

## Acts 13:1-52 ~ Teacher's Lesson Paul's First Missionary Journey

**Introduction:** Somehow the early church transitioned from being mostly Jewish to mostly Gentile, as it remains to this day. Today we'll see how this happened.

**Review:** You may recall that the Jewish believers scattered by persecution took the Gospel to the Gentiles in Antioch, who responded in great numbers. Barnabas and Saul taught the church there for a whole year. At the end of the year, a prophet in Antioch predicted a famine in Judea, and the Antioch church sent Barnabas and Saul off to Jerusalem with a relief offering (11:19-30).

-----

**\*\*\*\*1. What did Barnabas and Saul do after they took the famine relief money to Jerusalem (12:25)?** See 11:27-30. They returned to Antioch, taking Mark along with them. Luke gave us this information to set the stage for what happened next in 13:1-3.

-----

**\*\*\*\*2. What did the Holy Spirit say to the church in Antioch (13:1-3)?** Of five potential missionary candidates,<sup>1</sup> the church was told to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work the Spirit had called them to do.

**To whom does "they" refer in 13:2-3?** It could be taken to refer to just the prophets and teachers, or to the entire church in Antioch. It is generally thought that "they" refers to the entire congregation. For example, Marshall states, "the list of names in verse 1 is primarily meant to show who was available for missionary service, and since changes of subject are not uncommon in Greek, it is preferable to assume that Luke is thinking of an activity involving members of the church generally; this will fit in with the fact that elsewhere similar decisions are made by the church as a whole (1:15; 6:2, 5; cf. 14:27; 15:22)."<sup>2</sup>

**Literary Significance:** This marks the first time that a purposeful effort was made by an entire church to spread the Gospel. Prior to this, the Gospel was spread due to persecution.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps what really matters about a church is not its seating capacity, but its sending capacity!<sup>4</sup> This is also critical because it turned into a mission to Gentiles.

---

<sup>1</sup> Both prophecy and teaching are spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit to build up the church. A New Testament prophet receives direct, personal revelation from the Lord concerning a future event (such as the famine Agabus predicted in Acts 11:27-28) or a person's secret sins (1Co 14:24-25), or a message of encouragement (Acts 15:32). A prophet's words were designed to instruct, comfort, encourage, rebuke, convict or motivate. A teacher, on the other hand, bases his message not on personal revelation, but on written revelation (the Scriptures). The ministry of prophet is greatly needed where Scripture is scarce.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, 229.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>4</sup> Steven Cole, "Lesson 31: The Main Business of the Church", Bible.org. Accessed February 01, 2018.

ESV **Matthew 9:37-38** The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

**Fasting:** The Spirit spoke to the church as they were praising and fasting. Perhaps the fasting was due to the fact that they were earnestly seeking God's face specifically with regard to reaching more people with the Gospel. The church in Antioch quickly replaced Jerusalem as the center of Christianity.

**Application:** Every church should consider what role the Holy Spirit would have it to play in deliberately fulfilling the Great Commission.

-----

**\*\*\*\*How did God keep a false prophet from standing in the way of the Gospel (13:4-12)?**

Again showing that nothing can stop the progress of the Gospel, God allowed Saul to strike a false prophet with blindness, ending his influence over the Roman proconsul. God does not always remove a Bar-Jesus, but He can do so anytime He sovereignly pleases.

**3. Of all the places in the Roman Empire they could have gone, why might they have started in Cyprus (13:4)?** See 4:36-37, 11:20. Those who first preached the Gospel to the Gentiles in Antioch were from Cyprus. Furthermore, Barnabas was from Cyprus, so it was a likely place for them to start.

**What type of places did they first proclaim the Gospel on Cyprus (13:4-5)?** Upon reaching the island of Cyprus, they went first to the synagogues of the Jews.<sup>5</sup>

**4. Why do you suppose they went first to the synagogues (13:5)?** See *Romans 3:1*. Since they were both Jewish themselves, it was a logical place to start. They were members of the same club! There was an open door of opportunity for them in the synagogues. Those in the synagogue already had some spiritual interest in the things of Jehovah and a religious heritage to prepare them for the Gospel.

ESV **Romans 3:1** What advantage has the Jew? . . . Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

**According to 13:5, who went along to help them?** They were accompanied by John, better known as Mark (it was Mark's mom who hosted the prayer meeting for Peter when he was in jail). This information is important to note for later.

**Based on 13:6, how did Bar-Jesus fool people into believing that he was a true prophet rather than a false one?** He was a magician. Jesus was a common Jewish name (our Joshua); Bar-Jesus means "son of Jesus". According to 13:8, his other name, Elymas, means magician.

---

<sup>5</sup> Seleucia (13:4) was a port city in modern Turkey about 15 miles SW of Antioch (NDB, 1085). Cyprus is an island in the extreme NE of the Mediterranean Sea. Salamis was a harbor town on the east coast of Cyprus (*New Bible Dictionary*, 1055).

**Based on 13:7, what powerful man did Bar-Jesus have under his deceptive influence?**

Bar-Jesus had convinced the Roman proconsul that he was a legitimate prophet.

**Sergius Paulus was a Roman proconsul. What was a proconsul (13:7)?** A proconsul was a provincial governor within the Roman Empire.<sup>6</sup> Paphos was the Roman capital of Cyprus, so that is where Paulus lived.

**5. The world is full of false prophets. Based on 13:6-8, why was Bar-Jesus particularly liable to divine judgment?** The Roman proconsul summoned Barnabas and Saul specifically to hear the word of God, but Bar-Jesus tried to turn him away from the faith. Jesus said:

ESV **Mark 9:42** Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great **millstone** were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.

**6. In 13:9, Luke pointed out that Sergius Paulus and Saul shared the same name. Why do you suppose Luke picked this particular point to inform us that Saul was “also” called Paul (13:9)?** Saul is a Jewish name, and Paul is a Roman (Gentile) name. This event is a symbolic turning point in Saul’s ministry, from ministering primarily to Jews to ministering primarily to Gentiles. From now on, Luke referred to Saul as Paul.

**Who’s Your Daddy? The name Bar-Jesus means “son of Jesus”, but Paul informed him that he was actually a son of Satan. How did Paul know that Bar-Jesus was a son of the devil, an enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, and one who made crooked the straight paths of the Lord (13:9-10)?** Saul had supernatural into his heart because he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

**Based on 13:11-12, what impact did God’s judgment on Bar-Jesus have on the proconsul?** It is what God used to bring him to faith!

-----  
**\*\*\*\*7. What golden opportunity was Paul given in 13:13-15?** See *Colossians 4:3*. The rulers of the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch invited them to speak (perhaps they had already become acquainted with Paul before the meeting).<sup>7</sup>

ESV **Colossians 4:3** Pray . . . for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ . . .

**Name Shift:** When the mission trip started, the dynamic duo was referred to as Barnabas and Saul (13:2). Now, in 13:13, the team is called “Paul and his companions”.

---

<sup>6</sup> *New Bible Dictionary*, 973.

<sup>7</sup> They landed at Perga, a city in the region of Pamphylia (now part of modern Turkey), *New Bible Dictionary*, 871). They then went to another city named Antioch (there were 16 cities named Antioch), which was not actually in the region of Pisidia, but was on the way there (Marshall, 236). These areas were part of the old Roman Empire, then the Byzantine Empire, and then fell to Islam around A.D. 1000.

**What information did Luke give us about John-Mark in 13:13b?** He left them and went home to Jerusalem. No reason was given for his departure, but it later caused a rift between Barnabas and Paul, 15:37-38. Perhaps he was unhappy about the new focus on Gentiles.

-----

**\*\*\*How did Paul introduce Jesus to his audience (13:16-25)?** Paul began by recounting Israelite history that led to the coming of Jesus.

**8. Why did Paul recite all this Hebrew history (13:16-25)?** This established rapport with his audience, and showed that Paul believed what they did. He was one of them. It also gave context to Jesus' coming: Jesus is in the kingly succession of David and the events of His life were a fulfillment of prophecy.<sup>8</sup>

**9. Where in the Old Testament did God promise a Savior who would come from David's offspring (13:23)?**

ESV **2 Samuel 7:12-13** When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

ESV **Psalms 89:35-36** Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me.

ESV **Psalms 132:11** The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: "One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne.

**10. Why did Paul call John the Baptist to the witness stand (13:24-25)?** His hearers obviously held John the Baptist in high regard, so Paul quoted John as one who pointed to Jesus as the Savior.

-----

**\*\*\*\*What evidence did Paul offer for Jesus' resurrection from the dead (13:26-41)?** First he said that there were many eye witnesses to the resurrected Jesus (13:30-31), then he showed how Jesus' death and resurrection fulfill Hebrew prophecy (13:32-37).<sup>9</sup>

**11. How did Paul explain the Jewish rulers' rejection of Jesus (13:27-29)?** He said they were ignorant of the prophecies concerning Jesus and unwittingly fulfilled them in rejecting Jesus. He further stated that they could find no guilt in Jesus, but asked Pilate to have him executed anyway.

---

<sup>8</sup> Marshall, 234.

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 2:7, quoted by Paul in 13:33, was originally about a Hebrew king being God's begotten son, but was also commonly understood to be a Messianic prophecy. The idea of Jesus being begotten is purely metaphorical (Marshall, 240).

**12. In 13:35-36, how did Paul prove that certain prophecies (Ps 16:10 could not have referred to King David)?** David died and his body decayed; Jesus died but was resurrected without undergoing decay.

**13. According to 13:38-39, what does Jesus offer than Moses never did?** *See Romans 3:20-22.* Through Jesus was can have forgiveness of sins. Moses never offered the forgiveness of sins for keeping the Law. On the contrary, the purpose of the Law was to show the Jews their sin and cause them to seek for a righteousness apart from Law.

**ESV Romans 3:20-22a** . . . by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

**With what prophetic warning did Paul end his message (13:40-41)?** Paul cited a warning from Habakkuk and applied it to his audience. Paul was not like a modern Evanjellyfish, sickly sweet nice and afraid to condemn sinful behavior. Paul warned them; he told them like it was.

-----  
**\*\*\*\*14. What good response did Paul get in 13:42-43?** People begged them to come back next week, and “many” Jews and devout converts to Judaism (Gentiles) followed Paul and Barnabas.

-----  
**\*\*\*\*What did Paul do when the unbelieving Jews began reviling him (13:44-47)?** They turned away from the Jews and to the Gentiles. Though Paul continued to go first to the synagogue to evangelize, Luke is here indicating the start general trend of taking the Gospel to Gentiles.

**15. Based on 13:44-45, what was it that caused the Jews to contradict and revile Paul?** They were filled with jealousy over the large crowds that came to hear the word of the Lord.

**16. In what sense was it “necessary” for the word of God to be spoken to the Jews “first” (13:46)?** More than mere evangelical expediency, the Hebrews had been God’s chosen Old Covenant people and as such had priority in salvation history.<sup>10</sup>

**According to 13:46, what did the Jews’ actions reveal about themselves?** Thrusting aside the Gospel proved they were unworthy of eternal life. Though many Jews did believe, it is evident that the official position of those ruling the synagogue was against Jesus.<sup>11</sup>

**17. What prophet did Paul quote to justify turning to the Gentiles (13:47)?** He quoted from the prophet Isaiah.

---

<sup>10</sup> *ESV Study Bible*, 2112.

<sup>11</sup> Marshall, 244.

God's plan to offer salvation to the whole world through the Jews goes all the way back to God's promises to Abraham:

ESV **Genesis 12:3** . . . in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

ESV **Galatians 3:8** And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

-----  
**\*\*\*\*What eternal fruit did Paul and Barnabas leave behind in Antioch (13:48-52)?** They left behind many new believers: Jews, devout converts to Judaism (13:43), and Gentiles. Plus, the word of the Lord spread through the whole region, 13:49.

**According to 13:46, which Gentiles believed in Jesus?** Those who had been appointed to eternal life believed.

**18. Who appointed these Gentiles to eternal life (13:46)?** Clearly, it was God who had appointed them.

ESV **2 Timothy 2:10** I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

ESV **Acts 11:18** . . . to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.

ESV **Ephesians 1:3-5** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will . . .

**How did the unbelieving Jews rid Antioch of Paul and Barnabas (13:50)?** They manipulated the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city to be against Paul and Barnabas. Politics is a dirty business! Lesson: Be aware that is how lost people operate. Don't be naive. Be as wise as a serpent and as harmless as a dove.

**How did Paul and Barnabas react to being driven out of the city (13:51)?** See *Matthew 10:14-15*. They obeyed Jesus' instruction to shake the dust of the city off their feet and moved on!<sup>12</sup>

**Application:** It is important that we be able to let go of evil done against us by others. Shake it off. Give it to the Lord and go on.

**19. What emotions were the new converts in Antioch feeling (13:52)?** They were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Iconium (13:51) is a city about 90 miles SW of Antioch in what is now Turkey. Its modern name has been truncated to Konya.

**Application:** God's joy in our hearts is independent of outward circumstances. Here were these new believers, left orphaned as Paul and Barnabas were driven out of town, yet they were filled with joy.

**Sovereignty:** Despite the good response from the Gentiles, God in His sovereignty allowed the missionaries to be persecuted and run out of town. This is the opposite of what happened with Bar-Jesus. The Lord works in mysterious ways.

### So What?

#### 20. What did you learn about evangelism from this chapter?

1. The Holy Spirit calls some people to trans-local missions (Acts 13:1-3)
2. When we evangelize, we can expect satanic opposition (Bar-Jesus & persecution at Antioch).
3. Each church should strategize about their role in fulfilling the Great Commission. One of our jobs, as God's people, is to offer the Gospel to those who have never heard it. This is not to be simply a casual, haphazard venture. We are to strategize on how to spread the Word. As a church, we are to be intentional about it.

**21. What did you learn about God's sovereignty in this chapter?** God sovereignly sent out Barnabas and Saul, and God sovereignly appoints people to eternal life. Despite God's will that we evangelism, God allows real, substantial opposition to the Gospel.

\*\*\*\* = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the text of the ESV.
- You can hear this lesson being taught at [SermonAudio.Com/NTRF](http://SermonAudio.Com/NTRF).

Stephen E. Atkerson  
NTRF.org  
Revised 02/04/2018

---

<sup>13</sup> "Disciples" could refer to Paul and Barnabas.