

A Spirit-filled Church Acts 11 & 13 (2/4/2018 AM)

❖ The **example of the Church of Antioch**, Acts 11.

There are monumental moments in the life of the early church. Jesus before His ascension had commanded his disciples to take the Gospel to the world, Acts 1:8. The Day of Pentecost marked the beginning of the Church. The Church in Jerusalem experienced phenomenal growth but for a time the disciples stayed in Judea. It wasn't until the persecution that followed Stephen's martyrdom that the early believers began to branch out from Jerusalem, Acts 11:19. Some of the believers went north to Antioch the 3rd largest city in the Roman Empire. Its wickedness was only exceeded by Corinth. It has been called the New York City of the Roman Empire. Into this metropolitan city came these Jewish believers. From this initial group a "church", Acts 11:26, was formed. The Church of Antioch became the first predominantly Gentile Church. John MacArthur calls it "the first beachhead of Christianity in the pagan world." The Church of Antioch from its inception displayed key components of a Spirit-filled Church.

➤ The Church began with the **preaching** of the Gospel.

The (11:19-21) word "spoke" (20) is the same word "preaching" (19). It means to speak about or talk about. At first they spoke about Jesus only to the Jews. When the Greek speaking Jews came to Antioch they began to share the Gospel with the Gentiles. The word "preaching" (21) is the Greek equivalent of "evangelize" which means to tell good news. There is always a divine side to the expansion of the local church. Yet Jesus works in and through people grow His church.

➤ The Church began to **disciple** the new believers (11:22-24).

The word "encouraged" is *parakleto*, called alongside to help. It is the word used by Jesus to describe the Holy Spirit in John 14:16-17, "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth..." Barnabas encouraged and exhorted them. As Barnabas and others disciplined the new Christians the result was the addition of more disciples.

➤ The Church continued to **teach** the new believers (11:25-26).

Saul who becomes Paul was in Tarsus for 7 to 10 years. Barnabas had first introduced him to the church in Jerusalem when Saul was saved. Barnabas either knew of God's calling on Paul's life to go the Gentiles or the Holy Spirit led Barnabas to bring him. Antioch is an example of a church seeking to fulfill the great commission. Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen."

➤ The new believers' lives were being **transformed** (26) "And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."

This was first used as a term of derision meaning "of the party of Christ". These believers' lives became so distinct from their culture that they were labeled this way.

If our lives are not changed by Christ we cannot truly be Christians. There is often a wide gap between profession and possession of salvation. The Church of Antioch was a model of evangelism, preaching and teaching of God's Word, discipleship and life change.

➤ The Church was a **generous** church (11:27-30).

This first Gentile church was established in doctrine and overflowing with love. They established a pattern of contributing to meet the needs of others. The believers gave personally and proportionately to meet the needs of others.

❖ The Church of Antioch was a church **directed by the Holy Spirit**, Acts 13.

➤ The Church was led by spiritual **men** (13:1).

Prophets played an important role in the Apostolic Church. New Testament prophets were foundational to the church, Ephesians 2:20. Before the completion of the inspired scriptures prophets would receive their messages directly from God. The messages of the prophets were eventually inscripturated through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12:28. The New Testament gift of "prophecy", Romans 12:6, is the ability to proclaim the Word of God. The revelatory aspect in the apostolic age has ceased with the completion of scripture. The ministry of the teacher is to give clear understanding of the Biblical text.

▪ **The Church had unity within diversity.**

"Simeon who was called Niger", Niger means black. "Lucius of Cyrene", this was a city on the north coast of Africa. The church experienced racial harmony between Jew, Gentile, and different nationalities. The church was also diverse politically and economically. "Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch", this was

Herod Antipas who had beheaded John the Baptist. This word is found only here in the N.T. He may have been Herod's foster-brother.

➤ The Church was ***sensitive*** to the Spirit's leading (13:2-3).

The spiritual leaders led the church through spiritual ministry. They were like the Apostles. Acts 6:4, "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." The word "ministered" (2) is where we get our word liturgy. It means to serve in terms of worship. They saw their ministry to the people as an act of worship to God.

▪ ***Fasting is a voluntary spiritual discipline.***

Biblical fasting is a Christian's voluntary abstinence from something natural and physical for spiritual purposes. Fasting intensifies prayer. Fasting prayer has been practiced by godly people since biblical times. John Calvin, "Whenever men are to pray to God concerning any great matter it would be expedient to appoint fasting along with prayer." These spiritual men were praying and fasting for the Holy Spirit's guidance. Fasting enhances our perception and focuses our attention.

David Brainerd, "I set apart this day for secret fasting and prayer, to entreat God to direct and bless me with regard to the great work I have in view, of preaching the Gospel." Paul's first missionary journey was birthed by fasting prayer.

Pray for us and pray with us for the *Lord's*****

Leading.