

The First-Century Church

"The Church in Antioch -- Benevolent and Evangelistic"

Introduction:

1. The New Testament contains a tremendous amount of information [positive and negative] that was written "about" as well as "to" various congregations in the first century.
2. By examining this information we can learn the Lord's will for His church today.
3. This lesson is a study of the congregation in Antioch of Syria.
4. No letters were written "to" this congregation that have been preserved; however, Luke wrote at length "about" it in Acts.
5. We are especially interested in 2 of this church's characteristics -- it was "benevolent" and "evangelistic."

Discussion:

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- A. Jesus gave His apostles a plan for evangelizing the world in Acts 1:8.
- B. The apostles began their work in Jerusalem (Acts 2-7).
- C. Eventually, persecution caused many of the Lord's followers to leave Jerusalem; however, they preached the Word wherever they went (Acts 8:1-4).
- D. According to Acts 11:19-20, some of those who left Jerusalem traveled to Antioch where they preached.
- E. Many people in Antioch became believers (Acts 11:21).
- F. The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to work with the church in Antioch (Acts 11:22-24).
 1. Barnabas earlier demonstrated his generosity in Acts 4:34-37.
 2. He also commended Saul to the apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-30).
- G. Barnabas brought Saul from Tarsus to Antioch (Acts 11:25-26a).
- H. In Antioch the Lord's disciples were first called "Christians" (Acts 11:26b).
 1. A new name for God's people had been prophesied in Isaiah 62:1-2.
 2. The Gospel had been taught to the Gentiles (Acts 10; 11:18).

II. THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH PRACTICED "BENEVOLENCE"

- A. Agabus prophesied that a great famine was coming (Acts 11:27-28).
- B. The members of the Antioch church sent relief to the Christians in Judea (Acts 11:29-30).
- C. Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch after delivering the relief to Jerusalem (Acts 12:25).

III. THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH PRACTICED "EVANGELISM"

- A. This church sent Barnabas and Saul on their missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3; 14:25-28).
- B. Paul began and ended his second missionary journey in Antioch (Acts 15:35, 40-41; 18:22).
- C. Paul began his third missionary journey in Antioch (Acts 18:23).