

- 1) James' death and Peter's capture and miraculous release from jail could almost be considered an interruption in Luke's narrative
- 2) Basically this portion of the narrative was setup by the church at Antioch sending Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem with famine relief.
- 3) It was probably to show the tumultuous times in Jerusalem.
- 4) As a reminder before we proceed, we need to go back and read 11:27 and ff.

Acts 11:27–30 (NIV)

- 5) So, the assumption is that Barnabas and Saul may have been in Jerusalem at the same time as the incident with Peter took place
- 6) In fact, verse 1 of chapter 12 which is the James and Peter section basically says this:

¹ It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them.

- a) However, looking at various timelines one gets multiple opinions in this regard.
 - i) A definite word of caution however is, as we read 12:25 and then move to the events of 13:1 thru 5 there are varying opinions as to the time between Saul and Barnabas's return to Antioch and the sending out of Paul, Barnabas and John Mark on the first missionary journey.
 - ii) Likely at least a year perhaps even 2 or 3 years.
- 7) Now, picking up in verse 25 of chapter 12 we read ...

Acts 12:25–13:5 (NIV)

- 1) Luke introduces the church in Antioch with a bit of personnel name dropping.
 - a) We might call this the who's who list of teachers and prophets.
 - b) And, having all these is like the trifecta. In 2 Cor we are told:

1 Corinthians 12:28 (NASB 2020)

²⁸ And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *and various* kinds of tongues.

- 2) At this point, one can assume that Antioch was on the way to becoming a second major center of Christian faith second only to Jerusalem itself.
- 3) Its leadership team was well known, with Barnabas and Saul among them.
- 4) Wright comments that

“We get a fascinating glimpse of their regular devotional life: fasting and prayer surrounding the worship of the Lord, waiting for the spirit to give fresh direction.

Whether they had been expecting something like this, we don't know. But to be told, suddenly, that two of the main leaders were wanted elsewhere must have come as something of a blow."

Tom Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 13-28* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 3–4..

- 5) From vs. 5, obviously, we are off to a great start but, as we are about to see, things are destined to turn a little off pretty quickly.

Acts 13:6–12 (NIV)

- 1) Paphos was the seat of government on the island of Cyprus.
- 2) It is important to see the interplay here as we meet these characters.
 - a) First, Bar-Jesus – the magician (sorcerer).
 - i) Jewish name meaning “son of Jesus” or, said another way “son of salvation”
 - (1) Interesting twist to say the least.
 - ii) He was also called by the name Elymas which in some way means magician (not in the Greek) (some controversy over the phrasing of the parenthetical expression here)
 - iii) He was a Jewish man who was “with” (actual Greek) the proconsul. (NIV uses attendant?)
 - (1) Either way, it basically means he had the proconsul's ear.
 - iv) This was bad for two reasons – he was a magician and perhaps more importantly, a false prophet.
- 3) Elymas opposed Saul and Barnabas which simply means he was doing all he could to keep the proconsul (governor) from becoming a believer in Jesus.
 - a) One must assume that this is because once the proconsul did become a believer he would see Elymas for what he was and no longer associate with or need him.
- 4) Paul clearly states what Elymas truly was:

¹⁰“You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?”
- 5) (here is the point at which Luke loses the name Saul and uses the name Paul for the remainder of his narrative)
- 6) Paul then pronounces the hand of the Lord against the man and he becomes blind for a time.
- 7) Though this blindness might be a temporary punishment for Elymas, the more important outcome of the sentence was the proconsul's reaction.

When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

8) The dynamic trio (soon to be duo) continue their journey.

Acts 13:13–20a (NIV)

- 1) Of course, we will return to the leaving of John Mark at this point in the journey a little later.
- 2) For now, they proceed on to Pisidian Antioch and enter the synagogue there.
- 3) Two things of interest here:
 - a) First, unlike the temple, evidently, Gentiles who worshiped God were allowed in the synagogue with the Jews.
 - i) Remember, synagogues were not all “totally Jewish” they were in many cases simply town meeting places.
 - b) Second, apparently these folks were very much wanting (at least at this point) to hear what Paul and Barnabas had to say.
 - i) As we will see, this is not going to last very long.
- 4) All that being said, here is another of those long readings similar to the speech of Stephen before he was stoned.

Acts 13:20b–42 (NIV)

- 5) Obviously a much better outcome than Stephen’s speech.
- 6) Continuing on, we see the initial reactions – still favorable.

Acts 13:43-44 (NIV)

- 7) As we will see, this quickly changes.

Acts 13:45–47 (NIV)

- 8) Over the past few lessons, we have talked about the fact that Jesus absolutely told the disciples to go to the Gentiles.
 - a) As we have seen, this has been a challenge – individually and as congregations.
 - b) Now, I think we can see the root of the problem.
- 9) It is time for us to seriously look back at God’s plan.
- 10) God had planned from the beginning that the entire world would come to know Him.
- 11) In Genesis 12, God speaks directly to this:

Genesis 12:3 (NASB 2020)

³And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

- 12) There can be no doubt that when He says “families of the earth” He means all nations.
- 13) Then, there is the quote Paul makes in this very passage from Isaiah 49:6.

Isaiah 49:6 (NASB 2020)

I will also make You a light of the nations

So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

14) One very interesting part of this verse which Paul does not quote is the very first phrase

⁶He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the protected ones of Israel;

15) When I hear this I think what God is saying is Israel – the Jewish nation – has a much bigger role as His chosen people.

a) In essence, He is saying that the relationship He has established with Israel – His chosen people – He will establish with the rest of the nation of the world.

b) And, most importantly, Israel will be the instrument by which that relationship is established – “Light of the nations”!

c) So, instead of being jealous and so self-centered, they should have rejoiced that God had chosen them for such a monumental task.

d) It may sound a bit odd, but to put this in a little different perspective

i) God has a the sovereign right to be jealous of other gods (who aren’t really gods at all) but

ii) His chosen people do not have the right to be jealous of other nations whom God chooses to bless through them.

16) The more I contemplate this scripture and the situation it so explicitly defines, I believe it is the absolute core problem of the Jew / Gentile relational problems throughout the New Testament.

a) Not treating them equally – not eating with them etc.

b) Forcing them into obedience of the Law – circumcision – becoming Jew first before being accepted as Christian brothers

c) All stem from Jealousy!

17) In this, Israel had forsaken the task that God had given them.

18) As Paul explains, in light of this, he still had the responsibility to offer the Gospel to the Jew first then to the Gentile but, as the LABC asserts:

“But Israel had forsaken that task, so it was given to the church to carry out.”⁹

⁹ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 520–521.