

## THE BOOK OF ACTS | GOD'S REVELATION OF TRANSITION

SESSION 36 | ACTS 11:25-30

### ACTS 11:25-30 | PROPHETIC CHRISTIANS

- Verse 25 –
  - Saul had been sent by the “little flock” of Peter in Acts 9:30, and has not been seen since.
  - There is no indication that Saul has, at this point, received the mystery. It appears to me that the name change from Saul to Paul comes with the revelation of the mystery.
    - The name Saul is used 26 times in the book of Acts, all in reference to events taking place prior to Acts 13:9.
    - The name Paul is used 126 times in the book of Acts, 100% of them after Acts 13:9.
    - The first textual evidence of the mystery also comes in the Acts 13 account.
- Verse 26 –
  - This takes place at least 10 years after Pentecost, and every evidence is still a “Kingdom Gospel.”
    - Paul is “working” under authority of the Jerusalem church, along with Barnabus.
    - The two of them gather **with the church** of Antioch (a Jewish ecclesia).
    - Paul and Barnabus **taught much people**, but if he was teaching something different from Peter, it is not evident from the text.
  - At Antioch, some 10 years after Pentecost, **the disciples were called Christians** for the first time.
    - The suffix *-ian* is from the Greek suffix *-ianos* and is used to describe *the qualities of or a relationship with* the noun to which it is connected.
    - The fact that the disciples were **called Christian** does not reveal that they were Pauline in theology.
    - The only conclusion is that these disciples were so associated with Jesus Christ that they were called after His name. Remember that He was under the Law and taught the Law. It is doubtful that the term would have been originally used of Pauline belief, because it differed from the teaching of Jesus Christ.
- Verses 27-28 –
  - These were still prophetic days, which would last through the close of the New Testament.
    - A prophet named **Agabus** (also mentioned in Acts 21:10), prophesied of a **great dearth** that would cover **all the world**.
    - The prophecy, according to Luke, **came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar**, who was emperor from 41-54 AD.
    - Josephus mentions this famine, “...when Claudius was emperor of the Romans, and Ismael was our high priest, and when so great a famine was come upon us, that one-tenth deal [of wheat] was sold for four drachmae, (321) and when no

less than seventy cori of flour were brought into the temple, at the feast of unleavened bread (these cori are thirty-one Sicilian, but forty-one Athenian medimni), not one of the priests were so hardy as to eat one crumb of it, even while so great a distress was upon the land; and this out of a dread of the law, and of that wrath which God retains against acts of wickedness.” (Antiquities, 3.320-321)<sup>1</sup>

- Note that Agabus **signified by the spirit**. What spirit?
  - The King James does not capitalize in this case, always giving the benefit of the doubt *away from* the supernatural, but when there is a total clarity it will capitalize (as in Acts 10:19).
  - I would take this verse as the Holy Spirit.
- Verses 29-30 –
  - This is the first of the offerings for **relief unto the brethren**.
    - It came from one Jewish assembly and was sent to another.
    - There is no indication that Antioch holds a theology different than the original (and continuing) theology at Jerusalem.
  - If the famine is **throughout all the world**, why would the **brethren which dwelt in Judaea** need an offering and the brethren in Antioch not need an offering, and also have ability to provide?
    - Because 10 years earlier, the brethren at Judaea had sold their possessions and were now living communally in an arrangement that could only last for a short time before poverty came upon all of them.
  - It is ironic that the phrase Marxist *from each according to his ability* is taken from this text, yet this “taking from the rich” is to solve the very problem that a Marxist ideology created.
    - Only a twisted interpretation of the book of Acts can be used to support Marxist ideology (along with a sheer ignorance of economic principles, sociological principles, and historical reality).

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<sup>1</sup> Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 101.