

# **Acts Part 1 Study Guide**

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## **Lesson 12: Paul's First Journey (1) – Acts 13**

**Introduction:** Some time after Paul has been converted, perhaps 10-12 years, the Holy Spirit is finally ready to send him abroad. These last two lessons in this segment of study center upon the first journey among the Gentiles.

### **1. From Antioch to Cyprus – Acts 13:1-12**

A. The commission of Paul and Barnabas – 12:25-13:3.

1. True to Luke's writing style, he first introduces John Mark in 12:12 and now weaves him into the narrative. "Recruiting" of men to serve in the gospel alongside those of greater maturity, apprenticeship if you will, is common in Acts and the epistles. Jesus, Himself, used such "on the job training" with the apostles.
2. What a rich congregation Antioch was with teachers such as these. But the Holy Spirit assigns two of their most prominent leaders to travel abroad. This is a trip of probably three years in duration.

B. Confrontation with Elymas – 13:4-12.

1. The story of gospel preaching never changes: it is the search for opportunity amid a sea of obstacles. The opportunity: an audience with the proconsul of the island, Sergius Paulus. The obstacle: a Jewish sorcerer, Elymas.
2. Sergius Paulus wishes to hear what Paul and Barnabas have to say, but Elymas is shrewd enough to realize that if he is converted, his influence will be negated. So, *"he withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith"* (13:8).
3. With strenuous rebuke, Paul by the hand of the Lord strikes Elymas blind. Certainly Paul knows firsthand the blinding power of God, and such an act is symbolic of the moral and spiritual blindness that Elymas is choosing by opposing the truth of God.

### **2. In the Synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia – Acts 13:13-41**

A. The defection of Mark – 13:13. Again, note Luke's literary technique. He passes by this event with no explanation, but he will later refer to its deeper implications.

B. Paul's address in the synagogue – 13:16-41. A tactical pattern emerges in Cyprus (13:5) and Antioch (13:14) that will be followed by Paul in his evangelistic endeavors. Preaching first in the synagogues of the Jews is both practical and doctrinal: these are the people God promised would hear the gospel first, and they are the ones who have the history and Scriptural foundation to appreciate the message.

1. *Historical review:* Paul begins with a review of Jewish history, establishing the point that God created a special nation for the purpose of bringing His Savior into the world (Acts 13:16-22). What span of history is covered in the following two scripture references?

- a. Acts 13:17-19 –
  - b. Acts 13:20-22 –
2. *The Messiah has come*: Paul's main point is that all Old Testament history and prophecy has reached its fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Acts 13:23-39).
- a. What is David's role in this saving work of God (13:23)?
  - b. What purpose did the prophet John serve (13:24-25)?
  - c. How does Paul explain the Jews' rejection and murder of their Savior (13:26-29)? Where earlier in Acts has responsibility for this been laid at their feet?
  - d. What is the main theme of 13:30-37?
  - e. What does Paul do to substantiate the resurrection of Jesus?
  - f. How does Paul contrast David and Jesus?
3. *Driving the point home*: Now that Paul has laid the historical foundation and expounded upon its fulfillment in Christ, he establishes the significance of what is being offered by God and warns his Jewish brethren of rejecting it – 13:38-41.
- a. The inspired heart of the gospel is that the promise of God made so long ago and toward which He has been working is *forgiveness of sins* – 13:38-39 (cf. Acts 3:19, 26; 10:43). Even to Jews who are familiar with their history and the law, forgiveness is not what they have been looking for or perceived themselves to be in need of.
  - b. Perhaps Paul, like Stephen in Acts 7, perceived by body language and facial expression that his message was not being charitably received. Or perhaps he, as a Jew – one who himself had been resistant to the very message he was now preaching – could accurately anticipate the normal reaction of most Jews. At any rate, Paul warns them of the consequences of turning away from the truth he is proclaiming.

### 3. The Reaction to and Aftermath of the Sermon – Acts 13:42-52

A. Another pattern that begins to develop is the resistance of the Jews corporately to the gospel and the agreeableness of the Gentiles. This is reflected in Paul's comments in Romans 9-11. In Antioch, the Gentiles are thrilled by the message that they, too, are acceptable to God. The Jews, on the other hand, are envious.

1. What is the first tactic used by the Jews to oppose the gospel (Acts 13:45)?
2. What do they do after Paul withdraws from the synagogue and teaches among the Gentiles (Acts 13:50)?

B. In response to the rejection of the Jews, Paul indicates that he and Barnabas had fulfilled their obligations to them and pronounced condemnation upon them: *"you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life"* (13:46).

C. Paul and Barnabas are finally driven from the city. But persecution, as in the case in Jerusalem following the stoning of Stephen, often becomes the catalyst for the spread of the gospel.

**Special Note:** Calvinists use Acts 13:48 to substantiate the doctrine of limited atonement: that God arbitrarily elects some to be saved and other to be irrevocably lost. But the word "appointed" carries the idea of order or arrangement, not unilateral decree. Simply, the hearts of the Jews were not disposed to recognize and accept the truths of the gospel because they were motivated carnally (i.e., envy, 13:45). Thus, said Paul, you *"judge yourselves unworthy ..."* (13:46). The Gentiles, on the other hand, had their hearts so attuned to spiritual things that when they heard, they appreciated and responded to the truth. In this sense they were "appointed to eternal life."

#### Questions:

1. How does Sergius Paulus react to the blinding of Elymas and the teaching of Paul?
- 2a. What is the primary condition of receiving forgiveness as stated in Acts 13:39?
- 2b. To whom does this promise apply?
3. From what parts of the Old Testament does Paul quote to substantiate his arguments?
4. What does Paul remember about this situation later in life (cf. 2 Tim 3:10-11)?
5. What reaction does the acceptance of the gospel create in saved people (Acts 13:52)?