

## I. The First Journey (Acts 13:1-14:28)

- Barnabus and Saul journey from Jerusalem to Antioch, bringing John Mark (Barnabus' cousin-Colossians 4:10) along with them. The leadership of the church in Antioch is directed by the Holy Spirit to separate Barnabus and Saul from among them and send them to work. The two missionaries (and their helper, John Mark) leave Antioch for the coastal city of Seleucia. The first missionary journey of Paul begins.
- A summary of the journey:
  - **Salamis** (NE corner of the isle of Cyprus): Preach in the synagogues
  - **Paphos** (SW side of Cyprus): Encounter the sorcerer (Gk. "*magos*") named Bar-Jesus (Aramaic "*Bariesous*" meaning "son of Jesus/Joshua"), also known by his Arabic name Elymas (meaning "wise man"). He is also described as a false prophet and a Jew. Elymas is in cahoots with the Roman proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul wants to hear more of what Paul is teaching, but Elymas tries to distract him. Paul (Gk. "*Paulos*" meaning "small" or "little") rebukes the magician and Elymas is struck blind. Sergius believes the words of Paul (because of miracle or the teaching?) Paul's name change is interestingly close in the narrative to the Latin surname of the proconsul.
  - **Perga** (region of Pamphilia): John Mark parts ways with Paul and his cousin and returns to Jerusalem.
  - **Antioch** (region of Pisidia, central Asia Minor): Goes on the Sabbath to the synagogue, and after the reading of the daily liturgy, Paul delivers a short sermon. The sermon contains:
    - ✓ Short history from Exodus to King David
    - ✓ Declares Jesus the promised descendant of David
    - ✓ Reviews the mission of John the Baptist
    - ✓ Brief story of Jesus' false arrest, sham trial, unlawful execution and miraculous resurrection
    - ✓ Announces that Jesus fulfilled promises of a messiah (quotes Psalms 2:7, 16:10 and Isaiah 55:3)
    - ✓ David is dead, buried and decayed; Jesus is alive
    - ✓ The Basic Gospel Truth (28-39)
    - ✓ Warning about failure to obey (quotes Habakkuk 1:5)Afterwards, the Gentiles (Gk. "*ethnos*" meaning "nations") beg to hear more the next week. Many Jews and proselytes follow Paul & Barnabus and listen to their persuasive arguments. The next Sabbath, a huge crowd comes to hear the missionaries. The envious Jews oppose them; causing Paul to rebuke them and declare the message will be taken to the Gentiles since the Jews "judge themselves unworthy of eternal life". He quotes Isaiah 42:6-7 and 49:6. The Gentiles gladly welcome the Word of God, but the Jews continue their opposition, causing Paul and Barnabus dust off their feet (cf. Matthew 10:14) and leave.
  - **Iconium** (region of Galatia): Again, they preach in the synagogue, and although many believe, the city is divided and some threaten violence.
  - **Lystra** (region of Galatia/Lycaonia): Paul heals a crippled man, causing the people to assume they are the Greek gods Zeus (Barnabus) and Hermes (Paul). Hermes (Roman "*Mercury*") is interestingly enough the herald of the gods. One day they can barely keep people from worshipping them and the next, Paul is being stoned when his enemies from Antioch and Iconium arrive.
  - **Derbe** (region of Galatia/Lycaonia): Gospel is preached, many converted
- Paul and Barnabus return to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, encouraging the brethren and appointing elders in every church. From this region (Pisidia), they return to Perga in the coastal region of Pamphylia, and set sail from Attalia back to Antioch in Syria. They give a report of all that has happened.

## II. To Circumcise or not to Circumcise... (Acts 15:1-31)

- While they are in Antioch, a man from Judea arrives, teaching that Gentile converts must be circumcised. His teachings are disputed by Paul and Barnabus. It is decided that a delegation will be sent to Jerusalem to obtain a ruling from the apostles on the matter. On the way, they pass through Phoenicia and Samaria, telling the brethren about the Gentile converts in Asia. Galatians 2:1-10 recounts this story and tells us that Titus was with them, and gives the time frame: 14 years after Saul's conversion (or 14 years after leaving Jerusalem for Tarsus in Acts 9:30)
- Upon presentation of the dilemma in Jerusalem, there is mixed reaction and debate. Finally, Peter speaks, referring back to his involvement with the conversion of Cornelius and in verse 10, determines that they should not place the yoke of the former Law on the Gentiles. Paul and Barnabus relate the miracles and signs God allowed them to perform in front of the Gentiles and the resulting conversions.

- James lays down the final word, placing no obligation of circumcision on the Gentile converts. The “council” does instruct the Gentiles to observe some tenants of the Torah (in James’ speech and in the written reply):
  1. Abstain from eating things offered to idols (Exodus 34:15)
  2. From eating strangled animals and blood, these go together-properly slaughtered animals are drained of blood (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 3:17; 7:26; 17:10-14; 19:26; Deuteronomy 12:16, 23; 15:23; I Samuel 14:33)
  3. Abstain from sexual immorality
- The first two on our list may seem to be strange instruction and cause us to ask if they are binding today. Read I Corinthians 8:7-13 & 10:23-33 to decide.
- Paul, Barnabus, Judas Bar-Sabas, Silas, and we assume the still uncircumcised Titus (Galatians 2:3), return to Antioch and deliver the ruling. After encouraging the brethren in Antioch, Judas returns to Jerusalem, but Silas remains in Antioch.
- Paul and Barnabus propose to revisit the cities they went to on their first journey. They dispute over taking John Mark because he previously deserted them. After much debate, Barnabus takes Mark, traveling to Cyprus separate from Paul. Paul takes Silas as his new companion and heads back into Asia via Cilicia.

### III. The Second Journey (Acts 16-18:22)

- A summary of the second journey:
  - **Derbe & Lystra** (Galatia/Lycaonia): Timothy, the son of a Greek father and Jewish mother, joins the team. He is well spoken of by the brethren. Despite the ruling from Jerusalem, Paul has Timothy circumcised.
  - **Troas** (west of Mysia on Aegean coast): After being forbidden by the Spirit to travel into north Asia Minor/Bithynia, the missionaries arrive at Troas. Here, Paul is compelled in a vision to cross into Macedonia.
  - **Neapolis** (coastal city between Macedonia and Thrace): They land here after a brief stop on the isle of Samothrace.
  - **Philippi** (Macedonia): Lydia of Thyatira converted and a slave girl has a prophetic spirit cast out. Her masters had been making money off of this “gift” and were upset. They stir up the magistrates, causing Paul and Silas to be beaten with rods and imprisoned. A great earthquake opens the prison doors and loosens the prisoner’s chains. After panicking, the jail keeper is reassured that the prisoners did not flee. The jailor desires salvation and the missionaries share the Gospel with him and his family. After the jailer cares for their wounds, Paul and Silas baptize the entire household. Paul and Silas are granted freedom by the magistrates, but not until after Paul reminds them that have acted unlawfully to Roman citizens. They visit Lydia, and then depart.
  - **Thessalonica** (Macedonia): After passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, Paul and Silas arrive in this city. They teach in the synagogue for three Sabbaths and many are converted. The Jews that do not accept the message bring trouble on Jason, one of the converts.
  - **Berea** (Macedonia): Again, their preaching finds success. That is, until troublemakers from Thessalonica arrive and start trouble in Berea. Paul puts out to sea, but Silas and Timothy remain to work in Berea.
  - **Athens** (Achaia): Paul arrives in the famous center of Greek thought and achievement and begins to teach in the synagogues and marketplaces. He encounters philosophers who are curious about his teachings. They meet with him at the Areopagus (“*rock of Ares*”), a location where educated people meet and debate (“think tank”). Paul recognizes that they are a religious people and fear their gods. He announces to them who the deity is that they call “unknown”. In a short sermon, Paul contrasts the true God with their mythology:
    - ✓ Does not dwell in temples made by humans
    - ✓ Not in need of things given by the hands of men (offerings/sacrifices)
    - ✓ Created everything, alone
    - ✓ In complete authority over all realms
    - ✓ Giver of life to all men and nations, all men are God’s offspring
 God can overlook the ignorance of the Greeks in the past, but now they have the Truth and are accountable for it. The reaction to the teaching of the resurrection meets three responses (common today as well): desire to know more, mock the truth, or believe.
  - **Corinth** (on isthmus connecting Peloponnesian peninsula to Greek mainland): Paul works as a tentmaker with Aquila and Priscilla. Silas and Timothy reunite with Paul here. He is opposed by the Jews, but many are converted, including the synagogue ruler, Crispus and his family. They remain there for 18 months. Gallio becomes proconsul and the Jews try to get him involved in silencing Paul. Before departing the region, Paul cuts his hair because of a vow. Priscilla and Aquila join with him and they set sail.
  - **Ephesus** (SW coast of Asia Minor): Again, Paul teaches in the synagogue, but has to leave. Priscilla and Aquila remain behind as Paul returns to Antioch (after stops in Caesarea and Jerusalem).