

=THE BOOK OF ACTS=
Lesson 11
The Church at Antioch - Acts 11

AIM: to teach my pupils the importance of the church and what the church ought to be.

POINT OF CONTACT: Have the pupils give the names of some churches (apart from the First Baptist Church of Hammond) which have been a blessing and help to them, and have them tell in what way. Make this brief; do not go into any long discussion.

INTRODUCTION: Of all the churches in the Bible, the church at Antioch is one of the greatest. Its name means “speed of a chariot.” It was a fast-moving church, and yet it was built on the Word of God and did the things that God would have it do. It certainly is a pattern or example church for all churches today. Let us notice some things about the church at Antioch.

- I. THIS CHURCH WAS STARTED BECAUSE OF PERSECUTION. Acts 8:1. The death of Stephen had caused a great furor. The Christians were continually under pressure and persecution. This persecution scattered them. Some went as far as Antioch, and there they founded a church. The true church today will not be very popular in many cities. We should have the respect of men but not necessarily the approval of men. Paul said that if he pleased men, he could not be the servant of Christ. We are not to try to displease men, or even to do things to antagonize them, but the world hated Jesus Christ. The world is still antagonistic toward the true Gospel, and therefore, will persecute true followers of Jesus Christ. (Ask the class how their particular age group must face persecution, ridicule, etc.)
- II. THIS CHURCH WAS A CHURCH OF PERSONAL SOUL WINNING. (Acts 8:4) They were scattered everywhere. Their soul winning was not wrapped up inside a church building; in fact, they had no church building, but they won souls everywhere they went—on the street corner, from house to house, in the public places, etc. This is the New Testament pattern.
- III. THESE PEOPLE BELIEVED IN AND STARTED A LOCAL CHURCH. (Acts 11:19) (Trace on a map in the back of the Bible the towns listed here. Show the pupils exactly where Antioch is.) The local church is an institution set up for the building of Christians and the propagation of the Gospel. There is no such thing as one great denominational church. In the Bible, each church was a local congregation, governing itself without outside intervention. Look at Acts 11:21 in connection with this; many were saved, and the church grew. Growth is certainly pleasing to God.
- IV. IT WAS AN INFLUENTIAL CHURCH. (Acts 11:22) You will notice that this church influenced the church at Jerusalem. In other words, it was a challenge to other churches. In a real sense, the First Baptist Church of Hammond has become this very thing. This is one reason why it is so important that each one of us does his best. The eyes of the entire Christian world point toward us, and millions look to us as an example.
- V. LET US LOOK AT THEIR PASTORS. (Acts 11:22-26) In the early days of the church, Barnabas and Saul were the pastors. One interesting thing about Barnabas is found in verse 23. Notice the word “exhorted.” The word “exhorted” is a word akin to the word “paraclete” in the Bible. This is the word used concerning the Holy Spirit in John 15:7, where He is called the Comforter. It is also the word which is translated “advocate” in I John 2:1, concerning Jesus being our Helper. The word means “to run alongside someone to pick him up when he falls.” This is what a real pastor should be. His preaching should pick people up from sin, from discouragement, from error, from backsliding, and from a lost condition.
- VI. IT WAS THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH WHERE THE DISCIPLES WERE FIRST CALLED CHRISTIANS. (Acts 11:26) The word “Christian” means “Christlike.” However, we did not name ourselves. God’s born-again people called themselves “disciples,” “believers,” “followers,” “brethren,” “an assembly,” etc. The word “Christian” was a nickname given them at Antioch. It is obvious that they

lived like the Lord Jesus Christ, and since they were Christlike, people called them Christians because they reminded them of Jesus Christ. Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if we, the members of our church, could have a Christlike name attached to us because of the way we live!

- VII. THIS CHURCH WAS ALWAYS READY TO HELP THE POOR. (Acts 11:27-30) You will notice they heard about some needs in Judæa and decided to send relief or help. This has always been one of the duties and works of the church. We are to help the poor and care for the physical needs of the needy. (Tell about the work of our Rescue Mission. Tell about our food baskets that go out day after day to the poor in our area. Thousands of dollars are spent every year by the First Baptist Church to help the poor and needy. This is not just at Christmas and Thanksgiving; this is a 365-days-a-year proposition.)
- VIII. IT WAS A LARGE CITY CHURCH. Antioch was a wealthy and magnificent city and was described as one of the "eyes" of Asia. It was called the third great city of the world at that time. Rome was the first great city; Alexandria, the second; Antioch, the third. Antioch was the residence of a Roman leader and his court. It was also the place of a large Jewish colony. In spite of this, it was mostly Grecian. It was here that heathenism appeared in its most base form. The city was of such magnificence that its main streets ran for four miles through the length of the city. Hence, this was not an obscure village, but a great city. God has a burden for great cities and great masses of people. He has strategically placed us here in this area to reach the masses. Let us do our best in performing His work here.
- IX. IT WAS A BALANCED CHURCH. Many churches consider themselves just "teaching places." Still others think that all they should do is win souls. Still others think that they should just be separate from the world, etc. This church had every phase of the Gospel ministry. Notice in Acts 11:24c, "...much people was added unto the Lord." They were evangelistic. Notice in verse 23 the word "exhorted." They built up Christians, lifted up the fallen ones, and preached against sin. Notice in verse 26 the word "taught." It was a teaching church. They taught the Word of God as well as preached it. Then also they were Christlike in their conduct. This was a well-balanced church.
- X. THIS CHURCH SENT OUT THE FIRST MISSIONARIES. In this lesson we will not go into the 13th chapter where this was done, but this church was concerned about people outside its own borders; and the first missionaries to be sent were sent out from this church, not from a denomination but from the local church.

CONCLUSION: Let us show the pupils the importance of being faithful to every part of the church—not for the church's sake, but for their sake. Lay upon them their need for the church.

MEMORY VERSE: "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch," Acts 11:26c.