

Week 5: Paul's First Missionary Journey

Introduction: We turn now to study what is commonly referred to as the first of Paul's missionary journeys. Such a description may, however, belie the fact that Paul had been making missionary journeys since his conversion some fourteen years earlier. Beginning in Acts 13 however, Paul embarks on a career which specifically focuses on broadening the reach of the kingdom of Christ throughout the Gentile world.

I. THE NURTURING CHURCH AT ANTIOCH - Acts 13:1-3

- A. There was **unity** in **diversity** among church leaders
 - 1. The leadership was **ethnically** diverse
 - 2. The leadership was **socially** diverse
 - 3. The leadership was unified in **purpose** and **practice**
- B. The leaders were **submissive** to the direction of the Holy Spirit
- C. The leaders **commended** the work of the missionaries

II. MINISTRY IN CYPRESS – Acts 13:4-12

- A. This was Barnabas' **home area** – Acts 4:36
- B. They preached in the **synagogue** at Salamis – Acts 13:5
- C. They passed **through the island** with the Gospel – v. 6
- D. They had a **power encounter** at Paphos – vv. 6-11
 - 1. Opposed by an **apostate** Jew
 - 2. The conversion of **Sergius Paulus** – v. 12-13
 - a) Represents a **turning point** in Gentile evangelism
 - b) May have **provoked** the departure of John Mark

III. MINISTRY IN PAMPHILIA

- A. Synagogue preaching in **Psidian** Antioch
 - 1. Addressed to **Jews** and **God-fearers** – v. 16
 - 2. **Content** of the message – vv. 17-41
 - a) Divine blessing on Israel from **Abraham** to **David** – vv. 17-22

- b) Divine blessing on Israel through **Jesus**, David's **son** – vv. 23-37
 - (1) Proven to be the Messiah through **resurrection** – vv. 23-31
 - (2) Proven to be the Messiah through **prophecy** – vv. 32-37
- c) Proclamation of **salvation** and warning against **unbelief** – vv. 38-41
 - (1) Jesus provides **forgiveness** and **justification** – vv. 38-39
 - (2) Ignoring the invitation brings divine **rejection** – vv. 40-41
- 3. **Results** from the preaching – vv. 42-52
 - a) **Enthusiasm** among the Gentiles – vv. 42-44; 48-49
 - b) **Jealousy** among the Jews – v. 45
 - c) **Pronouncement** by Paul – v. 46-47
 - d) **Persecution** and departure – vv. 48-52
- B. **Mixed** results at Iconium – Acts 14:1-7
 - 1. Many believed the preaching backed by **miraculous signs** – vv. 1, 3
 - 2. Unbelieving Jews stirred up **opposition** to their message – vv. 2, 4
 - 3. **Organized** persecution caused them to flee to Lycaonia – vv. 5-7
 - a) Paul was willing to **suffer** for his faith
 - b) Paul was willing to **flee** for his faith
- C. Difficulties at **Lystra** – Acts 14:8-20
 - 1. A lame man is **healed** – vv. 8-10
 - 2. Both the apostles and the local people respond in **culturally appropriate ways**¹ – vv. 11-14
 - 3. The apostles preach an **incomplete** sermon to the pagan **animists** – vv. 15-18
 - a) God is the **Creator**
 - b) He is **knowable** through Creation
 - 4. The reception turns **stony** – vv. 19-20

¹ The New Bible Commentary states regarding this episode, “There is an ancient story about these same two gods visiting a town in the area. They were not recognized and received only a cool reception. In anger they destroyed the town that had been so inhospitable. With such a folk-tale circulating in this region, it is hardly any wonder that the crowd reacted in the way that they did, bringing forth a bull and wreathes and wanting to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas after a simple healing.”

- a) Trouble is stirred up by **Jews** from the cities previously visited
 - b) Paul is **stoned** and cast off as dead
 - c) Paul **revives** and departs for **Derbe**
- D. The gospel is received at **Derbe** – v. 21
- 1. The missionaries **preached**
 - 2. The missionaries **made disciples**
- E. The path toward **home** is **retraced** – vv. 21-25
- 1. They **strengthened** the souls of the **converts/disciples**
 - 2. They encouraged them to **persevere** in the faith
 - 3. They warned them of **persecution** in this life
 - 4. They **ordained elders** and committed them to the Lord²

IV. **MINISTRY IN ANTIOCH**

- A. The home church is **informed** of God's gracious works – vv. 26-28
- B. The intended work had been **fulfilled**
- C. There is a spirit of **camaraderie**
- D. The **emphasis** is on God
- E. They remained a **long time** in Antioch

Conclusion: The first missionary journey ends on a note of joy and fulfillment. Paul and Barnabas had accomplished what they set out to do. Through tribulation and disappointment mixed with victory and exhibitions of God's power, these missionaries established a pattern for all subsequent missionary endeavors. They showed their willingness to adapt their communication to fit the audience coupled with their absolute fidelity to the message committed to them by the Lord.

² These early missionaries demonstrate a biblical paradigm for missions work: 1) Make disciples, 2) Strengthen their faith, 3) Appoint leadership, 4) Commit them to the Lord. The missionaries recognized that these local believers had the same Word of God, the same Holy Spirit and were part of the same Body of Christ and were thus able to depart with confidence that Christ would indeed build His church!