

Acts 13:1-12 “Part 3: The Start of Paul’s First Missionary Journey” 2024-08-04

Intro & Review:

Let me say up front that today will be emblematic of the style that you’ve seen from me before. While giving a running commentary and teaching the current text, giving broader context and individual meaning to each verse and even some words, you’ll note that I will use a particular point in the text to relate to something in our own day and time that we consider relevant. This is on purpose. I want us not only to have an *intellectual understanding* of the narrative of the text but also to see the *theological outworkings and practicality* of the story at hand.

That being said, let us consider that chapter 13 starts the *third* movement in the book of acts. The story from here on out focuses on Paul and his three missionary journeys. Up to this point we’ve had three great sermons (Peter, Stephen, and Phillip) in part 1 (chapters 1-8:25). Then we had three wonderful conversions (Ethiopian Eunuch, Saul and Cornelius). This was 8:26-12. Now we will have three great missionary journeys. Chapter 13 is the beginning of this shift in the narrative and focus on Paul.

Our text today, verses 1-12 is in two parts. **This is the first question in your notes.** Verses 1-3 and 4-12. Perhaps you see that division in your copy of the text as indicated by section headings inserted by the editors of your translation.

1-3 Barnabas and Saul set apart.

-12:25 says that Barnabas and Saul went back to Jerusalem and took John Mark with them. This is the event most likely referred to in Galatians 2:1 where he says that they also took Titus but doesn’t mention Mark.

Antioch is where in 11:19 it says that some people had spread the gospel after the persecution of Stephen in chapter 7. It was here that there were “a large number turned to the Lord” 11:21. Barnabas went and found Saul and they spent a year teaching these new Christians. Antioch will become the home base for this first missionary journey. It is also the first-time people were called Christians (11:26).

-Racial (Jews, gentiles, romans [Cornelius], black men [Ethiopian Eunuch & Simeon called Niger]), intellectual (educated and not educated [Peter was a fisherman and Acts 4:13 says they were uneducated), and socio-economic status (1Cor 1:26-29 “not many...”, governmental officials [Manean], diversity and unity. There is a difference between not being exclusive and being intentionally flattening cultural norms.

*God did it. It was not mandated.

*likewise, we call **all** men, everywhere, to repent and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The main point of this particular portion of the text, however is about Barnabas and Saul being set apart and sent out. Notice the order, it is Barnabas first, then Saul. This will change soon and we'll point that out, But, for now, it's worth noting that Barnabas is considered first then Paul. That is probably because he was older and if you'll remember, he vouched for Paul with the apostles.

Moving on to verse 2, what is the nature of this phenomenon where "the Spirit said..."? We do not know except that they all agreed that it happened. What does "ministering to the Lord" mean? IDK. I do know that they were probably praying and fasting. Fasting means they were going without food and replacing the time of eating with concentrated prayer.

Fasting is mentioned twice once in verse 2 and again in verse 3. Fasting has an interesting precedent in the Old Testament and is mentioned several times in the NT. On into the centuries the early churches continued the Jewish practice of fasting twice a week but moved the days to Wednesday and Friday instead of Monday and Thursday. It was prescribed in the Didache, which was an early church document dated somewhere in the 100s. It also prescribed fasting before baptism for the candidate, assuming they were

Laying on of hands is a practice that is continued. Paul warns not to lay hands on someone too soon (1Tim 5:22). Sometimes that phrase has to do with assaulting someone but here it means setting someone apart for a particular purpose. For us, it is the ordination process for deacons and elders. Since we here at MRC are a new church only seven months old, we do not yet have official deacons and elders other than me as a teaching elder. That will change. We do have a provisional session of other teaching and ruling elders in our denomination, Vanguard Presbyterian. Nevertheless, the practice of laying on of hands was a rite of setting someone apart and commissioning them for a particular service. In this case, it was to send Barnabas and Saul out for the mission to the gentiles.

4-12 On Cyprus

B&P traveled about 16 miles south to the port city of Selucia and caught a boat.

Salmus was the closest port of Cyprus (about 130 miles southwest of Selucia).

Where was Cyprus? An island in the Mediterranean just west of Syria and south of modern day Turkey.

Where did they preach first (v5)? Who was with them? They went to the synagogue (Jews).
John Mark.

How is Sergius Paulus described in v7? What did he want? A man of intelligence. He wanted to hear the word of God.

How did Bar-Jesus (Elymas) respond? What did Paul do? In verse 8, Elymas opposed B&S and sought to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

Saul first called “Paul” in v9.

In verse 10 Paul **judges him and calls him a name**. Paul adds that he is perverting (or twisting) the straight ways of the Lord. I can’t help but see the consistency with our current time.

This is the part I spoke about where we see a phenomenon and relate it to our time. Here we go...

Theological liberalism snuck into the mainline denominations under the guise of being modern and rational. In its most outspoken form it denied miracles and any objective supernatural occurrence. Sociological came to the forefront and all conservative views were essentially abandoned. Support of social justice do gooding, LGBTQ whatever, and abortion replaced Biblical views on culture, sex, and murder. Nowadays, they literally fly the gay pride and BLM flags. They embraced the cultural revolution, and they were the ones who died. The results have been utterly disastrous, practically speaking. The decline of mainline denominations is nearly total. They have been relegated to obscurity. These denominations were called the “seven sisters” and included the United Methodist Church, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, The Episcopal Church, PCUSA (Presbyterian Church), American Baptist Church, United Church of Christ, and my own original church, a member of the Disciples of Christ, Christian Church were all included. Attendance in these churches is about 1-2% of what it was during their height in the 1960s. In other words, they’ve lost over 95% of their people. When compared to the population growth of the US, it’s even worse, much worse.

The evangelical and fundamentalist pushback on these churches was no small thing. Counter denominations and splits happened. But then something else happened inside of otherwise theologically conservative churches.

The seeker sensitive movement.

In the 1980s there was a significant change introduced into the American evangelical church. Bill Hybels’ Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago, and later Rick Warren’s book Purpose Driven Church from Saddleback Church in California became the new paradigms. The applied a

corporate template to church with a marketing campaign centered on felt needs in preaching instead of expository, verse by verse. It gutted any traditional music and replaced it with contemporary Christian. Of course, not everything about it was absolutely terrible but most of it is (was). It abandoned doctrine for pragmatism. It smoothed out anything in the church that was considered off putting to outsiders. In an attempt to become more relevant, they ended up losing their souls. Bill Hybels retired a few years back in a slew of controversy about sexual sin. Rick Warren was recently censured at the SBC for ordaining women as preachers.

Even up to the most recent years in evangelicalism, there has been an intentional and concentrated effort to undermine Biblical teachings on male leadership and style, politics, and a repainting of evangelicalism as a watered down, emotionally based, sentimentalism. The recent book by Bashum is on our table documenting how this was funded.

Perhaps you think this is a knee jerk reaction and I am overstating the case. Perhaps you think this all sounds very conspiratorial and farfetched. I am reviewing what happened in the American church to make the point that all of this has it's root in **not calling a spade a spade**. It starts with the effeminate value of **peace at any cost**. Preachers became counselors and psychology replaced prophetic fire. Instead of ministers being a flame of fire, they became flaming homosexuals themselves. The constant whine about tone and demeanor seeks to cut out the perceived cancer of Biblical masculine patriarchy and leadership. The overemphasis on Jesus' servant leadership at the cost of His prophetic ministry, most easily seen in Matthew 23, is not only an aberration but an abomination. The truncated gospel of the love of God has produced false converts, false churches and authentic damnation.

In verse 10, Paul did not say, "Look Elymus. I know that life was hard for you and you're just trying to make it. Can we talk? I don't want to hurt your feelings. Perhaps, maybe, we can come to an agreement." No. Paul made a **judgement** about him calling him full of deceit and fraud. In liberal Christianity, this is an unforgivable sin. You can't judge anyone. "Remember what Jesus said" they say. And yet Jesus did judge the pharisees and He will judge anyone not fully committed to Him. Yes, He was hard on those who were self-righteous. But self-righteousness extends not just to those who are morally pure but inwardly pridefull, but it also includes those who consider themselves moral elites for having superseded the ancient ethics of Christianity. People who claim to be Christians while exalting their overly sensitive, gayness on everything are as much pompous pharisees as the legalistic fundamentalist. The difference is that the fundamentalist is actually right about some things whereas the so-called liberal Christian has so distorted and twisted (perverted) all Christian doctrine, that he is unrecognizable as a Christian. **He has no values except to be accepted**. Paul calls Elymus a son of the devil. And that is what the current manifestation of seeker sensitive Christianity is as well. It abandons doctrine and embraces pragmatism at it's peril. It guts the Christian religion

and just replaces it with a soft relationship with our heavenly daddy. It has no intestinal fortitude, only prom songs for Jesus and emotional experiences.

That is why we here at MRC are confessionally bound and our denomination, Vanguard Presbyterian Church is unapologetically and without exception holding to the Westminster Confession of Faith. All of these denominations and churches have abandoned the historic confessions and *claim to teach and preach the Bible*. Claiming to teach the Bible alone will no do. It hasn't guarded the church from being twisted and perverted into some sort of unrecognizable amalgam of cultural soup. We need the historic confessions to guide us in our understanding of Scripture. They do not supersede the Bible. Instead, they help us know the guard rails about what those who have come before us considered outside the boundaries of Scripture. That is not all they do but they certainly do that.

What are the purpose of miracles in the gospels and the book of Acts? To authenticate the message. In other words, miracles confirm the truthfulness of what is being said. God shows up at this original preaching of the gospel to make sure that people believe what is being said. It is confirmed by miracles.

What were two things happened as a result of this (v12?) The proconsul believed having been astonished at the teaching of the Lord. May it be so in our time as well. May we be faithful and be bold. May we earnestly seek God in prayer and fasting. May we be pure in our motives and diligent in our efforts.

Next week we will look at Paul's first recorded sermon in the latter half of Acts 13.

13-43 In Pisidian Antioch -Paul's first recorded sermon.

44-52 Many Gentiles Believe

Closing Prayer:

Oh Lord God, would You guide us into truth? Help us to love You and Your word. Let us be guided by your Spirit as we know that the Spirit of God uses the word of God. Let us be found faithful that the kingdom of God will reign not only in our hearts but in the work of our hands. Indeed Lord, let your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Now as we feast on the bread and wine, help us to remember the death of the Lord Jesus in who's name we pray. Amen

Questions:

What is the general outline of chapter 13?

Where does the story start? Who was there? What were they doing?

Where was Cyprus?

Where did they preach first (v5)? Who was with them?

How is Sergius Paulus described in v7? What did he want?

How did Bar-Jesus (Elymas) respond? What did Paul do?

What were two things happened as a result of this (v12?)

What is the purpose of miracles in the gospels and the book of Acts?

Application:

Prayer and fasting.

Doctrinal integrity.

Boldness for the gospel.

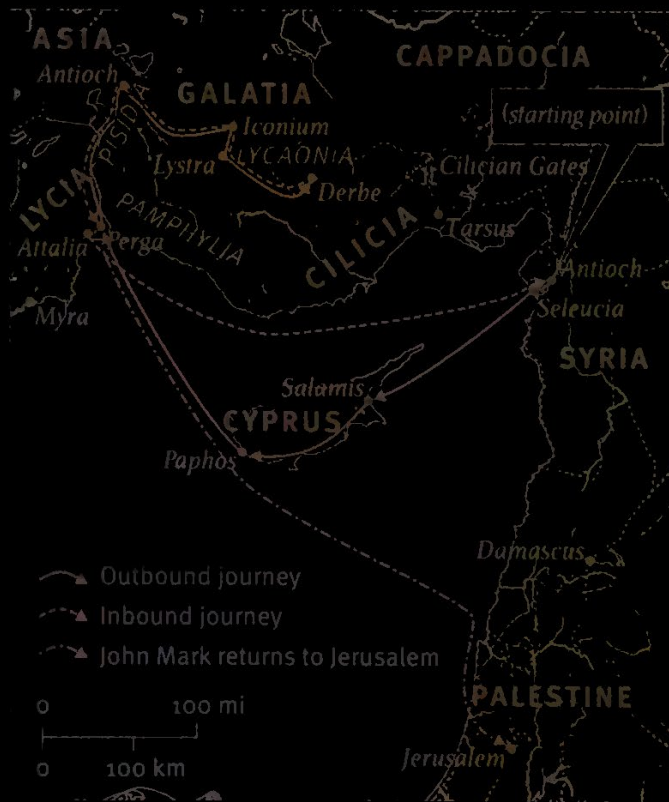
Additional Resources:

ESV Study Bible, pg 2110

Paul's First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:4–14:26)

C. A.D. 46–47

Barnabas and Paul first visited Barnabas's home region of Cyprus before sailing to the southern region of Asia Minor. When they reached Perga in Pamphylia, John Mark left the group and returned to Jerusalem. Making their way to Antioch (in Pisidia), Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, Paul and Barnabas were driven out of each city by jealous Jewish religious leaders. Later they returned by the same route, strengthening the new churches as they went. From Attalia they set sail for their home in Antioch of Syria.



Itinerary of Paul's First Journey

City	Province/Region	Reference
Antioch	Syria	13:1–3
Seleucia	Syria	13:4
Salamis	Cyprus	13:5
Paphos	Cyprus	13:6–12
Perga	Lycia (region of Pamphylia)	13:13
Antioch	Galatia (region of Pisidia)	13:14–52
Iconium	Galatia	14:1–6
Lystra	Galatia (region of Lycaonia)	14:6, 8–19
Derbe	Galatia (region of Lycaonia)	14:6, 20–21
Lystra	Galatia (region of Lycaonia)	14:21–23
Iconium	Galatia	14:21–23
Antioch	Galatia (region of Pisidia)	14:24
Perga	Lycia (region of Pamphylia)	14:24–25
Attalia	Lycia	14:25
Antioch	Syria	14:26–28