

ACTS 13:1-13 OPERATION EVANGELISM BEGINS IN EARNEST

Chronological Note: Chapter 12 ends with the return to Antioch of Paul and Barnabas upon the completion of their relief mission in 46AD to the believers in Jerusalem. The events of Chapter 12 (the murder of James, the arrest of Peter, the death of Herod Agrippa I) all occur in 44 AD, more than a year before Paul and Barnabas arrived there. Chapter 12 is a flashback.

From here on, the narrative of Acts centers around the assembly at Antioch (Syria) from which Paul makes three missionary journeys. Chapter 13 records the beginnings of the initial journey.

13:1-4 Antioch: An Evangelical Church in Action

v. 1 **A Teaching Church** Though only 5-6 years old (see 11:19, 20), this assembly was remarkably gifted, full-orbed, and flourishing in its ministries. We are late in the year 46 AD or early 47. Seventeen years have passed since Christ gave the Great Commission. Jerusalem now fades into the background.

Included among the gifted prophets and teachers were:

- **Barnabas**, whom we met in 4:36, 9:27, and 11:22 – a believing Jew.
- **Simon called Niger** (Lt., meaning dark, black) – a believing black person.
- **Lucius of Cyrene** (North Africa) – a believing Gentile, maybe a black person.
- **Manaen**, a foster-brother of Herod Antipas – a believing courtier.
 - This man was raised in the home of the man responsible for the beheading of John the Baptist and for the rejection of Christ in trial!
- **Saul** – the Apostle Paul, former zealous Pharisee and enemy of Christians.
- Many teachers and prophets all attuned to the voice of the Lord and ministering to the assembly at Antioch!

v. 2 **The Call of the Holy Spirit**

- **When?** As they were _____ to the Lord.
- **Who?** _____ (plural) separate to me; _____ and _____ in concert.
- **What?** Separate, appoint to me.
- **Whom?** _____ and _____, two of the most eminent teachers there.
- **For?** The work unto which I have called them (see 9:15).

This is a picture of the Spirit and the Body working in perfect harmony.

v. 3a **The Consent of the Local Church**

“When they had prayed and fasted” means with great seriousness and focus they concentrated on this issue.

“they laid their hands on them”, THEY – WHO? Certainly not the Apostles! The laying on of hands simply showed that the assembly was identifying with them in the Lord’s calling. The entire assembly identified with Paul and Barnabas in this mission; therefore, upon their return they report to the entire assembly, 14:26. The laying on of hands did not make these men Apostles; it only recognized their apostleship.

(OVER)

v. 3b, 4 **The Commission of the Local Church**

Note a distinction not seen in the English text:

“*they (the church) sent them away*” = they released them (aorist tense from απολυω/apoluo)

“*so they, being sent by the Holy Spirit*” = the Holy Spirit sent them (aorist, pass. ptc. from εκπεμπω)

Distinction: The local church released them, that is, they freed them from all obligations including financial worries, BUT THE HOLY SPIRIT SENT THEM FORTH! What a marvelous depiction of a local church being led by the Holy Spirit! It is the Holy Spirit who sends; some stay, some are sent; we as a church are only to agree with Him.

13:4b-13 Unpretentious Beginning: Paul, Barnabas to Cyprus

v. 4b, 5 **Cyprus**: familiar ground to Barnabas, his former homeland. It contained a large Greek, Roman, and Jewish populace. As one would expect, they initiate the ministry in synagogues.

Salamis: the largest city on the island (East Coast).

John (Mark): attended to Paul and Barnabas, he was a nephew or cousin to Barnabas.

v. 6 **Paphos**: the official capitol of Cyprus, hence seat of this provincial government (a senatorial province).

Bar-Jesus: means “Son of the Lord (YHWH) who saves”.

- a sorcerer (magi), a false prophet, a Jew
- “Magi” (false and true “wise man”) was common to all the courts of the ancient world. Most were charlatan deceivers.

v. 7 **Sergius Paulus** was the _____ or _____ (KJV, *deputy*).

- Bar-Jesus had attached himself to Sergius Paulus.
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- “*a prudent man*” = intelligent and open to the Word of God

v. 8 **Elymas** (Bar-Jesus) kept opposing them (imperfect middle indicative verb) seeking to prejudice the Proconsul against the faith.

v. 9-11 **A TRUE PROPHET AND A FALSE PROPHET IN CONFRONTATION**

- Paul rebukes Bar-Jesus as (v.10):
 - one full of deceit and fraud,
 - a son of the devil (διαβολος/diabolos = slanderer),
 - an enemy of every righteousness,
 - a pervertor of the right ways of the Lord.
- Paul pronounces divine judgment on Bar-Jesus – he is struck blind (v 11).

v. 12 **RESULT**: THE GOVERNOR OF CYPRUS GETS SAVED!

- Seeing the confrontation,
- he believed (aorist active indicative);
- being astonished, amazed at (epi) the doctrine that has the Lord as its object and subject!

v. 13 **Personnel Problems**: Not all was rosey. John Mark leaves the team over a personal problem with Paul’s decision and leadership (comp. 15:37-39).

(First Missionary Journey: To be continued!)