

Acts 11:19-26, The Church at Antioch
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Overview

From 11:19 through ch. 15, the structure of the book is dominated by Antioch.

1. 11:19-26, Founding of the Church; also gets Barnabas and Saul together.
2. 12-15, Three Characteristics of the Church, each bracketed by the departure and return of Barnabas and Paul:
 - a) 12, a Loving church
 - b) 13-14, a Missionary church
 - c) 15, a Disciplined church

Objective: a case study for the things the church should do.

3. Today, 11:19-26, Founding of the Church at Antioch.
Clue to structure: Three times we learn of the impact of the church on "a great number" (21) or "much people" (24,26). Each reflects the ministry of a different kind of person, showing the operation of the diverse gifts in one body.
 - a) Evangelization by believers going about their daily tasks;
 - b) Confirmation by an exhorter;
 - c) Education by a teacher.

We need to recognize these complementary contributions and stages in the life of the church. One plants; another waters; God gives the increase, 1 Cor. 3:6

- A. 19-21, *Evangelization by ordinary believers* who went there for other reasons. "Preaching" is lit. "evangelizing," "telling the good news about."

1. This is one of three ways that a local church can start:
 - a) Jerusalem, the original group of disciples.
 - b) Antioch, side-effect of persecution (in our day, cf. WIBC: my job shift). Note how the necessary gifts are brought in as needed.
 - c) Paul's journeys: deliberate church-planting effort on the part of Antioch. His team brings all the gifts along together.

NB: If Jer. had deliberately planted Antioch, then all churches would be tied to Jer. as their mother. God arranged the first round of spreading in a way that shows that he, not Jer., is the initiator.

Applicaton: The importance of our daily witness as we go about our workaday lives. God does call out missionaries, and uses them mightily; he also wants to use us.

You will say, "I don't have the gift of evangelism." That may be true: you may not have what it takes to do as Paul did, set out and establish a church by yourself (the work of the "evangelist," or church planter). But you can play a role as

one part of a team assembled by the HS, which is what happens here. Each of us should "be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks [us], a reason of the hope that is in [us]," 1 Pet. 3:15.

2. "The hand of the Lord was with them." We are not alone in our witness. Cf. Matt. 11:29; 1 Cor. 3:9 "we are laborers together with God."
3. The nature of the impact on "a great number": genuine conversion: belief + turning to the Lord; heart and hand. Not only conviction, but also obedience.

Evangelism alone is not enough. Dr. Fullerton used to talk about those who commit "spiritual infanticide" by neglecting to follow up those who receive the Lord. This ministry requires a special gift: that of exhortation.

B. 22-24, Confirmation by an exhorter.

1. The occasion: Jerusalem hears of the events and sends Barnabas, who would already have been known to these people from when they were in Jer.

2. His qualifications: cf. 6:3. Needs outward appearance AND inward substance. (There, "of good report, and full...") These two are the general categories under which God's servants must be qualified.

a) Outward: Good man.

- 1) Rom. 5:7, more than just a righteous man. Not only satisfies the requirements of the law, but goes beyond.
- 2) So often praised in Pss and Prov. Cf. Ps. 112:5, one who "shows favor, and lends" and "guides his affairs with discretion."

b) Inward: Full of HS and faith, cf. Stephen, Acts 6:5.

3. His Ministry

a) Rejoices over God's grace manifest in their salvation. How we can encourage one another by "rejoicing with those who rejoice," Rom. 12:15.

b) Exhorts them.

- 1) What: "cleave to the Lord." We must "abide in Christ," John 15:4. Interesting to see this emphasis on human responsibility right along side of "the grace of God." Cf. Phil. 2:12,13; 2 Tim. 2:19. Two sides of the same coin.

- 2) How: "with purpose of heart." Deliberate, decisive commitment. Abiding in Christ is not passive, but active. It requires a deliberate decision and energetic execution. Example: spending time with the Lord each day.

- 3) *Application*: Saving faith is not just a one-time statement, but a discipline to be pursued daily.
- c) Notes on his special ministry of exhortation
- 1) Barnabas means "son of exhortation," so called by the apostles because of his gift in this.
 - 2) Identified as a spiritual gift in Rom. 12:8. Probably the same as "word of wisdom" in 1 Cor. 12:8, which complements the "word of knowledge." Together they make up "teaching," 1 Cor. 12:28.
4. The impact on "much people": "added to the Lord." Different verb than in 21, but the same as in 5:14; 2:41, 47, where the subject is given: "The Lord added to the church." What is the difference in emphasis from 21?
- a) Count is different. The intrinsic semantics of *polus* "many" vs. *ikanos* "sufficient" suggest that those who turned are more numerous than those who were added to the Lord and who were taught. Usages:
- 1) 21, *polu/s te a)riqmo\s*: *polus* applied in Rev. 11:11 to 10K**2; in Acts 4:4 to 5000; in Luke 7:11 to the party traveling with Christ into Nain (cf. v.12)
 - 2) 24, *o)/xlos i(kano\s*: Mark 10:46, the group traveling along with Christ through Jericho; Luke 7:12, the mourning party of the son of the widow of Nain; 11:26, the size of the group taught by Barnabas and Saul; 19:26, the total body of Paul's converts (in the mouth of an accuser who would want the number to be as large as possible, but perhaps he means to emphasize the sufficiency rather than the magnitude of the number, "enough is enough").
- b) Subject is different. 21 tells what they did; 24, what God did. Could these be the same people being confirmed in their faith?
- c) Conclude: there is probably some overlap between the groups of 21 and 24. While some might have been evangelized from scratch, others who had showed interest were confirmed in their faith. Cf. the Samaritans in ch. 8; the Ephesians in ch. 19.

Application: As in v.23, a warning against "easy-believe-ism."

Barnabas has the gift of exhortation, "the word of wisdom." But that's not all there is to teaching. Realizing his own limitations, he seeks out one who has "the word of knowledge" to teach those who are truly saved.

C. 25-26, *Education by a teacher.*

1. Why did he seek out Saul?
 - a) to encourage him (in keeping with B's gift)

- b) having seen his ministry in Jerusalem, knew that he could complement B.
2. What did they do?
 - a) More "were assembled" than "assembled themselves," cf. Matt. 18:20. They are constituted a church, *ekklhsia*.
 - b) Teaching. With Saul's word of knowledge complementing Barnabas' word of wisdom, they can now offer a well-balanced spiritual diet to the "much people," the same designation as in v.24.
 3. Outcome: they became known as a distinctive group. The teaching led to distinctive behavior that set them apart, so that their unsaved associates termed them "Christ-ers."

NB: The title "Christian" is never used by believers of themselves, but only by unbelievers, particularly enemies: Acts 26:28 (Agrippa) and 1 Pet. 4:16 (the viewpoint of the Roman government). Believers call themselves disciples, believers, brethren, saints, those of the Way.

Summary:

- 1 Cor. 3:6, one plants, another waters; God gives the increase. Establishing a church calls on different gifts:
1. Every believer ready to give an answer, so that through us God may draw unbelievers to himself;
 2. Exhorters able to encourage those who have made a commitment, and where necessary to distinguish between true and false believers;
 3. Teachers who can help believers understand the distinctive style of life to which God calls his people.

Hymn: Psa. 126

A. Analysis

After an introductory summary of the planting of the church, the history of Antioch develops as three panels, each beginning with Paul's and Barnabas's being sent out, and each ending with their returning. These three panels develop three characteristics of a healthy church: its love for other believers; its sense of obligation to the lost; and its concern for order and discipline.

NB: This analysis strongly suggests that the next division of the book begins not at 13:1, but at 11:19!

B. 11:19-26, A Fledgling Church

Founding of the church at Antioch

1. Generic-specific (cf. 8:4,5; 2:42ff with ch.3ff. Check other exx of *men-de*; I'm sure I've seen other cases of this.)
 - a) generic: 11:19 Oi(me\n ou)^n diaspare/ntes a)po\ th^s qli/yews th^s genome/nhs e)pi\ Stefa/nw| dih^lqon e(/ws Foini/khs kai\ Ku/prou kai\)Antioxei/as, mhdeni\ lalou^ntes to\n lo/gon ei) mh\ mo/non)Ioudai/ois.
 - b) specific: Preaching of the Cypriots
 - 1) 20 h)^san de/ tines e)c au)tw^ n a)/ndres Ku/prioi kai\

- Kurhnai^oi,
a> oi(/tines e)lqo/ntes ei)s)Antio/xeian e)la/loun pro\s
tou\s (Ellhnista/s, eu)aggelizo/menoi to\n ku/rion
)Ihsou^n.
- 2) 21 kai\ h)^n xei\r kuri/ou met' au)tw^n,
3) polu/s te a)riqmo\s pisteu/sas e)pe/streyen e)pi\ to\n
ku/rion. [Cf. 12:24!]
2. Jerusalem sends help
- a) 22 h)kou/sqh de\ o(lo/gos ei)s ta\ w)^ta th^s e)kklhsi/as
th^s ou)/shs e)n)Ierousalh\m peri\ au)tw^n,
b) kai\ e)cape/steilan Barnaba^n [dielqei^n] e(/ws)Antioxei/as:
1) 23 o(\s parageno/menos kai\ i)dw\n th\n xa/rin [th\n] tou^
qeou^ e)xa/rh
2) kai\ pareka/lei pa/ntas th^| proqe/sei th^s kardi/as
prosme/nein tw^| kuri/w|,
c) 24 o(/ti h)^n a)nh\r a)gaqo\s kai\ plh/rhs pneu/matos a(gi/ou
kai\ pi/stews.
d) kai\ prosete/qh o)/xlos i(kano\s tw^| kuri/w|. [11:21; 12:24!]
3. Getting Saul from Tarsus
- a) 25 e)ch^lqen de\ ei)s Tarso\n a)nazhth^sai Sau^lon,
b) 26 kai\ eu(rw\n h)/gagen ei)s)Antio/xeian.
4. Early ministry
- a) e)ge/neto de\ au)toi^s kai\ e)niauto\n o(/lon sunaxqh^nai e)n
th^| e)kklhsi/a| kai\ dida/cai o)/xlon i(kano/n,
b) xrhmati/sai te prw/tws e)n)Antioxei/a| tou\s maqhta\s
Xristianou/s.
- C. 11:27-12:25, A Loving Church
1. 11:27-30, Barnabas and Saul go to Jerusalem
 2. 12:1-3, Herod's offenses
 3. 4, Herod's Guards
 4. 5, Peter and the church
 5. 6-11, Peter's delivery (center of Chiasm)
 6. 12-17, Peter and the Church
 7. 18-19, Herod and the guards
 8. 20-23, Judgment of Herod
 9. 24-25, Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch
- D. 13-14, A Missionary Church
1. 13:1-3, Sending Out
 2. 13:4-14:26, The First Journey
 3. 14:27-28, Reporting
- E. 15, A Disciplined Church
1. 1-3, The Offense
 2. 4-29, The Jerusalem Conference
 3. 30-35, Return to Antioch