

Acts 13

- We begin the second half of Acts with Luke's focus moving to the Gentile movement begun earlier
 - We remember that the first Gentile church was established in Antioch under the guidance of Barnabas
 - Soon thereafter Barnabas recruited his friend Saul in Tarsus
 - Now we see what came next

[Acts 13:1](#) ¶ Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

[Acts 13:2](#) While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

[Acts 13:3](#) Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

[Acts 13:4](#) ¶ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

- The leadership in this early church consisted of five men, some prophets and some teachers
 - Based on the grammatical structure of this verse, the list is divided into a group of three and a group of two
 - The first three names are the prophets and the last two are the teachers
 - This division simply reflects the way these men were called to minister in this church at least to this point
 - Notice Barnabas is a prophet and Saul is a teacher
 - Barnabas was probably the leader
 - And based on the order of the names, Saul may be considered the least of the five
 - The other three men are diverse
 - A dark skinned man from Africa
 - A Roman named Luke

- And a man of privilege who was raised in Herod's court
- The unifying power of the Gospel is immediately evident in how so many different men were called together into the faith
 - This is an early indication of how thoroughly the Gospel would penetrate the Gentile world
- This group was in the midst of ministering to the church when the Spirit made a call to two of the leaders
 - The Greek for ministering is a unique word used only two other times in the NT
 - It means conducting a worship activity or service
 - They were actively serving the needs of this group when they were called to a new mission
 - Notice that the senior leader, Barnabas, was called
 - And the least of the leaders was called, Saul
 - God can call anyone at anytime to serve Him in anyway
 - Barnabas might have assumed he had reached the zenith of his ministry
 - Leading the first Gentile church in a the third largest city in the Roman empire
 - And Saul might have assumed that he was already serving in the perfect place for the Apostle to the Gentiles
 - But Barnabas wasn't destined to be a leader of churches
 - And Saul couldn't reach the greatness God intended if he stayed in one place
 - We won't see all that God is prepared to achieve with our lives if we mistake progress for obedience
- The group hears the call, fasts, prays and obeys
 - The fasting and prayer simply reflect careful consideration and seeking confirmation of what they've heard
 - And the laying on of hands reflects a commissioning of these men to perform the work God assigned

- This is a classic Biblical approach to a change in ministry
 - First, serve the people God has given you
 - Whether as a prophet, teacher, counselor, laborer
 - Don't be looking for the next thing if it means ignoring what you have been given
 - Secondly, listen for and be receptive to the Spirit's call
 - Be ready to move on when required
 - Don't be so attached to what you have that you miss what could be
 - Third, Seek community counsel, prayer and confirmation in the face of a potential call
 - We aren't supposed to contemplate these kinds of decisions in private
 - We need the Body's strengths to confirm the Spirit's words and prepare us for the change
 - Finally, the Body sends us out with a laying on of hands...we don't sneak off
 - Departures are reasons to celebrate the Lord's word and direction
 - If we can't leave a ministry in this way, it begs a question whether we're truly leaving under the Lord's direction
- Barnabas and Paul leave Antioch
 - First to Seleucia about 16 miles southwest on the Med
 - Then they sailed to Cyprus, a large island with a large Jewish population

[Acts 13:5](#) When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper.

[Acts 13:6](#) When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-jesus,

[Acts 13:7](#) who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

[Acts 13:8](#) But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

- The first stop on the island was Salamis, today called Soli
 - Notice they first go to the synagogue and preached to the Jews
 - This is consistent with Paul's later teaching in Romans 1:16 that the Gospel was sent to the Jew first, and then the Gentile
 - Everywhere Paul would go, he would abide by this rule by preaching to Jews in synagogues before approaching the Gentile population
 - But almost invariably, the message would be rejected by the Jews
 - This then led to an opening for the Gentiles to hear
 - Paul was honoring His people by always giving them first shot to know the Lord
 - But as Paul himself wrote in Romans, he was painfully aware of God's plan to pass over the Jews,
 - And that except for a Jewish remnant, his message would only be received by the Gentiles
 - Traveling with the apostles was John Mark from chapter 12
- Now as they crossed the island, Luke records an interesting encounter
 - They reach Paphos, the center of Aphrodite worship
 - And they come upon a man called Elymas Bar-jesus
 - The name Bar-jesus simply means son of Yeshua
 - The name Yeshua was a common Jewish name of the day, and this man was the son of a Yeshua
 - The name is notably ironic since he is a false prophet and magician
 - He is employed by the proconsul, Sergius Paulus
 - The man's name was Paul and he was a smart man

- And he heard of Saul and Barnabas, and asked to hear the word of God
- But Elymas was working to thwart the meeting
 - He was working to turn the proconsul away from the faith
 - We already know the man is a false prophet and a socerer, which means he doesn't know the Lord
 - He must be operating under the enemy
 - Remember, anyone who is not a child of God by faith is automatically a son of disobedience or child of the devil

[Eph. 2:1](#) ¶ And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, [Eph. 2:2](#) in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

[Eph. 2:3](#) Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

- Now the moment of Paul's ministry begins

[Acts 13:9](#) But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him,

[Acts 13:10](#) and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?"

[Acts 13:11](#) "Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time." And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand.

[Acts 13:12](#) Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.

- Luke writes that Saul, who is also called Paul...
 - An obvious transition takes places here
 - If Luke's purpose was merely to clarify Saul's full name, he would have given this information early
 - Instead, he waits until 6 chapters later
 - Obviously, this information has a greater significance

- Luke introduces Saul's Greek name to signify Paul beginning his ministry to the Gentiles in earnest
 - For everyone who comes to faith, hears the calling of the Spirit and answers that call by stepping out into a ministry of the Gospel, there is a point like this
 - A point where the we "discover" the true call God has on our life
 - Before that point, we may serve in ministry and even have some degree of success
 - But once we step into the ministry that God has uniquely prepared for us, we become a new person
 - I can remember that moment in my life as if it were yesterday...
 - As Paul steps up to assume his calling, he also takes the leadership role over Barnabas
 - Luke will generally list Paul's name ahead of Barnabas from this point forward
- So the Apostle Paul emerges from the Ashes of Saul, the Pharisee
 - And he confronts Elymas directly, looking intently at him as Paul speaks
 - Paul calls him out as a deceitful fraud
 - As a play on his name, Paul says he is the son of the devil
 - Not the son of Yeshua
 - He is an enemy of righteousness
 - These are charges we can level at every unbeliever
 - By nature, every unbeliever can fairly be described as a fraud and full of deceit
 - As the son of the devil and an enemy of righteousness
 - Paul pronounces a temporary judgment on the man
 - He becomes blind and must be led by the hand
 - This is a temporary blindness

- Interestingly, Saul was persecuting the truth and was an enemy of righteousness when God struck him with temporary blindness
 - He too was led by the hand for a time, unable to see the sun
- Makes you wonder if Paul has been waiting for the chance to return the favor to someone
- The effect of this encounter is Paul's first recorded conversion
 - The proconsul of the island of Cyprus becomes a Christian
 - And notice the circumstances
 - He invited Paul and Barnabas...they didn't come to him
 - He was being advised against believing by one of his own
 - His belief arrives because his advisor is struck with blindness
 - Hardly a textbook evangelistic outreach
 - Goes to show that the spread of the Gospel is entirely under God's hand
- Paul's first journey outward began with him following Barnabas
 - And it ended with Him leading, performing miracles and preaching boldly to Roman leaders
 - Paul never looked back
 - And Luke writes this next section to show that transformation all the more clearly

[Acts 13:13](#) ¶ Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem.

[Acts 13:14](#) But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.

[Acts 13:15](#) After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, "Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it."

- Notice immediately that Luke says Paul and his companions
 - Barnabas and the rest simply become "the others"
 - Paul is the star of the show at this point, by God's design

- They travel about 180 miles by water from Cyprus up the Cestius river in modern-day Turkey
 - And they arrive at Perga
 - In Perga, John Mark goes back to Jerusalem
 - We don't know why he left, but John Mark's departure was considered desertion by Paul

[Acts 15:37](#) Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also.
[Acts 15:38](#) But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

- They finally reach Pisidia, a center of East-West traffic
 - Located near Lystra in Modern day Turkey
- As was typical, Paul and Barnabas visit the synagogue
 - Since they were visitors, they would have naturally been offered the opportunity to read from the Scripture during the service
 - And then in this case, the Synagogue official gave them an opportunity to offer the preaching as well
 - This was not unusual especially if the visitors looked learned in the Scriptures as these men likely did
 - So this is the invitation they expected and desired

[Acts 13:16](#) Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, ¶ "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:

[Acts 13:17](#) "The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He led them out from it.

[Acts 13:18](#) "For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness.

[Acts 13:19](#) "When He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance — all of which took about four hundred and fifty years.

[Acts 13:20](#) "After these things He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet.

[Acts 13:21](#) "Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.

[Acts 13:22](#) "After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.'

[Acts 13:23](#) " From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus,
[Acts 13:24](#) after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.
[Acts 13:25](#) "And while John was completing his course, he kept saying, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not He. But behold, one is coming after me the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.'

- Paul's first recorded preaching is similar in some respects to Stephen's famous preaching
 - Though it has a different tone
 - And it will result in a slightly different response
- Let's summarize Paul's message
 - Paul addresses a crowd of both Jews (Israel) and those who fear God (Gentiles)
 - Then Paul begins a historical recounting of Israel, beginning with the Exodus
 - He uses very specific and interesting highlights in the nation's history
 - First he uses Moses
 - Moses was a deliverer for Israel
 - A man who led the nation out of slavery
 - But then Paul reminds them that their ancestors spent 40 years in the desert
 - Every good Jews would clearly remember the reason for that unfortunate episode in the history of the nation: disobedience
 - So though Moses was a deliver, he couldn't deliver the nation from their own disobedience
 - Then he cites the next phase of the nation's history
 - They enter the land under Joshua, defeat the nations of Canaan, and settle

- This took 450 years...from Isaac to the conquest of the land
- This then led to a time of judges, which ended when Samuel turned from judge to prophet
 - Though Samuel was a prophet, he was a man who couldn't rule an unruly people
- He then anointed the first king
 - Saul, the king the people wanted but who was not of the right tribe and not the right king
 - They endured this mistake for another 40 years, another period of trial
- Saul was a king who failed to rule properly and follow the Lord
 - His rule was another forty-year test for Israel
- So God gives them the proper king, David
 - The rightful line of kings come from David, of the tribe of Judah
 - And the messiah would be a "Son of David"
 - But even David's reign didn't last forever
- So the promise of a deliverer, a new prophet and king must be fulfilled in someone else
 - Because the Scripture says the Promised One will rule and will never decay
 - He is greater than John the Baptist was
- Paul leads up directly to a conclusion that Jesus is the ultimate prophet, priest and king and deliverer for Israel
- In v.26 Paul begins to drive the point home

[Acts 13:26](#) ¶ "Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent.

[Acts 13:27](#) "For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him.

[Acts 13:28](#) "And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed.

[Acts 13:29](#) "When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb.

[Acts 13:30](#) "But God raised Him from the dead;

[Acts 13:31](#) and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people.

[Acts 13:32](#) "And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers,

[Acts 13:33](#) that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.'

[Acts 13:34](#) "As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY and SURE blessings OF DAVID.'

[Acts 13:35](#) "Therefore He also says in another Psalm, 'YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.'

[Acts 13:36](#) "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay;

[Acts 13:37](#) but He whom God raised did not undergo decay.

[Acts 13:38](#) "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,

[Acts 13:39](#) and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.

[Acts 13:40](#) "Therefore take heed, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon you:

[Acts 13:41](#) 'BEHOLD, YOU SCOFFERS, AND MARVEL, AND PERISH;
FOR I AM ACCOMPLISHING A WORK IN YOUR DAYS,
A WORK WHICH YOU WILL NEVER BELIEVE, THOUGH SOMEONE
SHOULD DESCRIBE IT TO YOU.'"

- Paul says this message of salvation has been sent to the Jews
 - And yet those who deny it fulfill the very Scriptures they ignore
 - Paul then retells Jesus' death and resurrection
 - And His appearance to the apostles as proof of his new life
 - Notice that Paul doesn't expect this point to convince the crowd by itself
 - He almost seems to assume that his message will be rejected, and so he speaks as if that will be the outcome
 - Paul then begins to quote from OT scripture to reinforce his point

- The second Psalm written by David declares that the “He” will be a son to God
 - Most Jews had come to believe that reference to “son” meant David
 - But then Paul skillfully references another Psalm by David in which the same “son” is said to not undergo decay
 - Meaning he is resurrected (v.37)
 - But they know David underwent decay in the grave
 - So if this “son” isn’t David, who is it?
- That’s the question Paul wants them to ask
 - The answer is Jesus of course
 - And belief in Jesus sets them free from everything that the Law of Moses couldn’t
 - But notice Paul’s ending
 - He quotes Hab 1:5
 - He says God foretold the Jews wouldn’t believe the testimony of the Messiah’s arrival
 - Not the usual evangelistic method
 - Paul isn’t trying to win these Jews with his clever words
 - He’s waiting for a work of the Spirit

[Acts 13:42](#) ¶ As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath.

[Acts 13:43](#) Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God.

[Acts 13:44](#) ¶ The next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Lord.

[Acts 13:45](#) But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.

[Acts 13:46](#) Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

[Acts 13:47](#) "For so the Lord has commanded us,
'I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES,
THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.'"

- Interestingly, this presentation of the Gospel resulted in the Jews asking for an encore performance
 - But a few believed and followed the men and Paul encouraged them
 - By the time another week rolled around, the word had got out and the synagogue was full
 - And predictably, when the Gospel began to earn a large audience within the Jewish population, it angered and threatened the Jewish leaders
 - And then they acted to put the message down
 - And like Jesus, Paul confirms the decision of the leaders on behalf of the people
 - He says he was obligated by God to bring the message to the Jew first
 - But now he would go to the Gentiles
 - As God planned
- Luke established once and for all that Paul's preference for the Gentile was not a reverse bias against Paul's own people, the Jews
 - It was the purposeful work of God, even as Paul did his best to approach the Jewish people time and time again