

How to Read the Bible for All its Worth

Lesson 6f: Acts 13:1 – 15:35 – Paul’s First Missionary Journey

Introduction

We are now begin to see the blossoming of Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles. It is interesting to note that although Paul possessed much zeal and knowledge when he was saved, the Lord still took time to prepare him, and everyone else, for the ministry that He would give Paul. The Lord has His own timing for our lives that isn’t always in line with our expectations. We must allow Him to complete His work in us and trust that at the right time, He will reveal His plan and engage us in the work He has for our lives ministry.

Acts 13:1-3 – The Ordination of Saul & Barnabas

What were these prophets and teachers doing in Antioch?

Does it appear that the Holy Spirit communicated His message to the other prophets and teachers, Saul and Barnabas, or to both groups of them? What does this teach us about ordination?

What is ordination?

What is the process of ordination we see in this passage?

Acts 13:4-12 – Ministry at Cyprus

Cyprus is the third largest island on the Mediterranean, after Sicily and Sardinia (see map on page 2). It is about 60 miles off the Syrian coast and would have been visible from Seleucia on a clear day. In New Testament times its two major cities were Salamis, the chief port and commercial center, and Paphos, the capital. Cyprus was Barnabas’ home town and it had a major Jewish settlement, large enough to support several synagogues in Salamis.

What do we learn about Bar-Jesus?

What do we learn about Sergius Paulus?

What do we learn about Satan’s ploys from this and why was Bar-Jesus’ blindness temporary?

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Acts 13:13-52 – *Ministry at Pisidian Antioch*

After being deserted by John Mark, they set sail from Cyprus to Perga. Rather than preaching in Perga, which they did on the way back, they made the difficult 100 mile journey across the Taurus mountains to the city of Pisidian Antioch, in the region of Galatia (the book of Galatians was written to the churches established in this area). It is hypothesized by some that Paul was ill, possibly with malaria, and needed to leave the coastal lowlands for the cooler mountain regions (see Galatians 4:13). The journey would have been very long and dangerous, both from the pass through the mountains and from the many bands of robbers that inhabited them. They would have also had to forge the turbulent flood-prone Cestrus and Eurymedon rivers. Paul may have been thinking about this journey when he wrote 2 Corinthians 11:26, “I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers...” (NASB)

We are beginning to see a pattern emerge in Paul’s missionary journey. What is the first thing he seems to do upon coming into a city? Why is this? See also Romans 1:16.

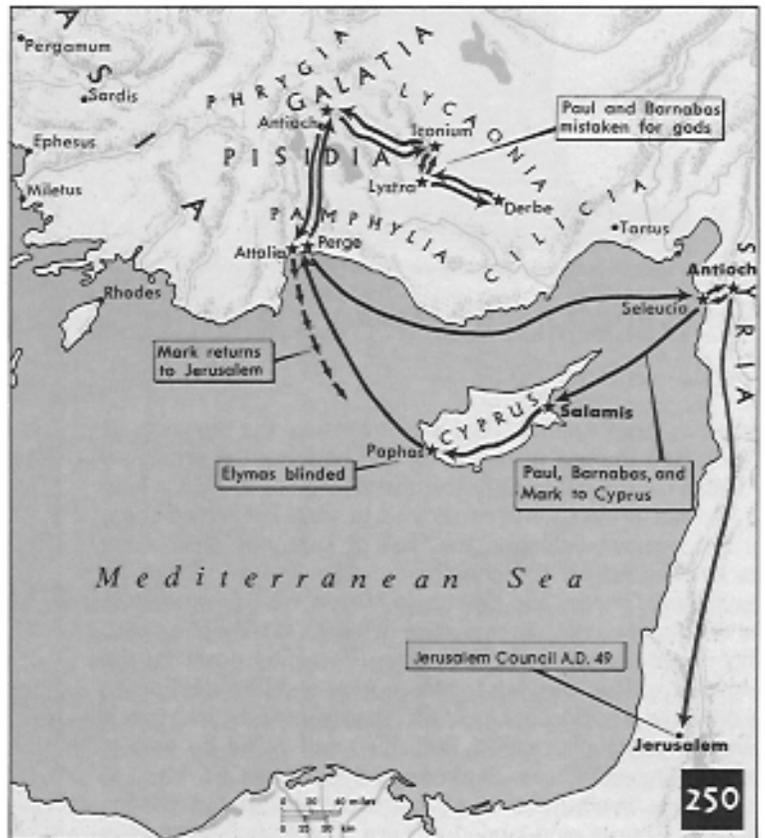
Acts 13:16-41 is the longest recorded sermon of the Apostle Paul. It is addressed to Men of Israel (Jews) and you who fear God (Gentile proselytes). It can be broken down into the following sections:

- Jesus: the Culmination of History (vs 16-23)
- Jesus: the Fulfillment of Prophecy (vs 24-37)
- Jesus: the Source of Salvation (vs 38-41)

What was the initial response to the sermon that Paul preached?

After the initial reception came the rejection by the Jews and their manipulation of the local government to have Paul and Barnabas cast out. What motivated this change in behavior? Do we see this elsewhere in the Bible? (think about Old Testament prophets)

What is the contrast between the believers and unbelievers as Paul and Barnabas leave?



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Acts 14:1-7 – Ministry at Iconium

Iconium was a melting pot of native Phrygians, Greeks, Jews, and Roman colonists.

We are beginning to see another pattern emerging in Paul’s ministry. What is the effect of the gospel upon a community when it is properly presented? (See also Matthew 10:34-36)

What was the method the local Jews used to create resistance against the Christians?

Acts 14:8-20 – Ministry at Lycaonia, Lystra, and Derbe

The cities around Lycaonia, Lystra, and Derbe were quiet towns, well off the main routes used for travel by most people at that time. They were located in the Roman province of Galatia. It was later that Paul penned a letter to the, “Churches of Galatia”. Lystra was the home of Lois, Eunice, and Timothy (Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5). They may have been saved during Paul visit.

How did Paul perceive that this man had enough faith to be healed? (See Mark 1:40 for an example from Jesus’ ministry)

Regarding Paul and Barnabas being named Jupiter (Zeus) and Mercury (Hermes), “There was a tradition in Lystra (recorded by the Roman poet Ovid, who died in A.D. 17) that the gods Zeus and Hermes once came to earth incognito (disguised). When they arrived at Lystra and asked for food and lodging, everyone refused them. Finally, an old peasant named Philemon and his wife, Baucis, took them in. Their inhospitable neighbors were drowned in a flood sent by the vengeful gods. Philemon and Baucis, however, saw their humble cottage turned into a magnificent temple, where they served as priest and priestess. After their deaths, they were turned into two stately trees.”¹

What do Paul being called Mercury (Hermes) and Barnabas being called Jupiter (Zeus) tell us?

What do Paul and Barnabas’ response to their worshippers teach us about their character?

Why were the Lycaonians willing to stone Paul?

Was their visit to Lystra successful? What does verse 20 imply?

Acts 14:21-28 – Establishing churches in Derbe, Lystram Iconium, & Antioch

What was Paul and Barnabas’ purpose in going back through the cities from which they had just came? Why wouldn’t they have encountered the same problems?

¹ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Acts 13-28, John MacArthur, Jr., 1996, p. 50

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Acts 15:1-21 – *Debate in Jerusalem*

When Paul stated in Acts 20:29 that, “after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock”, it came from experience. In this chapter we see the first appearance of these wolves who seek to distort the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What caused the great division in the church at Antioch?

Concisely state the big issue.

How did they decide to resolve this problem?

Let’s outline the argument made by Peter and James:

- Past _____ proves salvation is by grace (15:7)
- The gift of the _____ proves salvation is by grace (15:8-9a)
- _____ from sin proves salvation is by grace (15:9b)
- The _____ of the law to save proves salvation is by grace (15:10-11)
- The fact of _____ proves that salvation is by grace (15:12)
- _____ _____ proves that salvation is by grace (15:13-18)

Who is James and what do we know about him?

Why did they encourage them to abstain from things contaminated by idols, from fornication, and from what is strangled and from blood? (see verse 21)

Does this passage imply that one church should have power over another?

Acts 15:22-35 – *A Letter to the Church at Antioch*

Why did the church in Jerusalem send Judas and Silas back to Antioch?

Assignment:

Read Acts 15:36 – 18:22 in preparation for the next lesson