

Paul and his Journeys – Part 6 Paul and Barnabas Split

After the completion of their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas return to their main Church located in Antioch. Upon return, they encourage and share the wonderful miracles the Lord had performed with them as they travelled. They re-confirmed to the Antioch Church that God had fully accepted the Gentiles to be part of his salvation plan, “opening the door of faith” to them (Acts 14:27).

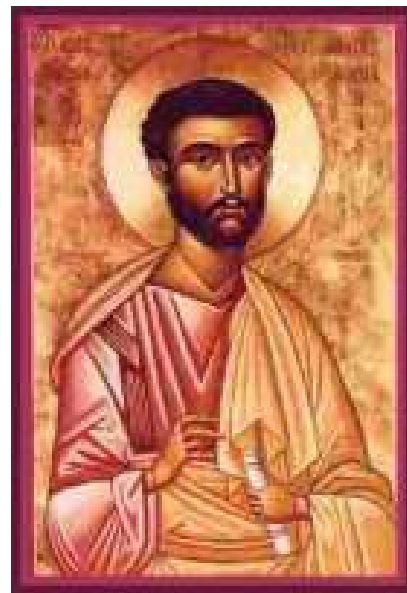
However, the merge between two God given-covenants (Judaism and Christianity), brought forth some confusion in doctrine. Certain men from Judea came to Antioch and declared to the Church “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” (Acts 15:1). Of course, Paul and Barnabas disputed the statement. In their travels they had seen God filling the uncircumcised Gentiles with the Holy Spirit, in the same way as the Jews were. The matter caused such a dispute that it was deemed necessary for Paul and Barnabas (with Titus an uncircumcised Greek, and a few other men), to go to the elders at Jerusalem to seek a resolution.

Again, Paul told the elders of Jerusalem all the miracles that had occurred on his journey, and that he did not consider circumcision to be necessary for the Gentiles. Some of the Pharisees that had been converted to Christianity argued that it was necessary for them not only to be circumcised, but also to follow the entire law of Moses. According to Paul’s letter to the Galatians, there were also present ‘false brethren’ who had come to spy on the meeting, to try and bring them back into the bondage of the law. In the end, the clever words of the Pharisees were no match for the truth. Peter supported Paul declaring that by his mouth the Gentiles (first) received the gospel, and that God gave them the Holy Spirit as he did the Jews. He did not see it necessary for them to put a ‘yoke upon the disciples’, for even the Jews could not properly keep the law. James concluded the matter by arranging for an apparent compromise: there was no need for Gentiles to keep the law, *except* they abstain from-

1. pollutions of idols
2. fornication
3. eating animals that had been killed by strangulation
4. eating blood

This doctrine was sent to the churches in the regions of Antioch, and Paul, Barnabas, Judas and Silas, travelled back to confirm it. After the doctrine was established, Judas returned back to Jerusalem, and Silas remained in Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.

After a period of time, Paul and Barnabas decided that it would be a good thing to re-visit all the cities they had preached in during their first missionary journey, to “see how they do” (Acts 15:36). However, Barnabas was determined to bring John-Mark with them, but Paul thought it “not good to take him”, because (as mentioned last month), John-Mark departed early from the first missionary journey and went “not with them to do the work”. This quarrel resulted in the separation of Paul and Barnabas as missionary partners. It appears that Paul still had a lot of respect for Barnabas as he writes of him in a favourable light in Galatians, but it appeared that it would be best for them if they were no longer missionary partners. So, Barnabas and John-Mark went on their own missionary journey through to Cyprus, and Paul went with Silas through the regions of Cilicia, on what is commonly referred to as ‘The Second Missionary Journey of Paul’.



Barnabas as depicted by early artwork