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a ***Grace Notes*** course

# **The Acts of the Apostles**

an expositional study

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Lesson 214: **Acts 13:1-12**

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## ACTS, Lesson 214, Acts 13:1-12

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**Acts 13:1-12****Acts 13:1**

**13:1 Now there were in the church at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.**

This chapter starts the second part of the Acts of the Apostles; and chapters 13 and 14 provide the history of the Apostles' first missionary journey.

Up to now, Luke has given an account of Christianity in general, with many different personalities (evangelists, teachers, converts) being discussed. From now on the narrative is devoted almost exclusively to the missionary efforts of the apostle Paul.

The church is seen here in a new and important aspect as an active, dynamic missionary church. Previously, the Gospel had been given out, it seems, by informal, unorganized efforts, and through casual occurrences. The persecution at Jerusalem, and in Judea, had caused a considerable dispersion of Christians, along with the diffusion of their opinions. But now the church at Antioch is the center of operations, taking the lead, planning and executing organized efforts to extend the gospel to the rest of the world. <sup>1</sup>

**certain prophets and teachers**

All the prophets were teachers, but not all teachers were necessarily prophets who made predictions about the future. We can't tell from this verse just which of these five named men which were prophets or teachers.

We know that prophets came to Antioch from Jerusalem (Acts 11:27), after Barnabas and Saul had been teaching there for a while; and by this time there were many evangelists, teachers, prophets, and apostles, who were associated with the extended Antioch church.

<sup>1</sup> Gloag, Acts 13:1

Baker: "From the Greek we are unable to discern whether the words *prophets* and *teachers* signify two separate offices, or if a person can be both prophet and teacher. Paul, for example, speaks of "pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11); in his view, a person fills one office that has a dual function. Further, in the same passage, he places the prophets in a separate category, which is listed after than of apostleship... Luke described both Barnabas and Paul as teachers in the Antioch church (Acts 11:26), but here he [leaves the distinctions] unresolved." <sup>2</sup>

**Barnabas**

Barnabas is well known to us by now. You can refresh your memory about this stalwart of the faith by reference to:

**Topic: Barnabas****Simeon Niger**

The consensus of Bible scholars seems to be that the name "Niger" was given to this man because of his complexion or origin in North Africa, although it seems that "Niger" was a common enough surname in the Roman world. The Greek word does mean "black", so Simeon might have been one of the evangelists who came to Antioch from Cyrenia (Acts 11:20)

**Lucius of Cyrene**

Lucius was definitely from Cyrenia, although this is all we know about him.

**Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch**

The phrase "had been brought up with" comes from the Greek **suntrofo-**, meaning "raised in the same family; brought up with".

Herod the tetrarch was the son of Herod the Great who ruled the provinces of Galilee and Perea; he also was responsible for the beheading of John the Baptist. At the time the missionaries were being set out from Antioch, Herod was in exile in Lyons.

<sup>2</sup> Baker, Acts 13:1

The historical record is speculative as to the relationship of Manaen with this Herod. Some think that Manaen's mother was Herod's nurse, when he was a baby, and that the two boys grew up together, at least in their young childhood. Since this Greek word is also used for "foster brother", this is plausible.

Josephus mentions a Manaen, belonging to the Essene sect, who, when Herod the Great was a child, predicted that he would be King of the Jews, and that Herod, when he became king, favored the Essenes on this account. Therefore, it has been conjectured that this Manaen must have been a considerable person in Herod's court, and that his son, the younger Manaen, would have been brought up with Herod. <sup>3</sup>

### Saul

...shortly to begin his mission to the Gentiles and to receive the name Paul.

### Acts 13:2

**13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.**

### As they ministered to the Lord

The word for ministered here is **leitourgew**, from which we get the English word "liturgy". This word had a number of meanings in a variety of circumstances: <sup>4</sup>

- A **civil service**, especially in the technical language of Athenian law.
- A **function** of any kind, even as of bodily organs.
- **Priestly ministrations**, both among Jews and among the heathen.
- The **Eucharistic services**
- **Set forms of divine worship**

<sup>3</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15.10

<sup>4</sup> Vincent, Acts 13:2

The word was commonly used in the Septuagint for the service performed by the priests who served in the Tabernacle.

Here, Luke uses the word for the first time in reference to the Christian practice of worship, with emphasis on ministering "to the Lord".

The Jews had special days set apart for fasting and prayer, but we are now familiar with the Christian's practice of getting together daily for exhortation, fellowship, and prayer, beginning in the days immediately following the day of Pentecost.

**Acts 2:46,47**, And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

The Christian community at Antioch was engaged in one united act of prayer, meditation, fasting, and exhortation, probably accompanied by celebrating the Lord's Supper.

### and fasted

The Jews fasted regularly, usually on two days per week, and the Christians may have found this quite appropriate to accompany their own worship. When Paul and Barnabas chose the elders for the local churches, we see that they fasted also.

Acts 14:23, And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Fasting was not mandatory for Christians, but it was part of their habit at this time.

### the Holy Spirit said

"How this revelation was made, whether by the mouth of some of the prophets who were present or by the impulse of a simultaneous and general inspiration, whether the route to be taken by Barnabas and Saul was at this time precisely indicated, and whether they had previously received a conscious personal call, of which this was the public ratification, it is useless to inquire.

A definite work was pointed out as now about to be begun under the counsel of God, two definite agents in this work were publicly singled out, and we soon see them sent forth to their arduous undertaking, with the sanction of the church at Antioch.”<sup>5</sup>

The most likely means the Holy Spirit used was to communicate this revelation through one of those with the prophetic gift, such as Agabus, who was likely present there.

### **Separate Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them**

Both Barnabas and Saul had been called to the ministry long ago, and had proved to be useful and active in such work; but this call is to the special campaign among the Gentiles.<sup>6</sup>

We are curious about many things concerning this project, but we have very few answers.

John Mark went with them, but there’s no information about how he was chosen. Was he selected because of his reputation, or relation to Barnabas?

How did the church, or Paul and Barnabas, decide on where they would go on their travels?

How was the project funded? We know that Barnabas was well-to-do; and we have hints that Paul had means, as we see Felix expecting a bribe from him, in the later chapters.

### **Acts 13:3**

**13:3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.**

### **When they had fasted and prayed**

This is an occasion of great importance and seriousness. Paul and Barnabas conducted a similar deeply significant ceremony in ordaining elders in Asia Minor.

<sup>5</sup> Conybeare and Howson, Chapter 5

<sup>6</sup> Robertson, Acts 13:2

### **Acts 14:21-24**

And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

Here in Antioch, the whole church was involved in sending Paul and Barnabas on their missionary trip.

### **and laid their hands on them**

This was not an ordination to a ministry, as it was in Acts 14 or Acts 6.

### **Acts 6:5,6**

And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

Paul and Barnabas were already seasoned apostles, exercising their gifts of teaching and other ministries. This time, the hands that were laid on them were consecrating them to the great project which was laid before them. They were being appointed to a particular field of labor; and the blessing of God was being requested for them.

### **they sent them away.**

In addition, it was a testimony of the fact that Paul and Barnabas were not taking on some sort of private venture, but were accredited messengers of the church at Antioch.

The book of Acts records mostly the work of Paul, and those that were directly associated with him, such as Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Titus, etc.

However, many other missionaries were working in every direction. For example, Paul speaks of Peter and other apostles as having received maintenance as evangelists.

#### Acts 13:4

**13:4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed unto Seleucia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus.**

#### being sent forth by the Holy Spirit

It is emphasized here that this mission planning began with God the Father, communicated by the Holy Spirit. So, Paul is later able to say that he has been sent “not from men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father.” (Gal. 1:1), all three persons of God being involved.

#### departed unto Seleucia

Seleucia was named after Seleucus Nicanor, the king of Egypt, who built of the city and fortress in about 300 BC. It was the first city of Syria after leaving Cilicia, and was established at the mouth of the Orontes river. Paul and Barnabas only stopped here to get ship transportation to Cyprus.

In the time of the apostles, the Orontes river was navigable up to Antioch, so people have always wondered whether Paul and Barnabas went overland or by riverboat to Seleucia. Overland it was only about 16 miles, less than a day’s walk. The river trip would have been about 40 miles, taking longer but having the advantage of having a restful boat trip.

Conybeare and Howson, Chapter 5

“The Orontes comes from the valley between Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, and ... flows on continually to the sea. Its waters are not always clear, but they are deep and rapid. ... They wind round the bases of high and precipitous cliffs, or by richly cultivated banks where the vegetation of the South, the vine and the fig tree, the myrtle, the bay, the ilex, and the arbutus, are mingled with dwarf oak and English sycamore.

“If Barnabas and Saul came down by water from Antioch, this was the course of the boat which conveyed them [a distance by water of

about 40 miles]. If they traveled the [15 to 18 miles] by land, they crossed the river at the north side of Antioch, and came along the base of the Pierian hills by a route which is now roughly covered with fragrant and picturesque shrubs, but which then doubtless was a track well worn by travelers, like the road from the Piraeus to Athens, or from Ostia to Rome.

“Seleucia [was] a fortress and a seaport. It was situated on a rocky eminence which is the southern extremity of an elevated range of hills projecting from Mount Amanus. From the southeast, where the ruins of the Antioch Gate are still conspicuous, the ground rose towards the northeast into high and craggy summits, and round the greater part of its circumference of four miles the city was protected by its natural position.

“The harbor and mercantile suburb were on level ground towards the west; but here, as on the only weak point at Gibraltar, strong artificial defenses had made compensation for the deficiency of nature.

“Seleucus, who had named his metropolis in his father’s honor, gave his own name to this maritime fortress; and here, around his tomb, his successors contended for the key of Syria. “Seleucia by the Sea” was a place of great importance under the Seleucids and the Ptolemies; and so it remained under the sway of the Romans.

“In consequence of its bold resistance to Tigranes, when he was in possession of all the neighboring country, Pompey gave it the privileges of a free city, and a contemporary of St. Paul speaks of it as having those privileges still [at the time of Paul’s visit].”

#### they sailed to Cyprus

On a clear day in Seleucia, the apostles would have been able to see the coastline and mountains of Cyprus. The voyage across the water would take less than a day. Cyprus was Barnabas’ birthplace, so he had intimate knowledge of the people and culture there.

“Four reasons at least can be stated, which may have induced the apostles, in the exercise

of a wise discretion, to turn in the first instance to this island. It is separated by no great distance from the mainland of Syria; its high mountain summits are easily seen in clear weather from the coast near the mouth of the Orontes; and in the summer season many vessels must often have been passing between Salamis and Seleucia. Besides this, it was the native place of Barnabas (Acts 4:36). Since the time when "Andrew found his brother Simon, and brought him to Jesus," (John 1:41,42) and the Savior was beloved in the house of "Martha and her sister and Lazarus," (John 9:5) the ties of family relationship had not been without effect on the progress of the Gospel.

"It could not be unnatural to suppose that the truth would be welcomed in Cyprus when it was brought by Barnabas and his kinsman Mark to their own connections or friends. Moreover, the Jews were numerous in Salamis (Acts 13:5). By sailing to that city they were following the track of the synagogues. Their mission, it is true, was chiefly to the Gentiles, but their surest course for reaching them was through the medium of the Proselytes and the Hellenistic Jews. To these considerations we must add that some of the Cypriotes were already Christians. No one place out of Palestine, with the exception of Antioch, had been so honorably associated with the work of successful evangelization. (See Acts 4:36, 9:19,20; 21:16)"<sup>7</sup>

#### Acts 13:5

**13:5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.**

#### when they were at Salamis

Salamis was one of the chief cities of Cyprus at the time. At an earlier time, it had been the capital of Cyprus, but in Roman times the capital was

<sup>7</sup> Conybeare and Howson, Chapter 5, *Departure of Barnabas and Saul*

moved to Paphos, possibly because the harbor at Salamis had silted up.

Salamis was large city, a harbor town on the east coast of Cyprus, in the middle of a widespread plain with grain fields and orchards<sup>8</sup>; and it was a trading center where merchants from Cilicia, Syria, Phoenicia, and Egypt traded olive oil, wool, wine, and grain. This port city attracted a large number of Jewish people who were merchants, and they had established several synagogues there. The Jews welcomed Paul and Barnabas when they arrived at the port.<sup>9</sup>

The ancient writers say that the city was built by Teucer, the son of Telamon, after his return from the Trojan war, which dates the city from before 1000 BC. The famous philosopher Solon was born here. He died on the island, but when he was about 80 years old he had demanded that his bones be carried to Salamis so that his ashes could be scattered about his native country.

The people of Cyprus also claimed that Salamis was the birthplace of Homer. When the Emperor Constantine took power, Salamis was renamed Constantia; and when the Turks got it into their hands, the name was changed again to Famagusta, the name it has today.

In the Fifth Century BC there were two major battles between the Greeks and the Persians which were called the Battle of Salamis. The first was the very decisive naval battle of Salamis of 480 BC which took place in the waters between the port of Piraeus (Athens) and the island of Salamis, which lies close to land in the Saronic gulf. After the Persian invasion of Greece, and the defeat of the Spartans at Thermopylae, the Persians were laying waste to the countryside, and the citizens of Athens were starting to evacuate the city. But the Greek naval victory at Salamis forced the Persian fleet to retreat and led to the Greek's victory.

In 450 BC the Greeks and the Egyptians were fighting another war with invading Persians. The Persian fleet consisted of naval forces from

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, *Salamis*

<sup>9</sup> Baker, Acts 13:5



Phoenicia and Cilicia; and these were defeated by the Greeks in a battle near the city of Salamis in Cyprus.

Another Battle of Salamis in Cyprus of 306 BC was a naval battle between the fleets of Demetrius I of Macedon and Ptolemy I of Egypt.

### they preached in the synagogues

Note the plural, “synagogues”. There were a lot of Jewish people in Salamis, and probably some Christians among them. The emperor Augustus had made a present to Herod the Great of half of the revenue of the copper mines of Cyprus, in order that Herod might settle a lot of Jewish families on Cyprus.

In the reign of the emperor Trajan, from 98 to 117AD, a Jewish insurrection broke out and the whole island of Cyprus fell into the hands of the Jews. The history of this event says that the Jews killed more than 250,000 Gentile people; and when the revolt was finally put down by the Roman legions, Jews were forbidden to set foot on the island, on pain of death.<sup>10</sup>

### they had John to their minister

That is, “they had John as their attendant.” The word “minister” is a navy designation **uphreth~**, which literally “under rower”, but used generally to mean “servant” or “helper”. At this time John Mark was a young man, Barnabas’ nephew, who was traveling as their helper. He “provided for them the necessaries of life.”<sup>11</sup> While Paul and Barnabas were ministering the Word of God, John Mark ministered to them.

### Acts 13:6

**13:6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus:**

<sup>10</sup> Vincent, Acts 13:5

<sup>11</sup> Gill, Acts 13:5

### when they had gone through the isle to Paphos

Paphos is a coastal city in the southwest of Cyprus and the capital of Paphos District. In ancient times, two locations were called Paphos: Old Paphos and New Paphos. The currently inhabited city is New Paphos. There was probably no town in the world more dissolute than Paphos

The Greeks said that Paphos was the birthplace of the goddess Aphrodite (Venus), and they had built up the area as an important worship center. Paphos was also the name of a god, the mythical son of Pygmalion, so there was another reason for all of the temples built in the area and the well-attended heathen worship ceremonies year around in the city. All of the temples and the whole city were destroyed by earthquakes on more than one occasion, and now little is seen.

In Greco-Roman times Paphos was the island's capital, and it is famous for the remains of the Roman Governor's palace, where extensive, fine mosaics are a major tourist attraction. It was the residence of the proconsul. [The 21<sup>st</sup> century capital of Cyprus is Nicosia, close to the center of the island, and is known as the last divided capital in Europe, having its administration and territory divided between Greece and Turkey.]

Paul and Barnabas had to travel about 110 miles to travel from Salamis to Paphos.

### they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus

The word **magon** does not by itself mean “sorcerer”, but merely “magician” or “wise man”. It’s the same word used for the three wise men who came to Jesus’ birthplace. We find out who this man is by the description “a false prophet.”

We can compare this Jewish con man with Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:9,11), or the seven sons of Sceva, Jewish exorcists who tried to imitate Paul, who are described in Acts 19.

### Acts 19:11-16

And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases



departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the LORD Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.

And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.

And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

Reference: *Greek Divination: A Study of its Methods and Principles*, by W. R. Halliday (1913). Deals with how *auspices* and *haruspices* were used, e.g. Xenophon in *Anabasis*.

#### Acts 13:7

**13:7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.**

#### the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus

The word deputy is **ajq̄pato~**, “proconsul” [see in both NAS and NIV].

For a long time Bible scholars criticized Luke for using this term, on the grounds that Cyprus was a province under the appointment of the emperor, which would have a chief executive called a *propraetor*, not a proconsul, so Luke should have used the term **ajtistrathgo~** instead of **ajq̄pato~**. That would have been true in 30BC, but in 25BC Cyprus was put under the control of the Senate, thus making the island governor a proconsul. Two inscriptions have been found with the dates AD 51 and 52, with the names of proconsuls of Cyprus; the inscription found at Soli has the name “Paulus”, undoubtedly this man, Robertson says. <sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Robertson, Acts 13:7

#### Topic: Roman Provincial System

In those days, the Romans sent two kinds of governors into the provinces. Some of the provinces were under the direct control of the emperor; into those were sent men who had filled the office of *praetor* in Rome, who were now called *propraetor* (**ajtistrathgo~**) in a provincial office. The *propraetor* had military units under his command, and he held his office as long as the emperor wanted him there.

Other provinces belonged to the SPQR, the Senate and people of Rome, and into those they send *proconsuls*, **men who had been consul for a year in Rome** (the office second only to the emperor), and were now appointed *proconsul*. He had no military power, and usually only served for a year; but he could be extended each year as long as the Senate voted for it.

Sergius Paulus was a very high ranking official with extensive responsibility and authority over the province of Cyprus.

#### Topic: Sergius Paulus\

The book of Acts makes these distinctions plain. For example, Luke speaks of Gallio as the *proconsul* of Achaia (Acts 18:12), and we know that Achaia was a senatorial province. Neither Felix nor Festus were called *proconsul* or *propraetor*. They served as deputy-governors of the *propraetor* of Syria; and the term used for them is **hgenwn**, which is a common term used for “governor”.

#### a prudent man

The word “prudent” (**sunetov**) here means “intelligent; wise; learned”. [NAS: a man of intelligence; NIV: an intelligent man]. He seemed to have an inquiring mind, willing to get information from any source. He wanted specifically to hear the Word of God taught by Barnabas and Saul.

#### called for Barnabas and Saul

Barnabas is named first here, and some commentators think that the order in which names are listed in Bible passages indicates the relative importance of the people. So that, when, from now

on, Paul is most often named first, before Barnabas, or Silas, for example, it means that he was the leader in the situation.

Now, in the listing of Acts 13:2, Saul is named last, which by this theory mean that he was ranked not only under Barnabas but also under the other three men named, Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen. But it is not likely that Saul had such a low place among those five men, his having already had a considerable ministry in the church of Antioch.

Barnabas may have been acquainted with Sergius Paulus, or he was at least a native citizen of Cyprus, and thus would possibly have been named first in the invitation they received

### desired to hear the Word of the Lord

We see in verse 12 that Sergius was captivated by the “doctrine of the Lord”, however much he may have been impressed with having seen Elymas staggering off blind. Here we see he has positive volition at the point of God consciousness.

### Acts 13:8

**13:8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.**

### But Elymas the sorcerer ... withstood them

Elymas persisted in his opposition; he knew he could lose his great prize, the sponsorship of Sergius Paulus, so he made every effort to discredit Barnabas and Saul.

“Withstood” is **ajqisthni**, which means “to set against”. This may indicate a public debate or even argument between Elymas and the apostles.

The name Elymas is the interpretation of the word **magō~**, not another form of BarJesus. Clarke points out that both Elymas and **magō~** are Asiatic words, though not Hebrew or Greek <sup>13</sup>. He points out that in Persian **mogh** means “an idolater, or a worshipper of fire, and “Elymas” is

<sup>13</sup> Clarke, Acts 13:8

from the Arabic **alama**, which means “wise; skilled”, hence, a doctor or learned man. <sup>14</sup>

Whatever the derivation of his name, Elymas was trying desperately to hold onto his job in the court at Paphos. The job might only last a year, as that was the usual term of appointment of a consul, but he certainly would expect Sergius to recommend him to the next man to hold the office. <sup>15</sup>

### seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

“to turn away” is the Greek word **diastrefw**, “to turn different ways; to twist; to distort or pervert.” This is the work of a false prophet; this man was directly in the path of God’s grace, and God arranged for him to be removed from the scene very quickly and dramatically.

### Acts 13:9

**13:9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Spirit, set his eyes on him,**

### Saul, who is also called Paul

Some commentators hold that it was Sergius Paulus who gave Paul this Roman name, as a sort of honor from a high ranking official. However, against this idea is the likelihood that Paul had always had both names, and was not just now being given a new name.

Among the Jews the name Saul was naturally used up to this point, but from now on Luke uses Paulus, except on occasions when there is a reference to his previous life (Acts 22:7; 26:14). <sup>16</sup> Moreover, he was quite proud of the fact that both he and King Saul were of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5).

His real career now, however, is among the Gentiles, and Paul would be the name used by them; so it’s proper for the narrator of his life to make the change here.

<sup>14</sup> See also Gloag on Acts 13:8

<sup>15</sup> See also Conybeare and Howson, Chapter 5,

*Elymas Barjesus*

<sup>16</sup> Robertson, Acts 13:9

**filled with the Holy Spirit**

A. T. Robertson wonders why the Holy Spirit filled Paul for this “emergency” rather than Barnabas, when Barnabas was named first in Acts 13:2. <sup>17</sup> However, we understand, from the doctrine of the Filling of the Holy Spirit, that any believer in fellowship, in the Church Age, is controlled by the Holy Spirit and in full exercise of his spiritual gifts. This statement emphasizes that Paul was fully in fellowship with the Lord for this vital activity.

**Topic: Holy Spirit, Filling of****set his eyes on him**

Paul concentrated his attention directly on Elymas and confronted him with all of the force of the power of God.

**Acts 13:10**

**13:10 And said, O full of all deceit and all mischief, you child of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?**

NAS: “and said, “You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?”

NIV: “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?”

**O full of all subtlety and all mischief**

“Subtlety” = **dolou**, which is from an ancient word meaning “to catch with bait”. It means “trickery”. Used in verses e.g.:

Matt. 26:4, “And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him.”

Mark 7:22, “Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit (**dolou**), lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

Mark 14:1, “After two days was the feast of the Passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft (**dolou**), and put him to death.

Paul denounces Elymas as a crafty trickster.

“All mischief” = “all villainy”. Also used in ancient Greek for “levity” and “unscrupulous”.

**thou child of the devil**

The devil is **diabolo-**, a slanderer, and Paul uses it here with great condemnation, as the Lord Jesus used it of the Pharisees in:

**John 8:44**, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

**thou enemy of all righteousness**

Elymas was the “personal enemy of all justice.”

**will you not cease to pervert the ways of the Lord**

Another use of the word **diastrefw**, “to distort; to pervert”. See notes on verse 8. This is a crushing question from Paul, summing up all of the categorical condemnation that he has laid on Elymas.

**Acts 13:11**

**13:11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.**

**the hand of the Lord is upon you**

Compare this situation with the similar one with Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8. We noticed that Simon was crushed by the very stern warning that Peter gave him, which indicated that he was in line for the sin unto death.

Acts 8:5-24.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*

We see that Simon repented and asked Peter to pray for him, and he was spared the bad things that might have happened to him. Elymas did not respond positively to Paul's warnings and came under the hand of the Lord.

### **thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season**

This drastic measure was designed to try to center Elymas' attention on the Lord. You recall that Paul himself had been struck with blindness, which lasted for three days, and it was part of the Lord's plan for convincing him of the truth. Elymas has a similar opportunity to repent. The main objective was Elymas' conversion; a secondary objective was to remove him from the place where he could do evil.

### **there fell on him a mist and a darkness**

"mist" is **ajluv**. This word was used in Greek to refer to the mist over a person's eyes as he lay dying, or of the mental condition of a person who is not able to recognize people or his surroundings.

The word "darkness" is **skoto~**, which means "darkness or gloom", but it is also used for the "darkness of death" or of blindness itself.

Note the use of the verb form **skotow** in Acts 4:17, 18, in a description of the "walk" of the "other Gentiles", where Paul was warning the Ephesians not to allow themselves to fall back into.

**Acts 4:17,18**, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened (**skotow**), being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

### **seeking someone to lead him by the hand**

This is the same verb used of Paul in Acts 9:8, who was led by the hand by his travelling companions, until he was safe in the house of Judas in Damascus.

Of this miracle, Gloag says <sup>18</sup> that "Paul struck Elymas with blindness because he felt inspired to perform that miracle." And Origen says, "Paul, by a word striking him blind, by anguish converted him to godliness." <sup>19</sup>

However, there is nothing in this text to indicate that Paul was the agent of the miraculous punishment of Elymas. The most that can be said is that the Lord revealed to Paul what was going to happen, and he made a prediction (prophecy) based on that realization.

Compare the episode in Acts 5, in which both Ananias and his wife Sapphira died the sin unto death in the presence of the apostle Peter. Again, it is not stated that Peter was the agent of Ananias death, only that the man died in his presence. True, Peter did predict to Sapphira that she was going to die, but there's nothing in the text to indicate that he performed a miracle of punishment.

And whatever information Origen might have had about the further career of Elymas, whether he became a believer, lived for the Lord, etc., the historical evidence is lost.

### **Acts 13:12**

**13:12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.**

### **Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed**

The proconsul was astonished at the "doctrine of the Lord", rather than at the miracle. He saw what had happened to Elymas, which was proof that the doctrine was true; this focused his attention on the message of Barnabas and Paul.

"Believed" is aorist active indicative of **pisteuw**.

<sup>18</sup> Gloag, Acts 13:11

<sup>19</sup> Origen (born about 185, died about 254) was an early Christian scholar, theologian, and one of the most distinguished of the early fathers of the Christian Church. He is thought to have been an Egyptian who taught in Alexandria.

Rom. 10:17, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

### being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord

"Astonished" is the present passive participle of **ἐκπλησσω**, of which the first meaning is "to strike out of; to drive away," hence, "to drive out of one's senses; to astound".

We don't hear any more about Sergius Paulus, although legend about him says he left the Roman government, traveled with Paul to Spain, and eventually became the bishop of Narbonne, in the Languedoc region of Gaul.

We also don't know if any other people accepted Christ in Paphos. However, there is good evidence that a church was started there, because in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, at the council of Nice, Cyril, the bishop of Paphos, was present; and there were bishops from Paphos at several succeeding church councils.

### Roman Provincial System

from "The Life and Epistles of St. Paul," by W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson.

From the time when Augustus united the world under his own power, the provinces were divided into two different classes. The business of the first Emperor's life was to consolidate the imperial system under the show of administering a republic. He retained the names and semblances of those liberties and rights which Rome had once enjoyed. He found two names in existence, the one of which was henceforth inseparably blended with the Imperial dignity and military command, the other with the authority of the Senate and its civil administration.

The first of these names was "Praetor," the second was "Consul." Both of them were retained in Italy, and both were reproduced in the Provinces as "Propraetor" and "Proconsul."<sup>20</sup> He told the Senate and people that he would relieve them of

<sup>20</sup> It is important, as we shall see presently, to notice Dio Cassius's further statement, that all governors of the Senate's provinces were to be called Proconsuls, whatever their previous office might have been, and all governors of the Emperor's provinces were to be styled Legati or Propraetors, even if they had been Consuls.

all the anxiety of military proceedings and that he would resign to them those provinces where soldiers were unnecessary to secure the fruits of a peaceful administration. He would take upon himself all the care and risk of governing the other provinces, where rebellion might be apprehended and where the proximity of warlike tribes made the presence of the legions perpetually needful.

These were his professions to the Senate; but the real purpose of this ingenious arrangement was the disarming of the Republic and the securing to himself the absolute control of the whole standing army of the Empire.<sup>21</sup> The scheme was sufficiently transparent; but there was no sturdy national life in Italy to resist his despotic innovations, and no foreign civilized powers to arrest the advance of imperial aggrandizement. Thus it came to pass that Augustus, though totally destitute of the military genius either of Cromwell or Napoleon, transmitted to his successors a throne guarded by an invincible army, and a system of government destined to endure through several centuries.

Hence we find in the reign, not only of Augustus, but of each of his successors, from Tiberius to Nero, the provinces divided into these two classes. One the one side we have those which are supposed to be under the Senate and the people. – The governor is appointed by lot, as in the times of the old republic. He carries with him the lictors and fasces, the insignia of a Consul; but he is destitute of military power. His office must be resigned at the expiration of a year. He is styled "Proconsul" and the Greeks, translating the term, call him "anthupatos," which our English translators has rendered by the ambiguous word "deputy." Acts 13:7, "The deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus." Or, "Gallio was the deputy of Achaia." Acts 18.

On the other side are the provinces of Caesar. The governor may be styled "Propraetor" or "ANTISTRATEIGOS", but he is more properly "Legatus" or "PRESBUTEIS" – the representative or "Commissioner" or the Emperor. He goes out from Italy with all the pomp of a military

<sup>21</sup> cf Seutonius and Dio Cassius.



commander, and he does not return until the Emperor recalls him.<sup>22</sup> And to complete the symmetry and consistency of the system, the subordinate districts or these imperial provinces are regulated by the Emperor's "Procurator" (EPITROPOS), or "High Steward." The New Testament, in the strictest conformity with the other historical authorities of the period, gives us examples of both kinds of provincial administration. We are told by Strabo, and by Dio Cassius, that "Asia" and "Achaia" were assigned to the Senate; and the title, which in each case is given to the Governor in the Acts of the Apostles, is "Proconsul." The same authorities inform us that Syria was an imperial province, and no such title as "Proconsul" is assigned by the sacred writers to "Cyrenius Governor of Syria," (Luke 2:2) or to Pilate, Festus, and Felix, the Procurators of Judea, which was a dependency of that great and unsettled province.<sup>23</sup>

Dio Cassius informs us, in the same passage where he tells us that Asia and Achaia were provinces of the Senate, that Cyprus was retained by the Emperor for himself, along with Syria and Cilicia. If we stop here, we naturally ask the question, and some have asked the question rather hastily, how it comes to pass that St. Luke speaks of Sergius Paulus by the style of "Proconsul." But any hesitation concerning the strict accuracy of the sacred historian's language is immediately set at rest by the very next sentence of the secular historian, in which he informs us that Augustus restored Cyprus to the Senate in exchange for

<sup>22</sup> All these details are stated, and the two kinds of governors very accurately distinguished in the 53<sup>rd</sup> Book of Dio Cassius, ch. 13. It should be remarked that EPARXIA (the word still used for the subdivisions of the modern Greek Kingdom) is applied indiscriminately to both kinds of provinces.

<sup>23</sup> The word invariably used in the NT is HEIGEMON. This is a general term, like the Roman "Praeses" and the English "Governor", as may be seen by comparing Luke 2:2 with 3:1 and observing that the very same word is applied to the offices of Procurator of Judea, the Legatus of Syria, and the Emperor himself.

another district of the Empire, a statement which he again repeats in a later passage of his work. It is evident, then, that the governor's style and title from this time forward would be "Proconsul." But this evidence, however satisfactory, is not all that we possess. Inscriptions, which could easily be adduced, supply us with the names of additional governors who were among the predecessors or successors of Sergius Paulus.

### Sergius Paulus

It is remarkable that two men called Sergius Paulus are described in very similar terms by two physicians who wrote in Greek, the one a heathen, the other a Christian.

The heathen writer is Galen. He speaks of his contemporary as a man interested and well versed in philosophy.

The Christian writer is St. Luke, who tells us here that the governor of Cyprus was a "prudent" man, who "desired to hear the Word of God." This governor seems to have been of a candid and inquiring mind; nor will this philosophical disposition be thought inconsistent with his connection with the Jewish imposter, whom Saul and Barnabas found at the Paphian court, by those who are acquainted with the intellectual and religious tendencies of the age.

For many years before this time, and many years after, impostors from the East, pretending to magical powers, had great influence over the Roman mind. All the Greek and Latin literature of the empire, from Horace to Lucian, abounds in proof of the prevalent credulity of this skeptical period. Unbelief, when it has become conscious of its weakness, is often glad to give its hand to superstition. The faith of educated Romans was utterly gone. We can hardly wonder, when the East was thrown open – the land of mystery, the fountain of the earliest migrations, the cradle of the earliest religions – that the imagination both of the populace and the aristocracy of Rome became fanatically excited, and that they greedily welcomed the most absurd and degrading superstitions. Not only was the metropolis of the empire crowded with "hungry Greeks" but "Syrian

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fortune tellers” flocked into all the haunts of public amusement.

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