

The Book of Acts
Chapter 13

Acts 13:47-49

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

I. Review

1. We began last lesson with a review of the Herod family. **[Herod graphic]**. Notice **Herod Antipas**, who beheaded John the Baptist. This same Herod is mentioned in 13:1.
2. We spoke about Jesus' inner circle of Peter, James, and John, and how that Peter and John were identified as continuing the ministry in the early chapters of Acts, but chapter 12 began by reporting of Herod beheading James.
3. Peter's miraculous deliverance from jail and death row is described in detail, as is his interrupting a prayer meeting held on his behalf.
4. We noted that the prayer meeting occurred in the home of Mary, the sister of Barnabas, and mother of John Mark.
5. Peter secretly departed Jerusalem, and the story follows Herod also departing Jerusalem to Caesarea. And when Herod gave a great speech and people praised him as the voice of a god, and when Herod accepted their praise, he immediately was struck with sickness, from which he died five days later.
6. Then the preaching of the Word flourished once again.
7. The chapter ended with Barnabas and Saul also leaving Jerusalem, taking Barnabas' nephew, John Mark, with them, and they returned back to Antioch.

II. PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

A. Preachers in Antioch

1. Chapter 13 and 14 are actually part one and part two of one story, often called Paul's First Missionary Journey.
2. **[Brief overview of cities and map.]**

3. There were a number of preachers/prophets and teachers, six of whom were named, working in the church in Antioch at this time.
Acts 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.
 4. Simeon called Niger, is possibly a reference to Simeon's ethnicity as Niger is Latin for black, and the next man listed is Lucius of Cyrene, which is a city of northern Africa. But that could just have been a nickname that stuck.
 5. It is interesting to note that Manaen was brought up with Herod the tetrarch. This is the same Herod Antipas I who had John the Baptist beheaded. And Manaen was a childhood friend of his.
 6. So if we wonder how some of the details of the Herod family got into the scripture, they were not just from common knowledge of a notorious government official, a close and longtime friend of his had been saved and was preaching in the church in Antioch!
 7. And also noteworthy is who was listed last on the list of preachers in the church. Perhaps if Luke had been writing in our day, he might have chosen a common expression as he introduced this last guy, "And last, but certainly not least, is Saul."
 8. What makes that noteworthy is that up to this chapter, we have been reading about Barnabas and Saul. And in fact, this chapter includes the last reference to Barnabas and Saul, but it also includes the first of many references to Paul and Barnabas.
 9. The gospel had been preached in Antioch for possibly two or three years, and it was God's time for some of these ministers to take His gospel to other needy fields.
- B. The praying church
1. As chapter 12 began with a reference to a praying church in Jerusalem, chapter 13 shows that this new church plant in Antioch was also a praying and fasting congregation.
 2. So the church that prayed saved their preacher, Peter, from prison and death. The church that prayed and fasted, sent missionaries out:
Acts 13:2-3
2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

3. By dedication and intercessory prayer and fasting, they heard the voice of the Lord revealing to them, perhaps by prophecy or by tongues and interpretation, that Barnabas and Saul should be sent on a special missionary tour into other Gentile countries.
4. The other ministers, in obedience to the Spirit of God, laid hands on Saul and Barnabas and, by a prayer of dedication, ordained them to the work to which the Lord had called them.
5. Even today, ordaining the ministry through fasting, prayer, laying on of hands, and an operation of the Holy Ghost, sets ministers on a journey that they soon recognize is not their own journey, and certainly not a stroll down easy street, but God's rugged, yet blessed, path of service and sacrifice.
6. Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark, had already seen some of those things on their journey, and were about to enjoy and endure far more.

III. Barnabas' and Saul's Ministry in Cyprus (Verses 4-12)

A. Salamis and no record

1. And so their journey began:

Acts 13:4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

2. **[Map of First Missionary Journey Map-large, close]**

3. Antioch was about sixteen miles inland from the seaport of Seleucia on the Mediterranean coast.
4. And the island of Cyprus, which was the early home of Barnabas (Acts 4:36), and on which Barnabas and Saul were to begin this mission, was about **sixty miles** southwest of Seleucia.
5. It is interesting to me that we read in chapter 11 that the church in Antioch they just left, was started by some people from Cyprus (Acts 11:20).
6. This was to be the beginning of Paul's great missionary work in the Gentile world.
7. Barnabas, Saul, and Barnabas' nephew, John Mark, arrived at the city of Salamis on the east coast of Cyprus, and headed first to the synagogues of the Jews.

Acts 13:5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

8. I find it interesting that in this first of preaching points on this first missionary journey, nothing was recorded of their ministry there.
 9. “The nothing that nobody was talking about.” Note in my Bible margin.
 10. That may mean that nothing to write home about occurred and rather than fretting about it, they just moved on to the next city where something exciting did indeed occur.
- B. Paphos and mixed response
1. We are introduced to the next city, and two individuals who had two opposite responses to the gospel: **[map-close]**
Acts 13:6-7
*6 And when they had gone through the isle unto **Paphos**, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was **Bar-jesus**:
7 Which was with the deputy of the country, **Sergius Paulus**, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.*
 2. The Archeological Study Bible notes that this deputy of the country was named on an inscription that says Sergius Paulus as a consul of Rome, meaning he was a Roman senator. ¹ His Roman position here would have been proconsul, meaning this area was under the direct control of the Roman senate.
 3. Sergius Paulus was a prudent man with a hunger for the Word. He had also been influenced by a false prophet, a Jew named Bar-jesus.
 4. And although Sergius Paulus was a secular Gentile leader, he obviously had an interest in things spiritual.
 5. Perhaps his interest in the apostles caused a jealousy to arise in the false prophet, Bar-jesus. He was referred to as a sorcerer, In the next verse, we learn he had another name—Elymas, perhaps a nickname.
Acts 13:8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.
 6. Just as the proconsul was turning toward the faith, Elymas sought to turn him away from the faith.
 7. But Saul was not going to let Elymas go any further without confronting him. We see here an early example of Saul’s willingness to confront error head-on.
 8. *Acts 13:9-11*
9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes

¹ Archeology Study Bible, p. 1622-1623.

on him,

10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

C. First things

1. What other new thing do we see here in this passage?
2. Saul speaks out first, not waiting for Barnabas. And we will see that from here forward, he takes the role as the leader of this journey.
3. Barnabas' disciple now becomes Barnabas' leader. Barnabas is only one of two people in the Bible who are described as "full of faith." The other was Stephen.
4. It takes that to be able to train someone up in the ministry, and then be willing to graciously step back in order to allow the student to excel over him.
5. Second, we see Saul is now going to be called Paul. That is the case from this verse moving forward.
6. Saul was his Hebrew name, Paulus was his Greek name. That was also the name of the proconsul Sergius Paulus. So it was a point of connection with the proconsul, plus it helped identify him to the Gentile audience he would be going after.
7. Of course, the shorter version of the name is Paul.
8. And speaking of the ability to confront error, Paul calls him full of deceit and mischief, son of the devil, enemy of righteousness, perverter of the ways of the Lord.
9. He became blind after Paul's proclamation, which sealed in the mind of the proconsul who he should listen to:
Acts 13:12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.
10. Two different reactions to the Word of God in one house.

D. John Mark's Departure (Verse 13)

1. After the conversion of Sergius Paulus, the missionaries sailed from Paphos, in a northwesterly direction about **one hundred and seventy miles**, to the southern coast of Asia Minor. **[map close]**

2. *Acts 13:13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.*
3. They ascended up the Cestrus River about seven miles to Perga in the province of Pamphylia.
4. From this place, John Mark returned to Jerusalem. No comment was made at this time as to why he left the missionary party, but Paul's later mention of this incident (Acts 15: 36-41) implies that Paul had lost trust in John Mark at this departure.
5. But in later correspondence, Paul asks for Mark to join him (2 Tim. 4:11) and mentions him as traveling with him (Col 4:10) and sends him greetings to him in Rome (Philem 24).
6. The apostle Peter also refers to him as his son (1 Pet 5:13).
7. And of course he wrote the Gospel of Mark.
8. So although John Mark had temporarily lost trust, he certainly gained it back to the point that not only were Paul and Peter able to depend on him, we all count on his faithfulness yet today when we read the Gospel of Mark.

IV. Paul's and Barnabas' Ministry in the Other Antioch (Verse 14-52)

- A. Start with the synagogue – to the Jew first
 1. After the departure of John Mark, Paul and Barnabas journeyed north from Perga, about one hundred miles, to Antioch in the province of Pisidia. This other Antioch, here in the region known as Pisidia, is called Pisidian Antioch.
 2. It is a different place than the Antioch in Syria, called Syrian Antioch, from which they had begun their journey. The former Greek Seleucid ruler, Antiochus I, actually founded 16 cities he named Antioch after himself.
 3. In Antioch of Pisidia they went into the Jewish synagogue on the sabbath day.

Acts 13:14-15

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

4. It was customary for leaders of the synagogue services, after the regular Scripture reading of the Law and prophets, to call on visiting brethren to speak.
 5. Paul took advantage of this custom whenever he could to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ on their journeys.
 6. So when asked to speak, he stood up and addressed the men of Israel and those who feared God (probably proselytes), and asked them to give him audience, thereby arousing their expectancy for something special.
- B. Preaching the gospel
1. **[slide]** Then in verses 17-41, we find the sermon that he preached to them.
 2. He preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, starting with a brief summary of Israel's history from the time of their deliverance from Egypt to the reign of David.
 3. All Israel knew that the promised Messiah should come of the lineage of David. So he told his audience that the Messiah had come in Jesus the Savior was that promised Son of David.
 4. He showed that John the Baptist had come as His forerunner, and that the Jews in Jerusalem, not knowing Him, had fulfilled God's plan by crucifying Him.
 5. He told them that He was taken down from the cross and buried, but God raised Him from the dead, and that He was seen of His disciples many days (forty days) before His ascension.
 6. He quoted several Old Testament prophecies they all would have been familiar with as being fulfilled in His death and resurrection.
 7. He then told them that through faith in the gospel of Jesus, they could receive forgiveness of sins. He also warned of the consequences of rejecting the gospel.
- C. Antioch and mixed response
1. In the end, many of the Jews and proselytes were converted to Jesus Christ.
 2. *Acts 13:43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.*
 3. In fact, the interest in the gospel was so great, the Gentiles begged to have this gospel preached to them the following sabbath.
 4. So on the next sabbath day, almost the whole city came to the synagogue to hear the Word of the Lord.

Acts 13:44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

5. That's great news, right? It depends on who you ask.
6. When the Jews saw the multitude of Gentiles, they became envious, and began to fight against Paul's message. So the apostles responded boldly:
Acts 13:46-49
*46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, **It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you:** but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.*
47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth [quoting Isaiah 42:6-7].
48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.
49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.
7. It is not recorded just how long the missionaries were able to preach in Antioch before being driven out by persecution.
8. But it was long enough to publish the Word of the Lord throughout all that region.
9. And as has been so far in Acts, the revival, persecution, revival, persecution cycle continued:
Acts 13:50-52
50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.
51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.
52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.
10. Paul and Barnabas were forced out but they left in Antioch a congregation of disciples who were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.
11. The next chapter continues with their journey to the next city of Iconium and another great revival.