

A Church that God will Use

Acts 11.19-30; 12.25-13.4

Risen Jesus: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, **and** in all Judea and Samaria, **and** to the ends of the earth."
Acts 1.8

v.19 those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen

STEPHEN – Big Thinking – God is BIGGER than JEWS Selfish Ideas
KILLED MESSENGER – BUT COULD NOT STOP THE MESSAGE

CHRISTIANS LOST THEIR HOMES BUT NOT THEIR TESTIMONY

THE WIND JUST BLEW THE FLAME HIGHER
WORD TRANSLATED "scattered" = SCATTERED SEED

Mediterranean Civilization met the Syrian Desert

Only 2 cities LARGER than Antioch in Ancient World - Rome & Alexandria

Antioch the Golden - CAPITAL CITY of Syria - "The Queen of the East"

1/2 mill Jews, Greeks, Romans, Persians, Chinese, Indians / Citizens of Rome

Ancient City has been WELL EXCAVATED- we know much about it today

Busy Port Center - Military Stronghold / Business, Commerce & Political Power

Main Street 8 km.Long/ Paved in Marble / Marble Colonnades on both sides

Only City in Ancient World with Streets Lighted at Night

Dedicated to Sex / Swathed in Superstition / CHALLENGE TO GOSPEL

UNLIKELY SETTING – GREAT 1st C CHURCH – MODEL for 21st C Church

1. Vision for their Community 2. for Congregation 3. for the Cosmos

1. Vision for the Community

a. God's Sovereign Leading

Acts 8.1-4 a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem...

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

1.8 "Be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to

THE ENDS OF THE EARTH” / but they were NOT GOING!

INFINITE WISDOM OF GOD / BAIKANOR for WORLDWIDE Mission
From Antioch Gospel would be LAUNCHED TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

See Economic COLLAPSE > God NEW Thing – Break Finances, NOT Faith
Foundation of LIFE Not MONEY but your God and MASTER and His TRUTH

Lord Jesus is Sovereign / Working Now IN and THROUGH All things in LIFE
History not a Series of Cosmic Accidents / HIS STORY

...men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do
1 Chronicles 12.32

DO WE HEAR HIS COMMISSION as WE WORSHIP TODAY?

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart
for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Acts 13.2

Often NO TIME in OUR Program for GOD to DELIVER HIS MESSAGE!

b. God's Spirit-filled Leaders

ESTABLISHING OF THRIVING CHURCH OF CHURCH IN ANTIOCH
Not result of well-thought out Plan / Intensive Research / Crusade of the Apostles

2 MAIN APOSTLES FOCUSED ON IN ACTS - Peter and Paul
Peter - Apostle to Jews // Paul - Apostle to the Gentiles

THIS CHAP IS AFTER FOCUS ON PETER / BEFORE FOCUS ON PAUL

HOLY SPIRIT uses "LAY" PEOPLE / UNNAMED AND UNKNOWN
ONE BEGGAR TELLING ANOTHER BEGGAR WHERE TO FIND FOOD

Handful of wandering Christians who shared their contagious faith
BURDEN CHRIST WOULD BE EXALTED OVER THIS PAGAN CITY

RARE to MEET UGANDAN CHRISTIAN WHO does NOT give TESTIMONY
"Hello, my name is Peter, and I love Jesus...or I am saved..."

CHRISTIAN IN SRI LANKA LEADING 100's of Buddhists to CHRIST

EVERY YEAR THRU HIS PERSONAL TESTIMONY OF FAITH IN Him

MOST EFFECTIVE EVANGELISTIC TECHNIQUE – GOSSIP, HOLY TALK

85% come to Christ / BECAUSE SOMEONE THEY KNEW INVITED THEM
PERSONAL INVITATION MOST EFFECTIVE METHOD / Church Growth

1 Reason People DO NOT COME - THEY ARE NOT INVITED
NOT FAMILIAR WITH CHURCH - AN EXCLUSIVE CLUB – COST?
strange customs, rituals, unfamiliar people, procedures

MICHAEL GREEN "One of the greatest tragedies in...church is that people do not, by and large, talk about Jesus. That is extremely foolish. Jesus is the supremely attractive One. If we exclude from our conversation the only real winner that we have, we are of all people the most to be pitied. If a church seriously wants to evangelize, my advice would not be to hire a famous preacher; it would be to open the mouths of the people in the pews. Everyone has a story to tell, the story of God's dealing with the soul. Everyone can invite a friend to a meeting. Everyone can say what a difference Jesus has made. It is not difficult. It springs naturally to many who have recently discovered the beauty of Jesus for themselves."

c. God's Saving Love – Greatest News of Bible, God Loves and Gives

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son... John 3.16

...Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me Galatians 2.20

Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God Ephesians 5.2

Believers in Antioch understood this LOVE is for SHARING with all People...

HELLENISTIC JEWS evangelized FELLOW JEWS

v. 20 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.

HARDLY IMAGINE MESSIAH OF ISRAEL Relevant to Pagan Gentiles

YET People of Mediterranean LOOKING FOR DIVINE LORD

Giver of Salvation and Immortality to their Devotees

GOOD NEWS -Jesus of Nazareth - Living Lord / Mighty God and Savior

EFFORTS met with INSTANT SUCCESS / seed fell in FERTILE GROUND

WORD OF GOD ON THEIR LIPS / HAND OF GOD WAS ON THEIR LIVES

MEET THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD / FOLLOW HIM AS LORD & GOD

Maasai Warriors of Kenya / many efforts to Evangelize / NO REAL SUCCESS

FAMINE IN MASAII LAND / KIKUYU CAME / HATED ENEMIES

KIKUYU CHRISTIANS CAME / FED STARVING MASAII in Jesus Name

Beginning of Masaai Church / not Masaai or Kikuyu Church / Jesus' Church

True Missionary Church reaches BEYOND BORDERS and COMFORT Zone

2. Vision for their Congregation

PERSONIFIED BARNABAS v. 24 He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit

NEWS REACHED APOSTLES IN JERUSALEM - H.Q. of new Movement

SENT OUT A FIELD REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE HOME OFFICE

TO SEE THIS NEWLY FORMED CHURCH AT ANTIOCH

4.36 Barnabas / Joseph Levite from Cyprus "Son of ENCOURAGEMENT"

MIND WIDER THAN THE JERUSALEM BORN APOSTLES

Barnabas "man with the biggest heart in the Church"

W. Barclay

a. Recognized the Work of God NOT EASY to See ACROSS CULTURES

v. 23 "the evidence of the grace of God"

What does GRACE of GOD look like in CITY of SOPHISTICATED SINNERS?

NOT VERY PRETTY - NOT NICE PEOPLE who GREW UP in Sunday School

People trying to Break Free of Slavish Passions

Liberation from Sexual Bondages, Addictions, and Perversions

HE DID NOT SEE SINLESS PERFECTIONISM / SINNERS IN PROCESS

NEW CREATIONS IN X / WORKING OUT THEIR SALVATION

ON ROYAL HIGHWAY OF SALVATION – Sometimes Walking Backwards

FAITH NEEDS TO BE ENCOURAGED – Barnabas Perfect Choice

EVANGELIST BILL GLASS SPOKE TO 1000 PRISONERS

Asked them "How many of you had parents who told you that you would end up in prison one day?" ALMOST ALL OF THEM RAISED HANDS

ENCOURAGEMENT OF SPIRITUAL AND NATURAL PARENTS NEEDED

b. Rejoiced in the Work of God / DO NOT ALWAYS GO TOGETHER

GO TO A PASTORS MEETING / COLLECTION OF ANGELS ON EARTH
MUCH talking about OTHER Angels who comprise CONGREGATIONS

How many did you have in Church last Sunday? / Hoping LESS than YOURS
MORE? Something wrong / Compromise, Worldly, False Teaching

GENEROUS SPIRIT OF BARANBAS REJOICED IN WHAT HE SAW

NEVER SAID "That's not like we're doing things down at HQ in Jerusalem"

COMMON DENOMINATOR WAS JESUS NOT THEIR FORMS OR STYLE

THEY HAD DIFFERENT TRADITIONS, HERITAGE, AND CULTURE
THEY MET IN DIFFERENT LOCATIONS, TIMES, AND PERSONALITY

v. 23 encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

EXHORTATION TO PERSEVERANCE AND TO WHOLE-HEARTEDNESS

EACH BELIEVER, EACH CHURCH, EACH FELLOWSHIP IS DIFFERENT
CANNOT & SHOULD NOT hold them TO OUR STANDARD / BUT GOD'S
"You work so hard work so hard at it. Just remember the rose never invites
anyone to smell it. If it is fragrant, people will walk across the garden and endure
the thorns to smell it" Gandhi to a group of Christian missionaries in India

c. Realized His Limitations UNIQUE ACT OF HUMILITY

v. 25 “Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch”

NOT AN EASY SEARCH / Paul had been SEPARATED FROM FAMILY FOR FOLLOWING JESUS / Probably DISINHERITED for his FAITH

EVERY PAUL NEEDS A BARNABAS / NO BARNABAS, NO PAUL

ABOUT 10 YEARS EARLIER - When (PAUL) came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. Acts 9:26-27

WHEN BARNABAS SAW GENTILES RECEIVING THE LORD
HE KNEW THIS WAS A TASK FOR THE APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES

"It is better to put ten men to work than to do the work of ten men" D.L. Moody

ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLE FOR TEAM LEADERSHIP IN ANTIOCH

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. Acts 13.1

"Barnabas" - Simeon called Niger = a Black African

"Lucius of Cyrene" from North Africa "Manaen" - "Saul"- Pharisee from Tarsus
SYMBOLIZED THE ETHNIC AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN ANTIOCH

13.1 “Manaen” brought up with Herod the Tetrarch

TROPHY OF GRACE OF GOD / 2 Young Boys BROUGHT UP TOGETHER
One cut off head of John Bapt. & Tried Jesus / Other Noble Leader of Church

"prophets and teachers" 2 DIFFERENT WAYS OF MINISTRY

PROPHET - spontaneous, impulsive, fast moving / UNPREDICTABLE
TEACHER - methodical, predictable, slow moving

CRITICIZE EACH OTHER - Charismatics: Tradit. are dead & lifeless

Tradit: Charismatics are shallow and immature

CHURCH TODAY – Needs BOTH "Charismatics" and "Traditionalists"

d. Recognized the Authority of Jesus

v. 20 “good news about the Lord Jesus”

v. 21 “the Lord’s hand was with them...turned to the Lord”

Who are these people? These are the ones always talking about CHRISTOS
Followers of Herod = Herodians / Followers of Christ = CHRISTIANS

v. 26 The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

LATIN SUFFIX "ian" = "Belonging to the Party of"
PROBABLY first spoken as INSULT – MOCKING their Constant ref to Christ
Was INSULT they came to WEAR as BADGE OF HONOR – Life GOAL!

TODAY? Preachers talk of Themselves – Illustrations about Selves, Families
Members could write BIOGRAPHIES of their PASTORS > Shameful

For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your
servants for Jesus' sake. 2 Corinthians 4.5

THE PARTY OF THIS LITTLE CHRIST / CRUCIFIED NAZARENE
LABEL THEY HAD TO PAY TO WEAR - with blood, sweat, tears

Jesus - Jesus' person and work, Jesus' love for sinners, Jesus' perfect life and
sacrificial death, Jesus' resurrection and offer of forgiveness. Stay on the issue of
Christ when witnessing. Not the church or denominations or religion or
theological differences or doctrinal questions. Speak precisely of Jesus, the
Savior. Charles Swindoll

e. Rested upon the Foundation of Scripture

Acts 11:21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number
of people believed and turned to the Lord.

Acts 11:24 a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Acts 11:26 So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the
church and taught great numbers of people.

HOW CAN LEADERSHIP OF JESUS BE SEEN / OR MEASURED??
how CHURCH, MEMBERS, PLANS, PRIORITIES compare w/ SCRIPTURE

AT THIS TIME THERE WAS OT AND NEWLY FORMING N.T.
STANDARDIZED DOCTRINES WERE BEING FORMULATED

"THE FAITH" A NOUN TO DESCRIBE BODY OF TEACHING

word of God spread and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith
Acts 6:7

PAUL AND BARNABAS RETURNED TO ANTIOCH

...strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith,
"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22

CHURCH at ANTIOCH GREW STRONG UNDER APOSTOLIC TEACHING
v. 26 "for a whole year they taught great numbers of people"

TYPICAL OF THAT DAY - TEACHING WOULD BE 5 HOURS A DAY
EQUIVALENT OF 25 YEARS OF 3 40 MINUTE SERMONS A WEEK

- 1) HOW TO PRESENT GOSPEL IN A HOSTILE WORLD
- 2) HOW TO UNDERSTAND AND REFUTE FALSE TEACHING, esp. Cults
- 3) HOW TO APPLY GOSPEL TO COMPLEX MORAL QUESTIONS

ANTIOCH: What is Xtian's relationship to Law of Moses? Temple?

What will they do about Mosaic dietary laws? Sabbath?

How to live out Lordship of Jesus under rule of Lord Caesar

How to be free in Christ while remaining a slave of men

SO A CHURCH GOD CAN USE HAS:

THE SAVIOR AS ITS SOVEREIGN

THE SCRIPTURES AS ITS STANDARD

AND THE SPIRIT AS ITS SOURCE OF LIFE AND POWER

3. Vision for the Cosmos (World)

WHOLE JESUS FOR THE WHOLE MAN FOR THE WHOLE WORLD
CONCERN FOR WHOLE PEOPLE / both Physical and Spiritual Needs

PHYSICAL NEEDS – Shared by PROPHET NAMED AGABUS

BEFORE COMPLETION OF SCRIPTURE – LIVING MESSENGER of God

TREMENDOUS EXAMPLE OF CONCERN OF BELIEVERS – they Gave

MANY GOOD REASONS WHY THEY SHOULD NOT BOTHER

- 1) They were just trying to get their own ministry started
- 2) Had no building or regular meeting place of their own

- 3) Big task of trying to reach Antioch - city of 1/2 million
- 4) Famine was to be global - they would go without

EXCUSES OFTEN GIVEN

- "We give money to missions, isn't that enough?"
- "We cannot send Bill, he is need to work in our church"
- "Don't those other countries over there have their own religion?"

IF ANTIOCH HAD MADE EXCUSES - GOSPEL NEVER COME TO US ALL

a. Loving Deeds

- 1) Gave Willingly NOT COERCED BY LEADERS OR TRADITIONS

v. 29 "the disciples DECIDED to provide help"

MIDDLE AGES ENTIRE ARMIES OF THE FRANKS WERE BAPTIZED
HELD RIGHT HANDS HIGH OUT OF WATERS OF BAPTISM - wield
sword

SOME CHRISTIANS BAPTIZED HOLDING WALLET OUT OF WATERS!

- 2) Gave Proportionally

v. 29 "each according to his own ability" NOT INVENTED BY KARL MARX
BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE BORROWED BY MARX – though not credited to God

PIG AND CHICKEN WALKING DOWN THE ROAD ONE DAY
CAME TO A ROADSIDE DINNER - Sign "Breakfast: Ham and Eggs"
CHICKEN SAID "that sounds good"
PIG "Good! It's terrible, for you it's just an offering, for me total sacrifice"

- 3) Gave Wisely

v. 30 "sending their gift TO THE ELDERS BY Barnabas and Saul"

TRUSTED COURIERS HANDED FUNDS TO THE RESPONSIBLE PARTY

13.1-4 DEPLOYED MISSIONARIES

b. Living Words

1) United in Worship – to One Another AND TO God

Holy Spirit spoke – LIKE MISSIONARY CALL TO ISAIAH IN TEMPLE

2) Sent their Best

“LET’S SEE HERE – THERE MUST BE SOMEONE WE CAN SPARE”

v. 2 "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul"

LOTS OF PEOPLE THEY'D GLADLY SEND TO MISSION FIELD
anyone you cannot get along with would make great missionary!!

THEY SENT THEIR BEST LEADERS / MOST GIFTED SERVANTS

Araunah TRIED TO GIVE KING DAVID LAND FOR TEMPLE

"No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." 2 Samuel 24:24

MISSIONS DESERVES OUR BEST AND BRIGHTEST – sons & daughters

TEMPLE OF GOD ADORNED w/ FINEST OF PRECIOUS STONES & GOLD

"We have all eternity to tell of victories won for Christ, but we have only a few hours before sunset to win them"

MISSIONARY THRUST WAS THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

COMMISSIONING AGENT? - BOTH Holy Spirit and the Church

vs. 3,4 ...they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit,

v 3 "they sent them off/ v 4 sent on their way by the Holy Spirit"

v. 4 "sent off" = RELEASE / DISMISS

BALANCE - Spirit sent them, by telling Church to do so

Church sent them, because told to do so by Spirit

BALANCE IS HEALTHY CORRECTIVE TO TWO OPPOSITE EXTREMES

INDIVIDUALISM - Xtian "lead by God" w/out affirmation of Church

INSTITUTIONALISM - all decisions made by Church w/out Holy Spirit

BALANCED MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Inward Call to the Worker Outward Confirmation by Church
 Commissioning by the Church Sending by Holy Spirit

c. United in Witness

13.3 “fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off”

REAL CHURCH / REAL PEOPLE & PROBLEMS / NOT PERFECTION

DIFFERENCES WERE MADE SECONDARY TO PRIMARY CONCERNS
 For Community, For Congregation, For Cosmos

NEED TO BE GRIPPED BY FACT THAT HELL IS AS REAL AS HILO
 FILLED WITH NICE PEOPLE, MORAL PEOPLE, RELIGIOUS PEOPLE
 PEOPLE THAT DO NOT KNOW JESUS
 ONLY WAY OUT IS JESUS - TRUSTING FULLY in HIM FOR SALVATION

"The evangelistic harvest is always urgent. The destiny of men and nations is always being decided. Every generation is strategic. We are not responsible for the past generation, and we cannot bear full responsibility for the next; but we do have our generation. God will hold us responsible as to how well we fulfill our responsibilities to this age and take advantage of our opportunities." Billy Graham

WITH THAT CONVICTION / BELIEVERS IN ANTIOCH JOINED HANDS