

Barnabas and His Epistle – #1

By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- Dec. 2, 2012

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Thanks for that excellent introduction, Larry! I am delighted to be here on Covenant Key FM. A big thanks goes to Larry and Jen Siegle, for allowing me to be a part of their network. They certainly have my gratitude and support.
- B. Before we begin, why don't we thank God for providing this opportunity to study His Word --

Our Father in Heaven, the Only True God of this infinite universe, the Holiest of all Holies, King of all kings, and Lord of all lords, the Sovereign of all the Ages -- We ask for Your blessings upon our studies and fellowship here. May we apply these truths to our lives in such a way that it not only strengthens us spiritually, but also equips us to teach others and build your Kingdom, so that many will be blessed and bring glory and honor to You and Your Son, who redeemed us with His blood. It is in His Wonderful Name that we pray. Amen.

- C. The last events we looked at, back in August on the podcasts at AD70.net, were some of the signs of the end (i.e., Jesus b. Ananus crying out "Woe, Woe to Jerusalem"), the earthquakes, famines, and plagues that began to happen with greater frequency and intensity as we get within the last ten years of AD 70. We will see more of these as we progress through the final seven years before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.
- D. We also looked at the travel of Josephus to Rome about this time while Paul was still in prison there, and while John was exiled to Patmos. I find it quite interesting that Josephus went to Rome at this very time. He stated that his trip was for the purpose of securing the release of some fellow priests who had been held hostage by Nero, but rarely did Jewish emissaries go to Rome with only one item on their agenda. Usually there was a whole shopping list of things to accomplish while there. Since he stayed for almost four years, this seems even more likely to be the case. When we get to AD 64 in our studies, at the time the Neronic persecution broke out in Rome, while Josephus was still there, we will discuss more about his possible agenda.
- E. Here are some of the more important events that were happening at this time:
 - AD 61-62** - Epistles of James and 1,2,3 John were probably written
 - AD 62** - Roman authorities in Judea ceased minting Torah-compliant temple coins, which provoked tension and distrust among the Jewish leadership.
 - AD 62** - Severe famine in Armenia and Palestine
 - AD 62** - Ananias b. Nedebaeus (with his three sons) was still very powerful. One of his sons (Eleazar) was kidnapped by the Sicarii and held as hostage for ransom. Ananias arranged the release of ten Sicarii prisoners in exchange for his son.

- AD 62** - Change in procurators in Judea (Festus died and Albinus took over). This was the time when Ananus II took advantage of the interim between the two procurators to arrest and kill James and some of his companions.
- April 62** - Paul in prison, James killed by Ananus II, and John exiled to Patmos
- AD 62** - Paul wrote his first two prison epistles (Ephesians and Colossians)
- July 62** - John wrote Revelation (predicting the Neronic persecution)
- Oct 62** - Jesus the Farmer began pronouncing woes upon Jerusalem
- Winter 63** - Paul wrote Philippians and Philemon (two more prison epistles)
- Feb. 5, 63** - Major devastating earthquake in Campania (southern Italy) at Pompeii. This was just south of Rome. It would have been felt in Rome, where Paul was still under house-arrest, but was about to be released shortly.
- Spring 63** - Just as he was being freed in Rome, Paul released his epistle of Hebrews (which shows familiarity with Revelation).
- Summer 63** - Soon after his release, Paul wrote two of his three pastoral epistles, 1 Timothy and Titus.
- Late 63 or Early 64** - 1 Peter was written (showing familiarity with Revelation)
- Late 64** - Neronic Persecution began, during which Paul and Peter wrote their last two epistles, 2 Timothy and 2 Peter (Peter's second epistle shows familiarity with Revelation also), as well as Jude.
- Late 66** - Zealot Revolt began in Judea, which cut short the Neronic persecution
- F. In AD 62, Paul was already in prison in Rome, James was arrested and killed, and John was sent into exile on Patmos. AD 62 seems to be a very pivotal moment in the history of the pre-70 church. It was the moment when the birth pangs began to intensify dramatically.
- G. The literary efforts of the apostles proliferated at this time. Sixteen of the twenty-seven NT books (almost 60 percent) were written in these last four years before the outbreak of the Jewish Revolt (AD 61-64). It seems that from the moment Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, the apostles shifted into high gear in their efforts to stay connected with all the churches that Paul and the other apostles had established. The apostles increased their letter-writing to stabilize the churches who were feeling the heat of the increased persecution, and the temptation to fall away from the Faith and go back to Judaism or paganism.
- H. It would not be improper to suggest that this may have been the time that Revelation 20 refers to as the release of Satan, when he went forth to deceive the nations to go to war. Certainly this was the time when the Sicarii and Zealots began their big push for resistance and rebellion, and according to Josephus there were a number of client nations in the Roman empire at this time who were also contemplating rebellion just like the Judeans.
- I. So this is where we want to pick back up in our historical studies, in AD 62 while Paul was still under house-arrest in Rome. This is just two years before the Neronic persecution broke out in the summer of AD 64, and only four years before the Jewish war with Rome began in AD 66. We are getting close to the end. The birth pangs are happening more frequently and with greater intensity. The persecution is heating up. The Romans are tightening their grip on the Jews, and the Jews are putting up more resistance. Famines, earthquakes, and natural disasters are occurring more frequently and are more devastating. The number of

false prophets, false messiahs, and false teachers began to proliferate at this time also. Signs were appearing all over the Roman empire saying that troubling times were just ahead. Everything we have studied so far was to put us in position to understand this last decade before the End. From here onwards we will be right in the thick of it. Josephus calls this critical time "*the revolution (revolving or changing) of the ages*" [Josephus *Wars* 6.250 (6.4.5)] -- the changing from one age to another. We will be dealing with the great tribulation upon the church and the outpouring of wrath upon her persecutors. This is an extremely important part of first century history for all Christians -- the death and burial of the old age and the birth of the eternal Age to Come.

- J. This also seems to be about the time when Barnabas was killed by the Jews, at which time he instructed Mark to join forces with Paul. In this session, we will look at this whole scenario with Barnabas and Mark, trying to see how they fit into the overall situation of the church at this critical time. The history of Barnabas and his Epistle dovetails nicely into our study here, since his martyrdom on Cyprus appears to have occurred before or about the same time Paul arrived in Rome for his first imprisonment there (AD 61). The *Epistle of Barnabas* had already been written before that. These events in the life of Barnabas and Mark provide some additional pieces of the historical puzzle that we can use to reconstruct not only the dates for some of our NT books, but also the chronology of the apostles Paul and Peter. So, let's get right back into the thick of it with Barnabas and Mark.

The Life and Work of Barnabas and Mark

Bernd Kollmann summarized the most well-attested traditions about Barnabas:

After his split from Paul, Barnabas... resumed his missionary activities... After the incident at Antioch he set off, together with John Mark, on a new mission to Cyprus (Acts 15:39), at which point he disappears from the Acts of the Apostles and reliable information about him comes to an end. The gaps are filled in with legends from such sources as the pseudepigraphic *Acts of Barnabas by John Mark* and the *Laudatio* of Alexander Monachus, whose respective accounts of the second Cyprus mission and the death of Barnabas concur in outline. Accompanied by John Mark, Barnabas carried out mission work over the whole [island] of Cyprus and suffered martyrdom in Salamis at the hands of local Jews stirred up by Bar-Jesus Elymas (*ActBarn* 23) or Jews who had traveled there from Syria (Alex. Mon., *Laudatio* 26.479-29.549) before his corpse was finally buried, along with a copy of the Gospel of Matthew, by John Mark. ...The legendary accounts may correspond to historical fact insofar as they claim that Barnabas died during the second Cyprus mission... At least a rough timeframe can be determined for the date of his death. At the time that 1 Corinthians was written [AD 57], Barnabas was still alive, or at least Paul had received no word of his death (1 Cor 9:6). According to Alexander Monachus, John Mark brought news of Barnabas' death to Paul in Ephesus (*Laudatio* 30.553-55). When considered alongside 1 Cor 9:6, this suggests that Barnabas died around [57 AD].. [Bernd Kollmann, *Joseph Barnabas: His Life and Legacy*, pp. 47-48]

BARNABAS: In addition to these external traditions about Barnabas, there are a few mentions of Mark in the later epistles of Paul. It is these biblical statements about Mark which provide the best evidence of when Barnabas might have died. There seems to be two possible dates for the death of Barnabas that have been suggested by the various Barnabas scholars (AD 57 or AD 61). We will analyze both of them in view of the biblical data, and explain why we favor the later date (AD 60-61) for his death.

The book of Acts does not mention either Barnabas or Mark after chapter 15. Both of them disappear together after Barnabas took Mark to Cyprus (Acts 15:39). When Mark does reappear in the epistles of Paul and Peter, it is without any mention of any association with Barnabas (implying that Barnabas was already dead). That supports the tradition which says that just before Barnabas died, he instructed Mark to go to Paul and join with him in his missionary efforts.

Let's look at what the New Testament says about both Barnabas and Mark: Barnabas is mentioned 24 times in Acts, plus the following mentions in two of Paul's epistles: (1 Cor. 9:6; Gal. 2:1, 9, 13). I have arranged these mentions of Barnabas in the order in which they were written with the date in brackets:

Gal. 2:1 [AD 51-52] Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with **Barnabas**, taking Titus along also.

Gal. 2:9 [AD 51-52] and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and **Barnabas** the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

Gal. 2:13 [AD 51-52] The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even **Barnabas** was carried away by their hypocrisy.

1 Cor. 9:6 [AD 57] Or do only **Barnabas** and I not have a right to refrain from working? [Note that Paul speaks of Barnabas as if he is **still alive** and doing mission work like Paul was.]

Acts 11:24 [AD 58-62] for [**Barnabas**] was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. [Note the eulogistic tone to these words from Luke in AD 58-62. It implies that Barnabas was already dead. So, somewhere between AD 57 and AD 62, Barnabas must have been killed by the Jews on Cyprus.]

MARK: After at least six mentions in the book of Acts (12.12; 12.25;13.5; 13.13; 15.37; 15.39), Mark reappears in three of Paul's later epistles (Col. 4.10; Phlm 1.24; 2 Tim. 4:11), plus the first epistle of Peter (5:13). However, there are no eulogistic words about Mark in the book of Acts, nor in any other NT book. It seems that Mark was still alive until the Neronian persecution, and maybe even until the Parousia itself, serving as a courier between Paul and Peter and the scattered churches. Notice in the following references that from AD 62 onwards, Mark is connected with Paul and Peter, with no mention of Barnabas. The tradition which says that Barnabas died and gave instructions for Mark to join up with Paul, seems to harmonize with the Biblical narrative very well. Let's look at each of these four texts which mention Mark:

Col. 4:10 [AD 62] Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin **Mark** (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him). *[Note that Mark was with Paul while he was in prison in Rome. Mark did not travel to Rome on the ship with Paul and Luke. But sometime after Paul reached Rome and began his two years of house arrest, Mark came to him there. There is a lot implied here in this statement to the church at Colossae. Notice that they had already received instructions from Paul about Mark through a previous letter or courier. This means that Paul had known about the death of Barnabas and his charge to Mark to join up with Paul before he wrote to the Ephesians and Colossians in AD 62. In fact, he had already sent instructions to Colossae (and probably to all the other churches in Paul's network) about welcoming Mark into their fellowship and helping him in his service work to Paul. This implies that Barnabas could not have died any later than the end of AD 61, but more probably somewhere in early AD 61, shortly after Paul arrived in Rome. The fact that Paul had given the Colossians instructions about Mark previously implies all sorts of things about the death of Barnabas and the travel of Mark to find Paul and join up with him. It also gives us a glimpse into the way the apostles instructed the churches on who was approved by them to do mission work and who was worthy to be supported. Paul told the Colossians to welcome Mark. Why did he need to tell them this? Wouldn't they have automatically welcomed him? Maybe not, depending on their opinion of Barnabas and his teaching with which Mark had been associated. But Barnabas was dead now, and Mark was reconciled to Paul. Paul reminds them of this. Furthermore, if Barnabas had died in 57, the Colossians would have long known about it, and Mark would have already been in Paul's network for over three years, so that there would not have been any need for Paul to clarify all of this for the Colossian church. They would have already known about Mark. This implies that Barnabas had died within the last year or less, and that Mark's reunion with Paul was a fairly new thing that still needed clarification.]*

Philem. 24 [AD 63] as do **Mark**, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers. *[Note that Mark was still with Paul in Rome when Paul was about to be released. This extended presence of Mark with Paul in Rome would allow for Paul to have written the book of Hebrews in response to the epistle of Barnabas, which Mark had brought with him. According to tradition, Barnabas had copy of Matthew's gospel with him. Did Mark write his gospel before the death of Barnabas, or afterwards?]*

Some destruction of Jerusalem is mentioned in chapter 16 of the Epistle of Barnabas. All the patristic scholars think it is referring to AD 70. However, in the context Barnabas quotes a number of texts from Isaiah which are talking about the 586 BC destruction. This means that the destruction that was past when Barnabas wrote was not AD 70, but rather the 586 BC destruction. That one little fact changes everything in regard to the date of the epistle. This is how I am arguing my case for the pre-70 date of Barnabas in my Masters Thesis (which is entitled, *Redating the Epistle of Barnabas*). I am showing from the context of chapters 13 through 16 that Barnabas is referring to the generation of Isaiah's day who failed to repent, and as a result were destroyed in 586

BC. He is not referring to the AD 70 destruction as a past event. This will be a bombshell in the field of patristic studies. If I am successful in establishing the 586 BC destruction as the one that Barnabas refers to in chapter 16, then the issues of authorship and date for the epistle will have to be reconsidered by Barnabas scholars in the futurist establishment. Pray for that to happen! We preterists have nothing to lose and everything to gain if my thesis is correct.

By the way, if any of you would like to have a copy of the Epistle of Barnabas in PDF format, simply email me and request it <preterist1@preterist.org>.

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If you would like a couple of great books which detail all of these events, I would recommend **ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS** by F. F. Bruce, which is available for order at our website (www.preterist.org), and **JEWISH BACKGROUNDS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT** by J. Julius Scott, which is available from Amazon.com. Be sure to get a copy of my book, **First Century Events**, which deals with the Roman, Jewish, and Christian events of the first century. We will be using it as a study guide here in our studies of the first century. You can purchase it from our website: www.preterist.org

Some further recommended reading:

Josephus *Antiquities* and *Wars* (sections which deal with the Herodian rulers)