

LESSON XLIV—THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH

INTRODUCTION: Third largest city in Roman Empire. Controlled commerce of Mesopotamia Plain. Full of Mythology. Potent in commerce; powerful in politics; prominent in history. Became the center of missionary activity of the New Testament Era.

I. History of the Establishment of the Church at Antioch:

1. Dispersion of Jerusalem Church (Acts 8:1-4; 11:19).
2. Preached Jesus in Antioch (Acts 11:20).
3. They "believed and turned unto the Lord" (Acts 11:21. See Acts 3:19; 2:38).
4. Jerusalem Church sends Barnabas out to assist (Acts 11:22).
5. The Church grows as a result of his exhortation (Acts 11:23-24).
6. Barnabas secures Paul to aid at Antioch (Acts 11:25-26). Continued together for year (Acts 11:26).

II. The Character of the Church:

1. The name "Christian" first given there (Acts 11:26). Not given to the Church — nowhere called the "Christian Church" — but given to individual disciples (Acts 4:11- 12; Col. 3:17; 1 Peter 4:6).
 - a. The Church at Antioch was the first local Church to be composed of both Jews and Gentiles generally (Acts 15:23).
2. Energetic and zealous in evangelistic work. Two men preached one whole year (Acts 11:24; 15:35).
3. Well supplied with teachers (evidencing growth and development) making it possible for the Church to reach out into other territory (Acts 13:1-3).
4. A Missionary Church. One of the most prominent in this work. Not only evangelistic at home but missionary abroad. Became the base of Paul's and Barnabas' and others efforts to spread the gospel.
 - a. Acts 13:2-3; 14:26-28 - First tour and return to Antioch.
 - b. Acts 15:35-36; 18:22-23 - Second tour and return to Antioch.
5. A Benevolent Church. Must have been liberal in giving. Sent relief to Jerusalem according to ability. First Church to send relief to those of another locality (Acts 11:29-30).
6. Recognized the local Church as the medium through which to work. "Sending to the Elders" (Acts 11:30).
7. Recognized the organization of the New Testament Church and respected the Eldership (Acts 11:30; 15:1-2).
8. Recognized the authority of the apostles as final in determining the Truth on controversial questions (Acts 15:1-2).

9. A Growing Church. "Much people added to the Lord" (Acts 11:24).

10. They were interested in the study of God's word. This accounted for their strength and growth (Acts 11:26). A years revival (Acts 15:35).

Conclusion: Where could a better example of a Church fulfilling her obligations both at home and abroad be found than at Antioch?