

## Acts 13:1-12 The Characteristics of Gospel Missions

### I. The Mission Extends From the Local Church (1-5)

#### A. The Church Sends Out Missionaries (1-3)

##### 1. The Antioch Church is Blessed With Leaders (1)

- a. The Church Leaders are described as Prophets and teachers
  - i. Remember that the New Testament hasn't been written yet – so prophets received God's word to instruct, exhort, and rebuke. Teachers taught the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures in Jesus
  - ii. Prophets and Teachers also appear in 1 CO. 12 and provide a balance to the early church
    - Things were new so they needed to hear the new revelation of God in Christ
    - But this new revelation also had to accord with the revelation already given in the Old Testament – this wasn't just a time when anyone just showed up with a word from God
    - Also we can't push the prophet/teacher distinction too far – Paul and Barnabas acts sometimes as prophets, teachers, and apostles in the book of Acts
- b. The Church in Antioch had Multiple Diverse Leaders
  - i. Barnabas was a Hellenistic Jew from Cyprus
  - ii. Simeon was probably a black African
  - iii. Lucius was from Cyrene in North Africa
  - iv. Manaen was raised with Herod among the royal family
  - v. Saul of Tarsus was a Jew, educated in both Greek academia and Judaism. He is also a Roman Citizen

##### 2. The Church Worships and Fasts Together (2a)

- a. The Antioch church wasn't just a teaching church but a worshiping church ("ministering to the Lord")
  - i. Probably included corporate prayers
  - ii. Probably included corporate singing
  - iii. Probably included corporate fellowship meals
  - iv. Fasting together as a church is also listed
- b. Notice that Paul and Barnabas were committed to the fellowship of the local Church

##### 3. The Church is Commanded to Set Apart Missionaries (2b)

- a. As they worshiped, the Holy Spirit commands them to separate Paul and Barnabas

- b. This may have been done by a prophetic utterance
  - c. However it happened the direct speech of the Holy Spirit is given by Luke – God Himself was speaking
  - d. Missionaries don't just strike out on their own, they are called and ordained by God (However, every believer is called to do the work on an evangelist)
4. The Church Confirms the Command and Obeys (3)
- a. The Church does not automatically jump because a prophetic utterance has been given
  - b. The Church continues to fast and pray
    - i. Not doubt praying for wisdom, discernment, and protection before they send out Paul and Barnabas
    - ii. The church lays their hands upon the two and "ordains" them for the mission
  - c. Notice that the text indicates that the church sent them
    - i. The Holy Spirit works through the church
    - ii. So it could rightly be said that the Holy Spirit called and sent them through the local church

B. The Mission is Carried Out Strategically (4-5)

- 1. Paul and Barnabas Head to Cyprus (4)
  - a. First they went to Seleucia which was a port city on the Mediterranean about 16 miles from Antioch
  - b. From there they sailed to Salamis which was a harbor city on the island of Cyprus
- 2. Paul and Barnabas Evangelize with a Strategy (5)
  - a. Once on Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas would go minister in the Jewish synagogues first in every city
  - b. This will be Paul's pattern for the rest of the book of Acts
    - i. They are called to bring the gospel to the Jews first and then the Gentiles
    - ii. They would have access to Jews and God fearing Gentiles
    - iii. They would also have a entry way into the communities of each city through the synagogues
  - c. This shows that they didn't just wander from city to city. They were strategic and planning about their mission
- 3. John Mark accompanied them – This will be important later
- 4. The next verse tells us they systematically covered the entire island

II. The Mission Confronts Error With Absolute Truth (6-11a)

A. The Mission Always Faces Opposition (6-8)

- 1. They finally come to Paphos – the Roman capital of Cyprus

- a. Paphos was a typical Greco-Roman city
  - b. There were many pagan temples, baths, and an amphitheater
  - c. The temple of Aphrodite was also there (you can imagine what went on in the love goddess temple)
- 2. Paul and Barnabas Come Across a Sorcerer named BarJesus (6-7a)
  - a. BarJesus means “son of Joshua” or “son of Jesus” in Aramaic – Jesus (Joshua) was a common name among Hebrews so probably doesn’t have anything to do with the Lord Jesus (Later he will be called “Elymas” which means “enlightened one” or “wise one”)
  - b. He was a magician (6a)
    - i. He claimed to be able to cast spells, do incantations or make potions to fix problems
    - ii. He was much like a witch doctor
    - iii. People with issues came to these kinds of people to have problems solved (bad harvests, disease, etc.)
    - iv. He practiced divination
  - c. He was a Jewish False Prophet (6b)
    - i. He was Jewish by nationality, but had probably rejected the religion of Judaism
    - ii. Jews were prohibited from divination and sorcery
    - iii. False prophet here means he was leading people astray by claiming to speak divine utterances
      - It doesn’t necessarily mean he claimed to speak for the God of Abraham (although that is a possibility)
      - It likely meant he was giving people spiritual counsel that was false
  - d. He was an Advisor to the Roman Proconsul (deputy) (7a)
    - i. He was part of the court of Servius Paulus (who was the “governor” of the province)
    - ii. No doubt he gave spiritual counsel to the proconsul and was a high ranking member of his court
    - iii. The Proconsul is said to be prudent which means he was wise and intelligent. He was a good discerner.
- 3. Paul and Barnabas Are Requested by the Roman Proconsul (7b)

- a. The news of Paul and Barnabas' ministry had spread across the island. Sergius and BarJesus had probably seen the fruit of conversions all around them
- b. Being a prudent man, Sergius desired to speak with these men
- c. Notice that he desired to hear the word of God. (This also leads me to believe that BarJesus had been pretending to give him advice from god.)
- 4. The Magician Continually Opposes the Missionaries (8)
  - a. As Paul speaks the magician continually resists him
    - i. This isn't a one time thing – the word is in the imperfect tense so it seems that he was continually opposing what Paul was telling Sergius
    - ii. We are not told how he opposed Paul but we can imagine that he was interrupting, rolling his eyes, making quips, and denying that Jesus is who Paul claimed
      - BarJesus may be outrightly denying the gospel
      - BarJesus may be distracting Sergius from the gospel
  - b. Paul and Barnabas were telling Sergius about sin and the Father's sacrifice of His Son.
    - i. They tell him of the crucifixion and the resurrection
    - ii. They were telling Sergius he must repent, trust in Christ, die to self, and follow Jesus
  - c. BarJesus may have said many things but it all boils down to Satan's first lie
    - i. God didn't really say that
    - ii. God's word shouldn't be interpreted like that
    - iii. Jesus isn't all that
    - iv. Salvation doesn't come that way and it isn't that urgent
  - d. BarJesus Must Have Been Worried About His Position
    - i. He wanted to turn the Proconsul away from the faith
    - ii. If Sergius is converted, BarJesus would no longer be a high advisor to the governor

#### B. Paul Confronts Error With Boldness (9-11a)

##### 1. Paul is Filled with the Holy Spirit (9a)

- a. Notice that here Luke begins calling him Paul – because the focus of missions has moved to the Gentiles, Saul begins using his Roman name rather than his Hebrew name

- b. Paul doesn't just go off on Barjesus on his own – he is filled with the Holy Spirit and is led by the Spirit to silence the opposition
    - c. The Spirit led Paul to come out with guns blazing because this man was standing in the way of a soul being saved
  - 2. Paul Offers No Compromise with the Magician (9b-11a)
    - a. Paul Stares at the Magician (9b)
      - i. I can only imagine what Paul must have looked like
    - b. Paul Harshly Rebukes the Magician (10a)
      - i. Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit but announces that Barjesus is filled with “subtlety and mischief” which means deceit and villany
      - ii. Paul calls him a son of the devil
        - Notice that there is no neutral ground
        - To opposed God is to join yourself with Satan
      - iii. Paul calls him the enemy of righteousness
      - iv. Paul was not politically correct at all
        - Notice that he doesn't try to find common ground or argue with Barjesus
        - He will not allow truth to be corrupted by error
        - He will not compromise at all
        - Paul was concerned only with Sergius' Soul
    - c. Paul Accuses the Magician of Obstructing God (10b)
      - i. By making straight paths crooked, Paul is saying Barjesus is confusing the gospel of God
        - People with “Bible knowledge” do this all the time
        - They may quote verses and use God's word to justify their own desires while sowing confusion
        - They desire others to join them in their beliefs and behavior
      - ii. We can confuse the gospel in people's minds by what we say, how we act, and how we live
    - d. Paul Pronounces Judgment on the Magician (11a)
      - i. Paul does not shy away from pronouncing God's judgment on unbelievers
      - ii. Since Barjesus has set himself against God's gospel, God has set his hand against Barjesus
      - iii. There are only two sides – one or the other
- III. The Mission Will Expose God's Grace and Judgment (11b-12)

- A. Judgment Immediately Falls on the Magician (11b)
  - 1. When the gospel is preached, judgment is sometimes the result
    - a. Most of the time it doesn't come immediately
    - b. We must never fail to warn people of the coming judgment
  - 2. Judgment is passed on Barjesus and he is struck blind by God
    - a. Even in Barjesus' judgment, we see the grace of God at work
    - b. Barjesus is struck blind "for a time" – God would have been right to kill him on the spot
      - i. Remember Paul had been struck blind for a time earlier and he repented and was restored.
      - ii. Barjesus is struck blind for a time so that he has an opportunity to repent
      - iii. We are never told if he repents or continues in his opposition to God
- B. The Proconsul Experiences the Grace of God (12)
  - 1. When the gospel is preached, redemption is sometimes the result
    - a. The proconsul believes in Christ and is saved
    - b. Notice that it is not the miracle of Barjesus' judgment that amazes or influences the proconsul
    - c. He is amazed by the "doctrine" (i.e. teaching) of Jesus
    - d. He believes in the gospel, not just because he saw a miracle
  - 2. Today many people claim to know the Lord because they have seen His hand at work
    - a. Some say "I know God is with me because he saved me from an accident"
    - b. Some say "I know God has plans for me because he delivered me from drugs"
    - c. An experience like this doesn't mean someone is saved
    - d. Salvation only comes through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus

All of us are on the mission field if we are believers. What we learn here is that our mission activity should be grounded in the local church rather than "lone ranger" Christianity. Also we see that we will always be opposed when we serve Christ, but we should never shy away from rebuking error and pronouncing truth. The gospel will always include judgment and salvation. God is ultimately the one who changes hearts. We are simply to give the message without compromise and without watering it down. Finally, there is no mission that does not include an active faith in Christ. Simply seeing God move in a situation does not necessarily mean they are right with God.