

### *The Beginning of the Missionary Era*

The Jerusalem church has faithfully carried the Gospel message across many cultural thresholds, witnessing in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria (Acts 1:8). As we continue this fascinating journey we will see the power of God at work through the apostle Paul, who will embark on fulfilling the final phase of the Great Commission, “to the ends of the earth.”

1. Take a few minutes to page back through the first 12 chapters of Acts. List the key events that were instrumental in thrusting the Gospel into Judea, Samaria and beyond.
2. Review the Chart of the book of Acts to obtain a visual picture of where we have been and where the rest of the book will take us. As we press on to a new section, in what year do these events begin?
3. **Read** “Rome’s Contribution to Christianity” for additional background.

***Bow in Prayer:*** “O Lord, we are humbled by Your mighty acts—not only in preparing hearts of whole people groups for the Gospel, but even arranging the physical world in a way that would facilitate the rapid spread of its message. Help us comprehend all You are doing in this passage.”

Chapter 13 begins in Antioch, a city that we have already noted as having significance in the strategic operations of the church as it moved away from Judea and Samaria.

4. **Read** Acts 12:25-14:28. Look at this section in terms of the big picture. What patterns do you see in the activities of Saul and Barnabas on their *first missionary journey*?

Focus again on Acts 13:1. Luke gives us a list of the “prophets and teachers” of the church at Antioch, and it is fascinating to see who is included:

*Barnabas*—the great encourager himself, who is a Jew from Cyprus

*Simeon*—a dark skinned man, probably from Northern Africa

*Lucius*—A Roman, also from Africa

*Manaen*—A foster brother of King Herod Antipas, a man of high social standing

*Saul*—a Pharisee from southeast Asia Minor and a former persecutor of the church

5. As you consider the leaders God had assembled at Antioch, what insights come to mind about the church that is being formed and the effectiveness of the Gospel thus far?

6. Do you see any lessons the modern day church can apply from question 5? Explain.
  
7. The church at Antioch was deeply burdened about where they should go next in obedience to the Great Commission. What happened as the church was worshipping and seeking the Lord (13:2)?
  
8. How did the “fasting” the church engaged in (Acts 13:2-3) affect the course of history?
  
9. In what way might Acts 13:1-3 apply to a decision you are currently facing?

The sending of Barnabas and Saul by the Holy Spirit is a decisive moment in the history of the early church. The work among the Gentile population is being set in motion!

***Review*** Acts 13:4-12—***The Work on Cyprus***

It’s time to put on your imaginary walking shoes and travel with these gifted men with great energy for the work of God. [Trace their journey to *Cyprus* on Map 4 using a colored pencil.]

10. Where did they head first after they landed on Cyprus? What additional information does verse 4 provide?

*The synagogue probably originated during the period of the historical exile of the Jews from their homeland in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., at which time the Temple was destroyed. The dispersion of the Jewish nation into foreign lands, a judgment of God for the longstanding sin of idolatry, resulted in the relocation of Jews to virtually every nation of the world (Acts 2:5). A place of common worship and instruction became necessary. This led to the building of synagogues.*

After preaching at the synagogue in Salamis they journey more than 100 miles (on foot) to the other side of the island to the city of Paphos where an interesting opportunity unfolds.

11. From Acts 13:6-8 contrast the proconsul (Sergius Paulus) with Bar-Jesus/Elymas.

12. For what reason was Paul filled with the Holy Spirit in a powerful way (verses 9-11)? What two-fold purpose was accomplished through this frightening confrontation (include verse 12)?

Although Barnabas and Saul surely talked about Jesus everywhere they went, Luke chose to relay only one incident about their work on Cyprus. *Here in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea was a man whom God wanted in His kingdom!*

13. At this point what does Luke note about Saul and why is this significant (Acts 13:9)? Review the handout “The Young Man Named Saul” from lesson 10 for insight.
14. How do you see Paul increasing and Barnabas decreasing in chapter 13? Compare Acts 13:2 with Acts 13:42. (NIV)

**Review Acts 13:13-52—*The Work in Pisidian Antioch***

[Trace their route from *Paphos* to *Perga* to *Antioch of Pisidia* on Map 4.]

Traveling northward from Perga, Paul and his companions followed the Roman road known as the *Via Sebaste*. They are now into the interior mountain ranges of Asia Minor—much like our Rocky Mountains. This would have been a trip of about 100-150 miles through several narrow passes, across the high mountains where even wagon traffic did not go—only pack animals, or men on foot. It was wild, rugged country, infested with thieves. Some of the episodes that Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 11:26-27 could have been experienced here.

15. For some unknown reason John Mark abruptly left and returned to Jerusalem (13:13). To dig deeper consult Acts 12:12, 13:4-5, 15:36-40 and Colossians 4:10 for clues.

In Antioch of Pisidia we have the first of Paul’s sermons that Luke records. According to custom, visiting Jews were asked to speak. This was an open door for Paul which he used wherever he went. **Reread** and listen carefully to the first part of Paul’s sermon (Acts 13:16-31).

16. How does Paul tailor his message to his listeners in order to break the news about Jesus Christ?
17. What can we learn from Paul’s approach to sharing the Gospel?
18. Paul goes on to tie all this into Old Testament prophecies, making a shocking announcement (verses 38-39)! State the essence of the Gospel message in your own words as if you were telling someone who was hearing it for the first time.

19. **Reread** Acts 13:42-44. Consider the atmosphere that Paul's message created in one short week in the city of Antioch—a city of approximately 100,000! Share your comments below.
20. a. From Acts 13:45-50 list the varied responses to the Gospel on the following Sabbath.
- b. Write out your interpretation of Acts 13:48. (You get credit for just trying.)
- c. How did Paul and Barnabas respond to those who rejected the Gospel (13:46-47, 51-52)?

**Note:** Often Jews would shake the dust off their feet when leaving a Gentile town on the way back to their own land. For Paul and Barnabas to do this to Jews demonstrated that Jews who reject the Gospel are not truly part of Israel and are no better than pagans. It was a gesture of utter scorn and disassociation.

**Review** Acts 14:1-28—***The Work in Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (in the province of Galatia)***  
[Trace the route from *Pisidian Antioch* to *Iconium* to *Lystra* and *Derbe* on Map 4.]

Chased out of Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas headed to Iconium, about 90 miles southeast of Antioch. Iconium was an agricultural center and the next most important city in the area.

21. a. How does Luke summarize the amazing success of the Gospel at Iconium (14:1)?
- b. Describe the tactics of the unbelieving Jews (verse 2).
- c. How did the apostles show that they were not intimidated? How did God back them up (verse 3)?
- d. Why did the apostles flee to Lystra and Derbe? In what way did God protect them?

It was about a 6 hour trip on foot to the small city of Lystra, where Paul healed a man crippled from birth. **Review** Acts 14:8-18. The people here were mostly idol worshipping pagans.

22. Paul and Barnabas find themselves in a uniquely new experience in Lystra. Note again how Paul finds the right point of contact with his audience. How did Paul describe the living God in contrast to the mythical gods?
23. In what ways are you faced with the temptation to be “god” in another’s life or take credit for what God has done?
24. What occurred in Acts 14:19-20 that interrupted the events at Lystra? Why do you think they could not kill Paul?
25. Following a successful evangelistic campaign in Derbe, what did Paul and Barnabas do that required great courage and tenacity (Acts 14:21-25)?

On their return trip they also organized the churches with elders being chosen by each local congregation. This meant that the church was now a distinct and separate organization from the synagogues. This was something uniquely new—God was building His church!

After traveling for a year or more and covering approximately 1,100 miles—Paul and Barnabas head home. [Trace the final leg of their journey on Map 4, from **Derbe** to **Lystra**, **Iconium**, **Pisidia of Antioch**, **Perga**, **Attalia** to **Antioch of Syria**.] *Imagine the joyous reunion—the wonder and worship as they hear about the mighty hand of God bringing great numbers of Gentiles into fellowship with Jesus Christ—intermingled with tales of pain and suffering.*

26. How have you been affected by the truth that the triumph of the Gospel comes hand in hand and through the means of tribulation (Acts 14:22)? *Are you willing to place the needs of others above your own comforts and conveniences as Paul and Barnabas did? How is God speaking to you about reaching out to our needy world, regardless of the cost?*

# ***Rome's Contribution to Christianity***

## ***Acts chapters 13-14 – Lesson 13***

As we consider the remaining portion of the book of Acts it's appropriate to ask, "what kind of world would allow for such a rapid spread of the Gospel?" When looking at the facts it becomes clear that the world had been uniquely prepared by God for such a time as this.

### **Infrastructure**

The Roman Empire was one of the mightiest empires the world had ever known. One of the factors that was instrumental in shaping its destiny was its intricate system of highways. Thousands of miles of roads connected major cities as well as outlying areas of the Roman Empire, facilitating and encouraging travel throughout the Mediterranean world and beyond. Both the New Testament and secular literature simply take for granted journeys of enormous length which would scarcely have been possible without the well designed and constructed roads. They were so well constructed that they were still in use 1,000 years after they were built.

The Roman roads also served Christianity. Although the early Christians often suffered tremendous persecution from the Romans, their well built roads permitted the apostles and many of God's people (particularly those who held Roman citizenship) to travel much more easily, while being protected by patrolling Roman troops who were stationed along the way. *It's actually quite ironic that the infrastructure of the empire that attempted to destroy Christianity also made possible its spread to the very farthest regions of the then-known world.*

### **Language**

In the process of conquering the Greek world, the Romans absorbed and adapted many facets of that civilization. Language was one of the most important. Alexander the Great had made vernacular Greek, *koine*, the common tongue of the East. Under the Roman Empire, it became the common tongue of the West. Of course, the presence of a nearly universal language meant Christianity could spread quickly, especially since Jesus' apostles used this language for their inspired writings. The rapid dissemination of ideas was further enhanced by the nature of the language. *Koine* was the language of the conquered rather than the conquerors, and so would not have been associated with imperialism and domination. In addition, the language was already equipped with a large philosophical and theological vocabulary which made it especially suited to the spread of Christianity.

Map 4

