

ACTS

Chapter 13

Barnabas and Saul Sent Off

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. ² While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

13:1 ANTIOCH – Was the capital of Syria, the Roman province just north of Palestine, and it became a vigorous seedbed for a growing church. Both Jews and Gentiles were converted to Christianity, and it was here that Jesus’ followers largely abandoned their bulky title, “Followers of the Way,” and took on the name by which they would be known ever afterwards: “Christians” (11:26). (LL)

prophets. See note on 11:27. The special gift of inspiration experienced by OT prophets (Dt 18:18–20; 2Pe 1:21) was known in the NT as well (2:17–18; 1Co 14:29–32; Eph 3:5). The prophets are second to the apostles in Paul’s lists (1Co 12:28–29; Eph 2:20; 4:11; but cf. Lk 11:49; Ro 12:6; 1Co 12:10).

teachers. See 11:26; 15:35; 18:11; 20:20; 28:31; 1Co 12:28–29; Eph 4:11.

Barnabas ... Saul. The church leaders at Antioch, perhaps listed in the order of their importance.

Barnabas. See note on 4:36. He was sent originally to Antioch by the church in Jerusalem (11:22), had recently returned from taking alms to Jerusalem (12:25) and was a recognized leader in the church at Antioch.

Simeon called Niger. “Simeon” suggests Jewish background; in that case, Niger (Latin for “black”) may indicate his dark complexion.

Lucius of Cyrene. Lucius is a Latin name. In the second group of preachers coming to Antioch, some were from Cyrene (11:20), capital of Libya (see 6:9 and note).

Manaen. In Hebrew, Menahem. Since he was the foster brother of Herod Antipas, he would be able to tell of the thoughts and actions of Herod (see Lk 9:7–9).

13:2 *worshipping the Lord and fasting.* Paul’s first missionary journey did not result from a planning session but from the Spirit’s initiative as the leaders worshipped (see v. 4). The communication from the Holy Spirit may have come through the prophets.

13:3 *placed their hands on them.* For the purpose of separating the two for the designated work (see 14:26 for the completion of the mission). Fasting and prayer accompany this appointment (see 14:23; cf. Lk 2:37). – The laying on of hands was a blessing. (PBC)

SENT THEM OFF – Could be translated more literally as “released them.” (PBC)

On Cyprus

⁴The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. ⁵When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

⁶They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, ⁷who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. ⁸But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. ⁹Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, ¹⁰“You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? ¹¹Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun.” Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. ¹²When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

13:4 TWO OF THEM – It was a trio that embarked on ship. Barnabas had invited his cousin, John Mark, to join the expedition. (LL)

See map No. 11 at the end of the Study Bible.

Seleucia. The seaport of Antioch (16 miles to the west, and 5 miles upstream from the mouth of the Orontes River).

SAILED – Most likely they weighed anchor at the opening of the sailing season – about March 10 – since strong westerlies blow later in the spring and their voyage would not have been so direct. (LL)

Cyprus. Many Jews lived there, and the gospel had already been preached there (11:19–20; see note on 11:19). – Means copper. The choice was hardly a mystery: this was Barnabas’ homeland, where relatives were waiting to learn the Good News and where such personal contacts would assist the missionaries. (LL)

13:5 *Salamis.* A town on the east coast of the central plain of Cyprus, near modern Famagusta.

John. John Mark, a cousin of Barnabas (see Col 4:10); see also note on 12:25.

13:6 *Paphos.* At the western end of Cyprus, nearly 100 miles from Salamis. It was the headquarters for Roman rule.

Bar-Jesus. “Bar” is Aramaic for “son of”; “Jesus” is derived from the Greek for “Joshua” (see NIV text note on Mt 1:21).

13:7 *proconsul.* Since Cyprus was a Roman senatorial province, a proconsul was assigned to it.

13:8 *Elymas.* A Semitic name meaning “sorcerer” or “magician” or “wise man” (probably a self-assumed designation).

13:9 *Saul ... called Paul.* † The names mean “asked [of God]” and “little” respectively. It was customary to have a given name, in this case Saul (Hebrew, Jewish background), and a later name, in this case Paul (Roman, Hellenistic background). From now on Saul is called Paul in Acts. This may be due to Saul’s success in preaching to Paulus or to the fact that he is now entering the Gentile phase of his ministry. The Gentile name Paul could have been applied to him already in childhood by his Gentile playmates as a result of the similarity in sound. The order in which they are mentioned now changes from “Barnabas and Saul” to “Paul and Barnabas.” Upon their return to the Jerusalem church, however, the order reverts to “Barnabas and Paul” (15:12).

13:10 CHILD OF THE DEVIL – A Jew, Bar-Jesus should not have been dabbling in the occult, and even his name, meaning “son of Jesus,” could further have confused the governor, who was inquiring about the Jesus. (LL) – Paul’s cutting and biting condemnation was intended to show the sorcerer his sinful condition. (PBC) - John Maxwell in his book Developing the Leader Within You tells the story of a young Jewish boy who grew up in Germany many years ago. “The lad had a profound sense of admiration for his father, who saw to it that the life of the family revolved around the religious practices of their faith. In his teen years, however, the boy’s family was forced to move to another town in Germany. This town had no synagogue, only a Lutheran church. Suddenly, the father announced to the family that they were all going to abandon their Jewish traditions and join the Lutheran church. The father explained that it would be good for his business. The youngster was bewildered and confused. The boy’s name was Karl Marx, founder of the Communist movement.” Look at the paragraphs “Child of the devil.” What can be learned from these two narratives?

13:12 *he believed.* He was convinced by the miracle and the message.

In Pisidian Antioch

¹³ From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵ After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue rulers sent word to them, saying, Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak.” ¹⁶ Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: “Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! ¹⁷ The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt, with mighty power he led them out of that country, ¹⁸ he endured their conduct^a for about forty years in the desert, ¹⁹ he overthrew seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to his people as their inheritance. ²⁰ All this took about 450 years. “After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. ²¹ Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. ²² After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’ ²³ “From this man’s descendants God has brought to

Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised. ²⁴ Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. ²⁵ As John was completing his work, he said: 'Who do you think I am? I am not that one. No, but he is coming after me, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.' ²⁶ "Brothers, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. ²⁷ The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. ²⁸ Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹ When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰ But God raised him from the dead, ³¹ and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people. ³² "We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers ³³ he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: "'You are my Son; today I have become your Father. ^{b, c} ³⁴ The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words: "'I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.' ^d ³⁵ So it is stated elsewhere: "'You will not let your Holy One see decay.' ^e ³⁶ "For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. ³⁷ But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay. ³⁸ "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹ Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses. ⁴⁰ Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you: ⁴¹ "'Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you.' ^{f, g} ⁴² As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. ⁴³ When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. ⁴⁴ On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying. ⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "'I have made you ^g a light for the Gentiles, that you ^h may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.' ^{i, j} ⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. ⁵⁰ But the Jews incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. ⁵¹ So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium. ⁵² And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

13:13 *Perga in Pamphylia.* Perga was the capital of Pamphylia, a coastal province of Asia Minor between the provinces of Lycia and Cilicia, and was 5 miles inland and 12 miles east of the important seaport Attalia.

John left them. Homesickness to get back to Jerusalem, an illness of Paul necessitating a change in plans and a trip to Galatia, and a change in leadership from Barnabas to Paul have all been suggested as reasons for John Mark's return. Paul's dissatisfaction with his departure is noted later (15:37–39). – Why is not stated in the NT. When the trio had left Antioch, Barnabas was clearly in charge. Yet by the time they reached Cyprus, Paul had clearly taken over leadership. Mark, as Barnabas' cousin, may have resented what he thought to be a take-over of leadership by an "outsider." Whatever the reason for John Mark's defection, the apostles were obviously also human beings. (LL)

13:14 *Pisidian.* See note on 14:24. – This was a very cosmopolitan community, with Galatian, Phrygian, Greek, Jewish, and Roman inhabitants. A large influx of veterans from the Roman army had also recently settled there. (LL)

Antioch. Named after Antiochus, king of Syria after the death of Alexander the Great. It was 110 miles from Perga and was at the hub of good roads and trade. The city had a large Jewish population. It was a Roman colony, which meant that a contingent of retired military men was settled there. They were given free land and were made citizens of the city of Rome, with all the accompanying privileges.

synagogue. Paul's regular practice was to begin his preaching in the synagogue as long as the Jews would allow it (see v. 5; 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8). His reason for doing so was grounded in his understanding of God's redemptive plan (see v. 46; Ro 1:16; 2:9–10; see also Ro 9–11). He was not neglecting his Gentile mission, for the God-fearers (Gentiles committed to worshiping the one true God) were part of the audience. Moreover, the synagogue provided a ready-made preaching situation with a building, regularly scheduled meetings and a people who knew the OT Scriptures. It was customary to invite visitors, and especially visiting rabbis (such as Paul), to address the gathering. – Of all the above ethnic groups, however, Paul and Barnabas would first proclaim, the Good News to their own kind – a standard procedure used by Paul from now until the end of the book of Acts. (LL)

13:15 *the Law and the Prophets.* Sections from the OT were read, followed by exposition and exhortation. – There was a Jewish colony there and so there was a synagogue. Paul and Barnabas joined the local congregation in worship.

rulers. Those who were responsible for calling readers and preachers, arranging the service and maintaining order.

BROTHERS – Here means fellow Jews, not fellow believers in Jesus. (PBC)

MESSAGE OF ENCOURAGEMENT – paraklasiz – exhortation. Any rabbi or distinguished visitor could be called on to speak.

13:16 *Gentiles who worship God.* See note on 10:2.

13:20 *about 450 years.* The 400 years of the “stay in Egypt” (v. 17; see note on 7:6) plus the 40 years in the desert and the time between the crossing of the Jordan and the distribution of the land (see Jos 14–19).

JUDGES – These were not people who tried cases in courts of law. They were spiritually and physically gifted men and women who helped Israel overcome their various enemies. Again and again, in situations which the Israelites brought on themselves by disobedience and idolatry, the Lord acted on their behalf. (PBC)

13:22 DAVID – The Jews regarded David’s reign as the high point of their history. In a sense it was, but they must not overlook what God promised David and how God kept that promise. Paul’s point has been that God’s promises to David were not fulfilled to David personally but to David’s Son. David served God’s purpose only in his own generation, and then he died. David’s Son lives to serve God’s purpose in all generations. (PBC) – Like Peter and Stephen, Paul skimmed the highlights of Israel’s past. But when he reaches David he shifts directly to David’s Messianic descendant, Jesus.

13:23 *as he promised.* See, e.g., Isa 11:1–16.

13:26 TO US – hmin – This is very inclusive.

13:27 THEY FULFILLED THE WORDS OF THE PROPHETS – Even though the people of Jerusalem failed to recognize Jesus they still played a part in the fulfillment of his ministry.

13:29 THE TREE – xulou – “the tree.”

13:29–31 *tree ... tomb ... God raised ... witnesses.* See note on 3:14.

13:31 *many days.* Forty days (see 1:3).

THEY – He was not a part of the twelve.

13:32 WE WILL TELL YOU THE GOOD NEWS – euaggelizomatha – This was the same good news that the original apostles had shared. It will also be the good news that we share today.

13:33 *today I have become your Father.* Here refers to the resurrection of Jesus (see NIV text note here and note on Ps 2:7–9; cf. Ro 1:4).

13:35 *not let your Holy One see decay.* Quoted also in Peter’s sermon at Pentecost (see note on 2:27).

13:43 FOLLOWED – Many did not want to wait a week for the next Sabbath service. They followed Paul and Barnabas. (PBC)

13:44 WHOLE CITY – A “standing room only” crowd. Not only Jews and converts to Judaism and proselytes, but other inhabitants of Antioch as well. (PBC)

13:45 JEALOUSY – It was not so much that the Jews were jealous of Paul’s popularity. They were jealous for what they thought was God’s honor. They believed that Paul was wrong to say that no one can be justified by the law of Moses, but only by Christ. They thought that this dishonored God as the giver of the law. (PBC)

13:46 *had to speak ... to you first.* Since the gospel came from and was for the Jews first and since Paul was himself a Jew with great compassion for his people (Ro 9:1–5; 10:1–3). See note on v. 14.

REJECT IT – God’s offer of mercy is always sincere, but it is possible to resist his grace. Now Paul and Barnabas would turn to the Gentiles with the gospel. It was not that they would never preach to Jews anywhere ever again. However, they would not preach to those Jews in that city again (PBC)

13:48 WERE GLAD – Those who reject the kingdom are themselves rejected from it. In contrast, “the disciples” who remain in Antioch are described in terms Luke uses for an authentic realization of God’s people: They are filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. (Sacra) – They became believers by God’s doing, not because of their attitude or decision. No one but God could make such an appointment. The Jews who rejected the gospel and abused the preachers, on the other hand, did not do that because God appointed them to be unbelievers. God has never done that. They themselves counted themselves out. (PBC)

all who were appointed for eternal life believed. † Possession of eternal life involves faith, “the gift of God” (Eph 2:8–9), and divine appointment “before the creation of the world” (Eph 1:3–14).

13:50 WOMEN OF HIGH STANDING & LEADING MEN – The prominent women were proselytes, the kind of people who were often happy to hear and believe the gospel. The leading men were not necessarily the city officials. They were leaders in commerce and civic affairs. Both groups would be influential in getting the government officials to persecute and expel two traveling preachers who were upsetting the leading Jews of community. The Jews used them for that purpose. (PBC)

EXPELLED – When Jesus began his ministry, he was baptized and received the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:21-22). Then he went into the wilderness where he confronted the demonic powers and bested them (4:1-13). Then he preached his inaugural sermon to his countrymen in a synagogue on the Sabbath, showing how the Scripture he had read in the assembly was fulfilled in him (4:14-21). After an initial favorable response (4:22), Jesus uttered prophecies that enraged his countrymen and led them to take him out of the city and try to kill him (4:23-30). Luke now has Paul follow the same pattern. He is commissioned by the Spirit in Antioch (13:1-3), then confronts and bests the demonic powers presented by Bar-Jesus/Elymas (13:4-12). Then he goes into the synagogue on the Sabbath, where he reads from the Law and the Prophets, then preaches a sermon showing how the Scripture has been fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus (13:13-41). Finally, there will be the same experience of rejection by Paul’s countrymen that Jesus

experienced from his (13:42-52). Luke obviously intends by this sort of narrative to establish the continuity between the prophetic ministry of Jesus and the one who, we now learn, is the one who is to be “light to the Gentiles” (13:47; Luke 2:32). (Sacra)

13:51 *shook the dust*. To show the severance of responsibility and the repudiation of those who had rejected their message and had brought suffering to the servants of the Lord (see note on Lk 9:5). – To shake off the dust from the feet was a Jewish way of declaring: “I have no further responsibility toward you.” (PBC)

Iconium. Modern Konya; it was an important crossroads and agricultural center in the central plain of the province of Galatia.

13:52 *filled ... with the Holy Spirit*. See note on 2:4.