

# The Antioch Model

## Introduction

Much has been said today about “apostolic” churches implying that if the church in your area is not “apostolic” then it is not really a church. However, there has been little agreement about what is actually “apostolic” and what is not. Some have said that “apostolic” means that an apostle is “overseeing” the local church and that is what makes it “apostolic”. This apostolic overseer usually has several more churches that he “oversees” meaning that he functions as a “bishop” with direct input into the affairs of the local church. Is this really what the Scriptures present as a proper church model?

This lesson will look at the early Church along with its government and the methodology of its work. We will attempt to discover the proper model as presented by the Scriptures and how this relates to us today.

## Two Church Models

The Church as the *Ekklesia*, the called out ones, was brought forth in Jerusalem. On the day of Pentecost, and also afterward, large numbers of people were added to the group of believers. All of these were converted Jews.

**Acts 2:41-47 NASB** So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. (42) They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (43) Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. (44) And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; (45) and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. (46) Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, (47) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

As Jews, these new believers had a Jewish mindset. Even though they had believed, their traditions and culture were distinctly Jewish. However, they did devote themselves to four very important areas:

1. the apostle's teaching
2. fellowship
3. breaking of bread (eating together)
4. prayer

Doing these four things continually resulted in changes in behavior and conduct:

1. awe at the signs and wonders taking place
2. living together with all possessions held in common
3. selling property and possessions and giving to the others who were in need
4. day by day continuing in one mind in the Temple
5. breaking bread house to house (eating together)
  - a) with sincerity and gladness of heart
  - b) praising God and having favor with all of the people

Now, the question is, “how much of the changes in behavior apply to us?” We know that at least one of the five items listed above has no application to us, at least in the literal sense, and that is “day by day continuing in one mind in the Temple”. The Temple is Jewish and is pictured in the New Testament as a type and shadow of the true Temple in the Heavens; the Temple that Jesus entered as our High Priest carrying His own blood as the offering.

Our New Testament Temple is made of living stones and should never be confused with any earthly temple. It is the Temple of His Body and is not a place but a people, His people. So, we have in the Jerusalem model a transition to the New Covenant model.

The early Church faced much difficulty because they were in transition between the old and the new—between the type and shadow and the reality. This included the Law, circumcision, sacrifices, festivals, and it also included Temple attendance and functions.

Because their mindset was built around the Temple, God gave a time of transition as He enlightened the understanding. Eventually God made sure that the Temple was eliminated. After 70 AD it was impossible for the believers to “continue in the Temple” because, as Jesus promised, not one stone was left on top of another.

So, if the Jerusalem Church Model is not the real model, what is? It is our other model given by the Lord that is without the Jewish mindset. It is the Antioch Church Model.

## The Antioch Church Model

The first thing that we should notice about the Antioch Church is that it was not founded by an apostle; so, we can't say that it was “apostolic” in the sense that the word is used today.

**Acts 11:19-21 NASB** So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. (20) But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and *began* speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. (21) And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

The persecution that occurred after Stephen was martyred resulted in many leaving Jerusalem and going to other places, which included Antioch. However, these only preached Jesus to the Jews (the Jewish mindset again). Others came to Antioch from Cyprus and Cyrene, which were Greek provinces. They preached to Greeks in Antioch and the Lord was with them and a large number of Greeks believed and turned to the Lord.

When the Jerusalem Church heard about what was happening in Antioch, they sent Barnabas so he could report back with the details. However, Barnabas was a good man full of the Holy Spirit and, instead of reporting back, encouraged the new believers and went to Tarsus to find Saul (Paul) to bring him to Antioch.

**Acts 11:22-26 NASB** The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. (23) Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and *began* to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain *true* to the Lord; (24) for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. (25) And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; (26) and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Barnabas and Saul taught disciples in the Antioch Church for a full year. Apparently they were very effective because the conduct and behavior of the believers became so Christ-like in Antioch that they began to be called “Christians”.

To sum up the Antioch Church to this point:

1. not founded by any apostle
2. primarily Greek believers rather than Jewish
3. strongly founded in the Scriptures by Barnabas and Saul
4. so Christ-like that the Antioch believers were called “Christians”

God continued to bless the efforts in Antioch and the Church began to mature. Leadership developed in the form of prophets and teachers. These met together to minister to the Lord.

**Acts 13:1-3 NASB** Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. (2) While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (3) Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

In Antioch we have five prophets and teachers who are ministering to the Lord. The Holy Spirit speaks (probably through one of the prophets) and tells them to set Barnabas and Saul apart for the work that He has for them. They fasted, prayed, laid hand on them, and sent them to do the work.

Now, our Antioch Model Church becomes a work center sending forth workers as the Holy Spirit commands. Notice that the entire Church does not send them but only the prophets and teachers, which

are probably the leadership in Antioch. None of those who are doing the sending are called “apostles”; they are only called prophets and teachers. Therefore, the sending forth of Barnabas and Saul is not an “apostolic” work like we consider it today.

## Summing Up

Now, let's sum up what we have learned. The first Ekklesia, Church, was brought forth in Jerusalem and was Jewish in its mindset and had to deal with the traditions of the past. This was a transition Church that was moving from its past traditions and mindsets toward the New Covenant understanding.

The first real Church Model was Antioch.

1. Antioch was founded by average believers not apostles.
2. Antioch was primarily Greek believers and not Jewish believers.
3. Antioch believers were founded in their faith by Barnabas and Saul who taught them for over a year.
4. Their teaching was effective to mature the Antioch Church to the point that the believers were Christ-like enough that the people called them “Christians”.
5. There was little ongoing interaction between the Jerusalem Church and the Antioch Church.
6. The Lord raised up prophets and teachers in the Antioch Church.
7. In a gathering of Antioch prophets and teachers who were ministering to the Lord, the Holy Spirit called and sent forth Barnabas and Saul.
8. The Antioch prophets and teachers confirmed Barnabas and Saul and sent them to do the work prepared by the Holy Spirit.
9. After being sent forth, Barnabas and Saul (Paul), who were prophets and teachers, are then called “apostles”<sup>1</sup>, which means “one sent”.

When we look at the facts presented above it becomes very clear that most of the hype we have today about the “apostolic” is simply that—hype—with little or no basis in the Scriptures. Did apostles found Churches? Sure they did; but, our model was not founded by apostles.

If we would do our part and follow the Holy Spirit, it seems to me that the Antioch Model would work well for us today. Of course, this model does not fit inside of a denominational church structure nor does it fit the independent charismatic structure either. We need to “re-discover” the Antioch Model as our “new wineskin”. If we will follow the Lord it will work.

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1 [Act 14:14](#) “But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, . . .”