

Barnabas had preached the Gospel, to inquire as to their spiritual growth. Barnabas was agreeable to his request, but he wanted to take John (called Mark or Marqos) with them. Paul refused! Mark, who seems to be the cousin of Barnabas, had deserted them before in a place called Pamphylia and Paul was not as forgiving as Barnabas. This disagreement caused a separation between them. Barnabas, who had taken the despised Saul and reconciled him to the believers years before, now took the deserter Mark and brought him to Cyprus to train him there to preach the Gospel. Barnabas was always the friend of the "underdog." After this, some twenty years of serving the Church, we lose sight of Barnabas in the Scriptures. He is never mentioned again in Acts; he disappears as quietly as he appeared, a Levite from Cyprus, who encouraged others in their service to the Lord.

The Book of the Bee mentioned earlier tells us Barnabas preached in Italy before returning to his native Cyprus. Two other non-Biblical works carry on a tradition and his importance to the early Church. The first is called The Acts of Barnabas. It purports to be written by John Mark mentions the separation of Paul and Barnabas and their arrival in Cyprus. A leper named Aristoclianus, who had been cleansed in Antioch by Barnabas and Paul and sealed to be a bishop. The work concludes with John and Barnabas going to Salamis where while preaching the Gospel of Matthew in the synagogue, a man named Bar-Jesus, bound and burned Barnabas in 61AD. Here he finished the race in Faith, a saint, an apostle and a martyr. The other work is called The Epistle of Barnabas. It is a rather long teaching in two parts, the first being devoted to allegorical interpretation of Old Testament passages and their relationship to their fulfillment in the life of the Messiah. The second part is a very Jewish teaching style, contrasting the Way of Darkness with the Way of Light. For us today, it is an insight into the teaching and expression of the Faith in the early Church.

Barnabas encouraged the Church: by supporting it financially, by visiting the believers in many locations; and by using his spiritual gifts, especially teaching and prophecy. He encouraged Paul: by comprehending what God had done in his life, by recognizing the potential in Paul, by aiding Paul in using his gift for the Church, and by helping Paul develop his ministry. He encouraged Mark: by forgiving his past mistakes, by taking him under his wing, and by giving him a place in his ministry. Barnabas encourages us today: by the example of his selfless giving, by the example of his service to the leadership, by the example of his ministry to fellow believers, and by the example of his martyrdom for the Gospel. *(excerpted from: stbarnabastheapostle.net)

Saint Barnabas the Apostle

Feast Day: June 11



Comment:

Barnabas is spoken of simply as one who dedicated his life to the Lord. He was a man "filled with the Holy Spirit and faith. Thereby large numbers were added to the Lord."

Even when he and Paul were expelled from Antioch in Pisidia, they were "filled with joy and the Holy Spirit."

Saint Barnabas the Apostle

*Saint Barnabas, or Mar Bar-Naba as he is known in Aramaic, was a prominent leader in the formative days of the Church. His name is mentioned thirty times in the Scriptures, more often than most of the Twelve Apostles or even the Virgin Mary! He is not a common saint in the Church of the East, nor are parishes named after him because he is considered a "Western Saint." He is certainly a Biblical saint and therefore universally accepted.

Saint Barnabas was a Hebrew from the island of Cyprus. His Hebrew and Aramaic name was Yosip, or Joseph. Apostles saw in this Joseph a distinctive characteristic, one for which they renamed him "Bar-Naba," or Barnabas in English. Bar-Naba is an Aramaic name, the meaning of which is "Son of Prophecy." He was a Levite, a member of the tribe of Levi, the one tribe that did not inherit property in the Promised Land. Instead, their inheritance was God, for He said to Aaron, "You shall have no allotment in their land, nor shall you have any share among them; I am your share and your possession among the Israelites (Num 18:20). The Levites were the administrators of the Old Covenant. One part of the Levites, the "Sons of Aaron," were the priests of the Old Covenant...They were supported by the tithes of the people. In turn, they tithed to the priests. We can see the similarities in this system to the New Covenant offices of deacons (shamashé) and the assistance they provide to the priest (qashishé) of the Church.

We first encounter Barnabas in the fourth chapter of Acts. When he was converted and became a believer in Jesus as the Messiah, we cannot be sure. Universal Eastern Christian tradition credits Barnabas as one of the "Seventy Disciples" who were sent out by Jesus in chapter 10 of Saint Luke's Gospel. In the Syriac work, "The Book of the Bee," Mar Solomon, Bishop of Basra (c. 1222) lists Barnabas as the seventh of the Seventy. Thus he was a member of the same group that included Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias. These were men who were with Jesus from the beginning of His ministry and some were even earlier with John the Baptist. When we meet Barnabas, we find him already part of the Church.

During the first days of the Church, there were many problems challenging the believers. Rapid growth led to financial need. The Gentiles, were part of this growth and added to the need for proper teaching from the mouths of the Apostles. There was distrust for these Gentiles, and their acceptance into the Church brought suspicion from the Jews, who only accepted Gentiles who converted to Judaism by circumcision. The Church faced persecution from the Jews their kinsmen and from civil authorities as well. Within the first year of being born on the day of Pentecost, the Church yielded her first martyr, Stephen the Deacon, and in Jerusalem, Saul of Tarsus was breathing down the neck of the fledging Church. But on the way to Damascus to arrest Christians there, Saul received a revelation of Jesus. Saul now became a believer in the Messiah and began to preach Jesus as the Messiah of the

Jews. So hated was his message, that the Jews plotted to kill him. Saul found that all the disciples of the Lord Jesus, whom he now served, would have nothing to do with him, except Barnabas. Saul was in need of someone to introduce him to the Apostles. Saul wanted to meet with Kepa (Peter), in Jerusalem, perhaps to give his testimony. Barnabas became Saul's "sponsor" (like a god-father) and Saul was brought into full fellowship because of the testimony of Barnabas and with the consent of the Church. We next encounter Barnabas still in Jerusalem when a number of men from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch and preached Jesus as the Messiah to the Gentiles who lived there. This was about 41 AD., and until that time the Gospel had only been brought to the Jews. A number of the Gentiles came to believe in Jesus, and Barnabas, a native of Hellenized Cyprus himself, was sent by the Church in Jerusalem, to investigate the conversions. This occasion exhibits the great trust the Church had in him and his discernment. Next, he went to Tarsus to tell Saul about the Gentiles coming to believe in Jesus. They both went to Antioch, where for an entire year the two of them met with the Church and instructed them in the faith. It appears likely while Saul was in Antioch, he became known as Paul and that the believers were first called "Christians," meaning "little anointed ones." Toward the end of that year, Barnabas and Paul were called by the Holy Spirit to be set apart for a special ministry. They were to go to various cities and preach in the synagogues the truth about Jesus being the Messiah and about eternal life through believing in him. This was the first missionary tour.

During the ten years they worked together, Barnabas and Paul saw many Gentiles, come to believe in Jesus. A debate arose among the Church; should a Gentile have to become a Jew and be circumcised before becoming a believer in the Messiah. In order to answer this question the first council of the Church was called. Here we find Barnabas and Paul, testifying to the Apostles (Shlikhé) and Elders (Qashishé) what had happened to the Gentiles as they received the Gospel and came to believe in the Messiah. It was to Peter that the Keys of the Kingdom had been given and his vision, accepted as a revelation from God, opened the Kingdom doors to the Gentiles without their needing to become Jews first.

In 52 AD., Barnabas and Paul, along with Judas and Silas, were chosen to represent the decision of the Church in Jerusalem to the Church in Antioch and elsewhere. This representative role, or "ambassadorship," is the reason for their titles of "Apostle." They were sent of to Antioch where Barnabas and Paul stayed while Judas and Silas went to other areas. After some time, Paul wanted to go to all the places he and