

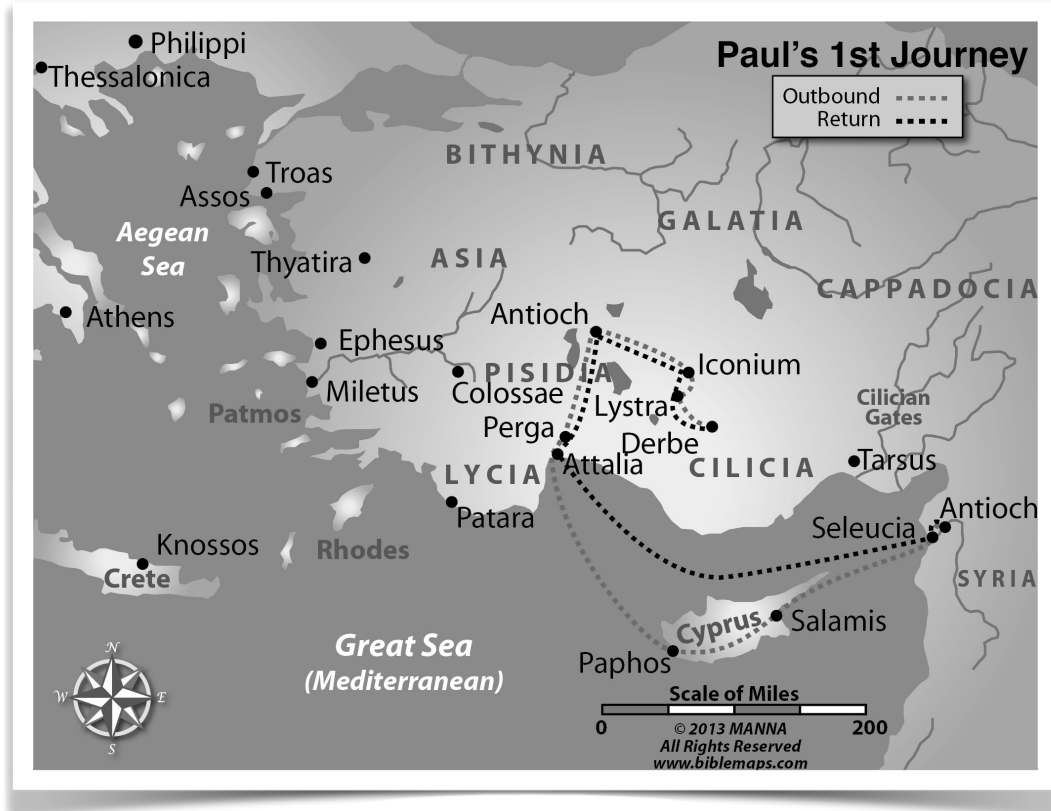


The Book of Acts
Bringing in a New Dispensation
From the Stock of Abraham to Whosoever Will
Acts 13:13-39

In our last session, Saul and Barnabas embarked on what is called Paul's First Missionary Journey." Both men were serving the Lord in the assembly of believers in Antioch. The Holy Ghost instructed the assembly to "Separate Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

They departed from Antioch to the coast with an assistant named John Mark. From there, they boarded a ship bound for Cyprus. When they arrived in Salamis, on the east coast of Cyprus, they found a Jewish synagogue and preached the word of the Lord.

From there they travelled by foot to the east side of the island, to Paphos where they encountered a Jewish false prophet and sorcerer who Paul rebuked and caused him to go blind. The governor of Paphos, Sergius Paulus, believed in the teaching of the Lord by Paul and Barnabas.



It is from here we pick up the account. Before we do, let's find out more about Paul.

Luke, the author of the Book of Acts, starts referring to Saul as Paul in chapter 13, verse 9. Although the text does not explicitly state that God changed Saul's name to Paul, name changes in Scripture often signify something new.

From now on, Saul is known as Paul. Luke never uses the name Saul again, except for Paul's retelling of his conversion in chapters 22 and 26. Since God's word is "given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16), there must be some significance to this name change. I think we should keep that in mind.

Does Paul's name change alert us to something new?

I have mentioned in the past about Paul having a mystery revealed to him. In Ephesians 3:3-6 Paul wrote specifically what that mystery was,

"That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel," and "which in other ages was not made known..."

Paul was to preach the dispensation of the grace of God. He said that he received a revelation about this dispensation. That revelation concerned a mystery that was not made known in other ages.

The mystery that was revealed was that there would be a unified body in Christ, comprising both Jews and Gentiles, called "the Body of Christ." This means that there will no longer be exclusively Jewish believers in Christ. And Christ, being the glorious Head of this body in Heaven. Paul called this Body, one new man (separate from Israel).

Members of this one Body are those who identify with Jesus Christ's death, burial and resurrection! It was a brand new fellowship we call the Church,

"The fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." Ephesians 3:9.

We are unsure when Paul learned about the mystery of one Body. Does the change in his name indicate he has now been granted this knowledge of that one unified body? If so, we should begin to see it manifested in his preaching throughout the rest of the Book of Acts.

"He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." Acts 9:15-16.

Will we see an overlap of teaching by Paul to the Jews, and to the Gentiles?

As we continue in the Book of Acts, let's be on the lookout for all the above.

Verse 13 —

Previously, while Paul was still Saul, Barnabas was always mentioned first. Now Luke thrusts **Paul** to the forefront in this chapter. The narrative concerns **Paul and his company**. Is this a statement indicating **Paul** is now the leader of the group? I would be comfortable saying so.

Loosed from Paphos, they weighed anchor, or they put out to sea. Heading northwest to **Perga** in the province of **Pamphylia** (see map).

Since Perga is inland about 12 miles, they would have first arrived at the seaport of Attalia, where, at the end of the first missionary journey, they set sail back to Antioch (See 14:25).

From Attalia it is possible they boarded another ship, or smaller boat, and traveled up the river Cestrus (Today called Aksu Stream) twelve miles to Perga. Over time, sediment has filled in that river, making it unnavigable. They also may have just walked.

Perga was a major city in the Roman world, complete with a stadium and a hippodrome. Luke does not record if Paul preached in Perga on his outbound journey. On the return journey, Luke notes that Paul did preach the word in Perga (Acts 14:25).

Luke includes a very brief note that **John** departed from Paul's company and **returned to Jerusalem**. There is no indication why John departed, he just went away. Was it out of fear? We don't know. However, his departure caused a major disagreement between Barnabas and Paul later on. Paul was left with a bad taste in his mouth for John Mark. We will deal more with this in a later chapter, but Paul's hesitation to ever take John Mark with him again can be seen in Acts 15:38-39. But people can change. We will see later if that is the case for John Mark.

Verse 14 —

We don't know how long they stayed in **Perga**, but they traveled north by land, about 125 miles, to **Antioch in Pisidia** (a different place from Antioch in Syria), located in what is today modern Turkey. It would have been a long and arduous journey on foot. Much of the journey would have been uphill. The rest of chapter 13 will take place here.

Their route would have been on the Via Sebaste, a Roman road built around 6 B.C. and still visible today!

Antioch in Pisidia was the capital of **Pisidia** and a Roman colony. The ruins of the city are still standing. It was a moderately sized city, but had a theater seating around 5,000.

Historians note that many Gentiles, including veteran Roman soldiers, lived there. Also many Jews lived there. According to Luke's account, there was also a synagogue. As was Paul's custom (Acts 17:2) he went to the **synagogue** first on the **sabbath day** (The seventh day, Saturday, not Sunday. In the dispensation of grace, we have no Sabbath to observe).

Paul and his company **went into the synagogue and sat down**. Some people of status or the elders might sit on benches around the synagogue walls, some less affluent synagogues might have had people sitting on the floor (See James 2:3).

Verse 15,16—

Custom always had the **reading of the Law and the prophets** according to a prescribed calendar (Luke 4:17). **The rulers of the synagogue sent unto them**, that is, Paul and Barnabas, inviting them to give **any word of exhortation**. We do not have indication why they were invited to speak or how they were recognized. So why were they invited to speak?

We can speculate on several reasons.

- 1) They knew of Paul and his training in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3). They would have asked the men about their visit, where they came from, etc.
- 2) Some Jewish scholars suggest that teachers, both Jew and Gentile, wore special clothing to indicate their status. But there is no indication that Paul and Barnabas wore anything that would have identified them.
- 3) Perhaps they had arrived days earlier and had sought out and connected with the Jewish community and maybe were even staying with a fellow Jew (See example of this in Acts 17:5).
- 4) Maybe Paul and Barnabas introduced themselves before the synagogue service began and volunteered to teach.

Both Paul and Barnabas had the credentials to teach. In whatever manner they were identified and called on, Paul, appearing now to the leader, is the one who **stood up** to speak.

Verses 16-22—

Paul's exhortation begins in the same manner as the apostle Peter's sermon in Acts 2:22.

This could indicate how the apostle Paul taught the same *kingdom gospel* as Peter when he was in the presence of Jews—at least at first. Jewish teaching reviews the history of Israel often.

That is why they have been able to hold on to their faith for centuries, even though dispersed around the world.

In the *church* today, I think we have lost our Biblical knowledge of our history. The evangelical church today focuses a lot on the current times. There is a lot of emphasis on the “Me” message; i.e., *What does this passage mean to me, me, me!* Rather than, what did the passage mean to those to whom it was addressed.

A loss of Biblical knowledge leads to a loss of a Biblical worldview.

Verse 23 —

Is Paul teaching a grace gospel for the Body of Christ? If so, why does Paul say that **God...raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus?** Remember, Paul is in a Jewish synagogue preaching to Jews.

That is what Jesus said: “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Matthew 15:24). Likewise, Paul states in Romans 15:8, “Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.”

Clearly, Jesus was sent for Israel—His earthly ministry was directed solely to Israel.

Verses 24-26 —

Paul continues to remind those in the synagogue of the message of John the Baptist; He preached before the coming of Jesus, **repentance to all the people of Israel**. This is not a message we should preach today. This message was to the people of Israel alone.

Recall two things.

First, Paul’s commission was also to the children of Israel (Acts 9:15).

Second, later in 1st Corinthians Paul states his method of evangelism:

- a. *“I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”*(1 Cor. 9:22).
- b. *“Unto the Jews, I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law that I might gain them that are under the law.”* (1 Cor. 9:20).

We will address his evangelistic method in more detail as we move through the Book of Acts.

Verses 27-31 —

Now Paul steps back about 12 years and gives a history of how things have progressed to this point. Those in Jerusalem missed the fact that Jesus was Messiah even though they **read every sabbath...the prophets**. The Jews in Jerusalem **desired they Pilate that Jesus should be slain**, and that he was crucified on a cross, laid in a tomb, **but God raised him from the dead**. Likewise, after his resurrection Jesus was seen by witnesses for many days.

Verses 32-37 —

The promise made unto the fathers was the resurrection. Paul cites this promise by quoting the Old Testament in Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 55:3, Psalm 16:10, and that the prophets were referring to the Messiah and not David, for **David...saw corruption: But he (Jesus), whom God raised again, saw no corruption**.

In Paul's exhortation, he has paralleled Peter's message. He is making the point to the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah they have been looking for, but they missed him.

Why is Paul preaching this Jewish message and not the Gospel of Grace that is available to all men?

In order for the Jews to understand the concept of justification by belief rather than the works of the Law, and for them to accept that Gentiles would be included in the same fellowship as them, they needed to first believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

Verses 38-39 —

But now, Paul deviates from Peter's message and proclaims something brand new.

Once again, he needed to first establish Jesus as the Messiah. Now, we find Paul expressing the grace message for the first time.

Be it known unto you therefore. The word order could be *Therefore be it known to you*.

Therefore, because of who Jesus is, because he is alive, there is certain forgiveness of sins...AND, there is more: **By him ALL that believe** (any man, woman, boy or girl) **are justified from ALL things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.**

This had to be a tremendous shock for any devout Jew to hear. All along salvation has been for the Jew only, now this man whom they invited to speak in the synagogue is saying ALL that **believe** can be saved. And this salvation, for all, is not from the Law of Moses. How will this NEW message be received? For that, we will have to wait until next time.