

The Acts of the Apostles

[Wed. Sep. 24, 2014] Acts Series, Acts 11.19-30 - Craig A. Thurman

Speaking to a brother the other day, we were discussing a portion of Scripture, and we made reference to a man that supported a particular position that agreed with our thinking. Now, it has been a particular goal of mine for some time to warn us in our studies about how to study the our Bible. Doubtless, we can find a man and men to agree with just about any position that we might say is being taught by Scripture. But is this the way to test our conclusions, and is this the right way to learn Bible doctrine? How can we prove what is right and wrong, or between what is good, better, or best? Nothing less than Scripture will suffice. We can only know the certainty of any matter, if it is discoverable at all, when the Lord reveals to us from His Word the truth.

This chapter is strategically placed where it is.

Interpreting this text requires more than looking at the words. My goal is to remain faithful to the text and context. By doing so we, by the Spirit of God, are generally kept from great error. This chapter in particular has proven to be very difficult in this regard. The context involves the setting of this chapter in its peculiar place succeeding the Gentiles conversion. This affects how we interpret those called Grecians in this chapter. (11.20) The Grecians here are not the same as those in chapters 6.1; 9.29. We are forced, by the setting of this chapter to understand that the Grecians are Gentiles, not Jews.

On this point it is interesting that the name *Grecian* is used twice before of Hellenist Jews. (6.1;9.29) And the third and last time of Gentile Greeks. It is from this point forward in Acts (and the rest of Scripture for that matter) that *Greek* always refers to Gentiles. (Acts 14.1; 16.1; 17.4, 12; 18.4, 17;19.10; 20.21; 21.28)

After all, that is the issue of the Antioch church. Otherwise what is it that is so unusual that the apostles in Jerusalem would take note of and send to them Barnabas? This clearly stands on a level with Acts 8.14 and the conversion of the Samaritans.

We are at a crossroads. We have the churches of Jewish congregations scattered throughout Israel; we have Samaritan congregations no doubt throughout

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Samaria, and a Gentile church in Caesarea. Paul is far to the north of Jerusalem, in Tarsus. And now we see it all come together in this last portion of chapter 11. This is the final and crucial step in the merger of the saints in the churches. We see the amazing power and order of the Wise God of Glory, who alone could have brought this all together. We just stand awe at this. This is the amalgamation of Jew and Gentile into one body. The congregations of Jews shall become mixed congregations, where Jew and Gentile sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus and worship the same God: the God and Father of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. That the blood of Jesus Christ has washed the elect of the whole world from their sins and caused them to come together as one people before Him in the same church, having the same ordinances, having the same commandments, having the same Word, having the same life, having the same goals, having the same hope of eternal life and the glory that shall be revealed at the coming of Jesus Christ.

1Jo 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Chapter 10.1-11.18 was the time of the opening of the door of faith to the nations. The next logical step is chapter 11.19-26: the first church where both Jew and Gentile sit en masse, in one body. This has been unheard of! I am of the opinion that Paul has already begun preaching Christ indiscriminately to the north. (Gal.1.21; Acts 15.21 Where did these churches come from, but from Paul's early preaching?) The Lord has already revealed to him his commission (Acts 9.15; 22.15; 26.17, 18), though it would hardly have been received by the Jews to this time. Now, the saints among the Jews shall begin to appreciate more fully what the Lord is doing through all the peoples of the earth. That is where we are tonight in our study. There has been a rest among the churches for over three years, since Paul's conversion.

19 ¶ Now

At this we are to reconsider the affects that the persecution had upon the believing Jews and proselytes that were scattered. This period (by Albert Barnes' account), from Stephen's death to this time, covers about 7 years.

they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about

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ἐπὶ is the preposition, not περί;

J-F-B, vol.3, 75, '[ἐπὶ Στεφάνῳ]—not “about Stephen” in the sense of ‘concerning [περὶ], nor about (the time of) Stephen (which would require the genitive), but **‘over,’ ‘after,’ or ‘resulting from (what happened to) Stephen ...’** (bolding added)

Stephen travelled as far as

διελθεῖν ἕως, **verse 22**. This sets known limitation to the extent of the reach of the scattering and gospel outreach to the Jews.

Phenice, (present day Lebanon)

This is evidently the same as Phenicia. Good details about its location. (Acts 21.1-4) It is called in our secular books Phoenicia. In the day of our Lord this region included the nation of Syria, whose coastal cities were Tyre, Sarepta, and Sidon as you head north from Israel.

and Cyprus,

An island being about 75 miles west, off the coast of Syria and about 50 south from the mainland of present day Turkey.

and Antioch,

The northern, prominent city of Syria.

The Interpreter's Bible, Copyright 1954 by Pierce and Washabaugh in the United States of America, Abingdon Press, vol. 9, p. 146, ‘... the third city of the Roman Empire, second only to Rome and Alexandria.’

preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

We should insert here ... that is, until the conversion of the Gentiles in Caesarea.

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Matthew Poole, vol. 3, p.421, ' God suffering them to be enlightened by degrees.'

20 And some of them

Who are 'them?' They are the scattered Jews preaching only to the Jews. They were men **of**, meaning that they were likely Jews **born in Cyprus and Cyrene**.

were men of Cyprus and Cyrene,

Being of this island so near, and north Africa, so far away, in relation to Antioch. Men born of these places and come to Antioch.

which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

Brethren, the Lord has begun to save those in the nations. We saw the event of Caesarea. We either get in the boat, or it shall sail without us. Paul is doubtless already preaching Christ to Gentiles in the north. Christ is being preach here in the city of Antioch. Whether this had to be in succession to the Caesarean event I cannot say. All that I can say about this is that Cornelius' conversion did much to help the apostles and saints in Jerusalem understand the will of the Lord to *Go ... and teach all nations*. That Cornelius had to be the first of the Gentiles brought to Christ and set in a church, I don't know. It looks as if there was a whole, singular movement to the nations all taking place at about this same time: Cornelius in Caesarea, Paul in the north, and Antioch just to the south.

The Interpreter's Bible, Copyright 1954 by Pierce and Washabaugh in the United States of America, Abingdon Press, vol. 9, p. 145, 'He [Paul] was probably already at work himself along similar lines in Syria and Cilicia (Gal.1:21). It is in fact entirely likely that the initiative was taken in various places by various individuals more or less simultaneously.'

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Again, the uniqueness of this portion of Scripture is this: Antioch set before us the very first church that consists of both Jew and Gentile. *Grecians* here refers to Gentiles, as we have mentioned in our opening statements.

John Trapp's, *A Commentary on the New Testament*, p.445, 'Not the Grecizing Jews (as chap. vi.1), but the Grecians which were Gentiles, to whom the light now began to break forth, and the partition-wall to be broken down.'

The New Bible Commentary: Revised, Copyright 1970 Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, England, p.986, 'It was here, then, that some of these Hellenists, not content with preaching Jesus in the synagogues to their fellow-Hellenists, began to preach Him to Gentile Greeks as well, with the result that a great number of these embraced the new faith ...'

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them:

With them meaning just Antioch, or in all these areas? It does appear best to say this refers to all of these places.

The hand of the Lord prospered the faithful preaching of Jesus Christ to others regardless of their ethnicity. It is not a Jew's religion. It is the faith of God's elect. (Tit.1.1) It is the doctrine of the Lord; the doctrine of God; Christ's doctrine. (Acts 13.12; Tit. 2.10; He.6.1)

and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

The Lord had prospered His Word to the hearts of a great number of particularly Gentiles.

1Co 2:4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration (a shewing forth) of the Spirit and of power:

5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

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It isn't our speech and preaching; but it was the Spirit of God who showed Himself in effectual power upon the souls of some of these men. It is never the eloquence of the messenger, nor the free will of the sinner; but it is the power of God, and all the glory goes to the Lord.

*1Co 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but **unto us which are saved** (presently experiencing the grace of God by Jesus Christ) it is the power of God.*

...

21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save (to bring them to the experience of grace by His Son) them that believe.

As far as we have seen from Scripture these servants preaching Christ Jesus the Lord were called *disciples*. No special, select sort of people; just disciples. There is absolutely no evidence that these were only pastors, or the seventy.

John Trapp's, *A Commentary on the New Testament*, p.445, 'He can make a law to bring forth in one day, a "nation to be born at once," Isa. lxvi.8.'

22 Then tidings of these things

What things? If it were that Jews were being brought to the faith of Christ what would be unique about it? The things that would be significant would be the fact that a great number of Gentiles were being brought to the faith of Jesus Christ throughout these different places where the saints had become salted.

came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth

ἐξαπέστειλαν, a triple compounded Greek word, out ἐκ, forth ἀπό, send στέλλω.

Barnabas,

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A man ready for whatever the Lord would do. He was ready to receive Saul when he came to Jerusalem. He doubted not the conversion of Saul to Christ though he had been such a terrible persecutor of the saints. (Acts 9.27)

*that he should go **as far as** (or lit. 'come or go through to ... Antioch)*

διελθεῖν ἕως; **verse 19**. In verse 19 we have the extent of the scattering of those who had believed in Christ and the gospel outreach. Here we have the extent of Barnabas' commission.

διελθεῖν, aor 2, infin act of διέρχομαι; διὰ by, through + ἔρχομαι to come.

ἕως; until, til, to; i.e. *unto the brow of the hill; till all be finished; until now; till the whole was leavened. Until I make thy foes; till he came to Caesarea; **as far as** Phenice;*

Antioch.

Notice still the limitation. Evidently, they are still trying to process the extent to the outreach of Christ to the world. This will in no way limit the work of God, but as with us, it is wise to move forward in a new thing cautiously and see how the Lord will open new doors.

We first met with Barnabas in chapter 4:

*Ac 4:36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed **Barnabas**, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,*

37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

The apostles sent Barnabas to help with the outgrowth of disciples northward from Jerusalem all of the way up to Antioch. *As far as* means that he was to promote the Word and Work of Christ *from* Jerusalem to Antioch. And Barnabas did reach Antioch. It does not say that he organized

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a church anywhere. And it would appear that one already existed in Antioch (11.26) Barnabas is, as Philip, a disciple who does what any disciple should do when he goes out into other areas: find a church, or be a church. If we cannot find a church we need to become a church. It is that simple. This important detail is all but lost today in the teachings of the churches. We have brethren out in places where there are no churches who haven't the confidence to begin a church in their house. Why? It is because the Scriptures do not teach it? No. It is because the doctrines has been lost. Preachers have expressed the notion that if we do that we will have rebels starting churches everywhere. So what? What about the truth? What about the Lord. Is He not in control of all of this? There are three or four house churches right now that ought to begin, but the reason that they do is because of a lack of proper instruction. Does every other church under the sun have to recognize me and this church in order to be a church? Not a one! What is important for us is to know that our Lord recognized us. And what do we do? All that any other church would do. It really is that simple. If not, how do we account for the church of Antioch? How do we account for the beginning of the churches in Cilicia? (Acts 15.41) They certainly had no sanction from 'the mother church of Jerusalem!'

How did we ever come to the place where we suppose it takes preachers to start churches, or churches to start churches? Where is that in the book of Acts? Baptized believers start churches! These legalistic notions pervade the work of God in the earth. And the idea of missionaries going out. How long are they missionaries to other places? When do they become pastors of churches? When does the work itself become self-sufficient? This has become, as usual, quite the religious machine. And money is what keeps it running.

What was Barnabas role to the Antioch church. The apostles doubtlessly had this man go up so that opportunity might be had to receive *good instruction*. And that is exactly what takes place. (Acts 11.26)

23 *Who, when he came,*

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παραγενόμενος, acc sing, masc, part, aor 2 of παραγίνομαι; παρα beside, near + γίνομαι to become; when he had come to this place or reached the extent of his travels from Jerusalem to Antioch ...

*and had seen (or, saw, ἰδὼν) the grace of God, **was** glad,*

ἐχάρη, 3rd p sing, aor 2, **ind pass** of χαίρω; joy; seems that in order to use the English 'joy' in the aorist ind pass we would have to say 'was rejoiced,' which would be rather crude for English idiom.

and exhorted

παρακάλει, 3rd p, sing imperf, act of παρακαλέω, παρα near, beside + καλέω to call.

them all, that with purpose

προθέσει, dat sing of πρόθεσις (pro + thesis); KJV except for the 'shew' in *shewbread* this is always translated with the English word *purpose*. πρό before + θεσις, root τίθημι to put, lay make. **To have as the foremost stance of the heart.**

of heart they would cleave

προσμένειν, pres infin of προσμένω; προς by, unto, with + μένειν infin. of μένω to remain, abide, continue; *to continue near*; Barnes Notes, 'adhere.'

unto the Lord.

One of the greatest proofs of Christ working in His people is their commitment to follow Christ in love. They are not forced to do, but are willing to do the commandments of Christ.

24 For he was a good ἀγαθὸς man,

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*Ro 5:7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a **good man** some would even dare to die.*

He was a man filled with the Lord of Christ for all men. (1Co.13. 4-8)

Yet he was a man subject to making errors in judgment as every man is. (Gal.2.13) He separated from the Gentiles as Peter did when some of the Jews had come down to Antioch.

and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith:

As Stephen was. (Acts 6.3)

and much people was added

προστέθη, 3rd p sing, aor 1, ind, pass of προστίθημι; πρόσ by, unto, with + τίθημι put, lay, make; put to; in Acts 2.41 there *were added* unto them; 2.47 And the Lord *added* to the church daily; 5.14 believers *were* the more *added* to the Lord; 11.24 and much people was *added* unto the Lord; 12.3 he *proceeded further* to take Peter; 13.36 *was laid* unto his fathers.

Can this be construed to mean that they were automatically added to the church? Acts 2.41, 47 is clear that they were added to the church of Jerusalem. But Acts 5.31 doesn't necessarily say this? Can we say that the two are synonymous statements. I cannot.

unto the Lord.

25 Then departed Barnabas to εἰς Tarsus, for to seek

ἀναζητῆσαι, aor 1 infin of ἀναζητέω; ἀνά re-, again, above + ζητέω to seek; Only used in Lk.2.44 they *sought* him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

Saul:

Saul's ministry to the Gentiles is probably as publicized as his conversion to Christ was.

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*Ac 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to **bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel ...***

*Ac 22:15 For **thou shalt be his witness unto all men** of what thou hast seen and heard.*

*Ac 26:17 Delivering thee from the people, and from **the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,**
18 **To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.***

Was Barnabas at Jerusalem when Peter made his report, with the six witnesses, of the conversion of the Jews of Caesarea? We can't say for sure, but if he were, and seeing this great turning to the Lord among the Gentiles all of the way up through to Antioch, it would appear that he see how Saul is *made* for the task.

J-F-B, vol.3, p.76, ' ... entrusting the church at Antioch meantime, beyond all doubt, to the honored brethren to whose instrumentality it had owed its existence. '

26 And when he had found him, he brought

ἄγαγεν, he led

him unto Antioch.

We are left with the sense that it took little to persuade Paul. Had Barnabas shared with Saul the fruitful fields of Antioch and the call of God upon his life, doubtless he had to see this and bless God for it.

And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves

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συναχθῆναι, aor 1, infin, pass of συνάγω; συν with, together + άγω to bring; this is the word from which we have *synagogue*.

with έν the church

έκκλησία, ekklesia, έκ out + κλησία, root καλέω to call; the 'called out'. The Greek considered with the English gives the full meaning of the Scriptures. The English *church* descends from *kirk*, which comes from the Greek *kuriakos*, the genitive (or possessive case) meaning *of the Lord*. Thus the corrected definition of *ekklesia* is not just 'called out,' but 'called out of the Lord.

Those gather together are the called out of the Lord. This is a certain people, not as before, that had *gathered* in synagogues, but the church/es of the Lord particularly.

Who brought this church about? The Lord Himself by gathering at the least two properly baptized believers for the purposes of carrying out the commandments of Christ. Who, then, baptized them? What is the answer of Scripture? Those disciples that had been scattered about as a result of persecution. (11.19) That is the only biblical answer that can stand the test of Scripture.

and taught

διδάξαι, aor 1, infin, act of διδάσκω; to teach; gathered with the church with the purpose *to teach* the saints.

much people. And the disciples

μαθητάς, acc pl of μαθητής; the verb is translated *teach* and *taught* in Mt.28.19 *teach* all nations; Acts 14.21 and *had taught* many.

were called

χρηματίσαι, aor 1, infin of χρηματίζω; KJV *warned, revealed, shall be called, was admonished, spake*. The root χράομαι is translated as *use*,

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entreated. The name serves as an indication of who and what these people are: followers of Christ and disciples.

Christians first in Antioch.

The great point here is that they are not called Jews; they are not called Gentiles; they are called Christians equally.

The name being given to the disciples of the true churches was *Christian*. Whether it is a derisive term I cannot tell. (Barnes Notes shows it could be either; J-F-B says it is derisive). This is used only three times in Scripture:

King Agrippa uses this term to refer to Christ's followers:

*Ac 26:28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a **Christian**.*

Peter uses this term to denote those followers of Christ:

1Pe 4:16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Matthew Poole, vol.3, p. 422, '... Christians are anointed ones, 1John.ii.27'

The New Bible Commentary: Revised, Copyright 1970 Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, England, p.986, 'lit. "they did business (Gk. Chrematizo) under the name of Christians", i.e. became commonly known by this name.

How fitting this is: from this church, the church at Antioch, the first with both Jew and Gentile seated in heavenly place in Christ Jesus; from this body of saints the Word of God is sent out by the ministry of Barnabas and Saul.

27 ¶ *And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.*

The Lord would have this church among the nations to know that the saints in Jerusalem need help. What a means for proving unity of the faith among the saints of God! This was done through the special gifts in the church upon some men. This gift was in lieu of having the full Word of God. They

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did not have what we have today. For us, do we need special revelation to know when saints have need to help them. No. We only need to act on the directive of the Word of God and the leading of the Spirit of God to conclude what our role is towards helping others.

28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, (Acts 21.10, 11) and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Barnes Notes, vol. 10, Acts, p. 188: A.D.41; reigned 13 years, died by poisoning from one of his wives named Agrippina to raise her son Nero to the throne.

Gill, vol. 8, p.250: that this famine came in the 'second year of his reign.'

29 Then the disciples,

Again, a very good thing to observe. The church is not being directed by any one man or men, but this is the mind of the church as a whole. *The disciples ... determine to send relief ...* Preachers don't know everything! We need one another. Far better it is that the church does what she does because she has the *desire* to, than to do just because a man says so. J-F-B, vol.3, p.78, '... this spirited proposal originated, not with Barnabas and Saul, but with the disciples themselves, in spontaneous exercise of Christian love to their suffering brethren of the circumcision – a grace which seems to have shone the brightest in the earliest days of the churches, as it still does in every new community of believers.'

every man according to his ability,

ἠὺπορεῖτο, 3rd per sing, imperf mid of εὖπορέω, εὖ well + πορέω;
εὖπορία is translated *wealth* in Acts 19.25.

determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:

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Ro 15:27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

John Trapp's, *A Commentary on the New Testament*, p.446, 'This age aboundeth with mouth-mercy (Go, and be fed, warmed, &c., Jam.ii.), which is cheap. But a little handful were better than a great many mouthfuls.

30 *Which also they did, and sent it to the elders*

Root presbuteros, πρεσβυτέρους; **This is the first time that this term is used in the book of Acts.**

J-F-B, vol. 3, p.78, ' That it [the term *elders*] was borrowed from the *synagogue*, and that the Christian churches were constituted after its model, and not that of the *temple*, is beyond reasonable dispute.' [added for clarity]

The Interpreter's Bible, Copyright 1954 by Pierce and Washabaugh in the United States of America, Abingdon Press, vol. 9, p. 154, 'Mentioned now for the first time as specifically Christian office-bearers. Here they are perhaps the presidents of the house churches of Jerusalem. ... The fact that on this occasion the alms were handed over to them need not imply that the apostles were absent from Jerusalem, possibly on account of Herod's persecution ...'

I disagree with Barnes' conclusion:

Barnes Notes, vol. 10, Acts, p. 188, '**I think it probably that it does not refer to officers in the church**, but that it means simply that the charity was intrusted to the *ages*, prudent, and experienced men in the church, for distribution among the members.'

I disagree with Gill's assessment.

Gill, vol. 8, p. 250, '*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 ...'

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It would appear that the elders are the pastors of the church. There is a distinction made between apostles and elders in the Scriptures. Peter is the only apostle who address *elders* as a *fellow elder*. Otherwise the offices are distinct.)

*Ac 15:2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the **apostles and elders** about this question.* (The distinction between the two is made 5 times in Acts chapter 15.)

*Ac 16:4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the **apostles and elders** which were at Jerusalem.*

As the early churches mature it might be that they begin to be allow to function in their role more and more independently in view of the coming of the end of the apostolic office. The pastoral office is only mentioned once in the N.T. using the term *pastors*. (Eph.4.11) Elders does appear to be the predominate means of addressing pastors of churches in Scripture.

*Ac 14:23 And when they had **ordained them elders** in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.*

*Ac 20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the **elders of the church**.*

*Ac 21:18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto **James; and all the elders** were present.*

*Jas 5:14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the **elders of the church**; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord ...* (Pastors do not have to be in full time ministry. There should be a consideration of having a multiplicity of elders to feed the sheep. Notice that a plurality is all but assumed in a church.)

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It is not that the apostolic and pastoral offices didn't have similarities:

*1Pe 5:1 The **elders which are among you** I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:*

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

But the apostolic office has passed and the pastoral office has continued to this day.

The term *elder* can refer to both the pastoral office as well as the older men:

*1Ti 5:17 Let the **elders** that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*

The term *elder* can at times simply refer to older men:

*1Ti.5.1 ¶ Rebuke not an **elder**, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren;*

*2 The **elder** women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.*

1Pe.5.5 ¶ Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

This is the first instance where aid is sent to help the saints that live in Judaea. This is a prophecy. It is foretelling of a coming famine. The Lord is preparing others to care for the Jerusalem church and churches in Judaea.

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The New Bible Commentary: Revised, Copyright 1970 Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, England, p.987, 'It is not clear how long before the famine Agabus's prediction was made. Probably the Antiochene Christians set aside money systematically until the time of need actually came, and then sent Barnabas and Saul as their delegates to take the accumulated sum to the Christians at Jerusalem.'

We are now, by the Word of God, prepared in every way, historically and logically, for the beginning of the great missionary expedition into the nations of the Gentiles by the apostle Paul, which begins in chapter 13.