

The Making of a Model Church

Acts 11:19-30

I. THE **ORIGIN** (Acts 11:19-21)

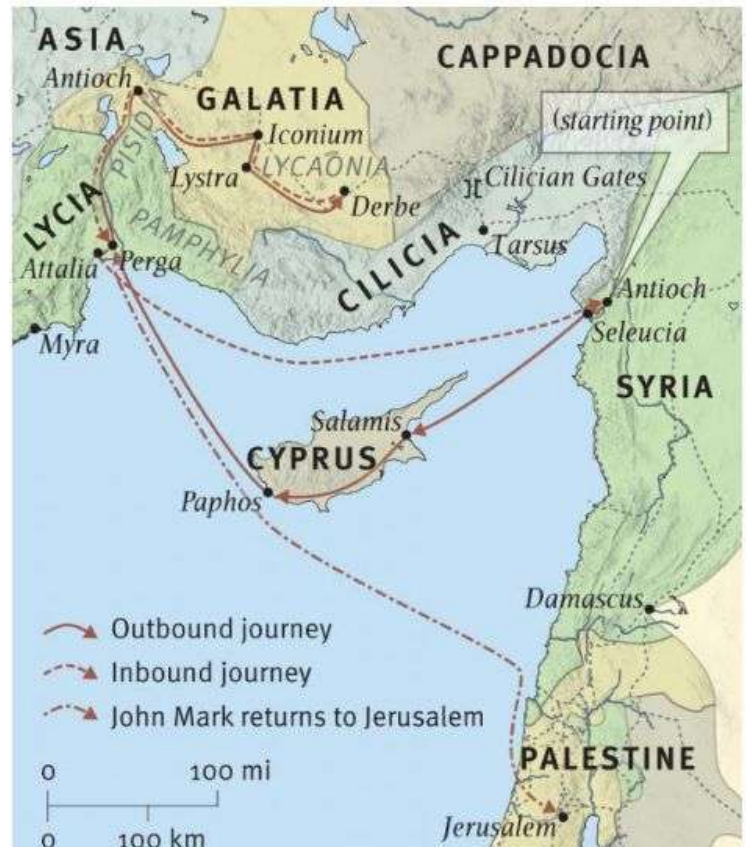
- **"Those who were scattered"**: The same word used for seed being scattered (Luke 8:5). God turned persecution into gospel spreading.
- **"Men from Cyprus and Cyrene"**: Hellenistic Jews with cross-cultural experience, naturally equipped to bridge ethnic divides.
- **"Spoke to the Hellenists" (Hellenas)**: Critical manuscript evidence supports "Greeks" rather than "Hellenists," indicating full Gentiles, not just Greek-speaking Jews.
- **"Preaching the Lord Jesus"**: "Lord" (Kyrios) was meaningful to Gentile mystery religions; "Christ" (Messiah) would have been foreign.
- **"Hand of the Lord was with them"**: OT way of saying God's blessing and power (Ezra 7:9; Neh. 2:8).
- **"Great number believed and turned"**: Two verbs indicate both mental assent and life transformation. People not only believed intellectually but also turned from their sins to the Lord (see also 1 Thess. 1:9). Believing is inseparable from repentance expressed in a changed life.



Antioch (artist rendition), est. population: 500,000

II. THE **OVERSIGHT** (Acts 11:22-24)

- **"They sent Barnabas"**: The Jerusalem church leaders sent Barnabas, "son of encouragement". This was a 300-mile journey.
- **"Encouraged them all" (parekalei)**: Imperfect active verb indicates ongoing, repeated encouragement over time. The Holy Spirit is called the "paraclete," which means "coming alongside."



Paul's First Missionary Journey

- **“Good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith”**: A perfect description of why the Jerusalem elders sent Barnabas – morally upright (trustworthy), Spirit-filled, and full of faith.

III. THE OPPORTUNITY (Acts 11:25-26a)

- **“Departed for Tarsus to seek Saul”**: 186-mile journey shows Barnabas's commitment to finding the right person for the job. He probably traveled for around 10 days to find Saul/Paul.
- **“To seek”**: “Greek lexicographers Moulton and Milligan said anazēteō is used ‘specially of searching for human beings with an implication of difficulty.’”¹

IV. THE OFFERING (Acts 11:26b-30)

- **“Were called Christians”**: Passive voice suggests outsiders gave the name. “Greek scholar, Thomas Newberry, states the Greek word translated ‘called’ really means ‘divinely called.’ The disciples were first divinely called Christians at Antioch.”²
- **“Great famine throughout all the world”**: the word “world” does not mean the surface of the earth, but “economy” meaning “the Roman Empire,” historically verified during Claudius's reign.
- **“Each according to his ability”**: Proportional giving principle, not equal amounts but equal sacrifice.

APPLICATIONS (For Individuals):

1. Look for opportunities to share Christ across cultural lines.
2. Encourage others like Barnabas.
3. Commit to systematic Bible study and growth.
4. Let your Christian identity supersede all other identities.
5. Give sacrificially to meet needs beyond your immediate circle.

APPLICATIONS (For Churches):

1. Prioritize evangelism to those who have never heard the gospel.
2. Rejoice when God is doing a great work somewhere other than where you are.
3. Provide sustained Biblical instruction for spiritual maturity (men, women, boys, and girls).
4. Actively welcome diversity while maintaining gospel unity – “Christian” first.
5. Look for opportunities to help other believers, churches, and mission works.

¹ cited in G. Abbott Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1977), 29.

² paraphrased from H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Book of Acts*. (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1943), 283.