



The Church at Antioch

- We noted the relief sent by disciples in Antioch to the brothers and sisters living in Judea because of a famine in Acts 11:27-30.
- Acts 13:1 tells us there were prophets and teachers in Antioch of diverse ethnicities and from various locations—Judea, northern Africa, Cyprus, and Cilicia.
- Twice in Acts 13:2-3 Luke informs us that they were fasting, demonstrating the seriousness of their devotion to the worship of the Lord and to prayer.
- While Barnabas and Saul were undoubtedly valuable assets to the church at Antioch, there was a willingness to “send them off” for the sake of spreading the gospel to others.



The Old and New Testaments contain examples of men and women **fasting** as they were earnestly seeking divine guidance and intervention. In times of great uncertainty, impending danger, bitter sorrow, penitence, and at the beginning of monumental undertakings, God's people have abstained from the physical intake of food for the sake of intense devotion to prayer and self-discipline.

⇒ In what ways can the example of the church at Antioch inspire us today? What do we need to learn from them?

⇒ Luke tells us in Acts 13:2, "the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" He tells us just two verses later that Barnabas and Saul were "sent out by the Holy Spirit." What does Luke want us to understand?



The first stop on this first missionary journey is the island of **Cyprus**, approximately 75 miles from the port city of Seleucia on the Syrian coast. Barnabas was a native of Cyprus (Acts 4:36). **Salamis** (Acts 13:5) sits on the east coast of Cyprus and is the largest city on the island. **Paphos** (13:6) is on the west coast.

⇒ We will quickly notice a pattern of Paul and his companions on these missionary journeys. Upon arriving in a new city, they first "proclaimed the word of God" (13:5) in the Jewish synagogues. Was there a reason behind this pattern? If so, what was it?



Sergius Paulus was a Roman "proconsul" (13:7), an official elected to oversee Roman territory by the Roman senate. It was not unusual for Roman leaders to look to astrologers and magicians as "spiritual advisors." A Jewish false prophet known as **Bar-Jesus** (Aramaic for "son of Jesus [or Joshua]") was with Sergius Paulus. **Elymas** was the magician's name, a name possibly derived from the Aramaic word *haloma*, meaning "one who dreams."

⇒ Why would this Jewish magician have opposed Barnabas and Saul, "seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith" (13:8)?

But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?" (Acts 13:9-10)

⇒ Take a moment to think about Paul's rebuke. Why, "filled with the Holy Spirit," would Paul have called Elymas:

- ◆ A son of the devil -
- ◆ An enemy of all righteousness -
- ◆ Full of all deceit and villainy -
- ◆ Someone making crooked the straight paths of the Lord -

⇒ What effect did Elymas' immediate blindness have on Sergius Paulus (13:11-12)? Why do you think that was?



“Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to **Perga in Pamphylia**” (13:13), a journey of more than 150 miles by boat to the southern coast of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).

“And **John left them** and returned to Jerusalem” (13:13). We were first introduced to “John, whose other name was Mark” in Acts 12:12. Like Saul/Paul, he has both a Jewish (John) and a Roman (Mark) name. In Colossians 4:10, he is identified by Paul as a cousin of Barnabas.

Luke does not tell us why John left and returned to Jerusalem. A variety of possibilities have been suggested: he is homesick; he is having difficulty adapting to strange cultures; he is unwilling to take the rugged 100-mile journey north to Antioch; he is increasingly uncomfortable with the nature of this mission to the Gentiles.

Whatever the reason, we will read in Acts 15:36-41 about the launch of a second missionary journey. Barnabas wants to take John along, “but Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.” Paul and Barnabas disagree so sharply that they separate from each other, Barnabas taking Mark and Paul choosing Silas.

All of that being said, whatever concerns Paul had in Acts 15, by the time he writes his second letter to Timothy, he gives these heartfelt instructions: “Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry” (2 Tim 4:11).

⇒ Carefully read Paul’s address (Acts 13:16-41) in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia. How would you outline the main points of his message? What does he want these “men of Israel” and those “who fear God” to see and understand?

⇒ At the conclusion of his address, Paul quotes Habakkuk 1:5 and challenges his hearers to “Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about.” What did this mean and what does it *still* mean, even today?

⇒ Luke tells us that some Jews “were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him” (13:45). Some Jews “incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city,” stirring up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, driving them out of the district (13:50). Why?

⇒ **THOUGHT QUESTION:** In Acts 13:46, Paul and Barnabas speak out boldly, saying, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you.” Why did they make this statement to unbelieving Jews?

A-C-T-S made personal

Based on my study of Acts 13:

A - doration: God is worthy of my praise because...

C - aution: this section of Scripture reminded me to **evaluate**...

T - rust: my **faith** in my Savior has grown because...

S - trength: I was particularly **helped** and **encouraged** by...

