

## To The Ends Of The Earth

### **LESSON 13: PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY, PART 1 (ACTS 13:1-41)**

The gospel was to spread in Jerusalem, then into Judea and Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). We have seen the gospel saturate Judea and Samaria (and beyond) up to this point. Now, the gospel would start spreading even farther!

#### **SAUL AND BARNABAS ARE SENT (ACTS 13:1-3)**

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**13:1-3.** The gospel had spread to Antioch and the church grew, aided by the work of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:19-26). After their famine relief mission to Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30), Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch (with John Mark, Acts 12:25). The church in Antioch had grown to the point of having prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon (also called Niger), Lucius (of Cyrene, perhaps one of the founding members of the church, Acts 11:20), Manaen (who had been closely connected with Herod Antipas), and Saul. During a time of worship (or service, perhaps when the whole church was together), with fasting (voluntary abstinence from food), the Holy Spirit gave directions (perhaps through one of the inspired men) that Barnabas and Saul be set apart for the work God had called them to accomplish. This would involve taking the gospel into foreign lands. This was perhaps around 10-15 years after Saul's conversion and God's stated mission for him (Acts 9:15; 26:16-18). Despite this meaning that they would lose two of their teachers and surely having plenty of work of spreading the gospel in and around Antioch, Saul and Barnabas were sent off to this work by the Antioch church, after fasting, praying, and laying hands on them (which indicated support for the work). It is also likely that the church sent them with some financial means to survive during the trip.

#### **PREACHING IN CYPRUS (ACTS 13:4-12)**

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**13:4-8.** Saul and Barnabas went to the seaport city of Seleucia (about 16 miles west of Antioch). From there, they sailed west to Cyprus (an island in the Mediterranean Sea, where the gospel had apparently been preached previously, at least to the Jews, Acts 11:20; also Barnabas's home, Acts 4:36). They arrived in Salamis (on the eastern side of the island) and began preaching the gospel by going into the synagogues (a theme of their work). John Mark was with them to help in the work (a relative of Barnabas,

Colossians 4:10). They made their way across the island to the city of Paphos (about 100 miles west of Salamis). There, they encountered a man named Bar-Jesus (son of Jesus, a common name among Jews). He was a Jew, a sorcerer (practicing deceptive acts), and a false prophet. This man was with the Roman officer (proconsul) named Sergius Paulus. He was described as an intelligent man and is pictured as desiring to hear the word of God (summoning Barnabas and Saul). However, Bar-Jesus (now called Elymas) stood in opposition and tried to turn Sergius Paulus away from the faith.

**13:9-12.** At this point, Saul (Hebrew name) is introduced as Paul (Roman name). He was filled with the Holy Spirit and confronted Elymas directly. Paul called Elymas out for being full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Furthermore, Paul said Elymas was the son of the devil and enemy of all that is right, who would not stop perverting (twisting) the straight paths of the Lord. Paul then struck Elymas with blindness by the Lord's power. A mist and darkness fell over him, and he did not see the sun for a time, needing someone to lead him by the hand. Sergius Paulus, though, saw what had taken place and believed, being astonished by the Lord's teaching!

#### **PREACHING IN ANTIOCH OF PISIDIA (ACTS 13:13-41)**

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**13:13-15.** Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark sailed from Paphos and came to Perga (capital of Pamphylia, about 150 miles northwest of Paphos). There, John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem (Paul considered this a desertion, Acts 15:37-38). Paul and Barnabas then traveled to Antioch (of Pisidia, over 100 miles north in Galatia; a hazardous mountainous journey; perhaps with Paul also dealing with illness, Galatians 4:13-14). They went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, where they were given the opportunity to speak after the Law and Prophets had been read (note that it was sometimes typical to give visitors an opportunity to speak).

**13:16-25.** Getting their attention, Paul began to address the Israelites present by recounting several points regarding Jewish history, ultimately leading to Jesus. He mentioned God's care for Israel to bring them out of Egypt, God's toleration for Israel in the wilderness for their 40 years of rebellion, and the fulfillment of God's promise to bring Israel into Canaan (defeating seven nations, Deuteronomy 7:1). Then, God gave Israel judges until the prophet Samuel. After this, the people asked for a king, and God gave them Saul (from the tribe of Benjamin). Saul was later removed, and David (a man after God's own heart who would be obedient to God) was raised up to be king. It

was from David's descendants that God brought a Savior to Israel named Jesus (according to prophecy, 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 132:11; Isaiah 11:1-16). Then, not only did Jesus fulfill prophecy, but John the Baptist had (in their own day, at the completion of his public ministry before Jesus came to the public's attention) preached a baptism of repentance (expressing a repentant heart) and pointed to the One who was coming after him as being greater than himself (unworthy to untie His sandals, Luke 3:15-16).

**13:26-31.** Paul then said they had been given the opportunity to hear this word of salvation. The people of Jerusalem and the Jewish leaders (despite the prophecies concerning Jesus) did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah and actually fulfilled the prophecies by condemning Him, having Him killed, and burying Him. However, God raised Jesus from the dead, and He appeared for many days to His disciples, who were now witnesses of His resurrection (Acts 1:3).

**13:32-41.** Paul and Barnabas were now declaring the fulfillment of God's promise for this good news about a Savior (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:8)! This was fulfilled through Jesus being raised from the dead, demonstrating forever that Jesus is the Son of God (Psalm 2:7; Romans 1:4)! This resurrection to never again decay fulfilled prophecy (Isaiah 55:3; pointing to the concept that the promised Messiah could not reign if He remained dead). In fact, God promised not to allow His holy One to see decay (pointing ultimately to the resurrection of Christ, Psalm 16:10). David died, was buried, and his body decayed after serving God's purpose in his time (Acts 2:29). Therefore, the prophecy concerns Jesus, the One through Whom the forgiveness of sins was now being proclaimed. Justification (being declared innocent) is only possible through Jesus and is offered to all (both Jews and Gentiles) who have faith (obedient faith) in Jesus. This justification could not be found through the Law of Moses (Hebrews 8:7-13; 9:11-14; 10:1-4)! The Jews who heard Paul were urged not to fulfill the prophecy (Habakkuk 1:5) about people who could hear something marvelous explained that God was doing among them (applied to the salvation brought through the Messiah, Jesus), and yet not believe it.

## CONCLUSION

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Paul and Barnabas had been sent out on a journey to preach the gospel. The gospel was preached in Cyprus, likely in Pamphylia, and then in Galatia (in Antioch). The Jews in Antioch had the opportunity to hear the gospel and now had a choice presented to them.

## DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

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How had the church in Antioch grown?

How was the church in Antioch useful in spreading the gospel in other places?

What work did Barnabas and Paul accomplish on the island of Cyprus?

What happened with John Mark in Pamphylia?

Where did Paul and Barnabas begin preaching in Antioch?

What points did Paul make in recounting Jewish history to those in Antioch?

What did Paul teach those in Antioch concerning Jesus?

What warning did Paul give to those in Antioch?

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