

Some interpretative questions to consider in Acts 11.19-14.28

1. How is this whole operation being financed?
2. What do we know about Syrian Antioch, where Barnabas and Saul spend a year?
3. In 11.26, we hear “it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called ‘Christians.’” How are we to understand this label in relation to other terms for Jesus’ followers in Acts?
4. Who is the “King Herod” in 12.1ff?
5. Starting in 12.3, we begin to hear opposition to the Way from “Judeans” [Greek, *Ioudaioi*]. Who are these people in relation to “Israelites” and other terms for Peter’s and Paul’s compatriots?
6. How are we to connect Herod’s response to Peter’s angelic prison escape and his death in the following passage (12.19-23)?
7. In 13.1, we hear of a named group of prophets and teachers. What might their roles be in the emerging church order/practice?
8. Sent by the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Paul begin a journey to bring the Word to others. What pattern might we find in the choice of cities to which they go?
9. In Paphos, they encounter a “magician” and a proconsul, Sergius Paulus. What echoes of earlier passages in Acts help us to understand the scene?
10. In Pisidian Antioch, Paul gives a long speech in the synagogue. What do we know about this place? How does Paul’s speech compare to Peter’s Pentecost speech and Stephen’s speech earlier? What choices is Paul making in his appeal to specific scriptural texts (e.g., Psalms rather than Daniel to “prove” resurrection)?
11. Starting in 13.46, we hear of Paul and Barnabas “turning to the Gentiles/nations”. What differences might it make to hear these people as “the nations” rather than “the Gentiles”? What does this mean given that they continue to speak in synagogues?
12. In 13.50, the Judeans provoke the local urban elite against Paul and Barnabas. Why might the Gospel be a threat to such people?
13. In 14.1, we hear for the first of five times in Acts the collective, “Judeans and Greeks.” What does this term mean in relation to “Gentiles/nations” on the one hand and “Israelites” on the other?
14. In Lystra (14.8-20), a humorous scene of linguistic and cultural confusion unfolds, quickly turning from treating the apostles as “gods” and then stoning Paul and leaving him for dead. What is the argument Paul makes to the people of Lystra? What might be at play in the sudden change?
15. In 14.23, they appoint “elders for them in each church.” How does this role reflect earlier biblical practice among the Israelites?