

The Church of Antioch Sends Off the First Missionaries Acts 13

Introduction

Until this point, Jerusalem had been the center of Christian work. Now, Antioch in Syria would become the center for missionary work. Chapter 13 records the first time the Holy Spirit inspired and directed a missionary **campaign** and it was approved by the church. Before this, the gospel had spread to surrounding areas because the believers had moved away from Jerusalem to escape persecution. They did not set out to be missionaries, even though God used them for that purpose. Barnabas and Saul were sent out to **evangelize** the areas of the Roman Empire. Their first campaign, recorded in chapters 13 and 14, took them to the Island of Cyprus and southern Galatia in Asia Minor. Saul probably chose to be called by his Roman name, Paul, because he was going into Roman areas.

In most of the areas Paul visited, there were synagogues for the Jews to worship God because Jews lived all over the Roman Empire. Paul used the synagogues as a starting point for his preaching. There were also Gentile proselytes in the synagogues and God-fearers who had knowledge of the Scriptures. Some of these people were very excited to hear Paul's message. Chapter 13 shows the shift to preaching to the Gentiles and not only the Jews.

Outline of Acts 13

- I. Call of the Holy Spirit in Antioch-Acts 13:1-4
- II. Confrontation at Paphos-Acts 13:5-12
- III. Desertion by John Mark in Perga-Acts 13:13
- IV. Gladness of the Gentiles in Pisidian Antioch-Acts 13:14-52

I. Call of the Holy Spirit in Antioch-Acts 13:1-3

The church at Antioch was gifted with many prophets and teachers. Luke names five of them. They were men of very different

backgrounds who worked together as a team. Barnabas was a Jew from Cyprus. Simeon, also called Niger (which means black in Latin) probably had dark skin. Some believe he may have been the Simon of Cyrene who carried Jesus' cross (Matthew 27:32). Lucius of Cyrene (which was in northern Africa) was probably one of the first to preach the gospel at Antioch (Acts 11:20). Manaen had been a member of the court of wicked Herod Antipas who ruled Jerusalem in Jesus' life time. Saul, the last mentioned, was a highly educated Jew and also a Roman citizen. God had brought together a variety of men to lead the Antioch church.

As these men ministered, prayed, and fasted, the Holy Spirit spoke to them. The message was, *Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.* The two missionaries were sent out by the church, but, more importantly, they were sent out by the Holy Spirit. First they travelled to Selucia, a seaport about 15 miles west of Antioch. From there, they sailed to the island of Cyprus.

II. Confrontation at Paphos - Acts 13:5-12

The missionary group landed in Salamis, the largest city on the east coast of Cyprus. They preached the gospel there in the synagogues. Apparently, there were many Jews in Salamis because there was more than one synagogue. John Mark, who had returned to Antioch with Barnabas and Saul after their trip to Jerusalem (Acts 12:25), was serving as their assistant on this trip.

The missionaries traveled across the island to the city of Paphos, probably preaching the gospel in towns along the way. Paphos was the capital of the **province** and also the center for the worship of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. The proconsul (governor appointed by the Roman Senate) was an intelligent

man named Sergius Paulus. It was common for high-ranking officers to have magicians and astrologers as counselors. A Jewish sorcerer named Bar-Jesus was associated with Sergius Paulus. Sorcery was forbidden to Jews (Deuteronomy 18:10), but Bar-Jesus was a sorcerer anyway, and he falsely claimed to be a prophet. His other name, Elymas, is probably Arabic and means "the wise." Elymas is like the Greek word "magos," translated as "sorcerer" in this passage. However, it is clear that Bar-Jesus was neither wise nor skilled at sorcery.

Sergius called for Barnabas and Saul, desiring to hear the word of God. However, Elymas did all he could to resist the missionaries and discourage Sergius from believing. He may have feared that, if the proconsul accepted the gospel message, he would no longer be needed.

In response to Elymas' resistance, Paul was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit which gave him boldness and wisdom. He looked directly at Elymas and spoke. Paul's words showed that Elymas was an impostor (a fake). He was an evil deceiver. He was not Bar-Jesus, which means "the son of salvation," but a *son of the devil*. He was an enemy of everything that is right, **perverting** the way of salvation. Paul declared a judgment of temporary blindness on the evil Elymas. Maybe with his eyes blinded, Elymas was able to see the true light.

Sergius Paulus was amazed by the *teaching of the Lord*. It was not the display of power that led this intelligent man to believe. It was the gospel message of the crucified Christ which touched his heart and changed his life.

III. Desertion by John Mark in Perga-Acts 13:13

At this point, Paul seems to become leader of the missionary group because Luke now refers to them as *Paul and his party*. Leaving Paphos, they sailed to Perga, the capital of the Roman province of Pamphylia on the southern coast of Asia Minor (which is known as Turkey today). John Mark left and returned to his

home in Jerusalem. Later, in Acts 15:37-38, it becomes clear that Paul was not pleased and felt Mark had deserted (abandoned) them. We do not know why Mark left.

IV. Gladness of the Gentiles in Pisidian Antioch - Acts 13:14-52

Leaving Perga, Paul and Barnabas traveled 100 miles north through the Taurus mountains to Pisidian Antioch, the main city of the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia. Note: it is not to be confused with Antioch in Syria, the city which sent them out as missionaries.

The missionaries went to the synagogue (just like they did in Salamis). They sat down and listened to the reading of the Law and the Prophets because it was the Sabbath. As visiting teachers, Paul and his party were asked to speak to the congregation. Based on what you have learned about Paul, what do you think he did? He stood and preached the gospel to the men of Israel and the God-fearing Gentiles who were there to worship God.

In his sermon, Paul explained all that God had done for Israel, from choosing them as His people, to sending them Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Paul told his audience, "*to you the word of this salvation has been sent.*" He asked them not to ignore this opportunity for salvation. He asked them not to follow the example of the rulers and people in Jerusalem, the men and women who had put Jesus to death without a cause. They condemned Jesus to die because *they did not know Him*, and they did not even know *the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath*. They did not understand who Jesus was because they did not recognize the prophecies in Scripture about Him. They killed Him and they put Him in a tomb and fulfilled the Scriptures as they did so.

God's power is far greater than the most evil acts of man, and *God raised (Jesus) from the dead* (Acts 13:30; also stated by Peter

in Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40). This was proven by those witnesses who saw Him, namely the apostles and the others who were His close followers (Luke 24:33-48; Acts 1:22; 2:32; 5:32).

God had promised to raise up a Savior from the seed of David (Acts 13:23). Paul used three Old Testament prophecies to show that Jesus was the promised seed (Psalm 2:7), that David's son was to be raised from the dead (Isaiah 55:3), and that indeed He was raised (Psalm 16:10). Paul's argument is very similar to Peter's on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:24-32).

Paul taught that there were two blessings available because of Jesus' death and resurrection: forgiveness and justification. Everyone who believes receives forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7) and is justified (freed from the guilt they are charged with and accepted as righteous in God's sight). *For (God) made (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in (Jesus)* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

There was great excitement about Paul's message, particularly among the Gentiles. They requested that Paul preach again on the next Sabbath. Many Jews and proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, receiving further teaching and encouragement. By the next Sabbath, almost the whole city had heard about Paul's sermon and the synagogue was overflowing with Gentiles who wanted to hear the word of God.

When the Jews saw the crowds of people, they were filled with envy. They had never experienced so many visitors for their own preaching and could not stand to see the people coming to hear Paul. They did not even try to hide their jealousy. They set themselves against Paul by disagreeing with his message.

In his commentary, Matthew Henry writes, "The Gentiles cheerfully embraced that which the Jews scornfully rejected." The Jews behaved like spoiled children receiving a gift,

but saying they did not want the gift because the gift was for everyone to share. They were jealous that the crowds were excited about Paul's message and were not giving them the attention they thought they deserved.

The Jews not only rejected the gospel, but they also tried to stop the gospel from spreading by persecuting the messengers. Paul and Barnabas were forced to shake the dust of Pisidian Antioch off their feet as they left town. It was a Jewish custom to do this when leaving a pagan town. It showed that you were cleaning yourself from the uncleanness of sinners who did not worship God. The Lord Jesus Himself had instructed his disciples to do it as a testimony against the towns which would not receive the gospel (Luke 9:5 and 10:10-11). In spite of the persecution, the disciples were joyful. The Holy Spirit was actively at work in their lives and fruit was being produced! See Galatians 5:22. †

Prayer

Are you a light to those who do not know Christ? Ask God to shape your words and actions so that you can be a light for Him.

Memory Verse

Acts 10:42 *"...and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses."*

Vocabulary

campaign - an operation energetically pursued to accomplish a purpose

evangelize - to preach the gospel to people; to convert people to Christianity

province - a territory (area) of land governed by an empire or country; similar to a state within the United States of America, but smaller area of land

perverting - causing to turn away from what is right and good; corrupting

Questions for Acts Lesson 11

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible

DAY ONE: Review last weeks lesson and notes.

1. Give one thing you learned from chapter 13 or the lesson notes about:
- The Holy Spirit.

b. What God did for Israel.

c. Jesus.

d. The Gentiles.

DAY TWO: Read Acts 14:1-7.

2. a. What city did Paul and Barnabas go to next and where did they go to preach?

b. Why did they stay there a long time?

c. What did the Lord do for them?

3. a. Why did Paul and Barnabas have to leave Iconium?

b. Where did they go to preach next? Find these cities on a map.

DAY THREE: Read Acts 14:8-18.

4. a. What was the problem with the man who was listening to Paul?

b. What did Paul discern about this man? Circle the correct answer(s) below.

He was demon possessed.

He had faith to be healed.

He was filled with the Holy Spirit.

c. What did Paul say to the man, and what was the result?

5. After witnessing the miracle, what did the following people do?

a. The people of Lystra

b. The pagan priest

c. Paul and Barnabas

- d. Explain the actions of Paul and Barnabas using Matthew 26:65.

6. a. What did Paul and Barnabas explain to the people about God? List as many things as you can.

b. **True or False** (circle one): After hearing Paul and Barnabas' message, the people still wanted to sacrifice to them.

DAY FOUR: Read Acts 14:19-23.

7. The Jews from Antioch and Iconium went to Lystra and persuaded the people to: (underline the correct answer).

give a party for Paul and Barnabas

believe in Jesus

stone Paul

8. What happened to Paul after this, and how did he respond?

9. a. Where did Paul and Barnabas go next? Find this city on a map.

b. What good thing happened there?

10. Why did Paul and Barnabas return to the cities where they had preached?

11. a. From verse 22, what must Christians go through to enter the kingdom of God? (circle the correct answer)

many tribulations

many sleepless nights

a golden gate

b. What are *tribulations*? You may write what you think or use a dictionary.

c. What do you learn about a Christian's tribulations from Romans 5:3-5?

DAY FIVE: Read Acts 14:24-28.

12. Why did Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch? See also Acts 13:1-3.

13. What did they report to the church there?

14. What do you think is the most exciting thing they had to report? You may also use chapter 13 also.
