

Good morning to all of you-

I want to apologize to those of you on Zoom last week. I presented in class from my slides but did not “share” them, and all you saw was me for the entire time. I have made a special note to “share” my slides. It seems like I have made every mistake in Zoom that can be made. I am not really tempting fate, because I am sure there are others out there that I have not made yet, but I am getting better at it, thankfully. If you want to listen to last week’s lesson, play the audio and open the slides and advance them.

I am excited about this week’s lesson because we begin the review of Paul’s first missionary journey. It validates that even with the troubles in the early church and in society in the first century, God’s plan will move forward. This is a good thing to keep in mind today too.

I am also excited about the next 3 sermons in our church on the end-times. You will hear more about that as Pastor Jeff starts the discussion with the “signs of the times” today. Many of you feel that as a nation we have lost much of our soul, and reason to be. I feel that way most of the time as well. I just keep reminding myself of this fact...**America may not come back** to where we want it to be, but **Jesus is coming back**, and I believe very soon. Don’t despair about things because God is fully in control, just as He was in the first century church. One other thing I try to remind myself to think about...we should not get so enamored with the things of this world, but remember we are citizens of a Kingdom to come where righteousness and Godliness will reign.

Over the weekend we listed to a daylong conference held at Calvary Church in Chino Hills California, called “Behold He Comes” which was a conference on the End Times. It was a powerful conference. All of the presentations, including Michelle Bachman, Jan Markell, Amir Tsarfati, Jack Hibbs, and Barry Stagner were wonderful and I recommend them. One of the most powerful to me was one by Amir, and it is not published separately yet, but it is named “**The Last Jihad**” and focuses on how and why Muslims support Jihad, and its many facets, but the time of the Last Jihad will be the Gog/Magog war and Islamists will die on the mountains of Israel by the hand of God. It is much more educational than what I just mentioned, but if I can find it, or find a way to excerpt it from the live stream, I will send a link. Here it is:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAjT\\_RTJj0g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAjT_RTJj0g)

Before we begin the reading and discussion, I want to show you a map of the area that Paul took for his first missionary journey.



The blue line is the outward part of the journey, and the red line is the return. I want you to get a picture in your mind of the scope of it. Remember, this is his first journey and stays mostly in the areas familiar to him and to Barnabas. I will come back to this as we progress.

Also remember that these nations had their own gods (the gentile portion) and some of the receptions were hostile for these missionaries.

Let's get to the scripture:

**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 worshipping 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.

The setting is the church in Antioch. This was familiar territory to both Saul and Barnabas. They had spent much time with this early church in present day Turkey. Luke makes a point of calling out specific prophets and teachers. Remember, prophets are both forth tellers, and foretellers. Mostly they spoke to the people what God had instructed them to say.

**Barnabas** from the island of Cyprus and was a Jew. He was educated and was part of the early church stemming from Pentecost. His given name was Joseph, but the disciples

called him Barnabus, which means Son of Encouragement. We have seen him many times already in the book of Acts, and he was instrumental in bringing both Jews and Gentiles to faith in Jesus. He was trusted and filled with the Holy Spirit.

**Simeon, called Niger.** We don't know a lot about him, but many believe is the Simeon who helped Jesus carry the cross, and his son Rufus is also mentioned in the NT in Romans 16. In any case, the name Niger is Latin for Black, and it is generally accepted he was a black or dark-skinned man from North Africa. Simeon was a believer and fully into the church at Antioch.

**Lucius of Cyrene.** There is some difference of opinion with little biblical facts to identify and clarify who this Lucius was. He could be another person with Simeon from the North Africa region, or various other ideas, but we should just accept he was a teacher or prophet, who was well known in the early church, and was in Antioch which was part of the Syrian nation at that time.

**Manaen** – this is a playmate and youngster who grew up with Herod the tetrarch. It is interesting to speculate how these two men couldn't be more different as they grew up. If there were tares and wheat... it is clear that Manaen was a wheat and Herod was a Tare. Herod the Tetrarch was Herod Antipas and one of the sons of Herod the Great. The term Tetrarch refers to a quarter, as in a quarter of the kingdom. He was never a king but is sometimes called that.

Finally, **Saul** – we know him well. Strict Jew, a Pharisee, well educated, and a persecutor of Christians. He was personally converted by Christ Himself on the road to Damascus and was destined to be the witness to the Gentiles, and receiver of much suffering for the cause. Now a zealous convert and powerful person in the Lord. He was from Tarsus, close to Antioch, and was both a Roman citizen and Jew. We have discussed this earlier in our study.

So, what happens? While they were worshipping and fasting the Holy Spirit comes and imparts instructions to these men. They are to **set apart** Saul and Barnabus for a task that the Lord has assigned (or called) to them. The team of teachers and prophets fast and pray, then lay hands on Saul and Barnabus to “commission” them for the work the Lord has for them. This commissioning was the form they used to set them apart and dedicate them to a task of the Lord. Then they sent them on their way.

I want to make a special point of the “call”. All of us in the ministry need to be called to our task. For preachers of the Gospel, if you are not specifically “called by the Lord” to the task, you will either walk away or be ineffective. When I listen to a teacher or a pastor, I always listen for an evidence of a call. I am not talking about those that pinch hit, but specifically about those who have a vocation of ministry.

I have been where a pastor or teacher grudgingly did their task from a sense of duty and not the joy of service, and it is not the way God intended it to be.

Barnabus and Saul had a specific call from the Lord, and the church acknowledged that call and set them apart for this service.

## **On 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 (John Mark) was with them as their helper.*

So, they travel to the coast and leave for Cyprus. Barnabus, Saul, and John Mark. John Mark is very young and so he goes as their helper, not a ministry partner. I always wonder how they received the specific instructions on where to go. Was it communicated in the Spirit assignment, or did it come to them as they readied themselves? Based on what happened in later journeys I suspect Paul had an idea where to go, but that is pure speculation. His ideas came from his prayers.

One other fact, they went where they were used to going...to the Jewish Synagogues. There they would find people knowledgeable of God and the existing scriptures, and so they came with a foundation on which to build.

GO BACK TO MAP

*<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.”***

This is an interesting passage, and there is some confusion in the name of the “magician”. To understand this passage, we must understand that many prominent men of the Roman era employed “wise men” as their assistants. These men derive from the Babylonian custom of having wise men, called Chaldean wise men. They go by the same names as the 3 wise men to visited Jesus after he was born. This helps us with solving the name problem. The assistant to the proconsul was named “Bar Jesus” or Bar Y’eshua, which means son of salvation. Joshua means “he will save his people”. This man probably knew the sciences and lots of other things that most did not, and became

a trusted advisor to the pro-consul, which was a prestigious, and well-paying position. The text calls him a Jewish sorcerer, which means he knew scripture as well as the dark arts. He was like so many Jews of the time, more interested in his power and influence than the word of God.

The pro consul hears of Paul and Barnabus and wants to hear more. This sorcerer tried to discourage him from listening to them, but apparently is called **Elymas**, which is probably a title he gave himself. It means Magus or Magi.

Paul is not fooled. He is full of the Holy Spirit and sees right through this deception and calls the magician out, most likely in front of the Pro consul, and strikes him blind. I guess this is a quick demonstration of who has the juice and speaks for the Lord

*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.***

So, when the proconsul sees what happens to his own magic man, he immediately believes the word of the Lord, and was amazed. Saul and Barnabus are making gains for the Kingdom wherever they went in Cyprus. Now they get in a ship and sail to their new area in Pamphlia. A town called Perga.

### ***In Pisidian Antioch***

*<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."*

I need to make a quick couple of points here. We see, almost as an afterthought that John Mark left the team of Barnabus and Saul. We are not given much detail as to why and there has been much speculation, but I think since he left and went to Jerusalem and not back to his home in Antioch, we might conclude that he got uncomfortable with the witnessing to the Gentiles and went to Jerusalem to report what was going on. Others think that since Barnabus was the earlier Christian, that perhaps John Mark was upset that Saul had taken the lead from his cousin Barnabus. Whatever the cause, we know it caused a serious rift later between Barnabus and Saul. We will revisit this later in Acts.

Also, the Jewish Leaders asked Saul and Barnabus if they would like to speak in the synagogue, and Saul immediately steps up and does it. This was a custom for visiting

Jews, and this is a God thing that this happens, although the results are both good and for Paul, not so good.

<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<sup>o</sup> 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: (Ps 2:7)

**"You are my son;  
today I have become your father.'** (Ps 2:7)

<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. (Isa 55:3)**

***35 So it is also stated elsewhere:***

***“You will not let your holy one see decay.”<sup>1a</sup> (Ps 16:10 septuagint)***

*36 “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. 37 But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.*

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

***41 ““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>1e</sup> ( Hab. 1:5)***

*42 As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, **the people** invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. 43 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.*

I wanted to read this section in its entirety, so you get a sense of the powerful way Saul ministers to the Jewish people. I can just imagine that this was a “God thing”, a divine appointment where the people and the presenter were prepared ahead of time. Saul had been preparing for this time his whole life. His knowledge as a Pharisee, trained under Gamaliel, prepared him to start with the OT and bring forward the plan of God.

The people and some of the Jews followed them out of the synagogue to hear more and invited them back the next Sabbath to continue the discussion. I am sure there were Jews who did not appreciate this discussion, but we don’t see them here yet, but wait.

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

The next Sabbath arrives... and friends tell friends, and the synagogue was packed out. I am sure the gentiles in the area invited other gentiles and the crowd was not just Jewish. The whole city it seemed had come to hear this good news. But all was not perfect for Paul and Barnabus, because the “Jews”, presumably the leaders, were jealous and began to contradict them and get personal with abuse.

***46 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. 47 For this is what the Lord has commanded us: (Isa 49:6)***

*“I have made you a light for the Gentiles,  
that you<sup>Ⓜ</sup> may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”*

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

I can imagine that the Jews were not expecting the crowd that came. They never had that kind of crowd. In fact, they never wanted the crowd. TO them being Jewish was exclusive and not to be shared willingly. I am confident they were both jealous and angry at the same time. You can tell by their reaction, but Saul is up to the task.

This is classic defense. Saul turns this where the Jews did not think it would go. Of course, they thought THEY were the object of the good news, never thinking it was meant by Saul to be focused on the Gentiles. When Saul dismissed their concerns and said they **“Had to speak to them first”** but since the Jews rejected it, and did not think themselves **worthy of salvation**, they could not get on with the mission the Lord gave them...**to be the light to the Gentiles and convert the world.**

The gentiles were excited and honored the word of the Lord, and an interesting phrase is next **“all who were appointed for eternal life believed”**. This sounds like the discussion we had about being “chosen”, but I believe it really reaffirms that God leaves us to decide, but He knows the decision, and that we are appointed or chosen **before even we know what we will do**. This also is comforting to those who witness...it is God’s decision and work to convict and convert others to Him, we are just the heralds of the “good news”.

***49 The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. 50 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. 51 So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.***

## **END OF CHAPTER**

Again, we see that the Lord’s plan to spread the Gospel, happened despite the Jews kicking them out with typical hate. Paul and Barnabus followed the example of Jesus when he stamped their feet and shook the dust off their feet, indicating they are leaving

it all there. It is like saying “I wash my hands of it” meaning you have done all you can do, and you are leaving it and them ...as a warning...to deal with God themselves.

Were the disciples upset? No, they were overjoyed because of the great success they had had in witnessing, and **the Jews were responsible for their own rejection of the Lord**. They were also filled with the Holy Spirit, who had guided them all along this journey so far.

This part of the journey is all in Galatia, which will merit its own letter from Paul to the church. Note again that the first missionary journey is within Cyprus, and modern-day Turkey, and they had met with strong opposition so far, and strong success even in the face of the opposition. Paul is only beginning the trials in his fulfillment of the plan of God.

This ends chapter 13, any Q's about what we have studied or any of the previous lessons in Acts up to now?

Next week:

- Pray for our church as we speak things that some do not want to hear.
- Pray for our Pastors and guest speakers who will address much needed prophetic topics
- Pray for our church body that they will take these sermons to heart and do what they must do
- Pray for our country and its leaders that God will open their minds to His plan
- If you feel the time is near, be bold and urgent to talk with and pray for those that need the Lord
- Pray for our needs as a class and keep in touch with those who have not been in a while.

Close in Prayer