

Acts 13:1 ¶ Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

This chapter opens with a list of prophets and teachers that were part of the church body in Antioch:

- Barnabas – Known as the son of consolation or encouragement, a Levite from Cyprus, a leader in the Jerusalem church
- Simeon, also called Niger, probably because he was black according to the Greek – According to Easton’s Bible Dictionary, this was probably the same man known as Simon of Cyrene who bore Jesus’ cross.
- Lucius of Cyrene
- Manaen, a childhood companion of Herod the tetrarch or Herod Antipas
- Saul – a native of Tarsus, a Roman citizen by birth, a student of Gamaliel, a Pharisee, a convert to Christ through a personal encounter on the road to Damascus while on a mission to persecute Christians

Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

Acts 13:3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.

Acts 13:4 ¶ So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

Acts 13:5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to *their* minister.

In some way the Holy Ghost made known to these leaders of the church that Barnabas and Saul were to be separated out as a team for particular ministry. We know from the words of the Lord to Ananias recorded in Acts 9 that this work included spreading the gospel to the Gentiles.

Acts 9:15 “But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel....”

After fasting and praying, the other men laid hands on Paul and Barnabas as an act of consecration and sent them away. Led by the Holy Ghost, they headed to Seleucia and then on to Cyprus, native homeland of Barnabas. Arriving at Salamis, a city on the southeast coast of Cyprus, they began to preach the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. Luke also notes that John Mark was with them to assist them (identified as accompanying them in the last verse of the previous chapter).

Acts 13:6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name *was* Barjesus:

Acts 13:7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

Acts 13:8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation)

withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

They finally ended up in Paphos, the capital city of Cyprus; it was known for its temple to and worship of Aphrodite/Venus, the goddess of love and pleasure. When they were sought out by Sergius Paulus, the highest ranking official of the country, because he wanted to hear the word of God, they encountered a “certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew” named Barjesus.. According to verse 8, this sorcerer was also known as Elymas, meaning magician or corrupter. The fact that Luke calls him a Jewish false prophet indicates that he claimed that his magic was a gift from God that signified him as possessing God’s stamp of approval so to speak. Luke notes that the sorcerer did his best to keep Sergius Paulus from believing the gospel message and becoming a Christian.

Acts 13:9 Then Saul, (who also *is called Paul*), filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

Acts 13:10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, *thou* child of the devil, *thou* enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

Acts 13:11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord *is* upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

Acts 13:12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

Beginning with verse 9, Luke begins to refer to Saul as Paul, his Greek or Gentile name, probably in connection with his distinct ministry to the Gentiles.

Being filled with the Holy Ghost, Paul directs his anger toward the sorcerer and identifies him as a child of the devil and an enemy of all righteousness. He notes that everything Elymas represents perverts the ways that are right before the Lord. Paul then pronounces God’s judgment against the sorcerer; he will be blind for a season (an undetermined period of time). As soon as Paul had pronounced God’s judgment, the sorcerer was struck blind; and he groped about for someone to lead him by the hand.

When Sergius Paulus witnessed such evidence to God’s affirmation of Paul’s message, he became a believer.

Acts 13:13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

Acts 13:14 ¶ But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

Acts 13:15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, *Ye men and brethren*, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

Paul’s team next traveled to Perga in Pamphylia, and at this point John Mark left to go back to Jerusalem. Since scripture is silent as to why John Mark left, one can only speculate. Whatever the reason, it eventually became an issue that

caused Paul and Barnabas to part ways (cf chapter 15).

From Perga they went on to Antioch in Pisidia, an area about 100 miles further north, part of the region known as Galatia. Antioch was the most important city in southern Galatia, and had a large Jewish population.

In Perga they went to the synagogue on the Sabbath as all good Jewish men do. After the reading of the scripture, the rulers invited Paul and/or Barnabas to share a word of exhortation with the people.

Insight from NIV Commentary: A typical first-century synagogue service would have included the *shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4-5), the liturgy of "The Eighteen Benedictions," a reading from the Law, a reading from one of the prophets, a free address given by any competent Jew in attendance, and a closing blessing.

Acts 13:16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with *his* hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

Acts 13:17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it.

Acts 13:18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

Paul didn't hesitate; he stood up making a hand gesture that indicated he was speaking to everyone present. He addressed both Jews (Men of Israel) and Gentiles (ye that fear God). He then began to summarize God's working with the people of Israel.

Paul began with the truth that God chose Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as the founding fathers of the people of Israel. He moved quickly to how God brought them out of Egypt with a miraculous show of strength and power. He patiently endured their whining, complaining and unbelief as they wandered 40 long years in the wilderness.

Acts 13:19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

Paul points out that the Jewish people had to destroy seven nations to take possession of the land of Canaan, the land God had chosen to give them as an inheritance according to His covenant with Abraham. Since I found several different listings of the nations being referenced, I am assuming Paul was referencing the words of Moses.

*Deuteronomy 7:1 "When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the **Hittites**, and the **Girgashites**, and the **Amorites**, and the **Canaanites**, and the **Perizzites**, and the **Hivites**, and the **Jebusites**, seven nations greater and mightier than thou...."*

Eventually, the land was divided among each of the twelve tribes by lot.

Numbers 26:52–56 “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying...Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot: according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. According to the lot shall the possession thereof be divided between many and few.”

Acts 13:20 And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

Acts 13:21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

Paul goes on to note how the Lord raised up judges to rule over his people for about 450 years before calling out Samuel as their prophet. The people, however, wanted a king like the nations around them; so God had Samuel anoint Saul, the son of Kish of the tribe of Benjamin, who served forty years.

Acts 13:22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

Acts 13:23 Of this man’s seed hath God according to *his* promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:

Acts 13:24 When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

Acts 13:25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not *he*. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of *his* feet I am not worthy to loose.

Paul quickly moves on to identify David as God’s next chosen king. He makes special note that God chose David, son of Jesse, because he was “a man after my own heart” that would strive to obey Him.

1 Samuel 13:13–14 “And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.”

Now Paul gets to his primary point—Jesus, a son of David, was the Messiah, the Savior that God had promised to send to deliver Israel. John the Baptist served faithfully to call the people to repentance in preparation to accept and serve the Savior.

IVP New Bible Commentary: “The Jews of his day would have seen baptism as part of converting to Judaism—the speech implied that those who thought of themselves as Jews already also stood in need of ‘conversion.’”

Many of the people thought that John was the promised Messiah, but he assured them that another would come after him for whom he was not fit to even loosen

the shoes on his feet (the job of the lowest level servant).

Mark 1:6–7 “And John...preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.”

Acts 13:26 Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

Acts 13:27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.

Acts 13:28 And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

Acts 13:29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.

Having identified Jesus as the Savior, the promised Messiah, Paul now urges all the Jews and God-fearers to respond to that truth. He went on to explain that the Jewish religious leaders who were witness to Jesus refused to recognize that truth. They rejected Him because they didn't understand the words of the prophets recorded in scripture. In fact, they fulfilled the words of the prophets by urging Pilate to condemn Him to death. After all the words of prophecy had been fulfilled concerning His death, He was taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb.

To this day, it's hard for me to understand how the religious leaders in particular could not recognize what they had done in light of the words of the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 53:3–9 “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.”

Acts 13:30 But God raised him from the dead:

Acts 13:31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

Now Paul gets to the glorious truth—God raised up Jesus from the dead, a truth that was verified by many witnesses who saw over the next 40 days. Both Luke and Paul give testimony to this truth in their writings.

Acts 1:1–3 “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God....”

1 Corinthians 15:3–8 “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.”

Acts 13:32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,

Acts 13:33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

Acts 13:34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

Acts 13:35 Wherefore he saith also in another *psalm*, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Acts 13:36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

Acts 13:37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

Paul now points to the words of David as testifying to the truth of his message.

Psalms 2:7 “I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.”

Psalms 16:10 “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

Paul emphasized that his message contained the words of life by his reference to the “sure mercies of David,” another quotation from the prophet Isaiah.

*Isaiah 55:3 “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, **even the sure mercies of David.**”*

It is also obvious that the words of David were prophetic of the Messiah because David did die and his body did decay; he was speaking of one who would descend from him according to God’s promise that would never experience bodily corruption.

2Samuel 7:8 & 16 “Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith

the LORD of hosts....thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."

God affirms this truth through the words of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 23:5–6 "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Acts 13:38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

Acts 13:39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Acts 13:40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets;

Acts 13:41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

Paul zeros in on the truth that only through Jesus can man find forgiveness of sins and that He justifies those that place their faith in Him—something the law could never do. To be justified is to be declared innocent and righteous. I'm always reminded of a phrase I have heard throughout my life—"just as if I had never sinned."

Paul then quotes the words of coming judgment from the prophet Habakkuk. Habakkuk was bemoaning the fact that God was allowing evil men to prosper without judgment and righteous men were suffering at their hands, but God prefaces the fact that Israel would suffer judgment at the hands of Babylon, a heathen nation, with these words.

Habakkuk 1:5 "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you."

Implication—You too will suffer judgment if you reject God's provision for salvation in Jesus.

Acts 13:42 ¶ And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.

Acts 13:43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

Acts 13:44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

Evidently, this message left the Jewish men speechless. The Gentiles, however, begged Paul to preach this message again the next Sabbath. The Jews had not totally rejected Paul's message, because Luke notes that many of the Jews and

Gentiles followed Paul and Barnabas. The next Sabbath Luke notes that it seemed like almost the whole city came out to hear the word of God.

Acts 13:45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

Acts 13:46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

Acts 13:47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

Acts 13:48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

The sight of so many people turning out to hear Paul's teaching brought out the green-eyed monster of jealousy in the Jewish leaders, and they began to contradict Paul and accuse him of blasphemy. Paul and Barnabas boldly declared that it had been important for them to declare the truth first to the Jews; but since they refused to accept the truth, they would concentrate their ministry among the Gentiles. They were serving at God's command as foretold by the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 49:5–6 "And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

This announcement pleased the Gentiles, and they glorified the word of the Lord. Many became believers and inheritors of eternal life.

"as many as were ordained" – The Greek for "ordained" states "appoint, determine." This can be confusing if not taken in context with other scripture. Scripture is clear in declaring that faith in God is a matter of choice on the part of the individual, but that choice has been known by God since before the foundation of the world.

*Ezekiel 18:32 "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore **turn yourselves**, and live ye."*

*Mark 1:14–15 "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: **repent ye, and believe** the gospel."*

For the Lord Jesus to call for people to repent and believe requires that such opportunity is available to all who hear His message for that message to be truth;

and He is the God of truth.

*2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but **that all should come to repentance.**"*

*Romans 8:29–30 "For **whom he did foreknow**, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."*

"foreknow" = "know beforehand, foresee"

*Ephesians 1:3–6 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath **chosen us in him before the foundation of the world....**"*

I like this quote from the "Believer's Bible Commentary" attributed to Erdman: "The sovereignty of God is absolute, yet it is never exercised in condemning men who ought to be saved, but rather has resulted in the salvation of men who deserved to be lost."

Acts 13:49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

Acts 13:50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

Acts 13:51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

Acts 13:52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

In spite of the opposition, the word of the Lord was made known throughout the region. It seems the new believers were eager to share their faith. However, the Jews were able to rally a group of many God-fearing women and leading men of the city to join them in persecuting Paul and Barnabas. The result was that they were forced to leave the area. Isn't it sad that the Lord's own people, the Jews, would prove to be the ones that were most active in trying to disrupt the spread of the gospel!

Luke makes note that Paul and Barnabas shook the dust of the city off their feet signifying that they were finished with that city. This was in accordance with the instructions the Lord had given the disciples when He sent them out to declare the message of the kingdom throughout Israel.

*Matthew 10:5–15 "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying...But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand....**And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.** Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city."*

After leaving Antioch, they traveled about 80 miles to Iconium, the capital of Lycaonia, today known as Konya, Turkey. I can read verse 52 two ways:

- The disciples they left behind were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.
- Paul and Barnabas left with a spirit of joy and filled with the Holy Ghost in spite of the treatment they had received from the leaders of Antioch.