

HOW THE CHURCH CAME TO ANTIOCH

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Men of Cyprus and Cyrene, (members of the church scattered by persecution) came to Antioch and *“spoke unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.”* A great number believed, and *“turned unto the Lord.”*

The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch, *“Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.”* Through his work, *“much people were added unto the Lord.”*

Later, Paul came to work with Barnabas, and *“they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. **And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.**”*

In these passages (Acts 11:19-26) we learn (1) the word of the Lord was preached, (2) people believed, (3) and turned unto the Lord; (4) they cleaved unto the Lord, and (5) others were added unto the Lord. And these people were called “the church,” “disciples,” and “Christians.” The discerning person sees in these verses how the church came to Antioch, and how it comes to any other place on earth.

THE SEED IS THE WORD OF GOD. The kingdom (church) is the fruit of seed sown in honest hearts (Luke 8:11). Truth, the only truth, can produce the church of Christ. Conversely, the complete unadulterated truth can produce only the church of Christ. Surely it is obvious that I refer to the true church of the Lord, and not to a party of people who may wear the name, Church of Christ. The true church consists of people who cleave unto the Lord, not of people who cleave unto a church building, or to other people (Acts 11:19-26).

HOW MAY THE CHURCH STAY IN ANTIOCH? We have seen that its existence depends upon the TRUTH, and PEOPLE DEDICATED TO THE TRUTH. Now the truth will remain true, without any help from us. 1 Peter 1:25 says it will endure forever, but people are far less constant – they “depart from the faith” (1 Tim. 4:1). Note – depart from the faith, not from other people. The only way we can keep Christ’s church in Antioch, or any other place is to keep people dedicated to truth. (And that takes a fair job of keeping, in the light of competition. As a rule, the majority is dedicated to preachers, friends, buildings, and to “the way we’ve been doing it.”)

NO MAN CAN SAVE THE CHURCH. The church already has a savior, Jesus Christ. He is willing and able to save all who come to Him. But we can exhort one another; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:2ff). We can do as did Barnabas – *“exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord”* (Acts 11:23). In this way we may “keep” the church in Antioch or any other place. And mark it well, this is the only way it can be kept. Let Jesus Christ save YOU, and YOU will be a member of His true church!
