

Stephen—the "Holy Ghost" and "faith," but he was a man of much more placable temperament than the first martyr. *Much people was added unto the Lord.* The ratio of growth was increased.

**25.** But this amiable man soon showed notable decision of character. *Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul.* After how long a sojourn in Antioch we are not told. He knew Saul well, recognized him as "a chosen vessel" to preach Christ to the Gentiles, and saw that this would be his great opportunity. God's providence has never been more clearly shown in the history of the Church than in the mission of Barnabas to Antioch. Suppose Peter had been sent; or some duplicate of Stephen,

**26.** *When he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch.* One wonders what Paul was doing when "found;" probably sewing tent cloth and preaching the Gospel. *A whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people.* One of the most important years in the history of Christianity. *The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.* This was "popular slang," says Ramsay. The Antiochians were famous for general indulgence in ridicule. The names applied to believers up to this time were not now properly descriptive. "Nazarenes" and "Galileans" would mean little to the heterogeneous people of Antioch; besides, many of the new Christians were Gentiles. "The Way" and the "Brethren" would mean nothing at all. The very form of the word "Christian," neither pure Greek nor pure Latin, helps us to understand the mixed population which surrounded Paul and Barnabas and from which the converts were made. Nowhere in the New Testament do the disciples of Jesus give this name to themselves.

### III. THE FAMINE IN JUDEA.

**27, 28.** *Prophets* were proclaimers of God's

messages, men of direct inspiration. *Agabus* here, and again in Acts 21, 10, foretells events in the future, but we are not to regard him and those similarly endowed as men whose calling was to reveal God's plans. God has always hidden more of his plans than he has revealed; but he abundantly reveals his will, and to proclaim this was the chief duty and privilege of the prophet, whether Hebrew or Christian. *A dearth.* There are abundant notices in history of the famine thus predicted. *All the world* would be understood by Luke's readers as meaning the Roman empire. *Which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.* During twelve consecutive years the "world" in various parts suffered for want of food, and in Judea for five years the want was excruciating, and thousands perished from starvation.

**29, 30.** Gentile as well as Jewish Christians were stirred up (by this partial revelation of God's plans) to do God's will, and by their liberality to maintain in comfort the members of the Christian churches of Judea. For this very purpose, doubtless, the prophecy had been vouchsafed. The famine did not come immediately, and in the meantime *every man according to his ability* voluntarily contributed. The "determination" was not come to by an "official board," but by the *disciples* generally; and in due time sufficient stores were gathered to furnish practical relief unto the brethren [the Christians] *which dwelt in Judea.* *Barnabas and Saul* were selected to convey this "relief" to the *elders* of Jerusalem, the general superintendents of the Church. The Jews of Antioch had been for years famous for liberal gifts to the Jews at Jerusalem. Doubtless at this very time the synagogue was busy gathering moneys to send thither, but in the distribution of such moneys the Christians of Jerusalem and Judea would be ignored, so that this gift of the Antiochian Christians must have been greatly needed and most lovingly appreciated.

## HOMILETICAL AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

### ANTIOCH.

This narrative continues the record which was broken off at Acts 8, 4, and shows the expansion of the policy of persecution of the Church by the Jews, who were now supported and encouraged by the Roman authorities, at Jerusalem. It also marks the extension, upon a broad scale, of the Gospel of redemption so as to include all the Gentiles upon equal terms with the Jews. A new epoch in the history of

the Church is begun, and with it new places and men appear upon the scene.

The city of Antioch at this period was the most important of the cities of the empire in Asia. After the Greeks came in great numbers into Asia in the path of the conquests of Alexander, the center of government of Syria was changed from Damascus to Antioch. It became the capital of the empire of the Seleucidæ; it was at the time of our lesson the seat of the