

Acts 13:1-12

From this chapter onwards we will be seeing Paul's various missionary journeys. There are detailed descriptions of his three journeys in Acts. Whereas it is proposed that after Paul's imprisonment and travel to Rome he may have been released and went on fourth missionary journey. Some even account his travel to Rome and all the adventures along the way as the fourth missionary journey.

V1-3 Paul and Barnabas commissioned

V1 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.

Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark were all at the church in Antioch, having returned from delivering a gift of support to the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30).

Simeon who was called Niger: Since Niger means black, he was presumably a black African among the congregation at Antioch, and believed to be the same Simeon who carried Jesus' cross (Luke 23:26).

Lucius of Cyrene – again from Africa.

Manaen - Herod and Manaen grew up together, but went very different ways. One killed John the Baptist and presided over one of the trials of Jesus before His crucifixion. The other became a Christian, and a leader in the dynamic congregation at Antioch.

V 2 – while they were worshipping and fasting... “set apart for me Barnabas and Saul”

As the people in the church fast and pray, the will of God is revealed to them. They obey by fasting, praying, laying of hands and sending the apostles with prayer.

Emphases

1. Diversity in the early church

- a. **Diversity of races** – people of all colors and backgrounds are seen in the church. They are involved not only in attending but leadership too. The church is ready to go through the pains of accepting everybody and making them a part of the Body of Christ.
- b. **Diversity of ministry** – prophets, teachers, deacons, apostles, evangelists and many such positions of service can be seen. Their ministry is preaching the message of Jesus and passing on the apostolic teaching in the form of hymns, doctrinal messages and rituals like baptism and Eucharist. All of them are blessed and sent by God.

2. Fasting and prayer in the early church.

The call for mission comes in the context of communal worship, prayer and fasting. Fasting and prayer as an important Christian exercise.

1. Mark of repentance
2. To be filled with spiritual food over physical food – openness to God's Word and will.

3. Giving up a luxury for the good of the poor

Worship and fasting and prayer inside the church helped them to realize the will of God for those outside the church.

“If we assume that they fasted and prayed about the need of the world for Jesus, we can see how God answered their prayer – by using them. This is often how God moves, by sending the people who have it on their hearts to pray.”

Prophecy in the early church.

Up to this chapter we have seen many who functioned as prophets. E.g. Agabus (prophet mentioned in Acts 11:27-28 famine in Jerusalem, Acts 21:10-12 Imprisonment of Paul). In the Bible, prophets are forth-telling more than foretelling. Forth-telling God’s will
Forth-telling God’s warnings
Not a prosperity preacher, which is a sad joke of this time.
False prophet Bar-Jesus (Elymas) mentioned in the next section of this chapter.

Set apart for me

Paul’s life was already set apart for Christ. But now for an even more specific purpose. Setting apart for Jesus would mean setting apart from many of the things of the world.
Sacred – set apart. Life becomes holy when dedicate to fulfil God’s will.

Missionary church

Attention now turns from the church in Jerusalem to the church in Antioch as the center for a divine initiative. Antioch becomes a missionary church.

Before this, believers set out from Jerusalem during the persecution. Many others became missionaries in different situations. But this is the first instance of a church specifically setting apart and sending missionaries.

Many cities with same names – e.g. Antioch

V4-12 Paul and Barnabas in Cyprus

Paul and Barnabas set out in AD 46-48

Accompanied by Mark

Set out from the port of Seleucia. They made it to Salamis in Cyprus, and proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish Synagogues.

As they traveled through the whole island they came to Paphos. This city on the west coast of Cyprus was known for its immorality. They met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus (Elymas) who was an attendant to the proconsul Sergius Paulus.

Inscriptions on boundary stones that refer to Sergius Paulus were found in Rome in the 19th century that dates back to AD 47, time of Emperor Claudius. This proves the historicity of this person. A Roman proconsul was responsible for an entire province and answered to the Roman Senate. Paul and

Barnabas were actually summoned by the proconsul because he wanted to hear more about Jesus.

Elymas sought to turn the proconsul away from the truth, but the Holy Spirit came upon Paul who then rebuked the man and caused him to be blind. It was because of this that the proconsul saw the power of God and converted.

Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, rebukes and curses him with blindness.

Paul would have remembered how his own blindness had made him realize that Jesus is the Christ.

Questions:

- 1. What is the relationship between worship and prayer and mission?**
- 2. This chapter mentions true and false prophets. Why do you think Elymas opposed Paul to prevent him from evangelizing Sergius Paulus? In what ways are people prevented today from realizing God's will?**