

## Acts 13-14 Chapter Study

- I. The Church At Jerusalem Chs. 1-7
- II. Persecution & Peace Chs. 8-12
- III. Launching Out Chs. 13-28

### A. Paul's First Missionary Journey Chs. 13-14

#### 1. The leaders at Antioch 13:1-3

**<sup>1</sup> 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.**

The focus has shifted away from Jerusalem now to the thriving church in Syrian Antioch – the Roman Empire's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city.

It was an important commercial hub for the Eastern Mediterranean and the perfect launching point for outreach.

God had brought together a fantastic leadership team there.

As we've already seen, **Barnabas** was a fantastic encourager and facilitator of ministry.

He had a sterling gift of recognizing the calling of others and helping them find a place of fruitful ministry.

**Saul** of course was the future Paul whose power in preaching was surpassed only by his zeal to take the Gospel where it had never been before.

Just as Barnabas was a nickname, **Simeon** had a nickname = Niger; a Roman word meaning "black."

Many scholars believe this Simeon is the same as **Simon of Cyrene** who was compelled to carry Jesus' cross, and whose sons later turn up as leaders in the Church. [Mark 15:21]

Cyrene was a port in North Africa.

**Lucius** was also from Cyrene, though we know nothing else about him.

**Manaen** came from the wealthy class & had been raised with Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great.

This was the Herod who'd executed John the Baptist, which means by this time he was a senior saint.

These men served together, each using his gifts to lead the church.

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God has blessed us with a fantastic leadership team here at Calvary Chapel of Oxnard.

We have some wonderfully gifted workers.

When visitors remark on how great our church is, I always attribute it to the grace of God in bringing such a wonderful group of people together. We are blessed!

**<sup>2</sup> 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." <sup>3</sup> Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them,**

### **they sent them away.**

What made the leaders at Antioch so effective was their perspective on ministry.

Though their *activity* was among people of Antioch, they saw it *as service to the Lord*.

And their focus was God's glory, not their own advancement – as proven by their fasting.

People who use leadership as a mean of personal advancement do not usually deprive themselves of food.

*Satisfying self* is the purpose of all they do, so they're not about to go hungry. That the leaders at Antioch fasted meant they were careful to keep self under so that the Lord could flow through them.

As they gave themselves to the Lord, He made it clear, probably through a word of Prophecy, that Barnabas & Saul were to be sent out.

So they fasted some more, laid hands on & prayed for them, then sent them off.

## **2. Cyprus 13:4-12**

### **<sup>4</sup> So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.**

From Antioch they would have sailed in a small riverboat down the Orontes River to Seleucia which was the main seaport for the area.

There they boarded a larger vessel and sailed west to the island of Cyprus, Barnabas' home.

### **<sup>5</sup> And when they arrived in Salamis,**

On the east coast of Cyprus -

### **they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John [Mark] as their assistant.**

While Jews generally didn't like the sea & avoided marine occupations like sailing, they were extremely skilled in trade, so they tended to locate in ports & commercial centers like Antioch, Seleucia, and Salamis.

When Barnabas & Saul arrived in these places, they went to the synagogues and preached the Gospel because they knew the Jews would be the best prepared to hear it.

After all, Jesus was their long-awaited Messiah.

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Barnabas' nephew, John Mark went along with them as an assistant, a schlepper of luggage, an attendant whose task was to assist in whatever way they needed.

### **<sup>6</sup> Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos,**

On the *opposite end*, the western coast of the island -

### **they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus,**

Son of Joshua; remember – “Joshua-Yeshua” was a common name at that time.

This guy was a fraud, a magician who played on the superstitions of others in order to make a living.

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### **<sup>7</sup> who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.**

Sergius Paulus was the Roman appointed governor of the Island of Cyprus.

Bar-Jesus was one of his attendants, a counselor who advised him.

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Many people of the Roman Empire were deeply superstitious.

Because of that, not a few rulers included in their board of counselors diviners, fortune-tellers, astrologers & spiritual prognosticators who used occultic means to advise them.

The *grand vizier* of the Aladdin story was such a person. *Merlin* was Arthur's counselor.

Bar-Jesus was Sergius Paulus' spiritual counselor.

But when Paulus heard about Barnabas & Saul, he was sharp enough to realize their message was different, and summoned them.

The Romans were always on the lookout for developments that could effect the Pax Romana – the peace and status quo.

They knew the volatile nature of religious devotion. So when Paulus heard about how these 2 guys from Antioch were stirring a spiritual awakening, he was all over it like stripes on plaid.

But more than just doing his job as governor – he wanted to know if there was any truth in the message Barnabas & Saul preached. He was hungry for the Word of God.

**<sup>8</sup> But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.**

Bar-Jesus was called "Elymas [el-lumas] = 'The Enlightened'.

He knew the truth of the Gospel spelled certain doom for the deception he'd we've round the governor, so he did his best to counter the preaching of Barnabas & Saul.

**<sup>9</sup> Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him <sup>10</sup> and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? <sup>11</sup> And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. <sup>12</sup> Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.**

Paul did not just blow up at this guy and cuss him out.

V. 8 makes it clear that Bar-Jesus *kept on trying* to counter what the apostles were saying.

He was interrupting & resisting in a rude manner.

When it was obvious to Paul that Sergius Paulus' attention was being hindered by the sorcerer's interruptions, he spoke up with a rebuke.

Bar-Jesus was controlled by a spirit of deceit which could not overcome the power of the truth.

Paul knew this was the moment in which the reality of that ought to be manifest in the visible world, and announced Bar-Jesus' blindness.

When the influence of Bar-Jesus was divinely removed, the governor came to faith in Christ.

But Luke wants to make it clear it wasn't just the judgment of Elymas that convinced Sergius Paulus; what blew his mind and resulted in faith was the preaching of the Gospel.

The word "*astonished*" is literally – '*blown away!*'

Before we move on, note that in v. 9 Luke introduces Saul's new name of **Paul**.

'Saul' is Hebrew & means "desired." Paul is Latin, and means "little."

Now that Saul has embarked on his career as a missionary, moving around the Roman world, it's fitting he take a Roman name.

He understood the principle that when taking the Gospel to people, you **identify with them**.

That's what Jesus did when He was baptized in the Jordan; though sinless, He came to identify with humanity.

What's interesting is that Luke refers to Saul's name change to Paul in the story of Elymas.

**Elymas** was a lofty title meaning *The Enlightened One*. It was a claim to **greatness**.

**Paul** means *little, small*.

Paul made no claim to greatness. He knew he was just a little guy – but he had a great, big God!

And when it came to a showdown between Elymas & Paul; the Enlightened One & Little – Small smoked Big.

Here's the lesson: <i>Those who are little in the Lord will always be vastly bigger &amp; greater than the great ones of this world.</i>
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### 3. Pisidian Antioch 13:13-48

**13 Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.**

From Paphos they sailed directly north to the southern coast of the Roman province of Asia, or as we called it, Asia Minor, modern day Turkey. They landed at Perga where their assistant John Mark split and returned to Jerusalem.

We'll learn later that this wasn't a good thing.

It seems he whimpered out and went home to momma, Barnabas' sister.

Later, when Barnabas & Paul head back out on their second journey, Barnabas will invite John Mark, & Paul objects, saying he's undependable.

The resulting disagreement becomes so sharp between the 2 apostles, they end up splitting up & go out separately.

**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.**

This was of course a different Antioch than the one in Syria.

Pisidian Antioch was a major trading center located on the main highway through this region.

To the north & east was a hilly region controlled by wild tribes the Persians and Greeks had never been able to tame.

The Romans managed to pacify the region only a generation before this. Antioch was really the last *major* city along the road before it began winding through this wild area.

Because it was a commercial center, there was a sizeable Jewish community there.

As visitors, the apostles entered the synagogue and sat down to worship with their fellow Jews.

**15 And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, “Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.”**

Since Barnabas & Paul were from Jerusalem by way of Syrian Antioch, they were invited to bring a greeting and share any pertinent news. They had news alright – really good news!

**16 Then Paul stood up, and motioning with *his* hand said, “Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:**

This was a nod to the God-fearing Gentiles who’d be sitting at one side of the room.

**17 The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it. 18 Now for a time of about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness. 19 And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment. 20 “After that He gave *them* judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. 21 And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. 22 And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, ‘*I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.*’ 23 From this man’s seed, according to *the* promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior— Jesus— 24 after John [the Baptist] had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 And as John was finishing his course, he said, ‘Who do you think I am? I am not *He*. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.’**

Paul’s concern was to present Jesus as the Son of David, the long-awaited Messiah, so he gave a thumbnail review of their history.

He referred to John the Baptist because by this time, John was considered by the Jewish people as having been a prophet, on the same order as the prophets of old, like Isaiah & Jeremiah.

John had indicated that his ministry was to prepare for the Messiah who was coming *next* and that the people should *look* for Him.

Then John *pointed to Jesus* and said *He* was the One they were to embrace.

**26 “Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been**

sent.

Just as John had pointed to Jesus as the Savior, Paul was now pointing to Him.

Would they respond in faith – or would they take the path John’s hearers had taken?

**27 For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled *them* in condemning *Him*. 28 And though they found no cause for death *in Him*, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death. 29 Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took *Him* down from the tree and laid *Him* in a tomb. 30 But God raised Him from the dead. 31 He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. 32 And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers. 33 God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’**

Paul makes clear the *Incarnation* of God the Son was *foretold* in the Scriptures.

You see, this was one of the earliest sticking points for the Gospel in answering the Jewish critics.

The followers of Jesus maintained Jesus was both human & divine, that he was both Son of God and God the son.

Unbelieving Jews said the *idea* of the incarnation was *blasphemous!*

So Paul refuted them by showing how the Word foretold the Incarnation.

He says it early here in his message in Antioch to forestall the objection he knows will eventually come.

**34 And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: ‘I will give you the sure mercies of David.’ 35 Therefore He also says in another *Psalm*: ‘You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.’ 36 “For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; 37 but He whom God raised up saw no corruption.**

Along with the Incarnation as an essential of the Gospel is the Resurrection, which was also foretold.

It’s in the Psalms of David that we find the most consistent witness to the resurrection.

Paul points out David could not have been referring to himself as the subject of resurrection since his grave was well known.

David was speaking of His descendant – the Messiah.

**38 Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; 39 and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.**

What Paul says here is an important insight we've not encountered before – that justification comes through faith in Christ, not through self-wrought righteousness & obedience to the Law.

Up to this point, the Apostles had taught that faith in Jesus means the forgiveness of sins.

But this is the first time we've seen spelled out that right standing before God is based in faith, not the law.

For those Jews who'd tried to find an intimate relationship with God through keeping the law, this would be good news.

But for those Jews who saw the law as a way to prove themselves *better than others*, Paul's message would be *infuriating*.

You see, some of the people in the synagogue really wanted to be close to God and following the Jewish traditions heard that they could secure God's favor by obedience to the law.

They knew from regular personal experience that they fell short of the standard, and instead of feeling closer to God for their efforts, they felt further because of guilt.

But some saw the law, not as a way to get closer to God but to elevate themselves above others whose obedience to the law was less obvious.

These didn't concern themselves with their failures, they only prided themselves on their successes.

Along comes Paul with the message that in the end, *righteousness* is not about what one does, but about in Whom one believes.

That message is going to *comfort* those who are conscious of their inability to obey while it's going to tick-off those who've deceived themselves into thinking they *have* obeyed.

**40 Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you:**

Then he quotes -

**41 'Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you.'**”

As Paul preached, he could see in the faces of those listening that some were hardening while others were being brought to faith. He warned those who were hardening in their opposition to his message.

**42 So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.**

In a typical synagogue service, only adult Jewish males were allowed to speak.

The God-fearing Gentiles who were there waited till the Jews had left then they gathered round Barnabas & Paul & pleaded with them that they would come back with more in a week.

**43 Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.**

It wasn't just among the Gentiles that a positive response was garnered; a substantial percentage of Jews & Jewish converts also believed.

These followed the apostles around in the tradition of disciples & rabbis, which is what Paul was.

Paul had been trained under the famed Jewish rabbi Gamaliel, but had become a convert to Rabbi Jesus.

**44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. 45 But when the Jews**

Meaning the unbelieving Jews . . .

**saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. 46 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so the Lord has commanded us:**

And now they quote Isaiah, 42:6 & 49:6 -

**'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'**

It was important that Paul & Barnabas locate their work among the Gentiles in the prophetic word because many of the Jews had a settled hostility toward the Gentiles.

Some even believed God had made the Gentiles as fuel for the flames of hell.

For such prejudiced minds, the thought that Gentiles *could* be saved, let alone that they would be the main focus of Paul & Barnabas' outreach would be maddening.

Ministry to Gentiles and the question of their salvation will soon become the first great internal dispute in the Church.

**48 Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.**

#### **4. Iconium 13:49-14:7**

**49 And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.**

This was part of the brilliance of Paul's strategy in going to Antioch; it was a hub for surrounding area.

The Romans had made it an outpost that controlled the entire region.

Located on the main highway, it was sure that whatever happened in the city would spread to the surrounding area.

**50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.**

Luke's mention of prominent women here is interesting since we know that the culture of this area readily accepted the women in positions of influence.

There were many enterprising women who ran businesses and held important leadership positions.

Because the Jews of this area were engaged primarily in commercial interests, they had access to the rich & powerful and used their connections to raise formal



opposition to the Apostles.

**<sup>51</sup> But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. <sup>52</sup> And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.**

Iconium was a smaller city about 80 miles SE from Antioch. Such a trip would be about a 3 to 4 day walk for the Apostles.

**<sup>1</sup> Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed.**

The response at Iconium was great – many came to faith – but not all . . .

**<sup>2</sup> But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. <sup>3</sup> Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. <sup>4</sup> But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. <sup>5</sup> And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, <sup>6</sup> they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region. <sup>7</sup> And they were preaching the gospel there.**

What was it the hostile Jews could have said to the Gentiles & rulers that would incite their opposition to the Gospel?

Just this: Within the Roman Empire was an official policy of the acceptance of traditional religions.

The Romans knew the volatile nature of religion and held a policy of allowing traditional religions among the people they conquered.

What the Romans didn't allow was *new* religious movements.

These had proven to be nothing more than means by which some political rebel could gather a following and try to usurp the Roman control of one of their provinces.

So they rejected new religions and religious movements – in some cases using force or the threat of force to squelch them.

Jews who rejected the Gospel used this policy of Rome to gain support for their opposition to the Gospel.

And it's why with both Paul, and with the later church fathers, they tried to show the Roman authorities that Christianity was NOT a new religion at all – it was the embodiment of what Judaism had always been meant by God to be.

## **5. Lystra & Derbe 14:8-20**

Vs. 8-20 were the subject of the message a couple Sundays ago, so we'll just read the passage with little comment tonight.

**<sup>8</sup> And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. <sup>9</sup> This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he**

had faith to be healed, <sup>10</sup> said with a loud voice, “Stand up straight on your feet!” And he leaped and walked. <sup>11</sup> Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” <sup>12</sup> And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. <sup>13</sup> Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes. <sup>14</sup> But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out <sup>15</sup> and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, <sup>16</sup> who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. <sup>17</sup> Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” <sup>18</sup> And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them. <sup>19</sup> Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul *and* dragged *him* out of the city, supposing him to be dead. <sup>20</sup> However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

#### 6. Return to Antioch 14:21-27

<sup>21</sup> And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, <sup>22</sup> strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”

Paul & Barnabas had rediscovered on this trip that while God was with them and gave proof to the power of the Gospel through a plethora of miracles, that did not mean life was a piece of cake.

The Holy Spirit does not come to make us happy but to make us holy.

The power of God is not a trick that makes things easy – it’s a weapon to wield in the midst of a war.

I want to ask you to take careful note of what Paul & Barnabas said here.

**“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”**

If you listen to the health & wealth-prosperity preachers, you’ll be led to believe real faith means smooth sailing.

If love means never having to say you’re sorry, faith means having nothing to be sorry *for*.

Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, Charles Capps, TD Jakes, Marilyn Hickey, Joyce Meyer, Benny Hinn and all the rest don’t have a tenth the faith the

Apostle Paul had – yet he said the road to heaven was paved with difficulty. What I want to know is, IF the Health & Wealth message is true - why don't its chief advocates hop on a plane to Darfur or Calcutta, and hold a crusade there. Those poor souls need that message desperately!

Why is it these guys stay in affluent countries, preaching their message of unlimited prosperity to the already affluent? We know why.

**23 So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.**

How mature could these new believers be?

Not that mature compared to the churches of Antioch & Jerusalem.

But Paul & Barnabas knew the churches would need some defined, designated leaders, so they looked for those who already demonstrated a level of maturity above their peers, and publicly recognized them by laying on their hands.

Because the apostles knew how important godly leadership is to the church, they fasted so they'd be in a spiritual state of mind to hear from the Lord.

**24 And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.**

They were back now along the southern coast of Asia Minor.

**25 Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.**

Right on the coast.

**26 From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. 27 Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.**

Their first missionary adventure complete, they returned to Antioch with a report of all the Lord had done, focusing on how fruitful the work had been among the Gentiles.