen and heard, which was a very wise and prudential step:

and we entered into the man's house; the house of Cornelius, for entering into whose house they were contending with him, and where he entered not alone, but the six brethren with him; the Ethiopic version wrongly reads "three".

Ver. 13. *And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house*, etc.] The clause, "in his house", is very appropriately put; for since an angel had entered into his house, it could not be criminal in Peter, and the six brethren, to follow him. In one place he is called a man, and in another place an angel; (see ~~400B~~ Acts 10:3,30), because, though he was an angel, yet he appeared in the form of a man, as it was usual for angels to do; but whether Cornelius knew that he was an angel, is not certain, since he calls him a man; and not he, but Luke the historian, and Peter, who repeats the account of the vision, call him an angel; however, he looked upon him as an extraordinary person, as sent to him from God, and therefore obeyed the heavenly vision. The Ethiopic version reads, "an angel of God; which stood and said unto him, send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter"; (See Gill on "~~400B~~ Acts 10:5").

Ver. 14. *Who shall tell thee words*, etc.] Preach doctrines, such as relate to the person and office of Christ, to peace and pardon, and righteousness and salvation by him; such as Peter did preach, as appears by his discourse in the preceding chapter:

whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved; that is, which would be a means of instructing him and his family in the right and true way of salvation; for the Gospel only points out the way of salvation, and is only effectual to it, when it is accompanied with, the power of God: multitudes hear it, and yet are not saved by and those to whom it comes not in word only, but in power, are saved only by Christ, who is revealed in it, as God's way of salvation; it is not bare hearing the word and attending on ordinances that will save any, only such who believe in Christ with the heart, who is the sum and substance of the Gospel, are saved; and still less are any saved by the faith of others; the house or family of Cornelius were not saved by his believing in Christ; but the words of faith and sound doctrine being preached to them, as to him, and faith coming thereby to one as to another, they were saved in one and the same way, namely, through faith in Christ Jesus.

Ver. 15. *And as I began to speak*, etc.], That is, whilst he was speaking; the word “begin” with Luke, both, in his Gospel and in this history, is used not to denote the time or order of any action, but the thing itself; as in (~~402~~ Luke 4:21 20:9 ~~400~~ Acts 1:1) for otherwise it was towards the close, and not at the beginning of his discourse, that what follows happened:

the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning; of our ministry, since the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; meaning on the day of Pentecost, and that the Holy Ghost fell on Cornelius and those that were with him, in a like visible form, and in the same kind of gifts, as speaking with tongues, as on them.

Ver. 16. *Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said*, etc.] Just before his ascension, (~~405~~ Acts 1:5).

John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost; as they were on the day of Pentecost, and as now Cornelius and his family were; and since they had the greater baptism, the baptism of the Spirit, the lesser baptism of water could not be denied them.

Ver. 17. *Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift*, etc.] Of the Spirit, of speaking with divers tongues:

as he did unto us; the apostles: who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ: which clause stands either connected with “us” the apostles, and so is descriptive of them who first believed in Christ, and became followers of him; or with “them” the Gentiles, as the Syriac version renders it, “if therefore God gave that gift equally to these Gentiles which believed on our Lord Jesus Christ, as unto us”; for it seems most likely, that faith in Christ came by hearing Peter’s discourse, before the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit fell upon them:

what was I that I could withstand God? or hinder the baptism of these persons in water, whom God baptized with the Holy Ghost, and who believed in Christ Jesus: from whence it appears that the Spirit of God is a gift, which he bestows on whomsoever he pleases, without any desert of man’s, and that both in his extraordinary operations, and in the common influences of his grace; for it is equally the gift of God to believe in Christ, which is a grace of the Spirit, as it was to speak with divers tongues; and these, though they did not always go together, yet here they did, as on the apostles, so on Cornelius and his house: and hence they became qualified for the ordinance of baptism; not by the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit,

but by his special grace; the extraordinary gifts were partly to confirm the Gospel preached unto them by Peter; and partly to assure him that he was right in going in to the Gentiles, and preaching to them; and to encourage him to baptize these persons who appeared to have also the grace of the Spirit, and to have believed in Christ; as well as to fit them, at least some of them, for public work and service: and now faith in Christ being a pre-requisite to baptism, and it being the will of Christ, and what he gave in commission to his disciples to baptize such as believed in him, and these being apparently such; to have refused to administer baptism to them, would have been acting contrary to the commission of Christ, a withstanding the will of God, and opposing the grace of the Spirit of God.

Ver. 18. *When they heard these things*, etc.] Peter's vision at Joppa, and Cornelius's at Caesarea, and the wonderful pouring forth of the Spirit upon these Gentiles under Peter's sermon:

they held their peace; and ceased contending and disputing with Peter, or blaming him for his conduct; for otherwise they were not silent, but made use of their tongues:

and glorified God; praised his name, adored his rich grace, and gave him the glory of all the wonderful things related to them:

saying, then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life. The phrase "unto life", is left out in the Ethiopic version, which only reads, "God hath also given to the Gentiles that they should repent"; but it ought not to be omitted, being in the Greek copies in general, and of considerable moment, rightly understood; the Arabic version directs to a wrong sense of it, "perhaps God hath given also to the Gentiles repentance, that they may live by it"; the word "perhaps", is very wrongly put instead of "then", which affirms that God had given them repentance, whereas this makes a doubt of it; and upon a supposition of it, the version ascribes too much to it; for it is not by repentance that men live spiritually, but by faith in Christ Jesus; nor do they obtain eternal life by it, but by Christ; though true repentance is an evidence of spiritual life, and it begins with it, for as soon as ever God quickens a sinner, he shows him the evil of sin, and gives him repentance for it: "repentance" here designs the grace of evangelical repentance, which is attended with faith in Christ, as it was in these Gentiles, and with views of pardon in Christ, and which springs from the love of God, and this is "unto life"; is a repentance from dead works, and is attended with a life of faith, and issues in eternal life: and it is also a

“grant” from God; it is not in the power of man’s free will, who though he may have time and means, yet if he has not grace given him to repent, he never will; his heart is hard and obdurate, and no means will do without an almighty power; not the most severe judgments, nor the greatest mercies, nor the most powerful ministry; it is a pure gift of God’s free grace, and a blessing of the covenant of grace: and this being given to Gentiles, shows that the covenant of grace belongs to them, as well as to the Jews; and discovers a false opinion of the Jews, that the Gentiles should not be saved; and answers the design of the Gospel being sent among them, whereby the doctrines both of repentance and remission are preached unto them; and opens the glorious mystery of the calling of them, and may encourage sinners of the Gentiles to hope for this grace, and apply to Christ for it, who is exalted to give it.

Ver. 19. *Now they which were scattered abroad,* etc.] These were not the apostles, but the other ministers of the word; (see ^{<488>}Acts 8:1) who were dispersed

upon the persecution that arose about Stephen; his preaching and miracles, his oration in defence of himself, and his death: these

travelled as far as Phenice; a country near to Syria and Galilee; its chief towns and cities were Tripolis, Botrys, Biblus, Berytus, Tyre, Sidon, Ecdippa, Ptolemais, and Dora. It was famous, as Pliny says ^{f550}, for the invention of letters, and of the constellations, and of naval and warlike arts. It was a maritime country, reaching from Orthosia (now called Tortosa) to Pelusium, or from Sidon to the borders of Egypt: it is the same with Old Canaan, and was so called, and had its name from Canaan; who, according to Sanchuniathon ^{f551}, also had the name of Phoenix, from whom this country was called Phoenice, or Phoenicia. Some think the name is the same with qn[p, “Pahanah”, or qn[twap, “Peoth Anak”, the corners of the Anakites; it being the tract of land which the children of Anak, or the giants inhabited, when drove out of Hebron by Caleb, (^{<651>}Joshua 15:13,14). Others say, it had its name from the palm trees, with which it abounded; and here, it seems, dwelt some of God’s elect, who being made righteous, flourished like the palm trees;

and Cyprus and Antioch; the former of these was an island, lying between the shores of Syria and Cilicia: it had Syria on the east, Pamphilia on the west, and Phoenice on the south, and Cilicia on the north; (See Gill on

“~~(406)~~ Acts 4:36”) and the latter was a city of Syria, built by Seleucus, king of Egypt, and called Antiochia, after his father’s name Antiochus. The account Josephus gives ^{f552} of it is, that it is the metropolis of Syria, and that for its greatness, and other happy acquirements, it has, without doubt, the third place among the cities in the Roman empire; meaning, that it was the next to Rome and Alexandria: and elsewhere ^{f553} he calls it the palace or royal seat of the Syrians; and the Jews, when they speak of a great city, and would describe one, instance in Antioch, a great city, say they ^{f554}, as Antioch; with them, it is the same as Hemath the great, spoken of in (~~(306)~~ Amos 6:2) on which words Jerom has this note:

“Hemath the great is what is now called Antioch; and it is called the great, to distinguish it from the lesser Hemath, which is called Epiphania”

And so the Jerusalem Targum on (~~(1018)~~ Genesis 10:18) renders the Hamathite, “Antioch”: and the Targum of Jonathan on (~~(4121)~~ Numbers 13:21) renders Hamath by “Antioch”. Here many Jews dwelt, to whom the ministers of the word preached the Gospel only at first. Josephus ^{f555} speaks of many in this place, and gives reasons for it:

“the nation of the Jews, he says, was much spread throughout the whole world, and great part of Syria, because near, was mixed with them, especially there were many in Antioch; partly because of the greatness of the city, and chiefly because of the liberty of dwelling there, granted them by the successors of Antiochus; for Antiochus, called Epiphanes, having wasted Jerusalem, robbed the temple; but those that reigned after him, whatsoever among the things devoted to sacred use were of brass, they returned to the Jews in Antioch, to be laid up in their synagogue; and they granted to them equally to partake of the city with the Greeks; and many of the Grecians they brought over to their religion, and made them, in some sort, a part of themselves.”

Here the Jews also had schools and taught: it is said ^{f556} R. Samlai taught in Antioch; and here also was a sanhedrim. It is often said ^{f557}, that Nebuchadnezzar came and sat down at Daphne of Antioch, and the great sanhedrim went out to meet him. Now Antioch was formerly called Epidaphne, because it was near a fountain of that name; and in the Targumists on (~~(9811)~~ Numbers 34:11) Daphne answers to Riblah, which was in the land of Hamath, (~~(1233)~~ 2 Kings 23:33) and Riblah, Jerom ^{f558} says, is

what is now called Antioch of Syria: and that you may know, says he, that Riblah signifies this city, which is now the most noble in Coele Syria, it follows, over against the fountain, (in Numbers it is, “on the east side of Ain”.) which, it is clear, signifies Daphne, out of which fountain the above said city enjoys abundance of water. And so Josephus calls Antioch ^{f559}, Antiochia which is by Daphne of Syria; and in:

“Which when Onias knew of a surety, he reprov'd him, and withdrew himself into a sanctuary at Daphne, that lieth by Antiochia.” (2 Maccabees 4:33)

Daphne is said to be by Antioch. Some make it to be two hundred and eighty miles from Jerusalem. So far they went who were scattered abroad at Stephen's death, and carried the Gospel to this and other places, in which there was a manifest appearance of divine Providence, and of rich grace.

Preaching the word to none but to the Jews only, which dwelt in those parts; so little was the commission of Christ, to preach the Gospel to all nations, understood, though it was so plain; or so it was ordered in providence, that as it was to be first preached to them, so it should be only for a while, till the elect of God of that generation were brought in, and until the rest put it away from them, and so were left without excuse.

Ver. 20. *And some of them were men of Cyprus*, etc.] That is, some of the preachers, that were scattered abroad, were Jews born at Cyprus: such was Barnabas particularly, (⁴⁰⁶⁵Acts 4:36) though he was not among these, as appears from (⁴¹¹²Acts 11:22) “and Cyrene”; such were Simon that carried the cross after Christ, and his sons Alexander and Rufus, (⁴¹⁵¹Mark 15:21) and others that heard the apostles speak with tongues on the day of Pentecost, (⁴²¹⁰Acts 2:10)

which when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians; or Hellenist Jews, who were born and brought up in Greece, and spoke the Greek language; though the Alexandrian copy, and the Syriac version, read “Greeks”, as if they were native Greeks, and properly Gentiles, to whom these ministers spoke the word of the Lord; but the former seems most likely.

Preaching the Lord Jesus; the dignity of his person, as the Son of God; what he did and suffered to obtain salvation for lost sinners; his resurrection from the dead, ascension to heaven, and intercession; the

virtue of his blood for peace and pardon of his sacrifice for atonement of sin, and of his righteousness for justification.

Ver. 21. *And the hand of the Lord was with them,* etc.] Not only his hand of providence, which brought them thither, and protected them; and his hand of love, grace and mercy, which was upon them, and supplied them with gifts and grace, and everything necessary for them; and his hand of wisdom, which guided and directed them; but his hand of power, the same with the arm of the Lord, which when revealed, and made bare, the report of the Gospel is believed: but if that is not put forth, or efficacious grace is not exerted, no work is done, none are brought to believe, or are converted; ministers labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought: but this was not the case here, it was otherwise with these preachers; though they had travelled many miles, and were come into strange places, they were not left of God, nor without success, the power of God attended their ministry; so that the Gospel preached by them came not in word only, but in power, and it was the power of God unto salvation: hence it follows,

and a great number believed; not the Gospel only, but in Christ preached in it, (^{<4111>}Acts 11:20) which was not owing to the force of moral persuasion in the ministers, nor to the power of free will in the people, but to the hand or power of the Lord; for the work of faith is not a work of man's will, but of God's almighty power and grace; and when that is displayed, multitudes believe in Christ for righteousness and life: and turned to the Lord; and obeyed his commands; (see ^{<4111>}Psalm 119:59,60) as a fruit, effect, and consequence of believing in Christ; for not first conversion is here intended, which is not man's work, but God's, and in which God is the agent, and man is passive; but obedience to the ordinances of Christ, as the fruit of faith, is meant.

Ver. 22. *Then tidings of these things,* etc.] Of the spread of the Gospel in several parts, and the success of it in the conversion of sinners, especially at Antioch:

came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem; these tidings were brought to the apostles and brethren there, by messengers which the ministers of the word sent unto them to let them know what success they met with; notwithstanding the persecution raised against the church of Jerusalem at the death of Stephen, and the havoc that was made of the members of it, and the dispersion of others, yet it still continued a church, and so it did for ages after: there are reckoned fifteen bishops of it unto the

times of Trajan, and the destruction of the city by him, when the Jews were no longer suffered to live in it; and they are these, James the brother of our Lord, Simeon, Justus, Zacchaeus, Tobias, Benjamin, John, Matthias, Philip, Seneca, Justus, Levi, Ephres, Joseph, and Judas; and these are said ^{f560} to be all originally Hebrews: but after the destruction of the city by Trajan, and the Jews were forbid inhabiting it, the church consisted of Gentiles only; and of them bishops were constituted over it, and were as follow: Marcus, Cassianus, Publius, Maximus, Julianus, Gaianus, Symmachus, Caius, another Julianus, Capito, another Maximus, Antoninus, Valens, Dolychianus, Narcissus, Aelius, Germanio, Gordius, and another Narcissus; all these governed this church in the “second” century: and in the “third” century, the bishops of this church were Alexander, Mazabanes, Labdas, and Hermon, who was the last before the Dioclesian persecution: in the “fourth” century, Macarins, Maximus, and Cyril, presided over it; and these were succeeded in the “fifth” century by Joannes Nepos, Prayllius, Juvenalis, Anastasius, and Martyrius; in this age also Lucian and Hesychius were presbyters of this church. In the “sixth” century, the names of the bishops of this church were Salustius, Helias, Johannes, Petrus, Macarius, Eustochius, Johannes, Neamus, and Isicius: in the “seventh” century were Thomas, Johannes, Neannus, Isaac, Zacharias, and Sophronius, who was the last bishop of Jerusalem before the utter and last devastation of it by the Saracens ^{f561}; since which time the city has underwent various fates, being sometimes in the hands of the Christians, and at other times possessed by the Turks, in whose power it now is.

And they sent forth Barnabas; who was himself an Hellenist, and of the country of Cyprus, and so very fit to be sent to the Grecians or Hellenists at Antioch, who had received the Gospel to confirm them in it: for his orders were,

that he should go as far as Antioch which is said to be about fifteen or sixteen days journey from Jerusalem: the phrase, “that he should go”, is not in the Alexandrian copy, nor in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions.

Ver. 23. *Who when he came, and had seen the grace of God*, etc.] The many instances of the powerful and efficacious grace of God in regeneration and conversion; the great goodness, love, and favour of God in enlightening, quickening, and converting so many souls; and the

wonderful gifts of the Spirit bestowed upon many of them, fitting them for public use and service:

was glad; rejoiced at heart, and gave glory to God, as every good man will, at the success of the gospel in the conversion of sinners, let it be by what instrument or means it will, and at the gifts and grace bestowed on them:

and exhorted them all; in whom he saw the grace of God implanted, who had received the doctrine of the grace of God, and had gifts of grace qualifying them for usefulness, in some nation or another:

that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord; that is, with a fixed resolution in the grace and strength of Christ, they would hold to his person, exercising grace upon him, abide by his truths and ordinances, keep close to his people, adhere to his cause and interest, and hold on and out unto the end. The Arabic version takes “the purpose of heart” to be meant of Barnabas, and reads the words thus, “and he exhorted them according to the usual firmness of his heart, that they would continue in the faith of the Lord”; in the doctrine and grace of faith in Christ.

Ver. 24. *For he was a good man*, etc.] He had the grace of God wrought in his soul, and did good works; he was very kind, and generous, and charitable; he sold what land he had, and gave the money to the apostles, for the use of the community, (~~405~~ Acts 4:37)

and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith; he was full of the several graces of the Spirit, and particularly of faith; and he was full of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and of the faith of miracles; he was full of the doctrine of faith, and of spiritual gifts for the preaching of it: the same character is given of Stephen, (~~405~~ Acts 6:5)

and much people was added unto the Lord; by the means of Barnabas, through his ministry, and the exercise of those gifts he was full of; so the Arabic version, “and he drew a large multitude to the Lord”.

Ver. 25. *Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus*, etc.] “In Cilicia” to seek Saul; who had been sent thither by the brethren that he might escape the rage of the Grecians, who sought to slay him, (~~405~~ Acts 9:29,30).

Ver. 26. *And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch*, etc.] That he might be useful in directing, and assisting in settling this new and numerous church; in the establishing the members of it, and in putting them

into Gospel order, and in a method to secure and maintain peace, especially as they might consist both of Jews and Gentiles; and none so proper to be concerned in such a work as the apostle of the Gentiles.

And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church; preaching the Gospel, and administering the ordinances to them, during that time, at proper seasons. For here being a number of converts, they were embodied together in a church state, very probably by the direction and assistance of Barnabas, who was sent to them from the church at Jerusalem, and in which he might be assisted by Saul: the first bishop, or pastor of this church, was Evodius, as Ignatius observes unto them ^{f562}; Remember Evodius, your worthy and blessed pastor, who was first ordained over you by the apostles; and Ignatius himself was the next, of whom Origen speaking, says ^{f563}, that he was the second bishop of Antioch after Peter, who in persecution fought with beasts at Rome; next to him was Heron, after him Cornelius, then, Eros; to whom succeeded Theophilus, who wrote three books to Autolytus, in vindication of the Christian religion, which are now extant, in the times of the emperor Aurelius Verus, about the year of Christ 171. He was succeeded by Maximinus ^{f564} about the year 179, under Marcus Antoninus; and after him was Serapion, about the tenth year of the emperor Commodus, and of Christ 192; and about the year 214, Asclepiades succeeded in his room; next to him was Philetus, in the year 220, and then Zebennus in the year 231; next succeeded Babylas, the famous martyr, who suffered under Decius, and then followed Demetrianus, or Demetrius, about the year 255; and after him was the famous heretic Samosatenus, who was excommunicated from this church for his blasphemy against the Son of God; and Domnus, the son of Demetriaus, was put into his room, about the year 270; after him was Timaeus, in the year 274; and then Cyrillus, about the year 283: and these were the bishops or pastors of this church in the three first centuries ^{f565}.

And taught much people; besides the church, and with success, as to enlighten, convince, convert, comfort, and establish:

and the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch; before they were called among themselves, the disciples, brethren, believers, the church, etc. and by others the Nazarenes, and Galilaeans: whether this name of Christians, which comes from Christ, and signifies anointed ones, was given by their enemies, or their friends, by others, or themselves, is not

certain, though it is most likely the latter; and it may be they hit upon this general appellation, upon the union of the Jews and Gentiles in one Gospel church state, and so happily buried the distinction of Jews and Gentiles, or those of the circumcision that believed, and those of the uncircumcision. Luke is particular in relating the affairs of this church, he being himself a native of this place. John of Antioch ^{f566} gives an account of this matter in these words;

“at the beginning of the reign of Claudius Caesar, ten years after Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, was ascended up into heaven, Evodus, the first after the Apostle Peter, being chosen bishop of Antioch, the great city of Syria, became a patriarch, and under him they were called Christians: for this same bishop, Evodus, conferring with them, put this name upon them, whereas before the Christians were called Nazarenes and Galilaeans.”

Epiphanius says ^{f567}, the disciples were called Jessaeans before they took the name of Christians first at Antioch: they were called Jessaeans, says he, I think, because of Jesse, seeing David was of Jesse, and Mary of David: and so the Scripture was fulfilled, in which the Lord says to David, of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne, etc. — Or else, they were called Jessaeans from the name of Jesus our Lord; and refers the reader to a book of Philo’s, written by him, concerning the Jessaeans, whom Epiphanius takes to be Christians; but those that Philo ^{f568} treats of were not Jessaeans, but Essaeans, and seem to be the same with the Essenes, who were not Christians, but a sect of the Jews. Nor do we ever find that the Christians were called by this name.

Ver. 27. *And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch.*], That is, some time in that year that Saul and Barnabas were at Antioch, there came from Jerusalem thither some Christian prophets; for such there were in the Christian church, who had not only a gift of expounding the more mysterious prophecies of the Old Testament, but also of foretelling things to come; (see ^{<4413>}Acts 13:1 ^{<4011>}Ephesians 4:11).

Ver. 28. *And there stood up one of them named Agabus,* etc.] The same name with Hagaba in (^{<4678>}Nehemiah 7:48) and with Hagabah, or Hagab in (^{<4125>}Ezra 2:45,46) and which the Septuagint there call Agaba and Agab. The name signifies a “grasshopper”, (^{<8122>}Leviticus 11:22) or “a locust”, (^{<4473>}2 Chronicles 7:13). In a book that goes under the name of Jerom ^{f569}, it is interpreted, “a messenger of tribulation”; respecting, it may be, not the

true signification of the word, as the things which Agabus predicted, as the general dearth here, and the binding of the Apostle Paul, (^{<4210>}Acts 21:10). And the same writer observes, that this interpretation is a violent, or a forced one. Some take it to be the same with **bg** [, “Agab”, which signifies “to love”; and so may be the same with the Greek name “Agapetus”, which may be interpreted “beloved”. This Agabus is said to be one of the seventy disciples that Christ sent forth: he seems to have been an itinerant prophet, who went from place to place delivering out his prophecies; we hear of him again at Caesarea, in (^{<4210>}Acts 21:10). Some say he was a native of Antioch; but this does not follow from his being here, any more than that he was a native of Caesarea from his being there also; it seems most likely that he was a native of Judea, and perhaps of Jerusalem, since in both places he is said to come from thence: it is reported that he died at Antioch; and he is placed in the Roman martyrology on the third of February.

And signified by the Spirit; not by the position of the stars, or by any natural causes, or by mere conjecture, but by the Spirit of God:

that there should be great dearth throughout all the world; not only throughout all the land of Judea, but at least throughout the whole Roman empire; (see ^{<4010>}Luke 2:1) since other writers speak of it in other parts: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar; in the second year of his reign, as Dion Cassius ^{f570}, the Roman historian, says: and ^{f571} Eusebius seems to speak of it, as in the beginning of his reign; for he says, Caius, who scarce reigned four years, Claudius the emperor succeeded, in whose time a famine afflicted the whole world; for this some writers, different from our religion, have made mention of in their histories: though he elsewhere affirms ^{f572}, that it was in the fourth year of his reign; both may be true, it might last so long: and indeed, according to what this writer ^{f573} cites from Josephus, it must be after this time that the famine raged in Judea; for having observed the defeat of Theudas by Cuspius Fadus, the Roman governor, he observes, that at the same time a very great famine happened in Judea: now Fadus was sent into Judea, after the death of king Agrippa, towards the end of the fourth year of Claudius; so that it must be in the fifth or sixth year of Claudius that this famine was ^{f574}. The Magdeburgensian Centuriators say ^{f575}, it was about the ninth and tenth years of Claudius that this famine raged in Greece, Rome, and other parts of the world. Suetonius ^{f576} makes mention of it, and ascribes it to a constant sterility or barrenness: and that it particularly affected Judea

appears from hence, that Helena, queen of the Adiabeni, was at this time at Jerusalem, who sent for, and brought corn out of Egypt, and distributed it to the poor ^{f577}; of which Josephus ^{f578} gives this account:

“her coming was very seasonable to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for a famine at that time much afflicted their city, and many perished through want of food. Helena, the queen, sent of her own people some to Alexandria, who bought a great quantity of corn, and some to Cyprus, who brought loads of dry figs; who, as soon they came back, distributed the food to the needy. — And her son Izates, hearing of the famine, sent much money to the chief men of Jerusalem.”

The Misnic doctors ^{f579} speak of various gifts which Helena, and her son Monbaz, as they call him, gave to the Jews for the use of the temple, but make no mention of this bounty; though they represent the son as very liberal to the poor, and giving all his goods unto them ^{f580}.

Ver. 29. *Then the disciples*, etc.] That were at Antioch, *every man according to his ability*; whether rich or poor, master or servant, everyone according to the substance he was possessed of; whether more or less, which was a good rule to go by:

determined to send relief to the brethren which dwelt in Judea; either because that Agabus might have suggested, that the famine would be the severest in those parts; or because that the Christians there had parted with their substance already, in the support of one another, and for the spread of the Gospel in other parts; and therefore the Christians at Antioch, in gratitude to them for having received the Gospel, and Gospel ministers from them, resolved to help them with their temporal things, when in distress.

Ver. 30. *Which they also did*, etc.] They not only determined, but they put their resolutions into execution, and acted according to a rule which the apostle recommends, (~~2~~2 Corinthians 8:11 9:7)

and sent it to the elders; to the apostles; for though there were deacons there, yet they chose to send it to them, that they might put it into proper hands to distribute to the necessitous: and this collection they sent

by the hands of Saul and Barnabas; of this journey to Jerusalem, Paul makes no mention in (~~17~~Galatians 1:17-19,21, 2:1).