

Week beginning Monday 18th January 2021

Prepared by Anne Jackson.

Acts 10. Peter breaks all the rules.

Peter and Cornelius's story is told more than once. Should we tell our story more often? Note the number of guiding prods Peter received, leading him to take the unprecedented step and baptise a Gentile household. v19, v35, v47. Peter preached about Jesus, chosen and anointed by God, teaching, healing, crucified and risen, as predicted in the Scriptures. All of which Peter had witnessed. Peter's short, unfinished sermon was interrupted. God's gift of the Holy Spirit was given to the Gentile congregation. [Caesarea to Joppa = 30 miles.]

Acts 11. The church grows in two new areas.

Scandalous rumours circulate that Peter has broken all the Jewish rules and traditions but his critics change their mind when Peter tells them the full story and they realise God's guidance. Note the extra detail in v16. Cf. Acts 1:5. The signs of the Kingdom.

A challenging thought: the message was spread by persecuted believers. The Jerusalem church chose Barnabus to investigate and encourage the growing church in Antioch. Barnabus recruited Saul's help. We will meet Agabus (v28) again. Note the generous giving to a fellowship in need.

Acts 12. Herod persecutes the church to gain popularity.

A devastating if brief account of the death of the apostle James is followed by a lengthy and hilarious account of the rescue of the apostle Peter. Before Peter disappears he makes sure James, Jesus' brother, knows what has happened. If the sudden death of Herod, who died in AD 40, seems a bit farfetched (v23); the Jewish historian, Josephus, tells the same tale. John Mark is mentioned twice in this chapter. v12 & v25.

SECTION THREE: PAUL THE MISSIONARY.

A map of the Mediterranean to follow Paul and Barnabus visits would be helpful.

Acts 13. The story moves from Jerusalem to the steadily growing church in Antioch.

As a result of the leadership team prayer meeting in vv1-3 the growing Antioch church released their gifted leaders to go overseas on mission. In Paphos, Cyprus' capital, note the Roman governor's response to witnessing conflict between truth and falsehood: v12.

Across the sea to Antioch in Pisidia, Paul had the opportunity to share the good news with fellow Jews. Note the climax of his sermon in vv38-40. Note Paul and Barnabus' response to opposition and Jesus' instructions in Luke 9:2-5.

Acts 14. The Gospel is preached in many cities all round the region.

A challenging chapter, showing the obedience, skills, energy and resilience needed for mission which leads to repeated violent opposition in spite of the powerful preaching and miracles. In Lystra the differences in culture and language led to a misinterpretation about who healed the lame man. Cf. Paul's sermon to the pagans stressing God the Creator with the one to the Jews in Ch.13. Paul and Barnabus retrace their steps, consolidating their work in Galatia. Note vv22-23. From Friday 23rd April, in the letter to Galatians, we will be reading about Paul's continued guidance and encouragement to these new Christians. Back home to Antioch in Syria at last!