

# Lesson 12: The First Missionary Journey Begins

## Acts 13

In Acts 13, we leave Peter and pick up with the narrative of Paul. We leave the strong and unlearned fisherman to follow the well-educated tent maker. We leave the man who walked with Jesus in the flesh to follow the man who fell before Him on the road to Damascus. As we see the differences in their personalities and experiences, we will see that one thing was the same: they were both empowered, emboldened and radically changed by the presence of the Holy Spirit living within them.

Jesus told Peter: “It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you” (John 16:7). Paul wrote of the power of that same Spirit in his letter to the Romans: “If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Romans 8:11). And that is what we’ve witnessed in Peter’s life. It’s what we’ll see in Paul’s life. It’s what is promised to us. As we open the Scriptures, may we also open our hearts to welcome the Helper in our midst, to allow the Spirit to give life to our mortal bodies.

*“Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through [Christ] forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.”*

*Acts 13:38-39*

### Set Apart

Read Acts 12:25-13:4.

1. What were the believers doing when the Spirit told them to set apart Barnabas and Saul? What does this suggest about the early believers’ customs and ways of life?
2. What was Paul set apart for according to his own testimony in Romans 1:1? What did Paul write that we (all believers) are set apart for in Ephesians 2:10?
3. What did the believers at Antioch do according to Acts 13:3? Who ultimately sent out Saul and Barnabas according to Acts 13:4? What do you think was the significance of the other believers at Antioch laying their hands on and praying for them?

4. Are you, like Saul and Barnabas, willing to be set apart for whatever work God has prepared for you? Do you have a community that will pray, fast and lay hands on you for God's purposes?

### Cyprus

Saul and Barnabas began their journey by traveling to Cyprus. Read Acts 13:4-12.

Begin to trace this journey on the map that is included in this study: *Paul's Early Ministry and First Missionary Journey*. As you continue reading, you can trace their travels through Acts 14.

5. What do we learn about Cyprus in Acts 4:36 and 11:19-20?
6. In Acts 13:5, we get an extra bit of information about another one of their traveling companions. Who was with them? What was he doing with them, and what details did you read about him in Acts 12:25? Looking ahead, what happens to him in Pamphylia according to Acts 13:13? (This will become important later.)

(This is the same John Mark who would later write the Gospel of Mark.)

On Cyprus, Saul (who from here forward will be called Paul) and Barnabas travel across the island to Paphos, which was the seat of the Roman government in Cyprus. The proconsul, Sergius Paulus, was the top official on the island.<sup>17</sup>

7. How is Paulus, the proconsul, described in Acts 13:7? What was he seeking, and what did he do?
8. Who was attempting to negatively influence Paulus? Why do you think Paulus might have been particularly susceptible with regard to spiritual matters?

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<sup>17</sup> Wong, John-Michael. *Opening Up Acts*. Opening Up Commentary. Leominster: Day One Publications, 2010. Page 194-195.

9. In his confrontation of Bar-Jesus, what did Paul say that Bar-Jesus was filled with in Acts 13:10? On the other hand, what is Paul described as being filled with in verse 9?
  
10. What happened to Bar-Jesus in Acts 13:11, and what resulted in the proconsul's life?
  
11. Read Paul's words from Galatians 5:16-26. What are some results of being filled with and walking in the Holy Spirit?

### Galatia

Read Acts 13:13-41. Continue to trace Paul and Barnabas' journey on your map.

12. When they arrived in Antioch in Pisidia (or Pisidian Antioch), where did they go first? From Acts 13:14-16, what happened there?

In Acts 13, we read the first recorded sermon of Paul.

13. Paul began by summarizing Israel's history. Look at the action verbs in this summary from Acts 13:16-25. Who took the action? What does that tell you about who was in control?
  
14. In his speech at Antioch in Pisidia, Paul focused on God's faithfulness and mercy toward Israel. Paul later wrote about God's faithfulness in his letters to the churches. What do you learn in the following verses?
  - ❖ 1 Corinthians 10:13
  
  - ❖ 1 Thessalonians 5:24
  
  - ❖ 2 Thessalonians 3:3
  
  - ❖ 2 Timothy 2:13

15. In Acts 13:23-39, what promise does Paul specifically state that God has been faithful to bring to fruition?

16. Whose offspring was that Savior according to Acts 13:22? How is he described through God's words in verse 22?

17. Consider Psalm 51, written by David after committing a grievous sin. How are you reassured to know that God described him as a "man after [His] own heart" (Acts 13:22)?

I am struck by the irony of Acts 13:27. The men and rulers of Jerusalem did not understand that the prophecies of the Old Testament spoke of Jesus Christ. As a result of their unbelief, they crucified Him, fulfilling the very prophecies that they failed to recognize. That is evidence of a sovereign God!

18. According to Paul in Acts 13:38-39, what is offered by Christ that could not be gained under the law of Moses?

19. What warning did Paul give the people in Acts 13:40-41? (He was quoting from Habakkuk 1:5). How might we heed the same warning?

Continue reading about Paul and Barnabas' experience in Antioch in Pisidia in Acts 13:42-52.

20. How did the people respond to Paul's message?

21. In verse 43, Barnabas and Paul exhort those following them to "continue in the grace of God." Whatever the amount of grace we have been given, we are encouraged to continue to walk in it. What did we see in lesson 10 as Peter and Cornelius walked in the amount of revelation and grace that they had been given?

22. Who gathered the next week to hear Paul and Barnabas, and what was the Jews' reaction? How did Paul and Barnabas respond to those Jews?

23. What was the state of the disciples that Paul and Barnabas left at Antioch in Pisidia?

**Prepare for Life**

24. In Acts 13:50, who did the Jews incite that eventually led to the departure of Paul and Barnabas? Do you see any warning in this for us?

25. What concern does Paul express in 2 Corinthians 11:3?

These women were devout. They were some form of religious. They probably wanted to do the right thing, but they were deceived and eventually helped to drive Paul and Barnabas from their town. There is certainly nothing wrong with being "devout" – the same word will be used later in Acts to describe a precious female believer, but we must be careful that we do not come to rely more on our devotion than we do on the One to whom we are devoted.

26. Read Paul's words in Philippians 4:4-7. What guards our hearts? How do these verses encourage you to live in light of that?

**Lecture Notes: Lesson 12**