

Believers in Antioch

Acts 11:19-30

by Don Falkos

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It had been over ten years since the stoning of Stephen had spawned a great persecution in Jerusalem. At that time, many of the believers had scattered. Some of them went to Antioch in Syria. At first they only talked about the Lord to fellow Jews. Then some of them started talking to Gentiles, telling them the good news about Jesus. Many of these Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord.

When news of what was happening reached the believers in Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to check things out. When Barnabas arrived in Antioch, he saw at once God was behind it all and he was very pleased. He encouraged those new believers to remain faithful to the Lord with all their hearts. Barnabas himself was a good and faithful man, filled with the Holy Spirit. As a result of his efforts a considerable number of people came to the Lord.

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul. When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Barnabas and Saul were in Antioch for a full year, meeting with believers and teaching large numbers of people. It was in Antioch the disciples were for the first time referred to as "Christians".

At about this time some prophets traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, whose name was Agabus, lead by the Spirit, predicted there was going to be a worldwide famine. Concerned about the believers in Judea, the disciples in Antioch decided each of them would send whatever they could to help out. They asked Barnabas and Saul to deliver their gift to the apostles in Jerusalem.