

Planting of Churches in Northland, New Zealand

Focus on the Antioch Model, Acts 11:19-30

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There are various ways Churches are planted, according to the New Testament.

Matthew 18:20 gives a **basic description of a Church** or *ekklesia* – assembly:

Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst”.

APOSTOLIC CHURCH PLANTERS SENT OUT FROM ANTIOCH

The apostles, Barnabas and Saul/Paul, are sent out from the Church in Antioch to do the work that the Lord has called them to. Acts 13:1-3, 4-50, and Acts 14:1-28. They travel from town to town preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

The converts are gathered into local groups of believers around the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A little while later the apostles, Barnabas and Saul/Paul return through each of the towns.

They gather with the local Church assembly in prayer and fasting, and through the leading of the Holy Spirit they identify those whom the Lord is choosing to be the elders.

Paul and Barnabas pray and lay hands on those who are chosen to be elders, and ordain them into that position, to be the leadership team of the Church. New Testament Church leadership is always a plurality of elders.

(Those chosen must be of sound Christian character: They must be mature Christians, (in Paul’s day some will have previously been members of the local Synagogue), men of integrity, truth and honesty, humility and servant heartedness, self-control, faith, mercy, ability to teach, faithfulness, goodness, kindness, gentleness, peace, endurance; head of a godly family, a one wife man, of good reputation among unbelievers, these are the necessary character qualities for eldership). 1Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9.

In the course of time their different roles in the eldership, and the specific function of each elder, will be made clear by the Holy Spirit. They will have different gifts as in Ephesians 4:11, 1Corinthians 12:28, and different levels of authority.

(The words “**bishop**” – Greek *episkopos* or overseer; “**elder**” – Greek *presbuteros* or elder; “**shepherd**” or “**pastor**” – Greek *poimen*, all describe one and the same ministry. Acts 20:17-28, Titus 1:5-9, 1Peter 5:1-5, Ephesians 4:11.

Note that the word “feed” in Acts 20:28 and in 1Peter 5:2, is the Greek word *poimaino* –the verb to shepherd or pastor.)

SAMARIA

In Acts 8, through the preaching of Philip, many were saved in Samaria. We do not read of any Church being formed, but undoubtedly there would have been. Peter and John came from Jerusalem to pray for the converts to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and would have taken a lead in this process.

CAESAREA

In Acts 10 and 11:1-18, we read of Peter preaching the Gospel in Caesarea, to the gentile household of Cornelius, a Roman Centurion, where many were saved.

The Church in Jerusalem acknowledged, that from this point onwards, God was receiving Gentiles into the Household of Faith, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 11:18.

Once again there is not record of a Church being formed, but undoubtedly there would have been. Peter would have led this.

Now the establishing of the **ANTIOCH CHURCH. Acts 11:19-30.** (This is the second Church mentioned, after Jerusalem.)

In Acts 11:19, those who were scattered abroad, (upon the persecution that arose about Stephen), travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch- in Syria, preaching the Word to none but unto the Jews only. (The preachers were not apostles.)

But some, of them, were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, preached to the “Hellenists”, (that is to “Greek speaking Gentiles”), preaching the Lord Jesus. **Acts 11:20.** These preachers were not apostles either.

(From the way this is written it is clear that the “Hellenists” were not Jews.)

The key point, is that this Antioch Church, was not founded, at the beginning anyway, by apostolic ministry.

Acts 11:21, And the Hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

(Also, according to the Commentaries: Expositor’s Bible Commentary, F Gaebelin, Zondervan; The New Bible Commentary, Davidson, Stibbs, Kevan, IVF; Commentary on the Whole Bible, Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, Zondervan; a strong case is made, that the “Hellenists” were Gentiles and not Jews.)

Acts 11:22-24 The Jerusalem Church heard about this and sent Barnabas to help things along. When Barnabas arrived he saw the grace of God, rejoiced and exhorted them to cleave to the Lord with all their hearts. Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith and a large number were added to the Lord.

This Antioch model of Church planting, without apostles travelling, preaching the Gospel, gathering the harvest, and forming Churches, is the model that the Lord has used to build His Church in Northland, New Zealand. The apostolic input has been of the Barnabas variety in most cases. In most cases the Lord raised up local people to establish a Church and then sent in a “Barnabas” type apostle to help and encourage and build the work. Dorothy and I did this for forty years in Northland, New Zealand.