

Acts 067
Prophecy's Precision
Acts 11:25-29
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Now let's go to Acts 11:25. We are finished with the conversion of Cornelius, and now we are at the tail end of Acts 11, where we get a peek of the church at Antioch, which is up north. We can take this section and divide it into two parts. The development of the church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-26); and then you are going to see a beautiful picture of the benevolence of this church (Acts 11:27-30).

- I. Development of the Church (Acts 11:19-26)
 - A. Jewish evangelism in the Diaspora (19)
 - B. Gentile evangelism (20)
 - C. Progress report (20)
 - D. Barnabas' ministry (22-24)
 - E. Saul reintroduced (25-26a)
 - F. Barnabas & Saul minister at Antioch (26b-d)
- II. Benevolence of the Church (Acts 11:27-30)
 - A. Agabus' prophecy (27-28)
 - B. Relief fund (29-30)

Essentially what has happened is Jewish evangelism (Acts 11:19). They still do not know that the gospel is available to the Gentiles—that door has been opened (Acts 10); Gentile evangelism (Acts 11:20); and then there is a beautiful progress report on the numerical growth of that church at Antioch (Acts 11:21).

The things going on at Antioch up north are so amazing that news of it reaches the Jerusalem church down south. They send Barnabas from Jerusalem to Antioch to investigate (Acts 11:22-24). Barnabas, when he travels from Jerusalem to see everything that the Lord is doing at Antioch, he just rejoices in the grace of God.

It is at this point that Barnabas tries to go and get Saul, who is still in Tarsus. That is the last we left Saul. He wants to bring Saul into the ministry in Antioch to build up these brand new Christians in Antioch. We have the introduction of Saul (who is going to become Paul) into all of this in Acts 11:25-26.

We pick it up in Acts 11:25 as Barnabas leaves Antioch, and he goes to Tarsus to search for Saul. It says in Acts 11:25, *"And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul."* Tarsus is right next door to Antioch up north. Barnabas, of course, has come from Jerusalem and traveled upward. They go and get Saul here in Tarsus, and they bring him to Antioch, which is pretty close to Antioch. The last time we left Saul was in Acts 9:30, pretty close to the end of his conversion.

It says in Acts 9:30.

"But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus."

Tarsus was actually Saul's hometown. There we left Saul in Tarsus, then we got into Acts 10-11 where the focus shifted to Peter, because he had the keys to the Kingdom. Peter is the one that leads the first full-fledged Gentile to Christ in the Church Age. Now that that story is completed, we can get back to Saul.

Barnabas leaves Antioch, and he goes to Tarsus, right next door, to search for Saul. When it says he went to search for him (Acts 11:25), *"And [Barnabas] left for Tarsus to look for Saul."* The word "look for" here, in the Greek, is *"anazēteō."* I think it is only used twice—once here and once by Luke in the Gospel of Luke, which is significant because Luke wrote both Luke and Acts.

The way that verb is used in the Book of Act is in the story where Jesus is being sought after by his parents. Remember, He got lost (or they thought he got lost). "Where is Jesus?" There He was in the temple, interacting with the religious leaders. The parents are in a panic, as any parents would be when their youngster is not around—they think He is lost. He says to them, "You should have known I'd be about My Father's business." Do you remember that story?

When the parents, Joseph and Mary, went looking for Jesus, that is the same verb, *"anazēteō."* It says in Luke 2:44-45,

"But supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him."

The Greek word for "looking" in Luke 2:44-45 is *"anazēteō."* It is an intense search. Luke, by employing the same verb here as Barnabas is looking for Saul, is saying that it is not just some casual walk in the park, "let's walk around a little bit and see if Saul shows up." It is an intense search.

It is almost as if Barnabas instinctively realizes how significant Saul is to the development of the church, that he is looking for him, and he wants to bring him from Tarsus to Antioch to teach this massive flock that is now growing there in Antioch. Barnabas brings Saul to Antioch, you see that in Acts 11:26, after he finds him. It says, *"And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch."* Tarsus is where Saul was, and Barnabas brings him to Antioch.

As I like to emphasize, these are very real places of geography that you can document on a map. I mention this a lot to show people that this is actual history as it unfolded. God used real history to give us His message. This is not just a book of spiritual tales—this is an actual history book. It is not just a history book because it gives us spiritual truth, but it is spiritual truth in the context of actual history.

I was reading Arnold Fruchtenbaum's commentary on this, he says, "Saul has now reentered the picture after a ten year absence." There has probably been about ten

years—or a decade—since the last time we ran into Saul, who was about to become Paul. The whole story of Saul is interrupted with the conversion of Cornelius.

As you go down to the end of Acts 11:26, you have a description of Barnabas and Saul together ministering in Antioch. You have the duration of their ministry and the size of the church there in Antioch. Antioch is the first time that these believers in Yeshua, these believers in Jesus, are given the name Christians. The name Christian has not been used up to this point in time.

Notice first of all, Acts 11:26. It says,

"And when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."

Notice the duration of the ministry here. Barnabas does this feverish look for Saul in Tarsus; he finds him and brings him to Antioch. Then there are Saul and Barnabas teaching in Antioch for a whole year. People might say, "Why are they teaching them for a whole year? Aren't those people in Antioch already saved? If they are already saved, why don't you just move on to the next mission place and evangelize the next group?"

That is how a lot of people think, in missions work. "After I get these people saved, I am going to leave. I am going to go to the next place and get them saved, then go to the next place and get them saved." All of that type of evangelistic strategy forgets what Jesus said. Jesus did not call us to make converts. He called us to make who? Or what? Disciples.

Matthew 28:19-20, the Great Commission verse:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Our calling as Christians is not to just make converts out of people under God's power; it is not just to lead people to Christ; it is not just to participate in the birth process; but it is to participate in the growth process. Catching the fish is one thing; cleaning the fish is completely different. That is the process of discipleship, and that requires in-depth teaching. That requires time.

In the natural world there are obstetricians and there are pediatricians. Usually an obstetrician is not a pediatrician, and a pediatrician is not an obstetrician, because those are two completely different disciplines. The obstetrician participates in the birthing process, the pediatrician helps the newborn mature. Through proper nutrition and other things he helps the newborn grow properly.

In the body of Christ there are evangelists—people that lead other people to Christ. But then there is the gift of pastor-teacher, which is primarily used amongst the saved, and helps the saved grow properly.

Sugar Land Bible Church is not just a church about winning people to Christ. That is important. We give the gospel here every week. We are getting more involved in county fair evangelism and things like that. We have a missions committee. We support missionaries. But if you think that Sugar Land Bible Church is just a church about getting the gospel out, then you are probably at the wrong church, because this church is about helping people that are already saved, that already understand the gospel, helping them grow into maturity.

A lot of our activity here revolves around not just making converts or believers, but making disciples. There are a lot of people out there who have been saved for 10, 15, 20, 30 years. They are sitting in churches that keep telling them how to get saved over and over again. That is fine, but that is the whole content of the messages that they get on Sunday. They already know how to get saved because they already are saved.

God is saying to them, "You can't just stay as a believer. Now you need to grow into discipleship. You need to be around a church with the right philosophy and the right gift mix that will help you, as a saved person, to develop and mature. In other words, you do not need an obstetrician anymore—you need a pediatrician. That is why Paul, an evangelist, would stay amongst saved people for an entire year, teaching the full counsel of God's Word.

Then as you look at Acts 11:26, the size of the church is given. It says that Paul and Barnabas *"taught considerable numbers."* This is the second time the size of the church at Antioch is mentioned. If you go back to Acts 11:21, it talks about *"a large number who believed."* If you go to Acts 11:26, which we just read, *"[they] taught considerable numbers."* If you go back to the end of Acts 11:24, it says, *"And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord."*

Why does Luke make reference to the numerical size of the church three times in this brief section concerning Antioch? Because Luke is writing to Theophilus. He is presenting Theophilus with an orderly account of the birth and growth of the church, so as to affirm Theophilus in what he has believed. In other words, Luke is using history to document the birth and growth of the church numerically, geographically, and ethnically.

He documents it ethnically by tracing the change in ethnicity in the church, which starts off as primarily Jewish. Then by the time you get to the end of the Book of Acts, it is primarily Gentile. He documents the geographic trajectory of the church northwest from Jerusalem to Rome. He documents the numerical growth of the church through something called "progress reports."

The Book of Acts will say things like in Acts 2, "there were about 3,000 saved." It talks about 5,000; and it uses passages like we are talking about here, saying "considerable numbers." That is why the numerical count keeps being given. Luke is writing to Theophilus trying to show Theophilus that this church, that he is a part of, is an authentic move of God—this is authentic.

A lot of Christians have what I would call "big church phobia." I am in touch with that emotion, because if a church is big, people think they got big because they

compromised—they left the Bible, they got into motivational speeches, or whatever. That is true to some extent, and that does happen, sadly. You will notice that some churches are big because God made them big.

The size of the church is not the issue. The issue is: How did they get big? You see examples in the Bible of small churches, struggling churches, like Philadelphia, where Jesus said to them, *"Though you are small, I have put before you a doorway that no man can shut"* (Revelation 3:8). You also see other churches, like Antioch, where it just keeps mentioning "considerable numbers."

When you look at a church, do not try to make a value statement about that church totally based on how big or small it is. Do not automatically think that if it is small, it is spiritual, and if it is big, it is carnal. God is in the business of both kinds of churches. The size of the church really is not the issue. The issue is: How did they get to where they are?

I would try to stay away from "big church phobia," automatically assuming carnality and compromise just because a church is big. I know of big churches in the United States that are very, very faithful. I know of small churches in the United States that are very, very unfaithful. I know the opposite. I know small churches that are faithful, and big churches that are unfaithful. It is just a tricky thing.

God can make big churches. He can make small churches. How big a church becomes is His business since He is the builder of the church. We do not want to get in a mindset here at Sugar Land Bible Church that we don't want this church to get too big, as if that is our business. God is the One that makes it big, or God is the One that makes it small. We want the church to be what the Lord wants it to be—big, small, medium, in-between, etc.

Then you come to the very end of Acts 11:26, where it says, *"And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."* Why are they called disciples? Because Jesus said to make disciples (*"mathetes"* in the Greek). This is the first time now that the name Christian has been used.

Why are these people called Christians? They are called Christians because, from the observer, they acted much like Jesus Christ. It is not saying they were little Christs, or little gods. That is not what it is saying. It is saying that the moral character of these people, as you looked at them, were those that imitated—or emulated—Jesus of Nazareth. They got the name Christians out of that.

Paul, in Romans 8:29, tells us what our purpose is. He says,

"For those whom he foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His son, that He would be the firstborn among many brethren."

Everybody knows Romans 8:28 by heart:

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

We usually stop reading, but Romans 8:29 follows Romans 8:28. Romans 8:29 gives you what the purpose is: *"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren."*

God's primary purpose in your life—and everything that comes into your life is designed by God in some way, shape, or form to accomplish this purpose—is that your daily life and character would become similar to that of Jesus Christ. It is not a statement that we become deity (because obviously that wouldn't be true), but it is a statement of morality, conduct, character, and communication that every single day of my life I would become more like Jesus Christ in my daily conduct.

God's number one agenda for the believer after they trust Christ, is that their practice would catch up with their position. We have been clothed in the transferred righteousness of Jesus Christ, positionally. Our daily life should start to reflect that over the course of time. As that happens, we are graduating from simply being believers into being disciples.

That is what was happening at Antioch. These people were becoming so Christ-like—not perfect, not sinless (although they were sinning less)—that the outside world looked at them and said, "Why don't we just call those people Christians? Because that is what their character reminds us of. It reminds us of none other than Jesus Christ Himself."

Christian for these people is a very appropriate name. The name Christian is only found two other times in the whole New Testament. I was surprised to learn that. It is going to be used in Acts 26:28 about Agrippa, as he is replying to Paul. Agrippa says to Paul in Acts 26:28: *"In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian."*

The only other time it is used is in 1 Peter 4:16: *"But if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but he is to glorify God in this name."*

You do not find a lot of biblical information about Christians. It is just in Antioch that they were called Christians. The name is used only two other times in the whole New Testament outside of here, because that is what their daily life looked like. They acted, talked, and conducted themselves just like Jesus.

That is what Paul said that God wants to do in all of our lives, that Jesus would be the "firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). There is Christ, and then God wanted to create brethren for Jesus (little Christs, we might call them). Do not misunderstand me—not deity. In daily life, daily conduct, daily morality, daily interaction, and daily thought life. As Christians, whether we do something or not, we should always be asking ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" That is who we are supposed to be like, at the end of the day.

Apparently, this one year teaching that Paul and Barnabas engaged in, was very effective at Antioch, where you do not just have believers, but you have disciples. You do not just have disciples, but you actually have Christians. This is another thing that Luke throws in to describe the development of the church. They've gotten a new name here, the name "Christian."

Prior to this, their name was the Way, it was used in Acts 9:2 for the first time:

"And asked for letters from him to the synagogue at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem."

They were called the Way in Acts 9:2, 19:9, 19:23, 22:4, 24:14, and 24:22. They keep getting called the Way. Where did this name, the Way, come from? Since the early church was Jewish, it could have come from Isaiah 40:3, where it says,

"A voice is calling, 'Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.'"

When the Messiah comes, He is going to be like a highway in the wilderness. That is what the prophet Isaiah predicts. Isaiah 40:3 calls this coming Messiah the way, clear the way. He will function as the Way. He is going to connect groups, and ultimately, He is going to connect man to God, the Father.

The name may have come from Isaiah 40:3. I am of the opinion it all could have come from John 14:6. Remember what Jesus said to the disciples in the Upper Room?

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.'"

That is how the early church got this designation, the Way, which goes all the way through the Book of Acts.

In addition to the Way another term is thrown in here: the name "Christian." What you are seeing is how the church is gradually developing. They are not just The Way anymore. Certainly they continue to be called The Way, but they also get this designation of "Christian." This, of course, fits Luke's purpose in writing, because he is presenting Theophilus with an orderly account of the birth and growth of the church, as to affirm Theophilus in what he has believed.

One of the ways the church was born, and one of the ways the church grew, was not just numerically, not just geographically, not just ethnically, but it grew morally. The people within the church were becoming like Jesus Christ, and in addition to the Way they got the designation of Christian. This is actually all very critical information in terms of documenting the maturity and the growth of the church.

Acts 11:19-26 is that beautiful picture at Antioch concerning how the church was maturing. They matured to the point where they became involved in benevolence. God started to use them and their financial surplus to help other people out. That is what benevolence is, and that is how you can document the maturity of any church. Is that church a giving church? What does that church do with the gifts that are brought in? A big chunk of that is helping those all around us who can not help themselves. That is called benevolence.

You see a tremendous picture of benevolence in Acts 11:27-30. It begins with a prophecy from Agabus about a famine (Acts 11:27-28). That prophecy leads to the church at Antioch taking up an offering, as a relief fund for the struggling saints in Jerusalem that are about to be hit by a famine that Agabus predicted was coming.

First of all, we have Agabus (Acts 11:27-28). What is the occasion of this prophecy that he had? Acts 11:27 says, *"Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch."* Barnabas made a journey from Jerusalem, in the south, to Antioch, in the north, to investigate what was happening at Antioch—to see if it was of God or not. Now what you start seeing is prophets, those that can predict the future, traveling from Jerusalem to Antioch—from down south to up north.

What you are starting to see is the development of the body of Christ. The Church in Jerusalem is Jewish, but the folks at Antioch, as we are going to see, are starting to become progressively Gentile in salvation. That will be particularly true with Paul's first missionary journey, which is coming in Acts 13, and is launched from Antioch.

How is it that these Jews and Gentiles could start getting along together? That is the mystery of the body of Christ. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, it doesn't matter what your gender is. (By the way, there are only two genders. Can I get an amen on that?) It doesn't matter if you are male or female: you are a believer. It doesn't matter if you are Jew or Gentile: you are a believer.

That is what Paul said would happen in the mystery of the body of Christ. He says in Galatians 3:28,

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

In other words your Jewishness is important, but you are part of the body of Christ now, which transcends ethnicity. You do not lose your Jewishness any more than you lose your gender. I am a male, and I kept being a male after I got saved. It is not as if you lose your gender. It is that, within the body of Christ, gender no longer is a barrier between believers, because we are all part of the same body (Ephesians 2:14).

It is Paul who is going to write all these things down for us in the epistles (the same guy that is ministering here with Barnabas at Antioch). Ephesians 2:14 says, *"For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall."* You are starting to see the dividing wall disintegrate as those from Jerusalem are going up north to Antioch to minister. The Gentile orientation of one or the Jewish orientation of another is not what is important. What is important is that we are all part of the body of Christ.

You will notice here in Acts 11:27, as these prophets traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch, it says: *"Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch."* "But wait a minute, Pastor. Antioch is up north, not down." They are coming down because of the topography of Israel. Jerusalem is at the highest elevation. This shows that whoever wrote this understood the topography—the geography—of the nation of Israel. That is why it is very significant that Luke says they came down.

Jerusalem is always considered to be geographically up. That is why, when the Jews traveled to Jerusalem (as they were required to do to celebrate various Levitical feasts, which you can find in Leviticus 23), it always says they went up to Jerusalem.

These verses from John's Gospel, tell us that Jesus went up to Jerusalem at least five times that are recorded.

Christ's Five Trips to Jerusalem

Feast	Verse
Passover	John 2:23
Unnamed	John 5:1
Tabernacles	John 7:2
Dedication	John 10:22
Passover	John 13:1

There is in your Bible some Psalms: Psalm 120-134 are called the "Psalms of Ascent." Why are they called the "Psalms of Ascent"? Because these were the Psalms sung by the Jews as they went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the various feasts. That is why they are called "Psalms of Ascent" not "Psalms of Descent." This is all related to the geography—the topography—of the nation of Israel.

Obviously, Luke understood this as he wrote. It is just hard to believe that this is some liberal, second century forgery written by someone that was not Luke. The person that wrote this demonstrates an awareness of basic geographical facts within the nation of Israel.

Here come these prophets traveling down from Jerusalem, heading north to Antioch. We have the name of one of them—his name is Agabus. It says in Acts 11:28 that one of them was named Agabus. His prophecy is going to give rise to the benevolence of Antioch that we are going to read about in Acts 11:29-30. In other words, Antioch becomes very, very generous, because they know that there is a famine coming, which is predicted by the prophet Agabus.

Agabus makes a prophecy, or a prediction, which is what prophets do. Acts 11:28 says,

"One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world."

The Greek word for world there is a little tricky. It is *"oikouménē."* It is not a technical word—it is a word that means different things depending on the context. Sometimes it means the known world, a smaller section of the world. Other times it can mean the entire

world. Whether the word "*oikouménē*" means the world as a whole, or a smaller section of the world, you have to look at the context to figure that out.

I bring this up because you have these people called Preterists today (R.C. Sproul, Gary DeMar, Kenneth Gentry, Hank Hanegraaff). These are basically people who believe that the Book of Revelation was already fulfilled in A.D. 70. They take all of the global prophecies there, and they shrink them to the local events of A.D. 70.

They love to use Revelation 3:10 to prove their point, because there it talks about tribulation covering the whole earth. They say, "The word there is '*oikouménē*,' which means the '*known world*' not the '*whole world*.'" I would say to them, by way of response, that the word "*oikouménē*" can mean the "known world," but it can also mean the "whole world."

The Whole World? (Revelation 3:10)

- *Oikouménē*—known world? (Luke 2:1; Acts 11:28)
- *Oikouménē*—entire world (Luke 4:5; Acts 17:31; Rev. 12:9)
- Context favors the global definition
 - Adjective "whole" (*holos*)
 - Rev. 6-18

Revelation 12:9 uses "*oikouménē*." It says that Satan "*deceives the whole world*," meaning that he does not deceive a little population group—he deceives the whole planet. It is also used that way in Luke 4:5 and Acts 17:31. "*Oikouménē*" can refer to the whole world, and that is what it refers to in Revelation 3:10, contra preterism.

That is not what it means here in Acts 11:28. Agabus made a prophecy of a famine that wouldn't hit the whole world, but it would only hit the known world. Agabus's prophecy was fulfilled because when you keep reading in Acts 11:28 it says, "*And this [famine] took place in the reign of Claudius.*"

Josephus, a first century historian, writing around the time of Christ, records this famine in his "*Antiquities of the Jews*." Josephus is a tricky historian, because there are two different ways of recording where in Josephus's writings you can find this. I am using his approach where three numbers are used: the book, the chapter, and the section.

If you have a copy of Josephus that has the book, the chapter, and the section, you can document exactly where Josephus records the fulfillment of this prophecy. It is in Book 20, Chapter 1, Section 3; Book 20, Chapter 2, Sections 1 and 5. There is no doubt that this famine that took place in the days of Claudius transpired exactly like Agabus predicted, which is the test of a prophet.

If someone is going to claim the mantle of prophet, there is absolutely no wiggle room for their prophecies to be right 70% of the time. I have spent a lot of my time in life dealing with people (some of them in my extended family) telling me that they are prophets, or that they know prophets.

My response to them is, "These prophets that you know, are their predictions 100% accurate?" They say, "They have to grow into their gift." They'll say things like: "A teacher messes some things up. A teacher is not flawless or inerrant"—Certainly I have messed up some things in my teaching that I have had to go back to correct—"Just like you had to grow into your gift, prophets have to grow into their gift." Meaning that there is wiggle room for getting things wrong.

I am here to tell you that that type of mentality is completely foreign to the Bible. If someone is claiming to be a prophet, has some direct pipeline from God, and is receiving direct oracles from God, then God says, "There is a way to test that." Everything they say has to be 100% accurate. That is why if I claimed to be a prophet, I would make a prediction that would be fulfilled allegedly after I am dead and gone. That way I could not be tested.

Do you see what Agabus is doing? He is making a prediction about something that would happen in the immediate future—he is making a prediction about a famine. It says at the end of Acts 11:28, "And this took place in the reign of Claudius." As I mentioned earlier, a couple of times Josephus indicates that this prophecy was fulfilled. There was a famine in the reign of Claudius.

I just can't see Isaiah or Jeremiah getting out there saying, "All right, I am going to make a prediction now. There is a pretty good chance it is going to come true. You know what? I am just growing into my gift." It is a mindset that is totally foreign to the Bible. All these people are trying to do is to justify all of these things in the modern-day charismatic movement, like at Bethel and other places, where people make predictions that just do not happen.

There was a time in our lives, as newlyweds, where we were very, very open to these kinds of prophets. We were in a group where an individual made a prediction about Y2K. She jumped on the bandwagon of all of these other ministries that were predicting the end of the world. "Planes were going to fall out of the sky with Y2K. We need to hide water in the backyard. We need to hide gold, because the banks are going to fail."

To be frank with you, when you hear people say things like that, with such complete certainty, and you are in small group settings, you are swept into it. "Maybe there is some truth to this." When Y2K came and went, it was the nonevent of the century.

What do you do with those people that were claiming, under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that all of these things were going to happen? Not in some nebulous remote way, but during Y2K? You have to say, "Those people are doing something, but they are not prophesying under the power of the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit (God being omniscient), is not inaccurate."

This is one of the ways you can determine that the kingdom of the cults is a cult. When you get into the literature of the Jehovah's Witnesses and of the Mormons, you will see prophets with completely and totally failed predictions about big things like who is going to win the Civil War. They got that one wrong. There are countless errors. You can not

just come up with this excuse that they are just growing into their gift. The Bible says that if you want to be a prophet, you have to be 100% accurate.

Where am I getting this from? When God took the nation of Israel to Mount Sinai—when they were making their way into Transjordan to enter the Promised Land—He gave two tests for determining if someone claiming to be a prophet is a prophet. One of them is that the prophet can not contradict prior revelation. Deuteronomy 13:1-2:

"If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them.' You shall not listen to the words of that prophet..."

This is a case where a prophet makes a prediction, or a sign, that happens, but then simultaneously says, "Let's go violate the first two commandments of the Decalogue. Let's go after other gods," which the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments) prohibits—no other gods before Me; no graven images (Exodus 20:3-4). If a prophet makes a prediction and then contradicts what God said back in the Book of Exodus, Moses says that that is how you know he is a false prophet.

Here is the second way to determine if a prophet is false: If they make a prediction that doesn't happen exactly like God says, or the prophet says, then the prophet is false. Deuteronomy 18:21-22—the second test for a prophet:

"You may say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?' When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him."

The truth of the matter is that God cannot lie. *"God is not a man that He should lie,"* (Numbers 23:19). *"It is impossible for God to lie,"* (Hebrews 6:18). *"God cannot lie,"* (Titus 1:2).

If Agabus had made this prediction about a famine in the days of Claudius, and the thing never materialized; and if Agabus is claiming to be a direct oracle of God, then God just lied. That is how you determine that a particular prophet can not be a true prophet, because he got something wrong.

You will notice, in the Bible, how specific these actual authentic prophecies are. They are not generic prophecies like you get from Nostradamus or Jeane Dixon. *"In the end, good will overcome evil,"* thus saith the Lord." That is not the kind of prediction you get in the Bible. The predictions you get in the Bible are very, very specific. They are very, very detailed, and many times they are time bound.

If that prophecy doesn't materialize in detail, then it can not be from God. It is a very simple test. If the prophet gets it right but says, "Let's follow other gods," and contradicts what God already said, then that violates Deuteronomy 13. If an alleged prophet gets

something wrong under the guise of, "I am just growing into my gift," then that is a false prophet.

In the case of Agabus, he was an authentic prophet. He made a prediction, and the prediction happened. It happened literally. Doctor John Walvoord, in his book, *"Every Prophecy of the Bible,"* goes through every prophecy of the Bible, fulfilled and unfulfilled. He shows that the fulfilled ones happened 100% of the time, literally.

In this case, you have this man Agabus, who had an actual accurate prophecy. The church took this prophecy—this prediction—seriously. They knew that a famine was coming, so they took up a collection (Acts 11:29-30). You see money collected (Acts 11:29); then you see money sent (Acts 11:30). Take a look at Acts 11:29,

"And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea."

This is not Marxism. Marxists love these kinds of passages, because they think it teaches the principles of Marxism: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" (the doctrine of Karl Marx). This is not Marxism. The Bible doesn't teach Marxism. This is what we would call compassionate capitalism, where people with means were touched by the Lord, and they gave volitionally.

There is no volition in Marxism. In Marxism you have to redistribute the wealth, whether you like it or not. This is not dealing with that. This is dealing with people who voluntarily give. Doesn't the Bible say that when you give it shouldn't be "under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7)? Do you feel under compulsion on April 15th? Are you cheerful on April 15th? "Yay! It is April 15th!"

It is not dealing with government coercion here. It is dealing with people being touched in their heart by the Lord. They are just giving. They said, "Those saints down there in Jerusalem are going to have some financial trouble because of this prophecy from Agabus." They moved in this direction of benevolence.

Notice that this offering is taken up to help the saints in Judea. That is down south in the Jerusalem area. You can see what is happening in the Book of Acts: Jerusalem used to be the main sending church, but now Antioch is bailing out Jerusalem. What is happening to the center of gravity in the church? It is moving in a northwest direction. The main action for church leadership used to be in Jerusalem, but not anymore. We are seeing progress here, because now Antioch is bailing out Jerusalem.

That trajectory is going to keep moving northwest. We are going to get to a point, in Acts 19, where Jerusalem and Antioch will still be thriving churches, but they are not the center of what God is doing in terms of influence. The center of authority is going to move to a place called Ephesus, which is a church that Paul will plant by lecturing for two years in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:10). God used the lecture method for two years to build a massive work in Ephesus.

The church ultimately is going to move to Rome, the center of gravity is going to move there. It is going to keep moving, because Paul is going to say, in the Book of Romans, "I want to get to Rome, I want to solidify the church in Rome in apostolic doctrine, because it was one of the few churches that was started without the assistance of an apostle. I want to get Rome on the right footing, and I am going to keep moving west to Spain." He wanted to use Rome as a beachhead for launching off into Spain.

When you put all the biblical data together, what you are seeing is that God is moving the key center of influence out of Jerusalem in a northwest direction, eventually up north to Antioch. You are seeing it happen now as Antioch is bailing out Jerusalem financially. It is going to keep moving once the gospel gets outside of the borders of Israel into Gentile territory. It is going to keep moving northwest.

Antioch is a big deal, because it is from Antioch that the Apostle Paul is going to launch his three missionary journeys. That is why you are seeing so much information here in the Book of Acts about Antioch. Antioch is going to become the key sending church.

I mentioned this last time: it is from Antioch that a school will develop there called the Antiochene School, who will not allegorize the Scripture like those in Alexandria, Egypt. The Antiochene School would stand the doctrine of chiliasm (today we call it premillennialism) for the first two centuries of the church.

What is happening in Antioch is huge. Antioch is going to become the sending church. Antioch is going to bail out Jerusalem through benevolence. For the first two centuries of Christendom, all of your literal Bible interpreters are going to come from Antioch preaching and teaching a future kingdom.

Alexandria is another center of authority in Christianity, but it will quickly deteriorate into allegorization—amillennialism comes from Alexandria, Egypt. But for 200 years, Antioch is going to say, "No, we are not going to allegorize the Scripture. We are going to interpret it literally." This is the impact of the Antioch that you are reading about here in the Book of Acts.

It also demonstrates the purpose of prosperity. You can jot down 2 Corinthians 8:14, which Paul will later write about:

"At this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality."

In the past, Jerusalem helped Antioch, but now the financial situation has changed where Antioch is now helping Jerusalem. If you are in a giving church, you understand that the overflow of finances is there to be benevolent towards other churches and other Christians. Paul says that is why God put the abundance in your hands.

But you know what? Circumstances can change. Finances can change. Maybe the other church will become abundant and you will run into scarcity. Even though God is using you to help them, the day may come where God may use them to help you. That is what Paul is saying there in 2 Corinthians 8:14, and you are seeing that played out here at Antioch.

One last thing. Paul writes this in Romans 15:25-27:

"But now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things."

Paul makes the point here: "Look at what you have as a Gentile Christian (or a church that is about to become predominantly Gentile). Look at what you have because of God's work through the Jews. You have benefited from the Jews, from spiritual things. You have the Savior, you have the Scripture, and you have the coming Kingdom because of God's work through the Jews."

Every single blessing that we have inherited today has come to us through the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Amen. If that is true, doesn't it stand to reason that we should try to help them materially, since we have been blessed so much by them spiritually?

That is why Paul says, "You need to help that struggling Jerusalem church. It is your mother church, first of all. You always look out for your mother in her old age. Secondly, that is a Jewish church. Had God not worked through the Jews, we wouldn't have any spiritual blessings today. If you benefited from them spiritually, you have an obligation to help them in this famine that you know is coming."