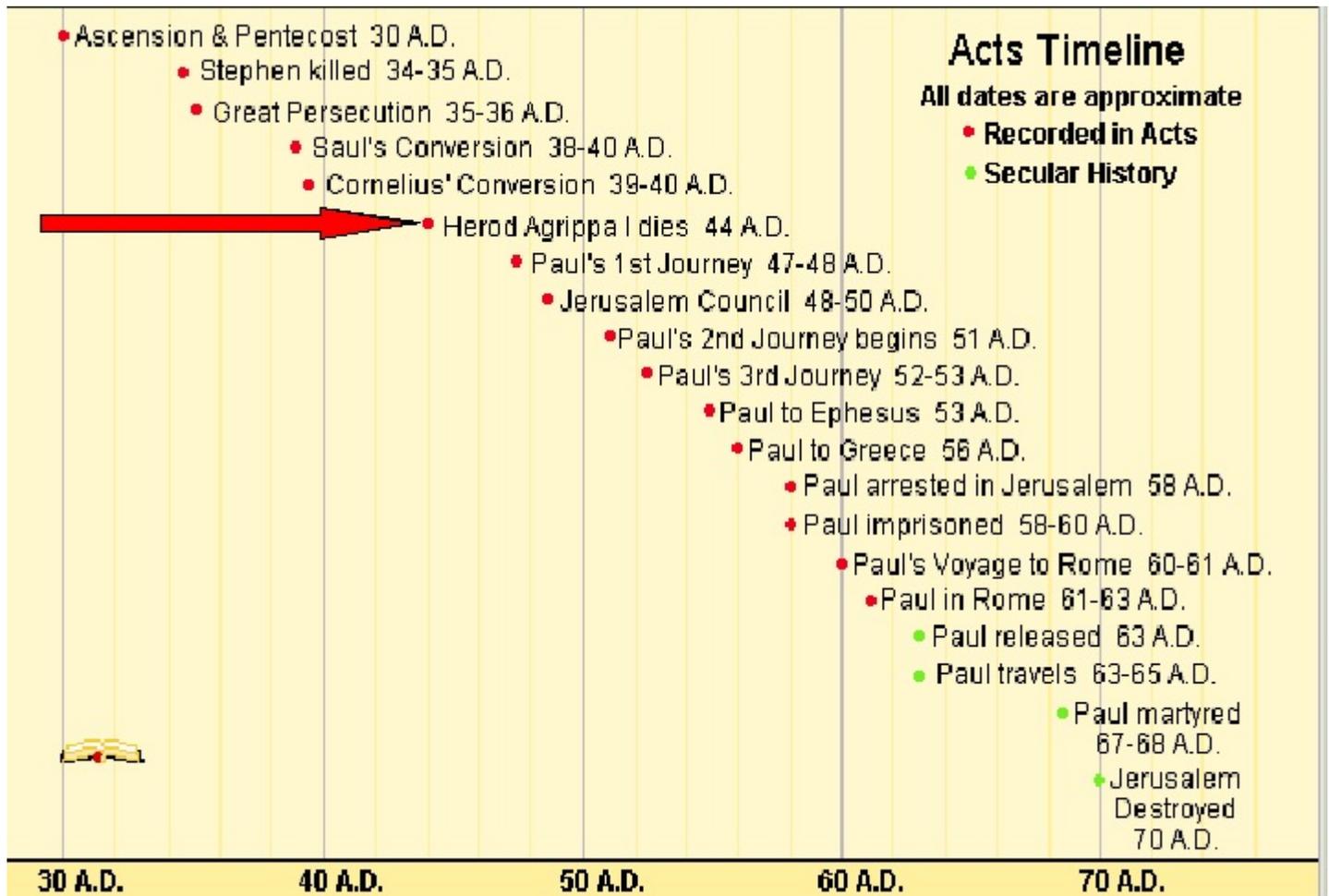


Transition to the Remotest parts of the Earth (Acts 11-12)

Gentiles In Antioch

The next event after the conversion of Cornelius is the beginning of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles in the city of Antioch. This marks the beginning of the final transition in Acts. Just as Jesus had foretold, they would be His witnesses in Judea(Acts 1-8:4), Judea and Samaria(8:5-12) and the remotest parts of the earth(13-28).

The work in Antioch introduced the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, and the transition from Peter to Saul who would soon be called Paul. The events in the chart below are mostly guesses, but we know from secular history that Herod died in 44 AD. That and the destruction of Jerusalem are the only fixed dates. Everything else is extrapolated from passages that often are not concerned with time chronology.



The fact the Luke recorded this after the conversion of Cornelius and that it caused no concern in Jerusalem when the news came makes it clear that these conversions occurred after the events recorded in Acts 10-11 had occurred and news of the Gentile conversion had reached Antioch.

When this good news from Antioch reached Jerusalem, they sent out Barnabas(son of Exhortation). After he had seen the good work being done there he encouraged(exhorted) them and even more were added.

Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. 23 When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. 24 For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. Acts

11:22-24

Barnabas seeks for Saul

After seeing the great power the gospel had over the Gentiles there, Barnabas went to find Paul. Since this was the major reason Jesus had appeared to him at his conversion and commanded him to leave Jerusalem to go to Tarsus, it is evident that Barnabas would have been aware of it.

*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, 16 to **reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles,** Gal 1:15-16*

*Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. 14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for **he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.** 16 For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." Acts 9:13-16*

*Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance 18 and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me...21 Then He said to me, **Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.** Acts 22:17-21*

*But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. 17 **I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you,** 18 to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.' Acts 26:16-18*

After seeing all the Gentiles converts, Barnabas went to Tarsus, looking for Saul.

Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. 26 And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

We don't know the exact moment it occurred, but at some point between the time Barnabas found Saul and the discussion in Jerusalem after the journey recorded in 13-14, it was evident to all that Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles and Peter was the apostle to the Jews.

*But on the contrary, when **they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter** 8 (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), 9 and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, **that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.** Gal 2:7-10*

It is probable that Paul began laying his hands on the Gentiles just as Peter and John had in Samaria.

Relief to Judea

This is the first mention of prophets since they were promised by Peter when he quoted Joel in his first sermon. The term prophet refers to those who have had hands laid upon them and are then able to preach by inspiration. The apostles could all prophesy and were therefore also prophets, but since the office of apostle was actually higher than that of a prophet they were called apostles.

*And God has appointed these in the church: **first apostles, second prophets,** third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 1 Cor 12:28*

*having been built on the foundation of **the apostles and prophets,** Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, Eph 2:20*

*which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit **to His holy apostles and prophets:** Eph 3:5-6*

***And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets,** some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, Eph 4:11-13*

These prophets reveal that a great famine was about to come upon the entire world. But it would hit the brethren in Jerusalem the hardest. First because in the early days of the church they made great sacrifices that left them without reserves. Second, because of the great persecution that had

displaced them and led to financial hardships as some would have lost fathers and breadwinners. For these reasons, the brethren in Antioch(Jew and Greek) determined to send relief to the brethren who lived in Jerusalem. The money was sent by the hands of Barnabas(who had earlier sold property) and Saul(who had earlier caused great grief).

And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. 30 This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. Acts 11:27-30

James and Peter Arrested

Although Herod's efforts to harass the church are summed up by Luke with the death of James and arrest of Peter, it is probable there were other things done. The death of James must have been deeply troubling for Peter and John. They had a long history together and it must have seemed difficult to believe that he was gone.

*Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, **James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother**, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. Mt 4:21-22*

*For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; 10 and **so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon**. Luke 5:9-10*

***James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges**, that is, "Sons of Thunder"; Mark 3:17-18*

***Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask."** Mark 10:35*

*When He came into the house, He permitted no one to go in except **Peter, James, and John**, and the father and mother of the girl. Luke 8:51-52*

*Now after six days Jesus took **Peter, James, and John his brother**, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; Luke 9:54*

*And He took **Peter, James, and John with Him**, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. 34 Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch." Mark 14:33-34*

Prayers were being Offered

While many in the church at Jerusalem had seen amazing things. Some had been present and either seen or been the recipients of the miracles Jesus performed. Many of the 500 brethren who saw Jesus' resurrection were still alive(1Cor 15:6). The miraculous events at Pentecost(Acts 2), the healing of the lame man(Acts 4) and the apostles' release from prison(Acts 5:19-20) must have made a powerful impression upon them.

Yet when Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church, killed James the brother of John with the sword, and seized Peter, it appears the faith of these brethren in their prayers faltered. Truly the case seemed hopeless. He was to be executed the next day, was in a prison, bound with two chains between two soldiers and guards before the door. There was no legal recourse and thus little hope(Acts 12).

Yet they were at "*the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying*" (Acts 12:12). So what were they praying about the night before Peter's execution? It is inconceivable that Peter was not in their thoughts. Did they ask God to deliver him "*if it be thy will?*" Did they ask for mercy on Peter, and "*if it be possible*" he might be rescued? It would be amazing if they did not.

While they were praying, God was acting. An angel of the Lord struck Peter on the side while he was sleeping. His chains fell off his hands, he was led past the first and the second guard posts, and through the iron gate which opened of its own accord. Certainly it was an amazing and unforeseen intervention. Even Peter "*did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision*" (Acts 12:9).

So while the church was praying for Peter after God freed him, he came to the house where they were praying. He "*knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and*

announced that Peter stood before the gate” (12:14-15). Clearly she believed it was Peter and was the perfect witness. So what response would we expect? Would they begin praising and thanking God for Peter’s deliverance? No, first they tell the young girl “you are beside yourself” then, “it is his angel,” and finally when they do see him, “they were astonished.” It was inconceivable to them that God would answer their prayers, beyond their level of faith to accept what had occurred.

Details of his Imprisonment

Delivered to 4 quaternions (16 soldiers).
 Peter is chained, lying between two soldiers
 two soldiers outside the door.
 Iron gate barring entrance into the prison
 No small stir among soldiers
 Herod examines guards and executes them.

Details of his Release

Prayer made at house of John Mark (Barnabas cousin)
 Angel awoke him; chains fell off;
 Girded; bind sandals, put on outer cloak
 Gate opened by itself; Peter on the street angel departs
 Saints praying; Peter knocks; No one believes at first.
 Peter asked them to inform James then leaves the area.

Death of Herod

Although he put the soldiers to death, it is clear, he was concerned enough not to keep persecuting the church. He traveled to Caesarea and the people of Tyre and Sidon come down the coast to bring about peace. Like all politics they need peace to continue to eat and are willing to do whatever is necessary. Probably bribery and flattery. He gave an oration and took far too much glory. He had the opportunity to reject it, but refusing to do so, God acted. We now learn that angels are also working in this world, meting out judgment. He is struck by the angel which causes him to be eaten of worms dying an slow and painful death.

Not sure if Barnabas and Saul were in the home of John Mark, but they returned from Jerusalem taking him along with them.

