

## Chapter 13: The Circle Widens Again: Missionaries Part 1

### Turning the World Right-side Up: Study 10, Acts 13

Acts Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they

cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: God calls us to share His Kingdom

#### Section 1: Acts 12:25-13:3

**12** <sup>25</sup> When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark.

**13** <sup>1</sup> Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. <sup>2</sup> While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have

called them." <sup>3</sup> So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Barnabas and Saul had been delivering famine relief in Judea (see Acts 11:27-30). While in Jerusalem, they pick up John, also known as Mark<sup>1</sup>. This is Barnabas' nephew and the man who will later pen the Gospel of Mark, which was narrated by Peter. It was in Mark's mother's house in Jerusalem that the church gathered to pray for Peter during his imprisonment (Acts 12:12).

Two offices of the church are mentioned here: Prophets and teachers. Prophets are people who speak God's words into situations. We see many prophets in the Old Testament.

The central purpose of the church, and of every individual Christian, is worship. A. W. Tozer wrote, "Worship is not an event, but a lifestyle."<sup>2</sup> Worship is what was lost in the fall and what we regain in Christ. It is what we will do for all eternity. The true work of God proceeds from a life of worship, as it does in these verses.

We also see here that this group was fasting<sup>3</sup> —going without food in order to be able to hear God more clearly.

The Holy Spirit says to set apart<sup>4</sup> to Him Barnabas and Saul for work the Spirit has called them to. We are not told how this was communicated, but the context would tell us it came through the

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<sup>1</sup> *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 801

<sup>2</sup> *The Purpose of Man*, pg. 177. A wonderful book on the centrality of worship.

<sup>3</sup> *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 444

<sup>4</sup> The word here means to put a boundary around something, to set it aside for a special purpose. This is what the Spirit wants these men to do.

prophets. It may be that this group was meeting in order to hear from the Spirit and to know what the Spirit wanted them to do next.

The church of Antioch lays hands on these two men, setting them apart for this work, and sends them out.<sup>5</sup>

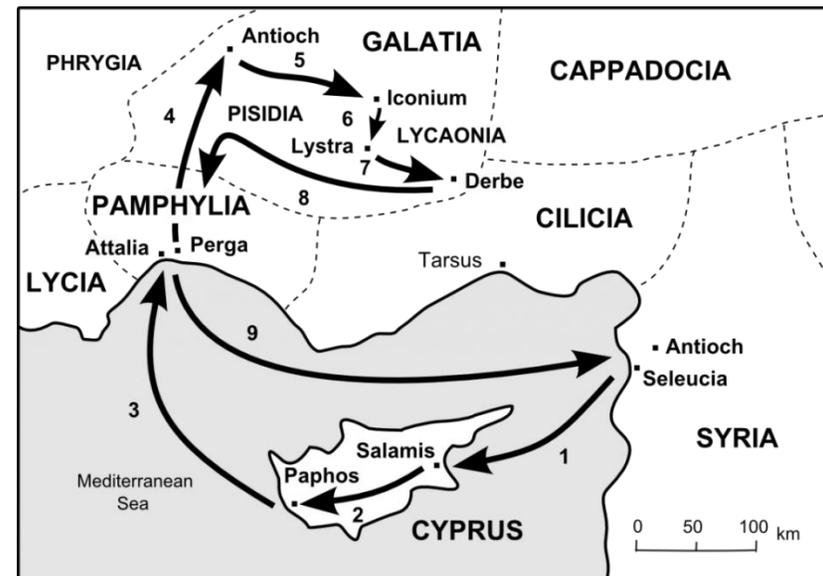
## Section 2: Acts 13:4-12 The Mess in Cyprus

<sup>4</sup>The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. <sup>5</sup>When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

<sup>6</sup>They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, <sup>7</sup>who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. <sup>8</sup>But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. <sup>9</sup>Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, <sup>10</sup>“You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? <sup>11</sup>Now the hand of the Lord is

against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun.”

Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. <sup>12</sup>When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.



<http://www.thebiblejourney.org/the-bible-journey/9-pauls-journey-to-cyprus-pamphylia-galatia-paul-starts-his-1st-missionary-journey/>

<sup>5</sup> *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 538

Paphos is a mess. Look at the people that these missionaries meet. There is Bar-Jesus, a Jewish sorcerer<sup>6</sup> and false prophet and Elymas the sorcerer. This is a place deeply immersed in the occult. Sadly, the Jewish people had taken on this culture and become polluted, in spite of the prohibitions in the Old Testament against sorcery (Exodus 22:18).

Barnabas and Saul start their ministry by speaking to those who are closest to God already. These are the people whose ears are most attuned to the word of God.

When Barnabas and Saul share the gospel, they are met with intense opposition. This is to be expected. Satan does not give up ground without a fight.

If you had said to Saul, "That was amazing when you made Elymas go blind," he would have quickly responded, "That wasn't me. It was the Spirit." In that moment, Saul was filled with the Spirit. There was more of the Spirit there than Saul. It was the Spirit speaking and acting. It was the Spirit who took Elymas' sight. Saul was merely the vessel.

The Spirit is merely make physical what is true of Elymas in the Spiritual realm. Elymas, and all who followed him, were walking in darkness. They were of the devil<sup>7</sup> and, like him, were enemies of everything that is right, or of God.

The result of this encounter is that the proconsul<sup>8</sup>, the Roman governor, becomes a believer.

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<sup>6</sup> *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 787

<sup>7</sup> *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 352

<sup>8</sup> *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 1032

### Section 3: Acts 13:13-43 Invited to Share

<sup>13</sup> From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. <sup>15</sup> After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak."

<sup>16</sup> Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: "Fellow Israelites and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! <sup>17</sup> The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt; with mighty power he led them out of that country; <sup>18</sup> for about forty years he endured their conduct in the wilderness; <sup>19</sup> and he overthrew seven nations in Canaan, giving their land to his people as their inheritance.<sup>20</sup> All this took about 450 years.

"After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. <sup>21</sup> Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. <sup>22</sup> After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'

<sup>23</sup> "From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised. <sup>24</sup> Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. <sup>25</sup> As John was completing his work, he said: 'Who do you suppose I am? I am not the one you are looking for. But there is one coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'

<sup>26</sup> "Fellow children of Abraham and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. <sup>27</sup> The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. <sup>28</sup> Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. <sup>29</sup> When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. <sup>30</sup> But God raised him from the dead,<sup>31</sup> and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.

<sup>32</sup> "We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors <sup>33</sup> he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm:

"You are my son;

today I have become your father.'

<sup>34</sup> God raised him from the dead so that he will never be subject to decay. As God has said,

"I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.'

<sup>35</sup> So it is also stated elsewhere:

"You will not let your holy one see decay.'

<sup>36</sup> "Now when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed. <sup>37</sup> But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

<sup>38</sup> "Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. <sup>39</sup> Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses. <sup>40</sup> Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you:

<sup>41</sup> "Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish,

for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you.'"

<sup>42</sup> As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next

Sabbath. <sup>43</sup> When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

This section begins by telling us that John Mark returned to Jerusalem. He had been the helper (Acts 13:5), most likely the one making all the logistical arrangements for the missionaries.

We now see Saul (his Hebrew name) being called Paul (his Roman name). We also see a change in the order of the missionaries: they are now Paul and Barnabas, showing that Paul had taken the lead.

Paul is no common Jew. He is a highly trained Jewish scholar. He is their version of a doctorate in Biblical scholarship. The Jews would recognize his credentials and would want to hear him teach the Word.

Paul uses the opportunity to trace through the Old Testament the work of God to bring about the Messiah, the descendent of David. Jesus fulfills the promise of God to His people. He was rejected by the Jews in Jerusalem. Through Jesus there is forgiveness of sins. Moses could not forgive sins. A. W. Tozer wrote, "All that Moses could do was command righteousness; but Jesus Christ produces righteousness. All that Moses could do is forbid us to sin; but Jesus Christ came to forgive us from sin."<sup>9</sup>

The initial reaction to Paul's preaching was very positive, with Jewish and Gentile synagogue members following Paul who

encouraged them to continue in the grace of God, the free gift of salvation through Jesus.

#### Section 4: Acts 13:44-52 Rejection

<sup>44</sup> On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.<sup>45</sup> When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him.

<sup>46</sup> Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. <sup>47</sup> For this is what the Lord has commanded us:

"I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."

<sup>48</sup> When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

<sup>49</sup> The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. <sup>50</sup> But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. <sup>51</sup> So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to

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<sup>9</sup> *And He Dwelt Among Us*, pg. 89

Iconium. <sup>52</sup> And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

The response to the message of salvation through Jesus' death and resurrection draws the entire city to the Jewish synagogue a week later. The leaders of the synagogue feel that things have gotten out of hand. They are losing their synagogue. In a desperate attempt to retain their power and influence, they challenge Paul and Barnabas and even lower themselves to name calling.

If we read between the lines, we see that the Jews began to respond when they saw the crowd. This crowd would have been made of many non-Jews, people the Jews would have looked down on as unclean. It was very easy for them to turn the Jewish people against the missionaries by pointing to the Gentiles right there in their midst. Also, Paul offers the gospel to the Gentiles because the Jews rejected it. The Gentiles cheer at this offer.

When Saul was first called, Jesus said he would be a missionary to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Paul quotes Isaiah 49:6, showing God's intent that the whole earth would hear of Him. The Gentiles were thrilled and the gospel spread through the whole region.

The Jewish leaders were not done. They used their political clout with powerful women and public officials to get Paul and Barnabas expelled from the region. The missionaries followed the directive of Jesus and wiped the dust off their feet (Matthew 10:14).

The missionaries leave behind them believers who are filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

### **What have we learned?**

The spreading of the gospel is the Spirit's work. He calls the missionaries, He gives power to them in the field, and He fills the converts who believe the message and put their faith in Jesus.

The work of the church is to worship, fast, and to be available to the Spirit.

Worshipping puts us into direct communication with God. This is what we were saved for. It is what we will be doing for all eternity.

Fasting separates us from the comforts of this life and makes us more receptive to hear from God.

The Spirit directs the church. The Spirit can speak to the church through prophets or by speaking directly to individuals. When we know the mind of the Spirit, we respond with obedience.

## What the Text Says

### Section 1 Acts 12:25-13:3

This is the inner workings of proper church government. We see worship and fasting and the leading of the Spirit. The Spirit calls for the separation of Barnabas and Saul for the third and last step in God's plan—taking the gospel to the ends of the earth (see Acts 1:8). The leaders lay hands on Barnabas and Saul—setting them apart and giving them authority—and send them on their way.

### Section 2 Acts 13:4-12

Barnabas and Saul travel to Cypress. They share the gospel and travel to the city of Paphos where they come upon a real mess. The Jews there had created a strange hybrid between their Jewish faith and the occult practices of the heathen. The powerful among them were the sorcerers. When the governor gets close to believing, a sorcerer named Elymas challenges Saul. The Spirit blinds Elymas, making his physical blindness match his spiritual blindness.

### Section 3 Acts 13:13-43

From here the missionaries travel to Antioch, in Asia Minor. Here they seek out those closest to the truth—the Jews. They are invited to speak and share of God's work from Israel to Christ.

### Section 4 Acts 13:44-52

The entire city turns out to hear Paul and Barnabas. The Jews, jealous and angry, use their power base in the city to turn out the missionaries who wipe their feet as they leave.

## Connecting to the Scripture

The gospel belongs to God. It was His before creation. He and the Word planned and executed it. Jesus came to proclaim it and to provide Himself the payment for it. The Spirit came to supervise the proclamation of it and the demonstration of its power. The early church knew to leave the gospel in the hands of God.

If we are to proclaim the gospel, we need to learn to follow the leading of the Spirit, to see what the Spirit is doing, and to join in. Sharing the gospel, evangelizing, is not a means of surveys and careful campaigns. It is not coming up with slick slogans and seeker-friendly services. True evangelism is a spiritual encounter.

Francis Schaeffer wrote, "Surely, as we look at the Book of Acts, we find in the early church not a group of strong men laboring together, but the work of the Holy Spirit bringing to them the power of the crucified and glorified Christ. It must be so for us also."<sup>10</sup>

Walking in the Spirit makes the Christian life pretty unpredictable. We can only follow where He leads and do what He tells us to do. Our job is to be the people He can fill. We need to break our dependence on anything other than God. We need to completely surrender to Him and His purposes in our lives. We must give our full energies to worship and prayer. We need to study the Word of God and fill our minds with His thoughts.

When we have done this, we are ready for divine appointments and displays of His presence and power. It's a wild ride.

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<sup>10</sup> *True Spirituality*, pg. 57

## Questions to Ask During the Study

### Section 1 Read Acts 12:25-13:3

1. Are you putting yourself in a place where you will be able to hear and accept the call of the Spirit (constantly worshipping, fasting, and praying)?
2. How do you know when it is really the Spirit speaking?
3. Would you be ready now to go if the Spirit called you to the mission field?

### Section 2 Read Acts 13:4-12

1. Have you ever encountered resistance while sharing Christ? Explain what happened.
2. How could the people of God, the Jews, become so polluted with the occult? Could this happen with us?
3. If you are familiar with the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal, compare that story to this one.

### Section 3 Read Acts 13:13-43

1. Paul shares with Jews using the Old Testament to show God's plan in Christ. Consider different types of people (a science teacher, gang member, football jock, nerd, etc.), how would you share the gospel with each of them?

### Section 4 Read Acts 13:44-52

1. In what ways would Satan bring persecution to those of us who walk in the Spirit? What can we do to be ready for these attacks?