

A Study in Acts

Chapter Thirteen – First Journey of Paul



ACTS 13:1-5:

In this lesson, we will engage in an introduction to the beginning of the work of the spread of the Gospel to the world, focusing on the travels of Paul. We will not only mark each location the journey covers, but we will also illustrate the events in each location, and finally summarize the happenings in each location before we move on. This will give you, the student, an opportunity to remember the events as they transpire.

Text #1:

Acts 13:1-3 “Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which

I have called them.”³ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.”

Antioch of Syria: This is the capital of Roman Syria; it is one of sixteen Antioch's founded by Alexander the Great in honor of his father Phillip II of Macedon (the name is from his favorite general – Antiochus).

The city was situated on the bank of the Orontes River, about fifteen miles inland from the Mediterranean Sea; the river was navigable to the coast, which also helped make Antioch of Syria a commercial trade center along with caravan routes from the east passing through this city. The city is in a fertile valley and shielded by snow covered mountains. The city is the third largest in the Roman Empire, believed to have about a half a million permanent residents at this time.

Church: We covered the Gospel to this city in **chapter 11:19-26**; where we also were told that Barnabas and Saul would also remain. Here we are told that there were many who ministered to the Lord (Greek, '*Leitourgeo*' – “service undertaken at one's own expense” the term is also found in **Romans 15:26-27**; **Hebrews 10:11**).

Not much is known of the men mentioned along with Barnabas and Saul, other than what is mentioned here; there is a Lucius mentioned in **Romans 16:21** as a kinsman of Paul, who was with him in Corinth when he wrote the Roman letter (unknown if it is the same one).

Fasted: We do not find a direct command within the confines of the New Testament for the implementation of fasting; however, we have many approved examples of fasting and its connection to service to the Lord.

Here we see these men engaged in fasting while in service to the Lord (a key); in **2 Corinthians 6:5**, Paul mentions that as ministers of God he was in fasting's often; in **2 Corinthians 11:27**, Paul again acknowledges that he fasted often as a common part of his universal service and suffering for Christ Jesus.

This is also at the root of the command of the Apostle Paul to Christians in Corinth concerning their spiritual service in observance of the Lord's memorial (**knowing full well that they came together to partake of this spiritual meal as a service to the Lord – remember the key!**), note:

1 Corinthians 11:33-34 “Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴ **But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.**”

Barnabas and Saul: Of all those mentioned in service to the Lord, Barnabas and Saul are chosen by the action of the Spirit of God for a work he would give them (a charge, or vocation). Paul and Barnabas will become ones sent by the Spirit of God; this is the universal understanding of the generic use of the word apostle (one sent). Barnabas is not an Apostle of Jesus Christ (as chosen by Him and sent by Him); however, he will definitely be an apostle of the Spirit in this

work he has been sent with Saul to accomplish (this will help in understanding Luke's use of this term in **Acts 14:14**), this is enforced in **Verse 4**.

Laid Hands on Them: As we have seen thus far in the study of this work of Luke, the laying on of hands has served two purposes; first, as a sign of approval – **Acts 6:6**, second, as a means by which the Apostles of the Lord would bestow spiritual gifts (**Acts 8:17; 19:6**). Here it is the act of approval.

Summary of Antioch: Antioch of Syria will be the beginning and ending location for the journeys of Paul, except the end of the third journey, which would end in Jerusalem. In addition, the brethren here in Antioch laid hands on Barnabas and Saul and sent them on their way, and they would additionally receive reports of the work upon the return. In addition, we should also mention at this point, although he is not mentioned until **verse 5**, John Mark who returned with them from Jerusalem to Antioch (**12:25**), is also with Barnabas and Saul.

Text #2:

Acts 13:4 “So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.”

Seleucia: Here Luke does not tell us whether they traveled down the river or went on foot, but to the coast they would come. This sea port city was actually founded to provide a port for Antioch of Syria. It is here that they will board a ship to Cyprus.

Cyprus: This is a large island in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. It was approximately 148 miles long (west to east) and about 40 miles across (north to south). Its terrain is very rocky except for the coastal borders. Barnabas is from this island – **Acts 4:36**.



Summary of Seleucia: This will be simply a jumping point for these men to take a ship to the isle of Cyprus!

Text #3:

Acts 13:5 “And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as *their* assistant.”

Salamis: This is a town on the east coast of Cyprus, which possessed a good harbor and was a flourishing and sizable town. We also know that there was a sizable Jewish presence here by the existence of synagogues (plural).

This is going to be a pattern with these men that will continue with the Apostle Paul on all of his journeys, to seek out the synagogues to speak the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Jews and proselytes. This was a pattern that Paul will acknowledge later was necessary; as the Gospel was to come to the Jews first – see: **Acts 13:46** (they were to be those who should have been builders of the kingdom – **Act 4:11**; **Psalms 118:22** “**rejected by you builders**”, spoken to those who rejected Jesus as the Christ and His Gospel).

The pattern does not exist to promote synagogue worship or Sabbath day worship; it is simply a convenient place and time to find many already gathered in order to speak the truth of the Gospel of Christ. Luke acknowledges that this was just a custom of Paul in order to reason from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ – **Acts 17:2**. This was a practice that was so successful for Paul with the Jews and with the Gentiles (**Acts 13:42**), that for expediency sake, Paul circumcised Timothy (a Gentile), so that he could accompany Paul into the synagogues (**Acts 16:3**).

When we study these in the future, I hope you will remember this first mention of Paul’s synagogue practice, and we should not have to cover it in as much detail then.

We additionally here, have the first mention of John Mark traveling with them as an assistant (Greek, ‘*Huperetes*’, “an under rower, not yet a seaman” – also translated from time to time as ‘minister’).

Summary of Salamis: This is the entry point to the isle of Cyprus for Barnabas and Saul, traveling with their assistant John Mark. Luke records that they preached the word of God in the synagogue; however, Luke does not record any results from this work, so without speculation, we will list it as just unknown.