

Church Constitution, Essential Mother-Daughter Authority and Direct Authority, To Which Do the Scriptures Testify?

When considering the establishment of a church, among the Baptist churches with whom we enjoy some measure of fellowship, there are two, prominent church succession teachings. To be clear, we should understand that the teaching of church succession is not some novel idea. Every religious entity that calls itself a church has some position on church succession. But of the churches that our congregation has fellowshipped and cooperated with in missionary efforts there are two main thoughts as to how church succession works. One thought is called the Essential Mother-Daughter Authority (EMDA), and the other is Direct Authority (DA).

In this lesson, First, we should define EMDA and DA. Second, we should define the terms *disciple* and *church*. Third, we consider the history of the church, beginning with the first church which our Lord Jesus constituted and ending at the time of the first missionary expedition of Paul and Barnabas. And, fourth, a few closing remarks. First, to define EMDA.

Essential Mother-Daughter Authority

EMDA teaches that churches beget churches, which means that in order to have another church there must be a mother church to bring it forth. So, a mother church will *authorize* a man or men to be their proxy to carry out the Great Commission. Only church *authorized* men may carry out the Great Commission, and only mother churches can constitute other churches. This can be demonstrated like this:

A church has authorized (ordained) an evangelist or a pastor that he may preach the gospel, baptize and instruct others in Christ's doctrine. When there are any that respond in faith to the preaching of the gospel, then they are baptized. By baptism, more often than not, it is thought that the believer is automatically added to the mother-church, a church that might be located in another city, state, country, or even on another continent. Now, let's say now that there are two, three, six, or more of these baptized believers living in proximity to each other. Their membership is in a mother church, but they live in some outlying area. These little groups are called chapels, missions, or mission points, and as such they might continue in this state, as a mission, for years, until such time when the mother church *grants* to them the authority (right) to become a church for themselves. And this method of

EMDA church constitution is repeated over and over again by every mother church. Once a mission is granted church status then it may choose to beget daughters of her own and ultimately authorize churches under her authority.

Direct Authority

Direct Authority (DA) teaches that disciples of Jesus Christ have, under the Supreme Authority of the Lord Jesus, received their commission. There is no other authority between Christ and His disciples. These disciples have the liberty to evangelize, baptize, and doctrinally instruct others according to the gifts and abilities which the Lord has given to them. If so be that the time comes when as few as two or three souls have followed the Lord by faith and in baptism, a church may be constituted immediately.

The notion that baptism is an automatic entrance into the membership of the *home* church creates a problem for both EMDA and DA because there are members which cannot contribute to the edification of the body or worship with it, and cannot meet together. (See below the definition of a church.)

At this place it might help to define two other terms: *disciple* and *church*.

Disciple Defined

What is a disciple of Jesus Christ? A disciple (Greek noun, μαθητής) is one that desires to be *instructed* in the way and doctrine of Jesus Christ. See the Greek verb μαθητεύω, to instruct.

*Jn.8.31 ¶ Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, [then] are ye my disciples indeed;
32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

In the NT a disciple of Jesus Christ always refers to one that has had some connection to a NT church. I say '*has had some connection*' because disciples leave their home church in order to do the work of an evangelist or to start another church. My definition of a disciple is this: a disciple is a baptized, believing, church-related disciple of Jesus Christ.

Church Defined

What is a church? A church is a local body of baptized, believing disciples which *can* meet together in all of its members at the same time and in the same place

(Ac.15.22; 1Co.11.20, 33; 14.23), to participate in the mutual edification and worship of the body. A CHURCH THAT CANNOT MEET TOGETHER AT THE SAME TIME AND IN THE SAME PLACE IS NOT ORDERED ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES. Most churches which confess to be local evidence a practice which contradicts their confession by having members that cannot assemble with them at all. These continue in the universal church error of Catholicism and Protestantism.

Now let's examine the Scriptures to discern how churches were constituted in the times of the apostles.

As we begin today, we should ask these questions: Who is shown exercising any authority? What direct role does any church have in the accounts of which we shall read? What examples are there showing transference of authority? Watch for these as we read. Our task is to allow the word of God to speak for itself.

Christ Constituted the First Church

As far as I know, the churches of which I am familiar all agree that the first church began under the direct authority of the Lord Jesus, and during His earthly ministry. Better to say that the Son of God, our Lord Jesus, under the authority of His Heavenly Father, was commissioned to do all that He did. (cf. Mt. 21.23-27)

Mt.21.23 ¶ And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

24 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.

25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?

26 But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.

27 And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

Note: By the word of God, we should conclude by the words of our Lord Jesus Himself that he did not receive authority (better, His commission) from John the Baptist. He received authority from the

Heavenly Father. (Baptism neither commutes authority nor commissions anyone.)

The first church began when the Lord Jesus called the first two of John the Baptist's disciples to follow Him. To organize a church the Lord Jesus joined to two baptized disciples (of John).

*Jn.1.35 Again the next day after John stood, and two of **his** disciples; (To be a disciple of John they must have been baptized.)*

*36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!
37 ¶ And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. (These two were Andrew and Peter.)*

...

(Then Christ called Philip.)

43 ¶ The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.

The church existed prior to the Lord Jesus appointing into it the apostles. Notice that of the disciples, a larger group, he called out certain men to fill the apostolic office.

Lk.6.12 ¶ And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

13 And when it was day, he called [unto him] his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles ...

1Co 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

To this church and all churches like it, the Lord Jesus promised to preserve it so that it could never go out of existence from that time forward. This teaching is called *church perpetuity*, the perpetual'ness', the everlasting duration of the Lord's churches.

Mt.16.18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Mt.28.20 ... lo, I am with you alway, [even] unto the end of the world. Amen.

Eph 3:21 Unto him [be] glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Like the first church, churches may be constituted with as few as two or three members.

Mt.18.19 Again

By the Gr. adv., *πάλιν*, the Lord Jesus is reiterating what a church is, which He mentioned in vss. 17, 18.).

I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask,

That is, if this church agrees concerning the unsettled offense that was brought before them for their judgment, regardless of how few their number is, then ...

it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

If we do not have this as a starting place for the smallest number required to constitute and continue as a church, then there is nothing in the NT to help us know this. One dear brother told me a few years ago that the number was 7 or 8. I have only his word for that. Another man has as much right as he to say a completely different number. Let the truth of God's word and this statement settle the matter once for all.

The Great Commissioning

Look now at the text of the Great Commission. (Mt.28.18-20)

Mt.28.18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power

(*ἐξουσία*, tss. power, right, authority, and jurisdiction; later, the issue of ability, *δύναμις*, will be addressed.)

is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, [even] unto the end of the world. Amen.

The *commission* of the Great Commission is very simple. It is stated in vss. 19, 20. This tells the disciples how to make other disciples. The single imperative in this commission is the word *teach*, μαθητεύω, meaning *to instruct*. The imperative is not as some think, 'Go.' 'Go' is an aorist participle which, with the imperative 'to teach,' could read something like this: *Having gone, TEACH, INSTRUCT!* the nations. Over this matter Christ is the supreme authority. (cf. Mt.21.23-27) Under His authority, His jurisdiction, His power, and His right the disciples are commissioned to 'make disciples'; that is, the disciples are to teach the nations (implying gospel instruction), baptize those that believe which are of those nations, and further, catechize them in Christ's doctrine. If there is any transference of Christ's authority in this matter it is neither expressed nor implied here. So, this kind of authority among men or churches remains a question unanswered. We must find that in some other place in God's word. Some suppose that the text of Mk.13.34 answers this question. But the truth is that it might be clearer concerning who it is that Christ is commissioning, a church or the people of it.

Mk.13.34 [For the Son of man is] as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

It seems to me that the text of Mk.13.34 is an example of vertical authority rather than horizontal. here the servants of the Son of man were directly commissioned and given a work to do, rather than the *house*. The house did not commission the servants. The Lord Jesus remain the supreme authority in this matter.

Now turn to the Book of Acts where the Great Commission is demonstrated.

The Great Empowering

Until now, though the Lord Jesus told the disciples that He has supreme authority (ἐξουσία), they were also commanded to wait until they received *power* (δύναμις, ability, strength, might) from on high.

Ac 1:4 And, being assembled together with [them], commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, [saith he], ye have heard of me.

...

8 But ye shall receive power (δύναμις), after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Note 1 – The disciples received the *commission*; so they also must receive *power*, or ability, strength, in order to accomplish their *commission*.

Note 2 – There is in the 8th verse the reason why there was a visible demonstration of the Holy Ghost beginning in Jerusalem, then Samaria, and then Caesarea. In these places the Lord gives to the apostles undeniable proofs that salvation is come to the nations (Gentiles).

All of us would agree that only the disciples of the church at Jerusalem received power (δύναμις) on the Day of Pentecost. The disciples of John were not empowered that day. The proselytes of the Pharisees and the various sects were unaffected. (cf. Mt.9.14; 11.2; 23.14; Ac.5.17; 15.5)

Ac 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

After these *commissioned* and *empowered* disciples finished with preaching at the temple on the Day of Pentecost 3,000 souls were added to the previous 120-membered church: the only church in existence at that time. (cf. Ac.2.41) Shortly after this, in Ac.4.4, another 5,000, men, not counting women and children that might have come to Christ that day, were added to the Jerusalem church.

The Disciples Scattered from the First Church

At the 8th chapter of the Book of Acts the temperature of persecution began to rapidly rise.

Ac 8:3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed [them] to prison.

Ac.26.10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against [them].

This persecution scattered the disciples of the Jerusalem church throughout Judaea, Samaria, except for the apostles. (cf. Ac.8.1b) This terrible event sets in motion a sequence of events which forces Christ's disciples to take the gospel to the Gentiles, beginning with Judaea and Samaria.

Ac.8.1 ¶ And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

The Acts narrative follows a disciple named Philip.

Philip & the City of Samaria

Philip, which had been a deacon of the Jerusalem church (cf. Ac.6.5), left the church which was at Jerusalem because of persecution and traveled north to the city of Samaria. The Scriptures shed no light whatsoever on whether the Jerusalem church commissioned or authorized Philip (and many others) to do the things that he will. This suggests that Philip acted under the immediate commission given by the Lord Jesus in Mt.28.18-20. Here, in this city, Philip preached the gospel, baptized the believing and then assembled them into a church. (cf. Ac.8.12, *the believing were baptized, both men and women*; 8.15, *an assembled body – Peter and John prayed for them, 17, laid they their hands on them*). This was a church parallel to the state of that the Jerusalem church was in after the Lord's ascension into glory. They were assembled and commissioned under Christ's authority, but without power until Pentecost. And the same can be said of the church in the city of Samaria.

Then the Jerusalem church sent Peter and John to verify this report. These two apostles never called into question Philip's ministry. In every respect, except for 'power,' a church in the city of Samaria was constituted before Peter and John came down from Jerusalem. Here was one of the Lord's NT churches. They were organized under Christ's supreme authority (ἐξουσία), but lack but one thing: the

power (δύναμις, ability, might, strength) of the Holy Spirit of God. Just like the Jerusalem church which was assembled and waiting for power, which came on them at Pentecost, so this church is waiting for power to come upon the very first half-breed assembly of Samaritans in this city.

A conundrum: EMDA brethren argue that Philip was *authorized* by the Jerusalem church to do what he did. But if this is true, then why send Peter and John? Church constitution is not why the Jerusalem church sent Peter and John to the city of Samaria. Rather the Jerusalem church sent Peter and John to give an official stamp of approval that Christ and the gospel has come to the half-breeds of Israel.

Ac 8:15 Who, when they (Peter and John) were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

17 Then laid they [their] hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

Some might think that Ac.8.18, 19 might lend credence to the notion of transferring authority to others by the laying on of hands.

Ac.8. Ac 8:18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

Simon wanted the *authority*, ἐξουσία which appears to be something that only the apostles possessed. The fact is, this episode is not an example of a transference of authority to this Samaritan assembly at all. It was a public demonstration of empowering, δύναμις, this new congregation of Samaritans. And Peter rebuked Simon for desiring to acquire this kind of authority, an authority which was only shown twice in the New Testament; once here by the apostles Peter and John at the city of Samaria, and again by the apostle Paul when he came upon the twelve Ephesian brethren at Ephesus.

Only once more, with Cornelius and his house at Caesarea, will we this *power from on high* specially demonstrated. Why? Because this will be the very first church constituted of Gentiles.

Acts 19.1-7 is an extraordinary demonstration of the Holy Spirit coming upon a body of twelve baptized disciples. The problem that is corrected in these disciples is related to the error of Apollos, an error which Aquilla and Prisca perceived in his preaching. What was that error? Apollos knew only the baptism of John. That means Apollos didn't know that the Holy Spirit had been given at Pentecost. (cf. Ac.18.25, 26) Once this error is corrected the Spirit of God honors these people with his presence and they too became a church of the Lord Jesus.

What roll did the church have in *authorizing* anything in this account, except for commissioning Peter and John to come down to this city? The Jerusalem church couldn't know anything about the matter until *after the fact*, until after these things were all done. Obviously, the church had not *authorized* Philip to do what he did, otherwise there would have been no need for sending Peter and John. There's no denying that the Jerusalem church commissioned Peter and John to come, but neither the church nor these two apostles had any idea what they were going to find once they arrived there. These two apostles saw the clear evidence that the Lord had come to the half-breeds of Israel, a Jew/Gentile people. (cf. Jn.4.9) Certainly the Lord saved some Samaritans in His day, but none of these would have formed members of that first church; no, not yet, but now they do when Philip came to the city of Samaria. And this significant required apostolic witness. (cf. Ac.1.8)

But what is there here that supports the notion of a mother church *authorizing* men to carry out the Great Commission, or of a mother church delegating or transferring authority in order to constitute a daughter church? We're looking for Scriptural proofs.

Philip and the (Jewish) Ethiopian Eunuch

Philip leaves the church that is in the city of Samaria, which is north of Jerusalem, and now travels south through Judah to come to Gaza. Here the angel of the Lord commands Philip to go down to Gaza, but he doesn't know why the Lord is sending him here. Certainly, the Jerusalem church knows nothing of this. And the apostles knew nothing of it. BUT THE LORD KNOWS!

Ac.8.26 ¶ And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

Furthermore, the Spirit of the Lord commands Philip to go to a certain chariot to see a certain man, a treasurer for the Queen of Ethiopia, Candace. (cf. Ac.8.27-29) After preaching Christ to him the eunuch was baptized. In very few instances where baptisms are administered is the administrator revealed. Here we know that Philip administered this baptism.

Ac 8:36 And as they went on [their] way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, [here is] water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

Note: A church cannot be constituted of a single baptized believer.

Questions: Who commissioned Philip to go to Gaza? An angel. Who commissioned Philip to go directly to the eunuch? The Holy Spirit. What role did the Jerusalem church have in this? Or, any church? Again, the Jerusalem church, and any other church must have become aware of what had taken place here in Gaza *after the fact*.

After this Philip eventually made his way up the sea coast to the city of Caesarea where he will remain for many years. (cf. Ac.21.8) I will inject this here: based on the plurality of churches that arise during this time, that Philip also organized a *Jewish* church in Caesarea. Philip saw the apostolic confirmation upon the Samaritan church, but this is as far as he could go. He, like the other scattered disciples which were scattered from the Jerusalem church, had only preached the word of God to the Jews, (Ac.11.19), and now half-breeds. To entertain the notion of preaching to the Gentiles and allowing them to become a church of the Lord Jesus was more than their minds could presently conceive. But the Lord shall change their minds, and we'll read that when we reach that part of Acts in this study. (Ac.11.18) The Acts account now turns to Saul, Ananias and the church at Damascus.

Saul, Ananias and the Church at Damascus

By the time of Saul's (Paul) salvation there must have been a Jewish church already in Damascus, Syria. (Remember how we defined a disciple?)

Ac 9:19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

Furthermore, we know that there were a number of churches that inexplicably sprang up all over Palestine as a result of the persecution of this man named Saul.

Ac 9:31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

But evidently Saul got word of a church in Damascus, and he went there to destroy it. (cf. Ac.22.4) But while on the way the Lord Jesus revealed Himself to Paul, but also temporarily took his sight so that he has to be led by the hand into the city. Then the Lord commanded, commissioned a disciple of this church, named Ananias, to go to him.

Ac 9:10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I [am here], Lord.

11 And the Lord [said] unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for [one] called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting [his] hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

And after Ananias had completed his mission, the Lord was pleased to restore Saul's sight. Immediately following this, again, the Bible doesn't tell who baptized him, but someone did. And after baptism Saul joined himself to the church there in Damascus. (cf. Ac.9.10, 17, 19)

Who authorized Ananias to preach to Saul? Christ directly. (Ac.9.11) Who administered baptism? It could have been any baptized believing church-related disciple of Jesus Christ. What role did the Jerusalem church at Jerusalem have in this? We don't know what role the church in Damascus had in any of this except that Saul joined to their fellowship. What was Ananias' relationship to the church of Damascus? We only know that he

must be a baptized believing church-related disciple of Jesus Christ. We simply cannot say anymore than this of him.

Peter and Cornelius

This next event is the last step that shows salvation has come to the Gentiles. Like the city of Samaria, this will be confirmed by an apostle.

Ac 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in ¹Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in ²Samaria, and unto the ³uttermost part of the earth.

Earlier the Jerusalem church sent Peter and John to the city of Samaria to account for the half-breeds of Israel receiving the gospel. And here, with Cornelius and his house, it becomes evident that salvation is come to the Gentiles. There is no doubt in my mind that Philip lives in Caesarea and that a Jewish church is here. But the baptized, believing Jews would never have thought to take the gospel to the Gentiles. Well, that's about to change.

When the Lord begins to work in the life of Cornelius, Peter is residing in the city of Joppa, where there is evidently a church. (cf. Ac.10.23, *and certain brethren from Joppa*) Through three visions to Peter, which he had no idea what they meant, the Lord directed him to go with certain other brethren of Joppa to come to Caesarea, to the house of Cornelius. Once they arrived here and heard what Cornelius had to say, Peter was convinced that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles.

Ac.10.34 ¶ Then Peter opened [his] mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons;

35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

...

Ac 10:44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

The order of events might differ from what we would normally expect, receiving the *power* of the Holy Spirit prior to baptism, but THE END RESULT IS THE SAME. This display of the Holy Spirit upon the believing Gentiles must have convinced Peter that these Gentile be baptized; something they would have never done otherwise. After all, who could deny this to anyone upon whom the Spirit of the Lord has shown His presence by empowering them to speak in other languages too? (cf.

Ac.10.44-48) So, Peter directs someone to baptize them; again, we have no idea who did the baptizing. Then the 'Church of the House of Cornelius' asked Peter to stay with them longer. Undoubtedly this little flock desired to know all that they could of the doctrine of the Lord Jesus.

What do we see about a mother church authorizing this? What do we see about men authorizing anything? All of this appears to be freely flowing from the original commission which the Lord gave at Mt.28.18-20; Mk.16.15; Lk.24.49; Ac.1.4, 8. There is no evidence of anyone or any church delegating authority to anyone or any church in order to authorize baptisms or constitute churches.

Afterwards Peter goes to Jerusalem to report word what the Lord has done for the Gentiles. The first thing he meets with is opposition from a bunch of legalist members of the church. **THUS THE IMPORTANCE FOR HAVING APOSTOLIC CONFIRMATION!**

Ac 11:2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him ...

But the church response after hearing the whole matter was,

Ac 11:18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

Barnabas, Paul and the Antioch Church

The narrative of Acts turns from Caesarea to the north again, to Antioch, Syria. We read,

Ac 11:19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

The question I have to ask myself is, Why mention again the scattered disciples unless it is relative to the establishment of so many of the early churches that were constituted in Palestine, Syria, and beyond? (cf. Ac.15.44, confirming churches where neither Paul or Barnabas had come in any missionary journey.) Only *after* the Jerusalem church was informed of something happening in the north did they sent Barnabas.

Ac 11:22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

Yes, as the Jerusalem church sent Peter and John to the city of Samaria, so they sent Barnabas to go *as far as Antioch*. In both, they confirmed the things that they heard. The words *as far as*, ἕως, means ‘unto’ or ‘until’ Antioch. Barnabas was to encourage the churches he found along the way, until *as far as* Antioch. The Jerusalem church commissioned Barnabas, not to authorize a church for the mother church of Jerusalem, or to delegate authority in Jerusalem’s behalf, but the Jerusalem church was of the mind to encourage all of the disciples of the churches that he found along the way. After all, Barnabas’ name means, ‘The son of consolation.’ (cf. Ac.4.36) This was the kind of man Barnabas was.

Ac 11:23 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.

These are the words one would direct to a church people. It isn’t possible to direct this message to believers at large. After this, Barnabas decided to try to find Paul, who in the mean-time might have started several churches even farther to the north in Syria and into Cilicia. (cf. Ac.15.41)

Ac 11:26 And when he had found him (Where? In Tarsus, a city of Cilicia. [v.25]), he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

The last event relative to this discussion involves the first missionary expedition.

Barnabas and Paul’s Call and Sending to Evangelize

Here is the first of its kind; an organized, church sponsored, church supported missionary endeavor. A church and churches may do this. Churches may cooperate in this work. (cf. Phl.4.15; 2Co.11.8) But it is not required. If God impresses upon a man a call to the mission work he is charged with that task whether or not men or churches ever consents.

As we read, pay attention to any issue related to authority, i.e., mother-church authorizing men to go out and transfer or delegate authority to constitute a daughter church.

Ac.13.1 ¶ Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they (the five) ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate (aor. imperative of ἀφορίζω, to sever, to divide) me (Or, You separate them to me) Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

Evidently, these five men had committed themselves to some service (λειτουργίᾳ) together in this church, and the Lord commanded that two of them be severed from them and that service so that they might go to the service to which the Lord has now called and sent them.

3 And when they (the three) had fasted and prayed, and laid [their] hands on them, they sent [them] away (ἀπολύω, released, loosed).

4 ¶ So they (the two, Barnabas and Saul), being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed ...

being sent forth, aor. part. pass. of the verb ἐκπέμπω, ἐκ from, out of + πέμπω to send, to thrust; ἐκπέμπω is twice in the NT, tss. *to send forth, to send away*, which is to commission someone to do something. (Mt.11.2; Lk.16.24; 20.13; Jn.1.22; 6.38; **Ac.10.5; 15.22, 25**)

What is said of the church of Antioch in this text? Only that there were five men in it that were committed to some service and fasting. During this time the Holy Ghost communicated to three of them that He had called and sent (commissioned) Barnabas and Paul to do another work. What part did the church have in this? There is one thing that I found that the church did. The Antioch church didn't call these men. The church didn't commission these men. The church didn't separate these men to the work. But on both occasions, first when Barnabas and Saul went out, and then when Paul and Silas went out from the Antioch church they recommended them to the *grace of God*.

Ac 14:26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended (part. perf. pass.) to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

Ac 15:40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended (part. aor. pass.) by the brethren unto the grace of God.

to recommend, of the verb παραδίδωμι, tss. to commit, to give over, to give up, to deliver.

I don't know what else the church could do, but to entrust these great servants of the Lord to His grace, and as the Lord allows, help them along the way. When the first missionary trip is complete Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch to report all that had been done among the nations. (cf. Ac.14.26-28) After the second, though recommended by the church, we do not know if Paul and Silas returned to Antioch. Later there is record, that Paul went to Jerusalem, and was then arrested.

Closing Remarks

I have tried to present why I understand the Scriptures to teach DA, that the disciples of Christ may freely go to the work of evangelism, baptize and constitute into churches where they come. I could be wrong, but I have to stand where the Scriptures lead me. But the same stands for my EMDA brethren. They must stand where the Scriptures lead them. There is no doubt in my mind that churches are constituted in both instances. There is no doubt in my mind that there are great servants of the Lord on both sides of this issue. This church, the Hidden Hills Sovereign Grace Baptist church has helped other brethren, other churches, and other works without even questioning their constitution – we saw their works, their love for the brethren, and their doctrine. That was enough for us. I don't even remember asking myself if this or that church was organized correctly so that we might be able to be a blessing.

I understand order. I like everything to fit in my little box. These little boxes are where I take defensible positions. But sometimes this box isn't quite right and it needs adjusting. And by the grace of God we do. Usually after having a hole blown through the side of it. And then we make a new box. I think that is how most of us work. Always test the box with Scripture. Most of us can relate to what a brother from the past wrote. It speaks of the order there was among fellowshipping

churches. But given this he understood a larger work that didn't fit inside of this 'box', so-to-speak. C. D. Cole wrote:

C. D. Cole's Definition of Doctrine, Volumes 1 and II:

'Baptist churches come into being today somewhat after this manner. A group of believers in a community wish to become a church. The members in conference will make this wish known to other churches, and these churches send messengers to counsel them in accomplishing their desire. For the sake of order and recognition these messengers will inquire into their belief, and if it is thought wise, the visitors endorse their articles of faith and recommend their constitution as an independent church. These visiting brethren do not organize the church. Since the church is to be self-governing it must of necessity and logically be self-constituted. And so those wishing to become a church enter into covenant to that effect; and another church is born. The help from the outside is for the sake of order and fellowship and is not absolutely essential.' (underlining mine)

On the horizon is coming a storm against which the saints of the churches should be prepared. It might come overnight, or next week, or in the next few weeks or months, but it is coming. We shall be plunged into the severest persecution that the churches have ever endured to this day.

Jer.30.7 ... the time of Jacob's trouble ...

Dan.12.1 ... and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation [even] to that same time ...

Mt.24.21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. (cf. Mk.13.19)

Re.7.13 ¶ And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

I believe DA church constitution meets every circumstance that the disciples of the churches of Jesus Christ face whether in times of peace or in times of severe persecution. In this church I think most of you know what to do and how simple it

is to do to be a house church or a church that meets like this. Some of you can do this, and some of you can't for various reasons. We live in an especially volatile day. The economy could collapse, the stars could fall, the earth can shake, the sun and the moon can turn to blood, volcanoes can erupt, islands flee away, famines and pestilence can suddenly hit, world governments can fail, wars and civil unrest; and the disciples of the churches might find themselves suddenly separated, perhaps indefinitely. If this happens to you, find others of Christ's disciples and form a church there. It will be among one of the best things to do if we should come into such a circumstance. For me – Christ's commission is enough! It will be enough for us all then. The Lord give His people the wisdom of His word to direct them to the day of Christ.

Below are several statements that I found concerning church succession, dating from the late 1800's to the our day. The idea of succession and DA is an ancient idea.

Thomas Armitage, 'History of the Baptists (1886),' vol. 1,

p.1

Is an unbroken, visible, and historical succession of independent Gospel Churches down from the apostles, essential to the valid existence of Baptist Churches today, as apostolic in every sense of the word? This question suggests another, namely, Of what value could any lineal succession be as compared with present adherence to apostolic truth? From these two questions a third arises: Whether true, lineage from the Apostolic Churches does not rest in present conformity to the apostolic pattern, even though the local church of today be self-organized, from material that never came out of any church, provided that it stands on the apostolicity of the New Testament alone. The simple truth is, that the unity of Christ's kingdom on earth is not found in its visibility, any more than the unity of the solar system is found in that direction, for its largest domain never falls under the inspection of any being but God. So, likewise, the unity of Christianity is not found by any visible tracing through one set of people. It has been enwrapped in all who have followed purely apostolic principles through the ages; and thus the purity of Baptist life is found in the essence of their doctrines and practices by whomsoever enforced. Little perception is required to discover the fallacy of a visible apostolical succession in the ministry, but visible Church succession is precisely as fallacious, and for exactly the same reasons. The Catholic is right in his theory that these two must stand or fall together; hence he assumes, ipso facto, that all who are not in this double succession are excluded from the true apostolic line. And many who are not Catholics think that if they fail to unroll a continuous succession of regularly organized churches, they lose their genealogy by a break in the chain, and so fail to prove that they are legitimate Apostolic Churches. Such evidence cannot be traced by any Church on earth, and would be utterly worthless if it could, because the real legitimacy of Christianity must be found in the New Testament, and nowhere else. (Bolding added, CAT)

p.3

'1. THAT CHRIST NEVER ESTABLISHED A LAW OF CHRISTIAN

PRIMOGENITURE BY WHICH HE ENDOWED LOCAL CHURCHES WITH THE EXCLUSIVE POWER OF MORAL REGENERATION, MAKING IT NECESSARY FOR ONE CHURCH TO BE THE MOTHER OF ANOTHER, IN REGULAR SUCCESSION, AND WITHOUT WHICH THEY COULD NOT BE LEGITIMATE CHURCHES.'

Those who organized the churches in apostolic times went forth simply with the lines of doctrine and order in their hands, and formed new churches without the authority or even the knowledge of other churches. Some of these men were neither apostles nor pastors, but private Christians.

...

God never confided his truth to the personal succession of any body of men: man was not to be trusted with the Custody of this precious charge, but the King of the truth has kept the keys of the truth in his own hand. The true Church of Christ has ever been that which has stood upon his person and work.

p.5

II. OUR LORD NEVER PROMISED AN ORGANIC VISIBILITY TO HIS CHURCH IN PERPETUITY, AMONGST ANY PEOPLE OR IN ANY AGE.

A History of the Baptists, John T. Christian (1922), vol. 1,

p.21

The New Testament recognized a democratic simplicity, and not a hierarchial monarchy. There is no irregularity, but a perpetual proclamation of principles. There is no intimation that there was not a continuity of churches, for doubtless there was, but our insistence is that this was not the dominant note in apostolic life. No emphasis is put on a succession of baptisms, or the historical order of churches. ...Nothing definite is known of the origin of the church at Damascus. The church at Antioch became the great foreign missionary center, but the history of its origin is not distinctly given. The church at Rome was already in existence when Paul wrote to them his letter. These silences occur all through the New Testament, but there is a constant recurrence of type, a persistence of fundamental doctrines, and a proclamation of principles. This marked the whole apostolic period, and for that matter, every period since that time.

p.22

Baptist churches have the most slender ties of organization ... Baptist churches may disappear and reappear in the most unaccountable manner. Persecuted everywhere by sword and by fire, their principles would appear to be almost extinct, when in a most wondrous way God would raise up some man, or some company of martyrs, to proclaim the truth.

The footsteps of the Baptists of the ages can more easily be traced by blood than by baptism. It is a lineage of suffering rather than a succession of bishops; a martyrdom of principle, rather than a dogmatic decree of councils; a golden chord of love, **rather than an iron chain of succession, which while attempting to rattle its links back to the apostles,** has been of more service in chaining some protesting Baptist to the stake than in proclaiming the truth of the New Testament.

Jonathan David, 'History of the Welsh Baptists from the Year Sixty-Three to the Year 1770 (1885),' p.171,

The doctrine of uninterrupted succession is necessary only to such churches as regulate their faith and practice by tradition, and for their use it was first invented.

But a Baptist has not the least trouble about what is called a lineal or apostolical succession. His line of succession is in faithful men, and it is a matter of indifference with them, when or where they lived, by what name they were called, or by whom they were baptized or ordained.

...

Christ's disciples began to congregate into churches, soon after he left the earth. ... The persecution, which arose about the time of Stephen's death, caused all the disciples of Jesus, except the apostles, to leave Jerusalem. They proceeded out every way, like the radii of a circle from the centre, and formed churches in many places – first in Palestine, then in other parts of Asia, and lastly in Europe.

David Benedict, 'Fifty Years Among the Baptists (1859),' p.237,

[R]elative to the manner of their formation (churches that arose in Palestine, added), in no case is the least information given. All at once the names of these churches appear; some incident, or the name of some person or persons connected with them is given, but nothing in particular is said as to the time, or the circumstances of their origin.

Thomas Williamson, 'Landmarkism before J. R. Graves (2015),' p.20, The purpose for this booklet was to show that J. R. Graves did not concoct the idea of Baptist succession or perpetuity.

[T]here are those who have taken this concept (of Baptist Succession, added) to extremes, freely claiming various oddball or heretical groups from past ages as having held to modern Baptist principles, in the face of all evidence to the contrary. Some have claimed to be heirs to a link-chain succession of churches from John the Baptist until now, and have put forth bogus, undocumented chains of title. Some have gone even farther, stating that the only way to plant a scriptural church is by vote of a mother church which can trace its perpetuity back to the First Century. In reality, no Baptist church today can document such perpetuity (The writer does point out that there were many Baptists who believed, prior to J. R. Graves, in some form of Baptist Succession.

Rosco Brong, 'Christ's Church and Baptism,' (1977), p.71,

Apostolical succession refers to an effort to validate the ordination of a clergyman by attempting to trace, the ancestry of that ordination in an unbroken line of valid ordinations back to the apostles. Historical succession refers to an effort to validate the existence of a church by attempting to trace the ancestry of that church as a clearly definable historical entity in a valid and unbroken line back to the New Testament times.

...

We have no more need of validating the existence of one of Christ's churches by tracing its ancestry through human records back to New Testament times than I have of validating my own existence by tracing my ancestry through genealogical records back to Adam.