

BIB204 NT2 Early Church

Unit 5a

Recap of the First Missionary Journey

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Hello. This is Unit 5 of the Early Church. And in this unit, I'm going to start off with a basic recap beginning in Acts 13. We're going to quickly run through chapter 14. That represents the first missionary journey for Barnabas and Saul, who, in the midst of these two chapters, we will see a switchover from the name Saul to Paul. And we will run through a variety of the missionary journeys. There are three missionary journeys. Our attempt is to try to cover all three of them, first of all with the recap of the first missionary journey and then a bit more detail with respect to the second and the third missionary journeys. So if you have your Bibles, please open them to Acts 13.

So in Acts 13:1, we read, "Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" So what we see here is that Saul is still being called Saul at this juncture. That's going to change in the course of the content of these two chapters. Verse 3, "Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off." So this is the first missionary journey. Barnabas and Saul have been consecrated. Remember, they brought John Mark from Jerusalem with them, and we see that in Acts 12:25.

At this juncture, we're looking at about the year AD 46 in the 1st century. The famine was predicted earlier on in AD 43 or 44. So the famine has already come into play, as it were, and it's going to end around AD 47 or 48. So this is about AD 46, maybe the middle of AD 46, some might estimate, when the Holy Spirit sets these two men apart and they go off on their missionary journey. Now, the reason I'm highlighting this time period is that at this point, many scholars suppose that the first document of the New Testament has been written, and that would be the letter of James. And if you look at the beginning of the letter of James, you see that it is addressed to the 12 tribes of the dispersion. That's in James 1:1 and 1:2. And so we have the first document of the New Testament generated. And I'm saying this in the context of this course being titled The Early Church. So James is the first New Testament document that is written. That is the first written material as far as we know. There may be notes on the gospel story, but at this point, the narrative of the gospels, that which will become the narrative of the gospels, is still in oral form. There is still a lot of orality in the church at large, and that is embodied in apostolic teaching, apostolic tradition.

So James has been written, and Barnabas and Saul are going off on their first missionary journey. Let's look at verse 4. "So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus." And that would be a large island in the Mediterranean. "When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them. When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus." If you look at the map of Cyprus, they landed on the east end of Cyprus and they traveled throughout the island until they got to the west end, so from Salamis on the east to Paphos on the west. And they met up with a magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. "He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God." Now, the importance of this part of the narrative is that Sergius Paulus is a Gentile. He's a proconsul. He is Roman. He is, in all likelihood, uncircumcised, so he is a Gentile. And there is no evidence that he is, at the very least, a God-fearer. He is quite likely an out and out Gentile who has never darkened the door of a synagogue.

So he summons Barnabas and Saul. He wants to hear the word of God. “But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. But Saul, who was also called Paul...” And that’s where the transition happens. Did you see that? So Saul, who was also called Paul, from here on in, this name, he will no longer be called Saul. He will be called Paul. This is the juncture at which that occurs. “Filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, ‘You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time.’” So Paul exercises apostolic authority here and blinds this magician. We read that in the next sentence. “Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.” What that means is that the proconsul believed the gospel message. So you have an uncircumcised Gentile believing the gospel message as propounded by Barnabas and Paul.

Now, there are ramifications as to what happened here because all the while, the ministry of these two men, with John Mark accompanying them, has been to the synagogue of the Jews. They’ve gone to the Jew first, as Paul will say in later letters, such as 1 Corinthians. To the Jew first and also to the Greek. He also says that kind of thing in the letter to the Romans. Look at what happens in verse 13. “Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia.” So they left the island. They traveled in sort of a northwesterly direction and landed on the mainland of Asia. Largely called Asia, but it’s really on the Phrygian side. So they landed in Pamphylia, not an island. Land mass. “John left them and returned to Jerusalem.” So they left Paphos, they landed in Pamphylia, and John Mark decided he was going to go back to Jerusalem.

So let’s think about this for a second. John Mark came with Barnabas and Paul. From Jerusalem, he traveled north back to Antioch in Syria. He’s been there for some time. In the midst of a church service, God separates Barnabas and Saul for missionary work. The congregation lays hands on these men. The elders do. They travel out with this young man, John Mark. They minister on the island of Cyprus. At the end of it, on the west end of the island, in Paphos, a Gentile proconsul, uncircumcised, believes the gospel. Now, John Mark is from Jerusalem. As we will see later on in the Book of Acts, there’s a great deal of zeal in Jerusalem. There’s a great deal of adherence to the law. That seems to be the background that John Mark comes from. He leaves them. Now, admittedly, the text does not tell us why John Mark left them, but there are ramifications for this particular action. Some of us may recall reading in the latter part of Chapter 15 that Barnabas and Paul have a major disagreement about Mark because Barnabas wants to take Mark on the second missionary journey and Paul simply refuses because John Mark did not persevere with them in their missionary work. So this is the juncture at which John leaves and he doesn’t go back to Antioch. He returns back to Jerusalem. He goes all the way back home.

Verse 14, “But they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia.” And of course, there must always be a distinction made between Syrian Antioch, which is their home church, and Pisidian Antioch, which is in the Phrygio-Galatian region. So they went on from Perga. They came to Antioch in Pisidia. “On the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.” So they go to the Jew first. This is a pattern. Verse 15, “After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, ‘Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it.’ So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said...” And so from verse 16, the third clause of verse 16, all the way to practically almost the end of the chapter, I would say about verse 41, you have Paul

basically doing a sketch, an intelligible, clear, concise sketch of the history of Israel, which he then funnels into the narrative of the gospel, the message of the gospel. And so reading all of that, it's pretty concise history.

So that takes us to verse 42. These people hear this message and they are impacted. Now, of course, it must be said that when Barnabas and Paul go into the synagogue, they would have introduced themselves. They would have established their *bona fides*. That is to say, they would have talked about where they were from and who they were and what they did for a living and their qualifications. They wouldn't just have gone into the synagogue, had a seat, and then someone read from the Law of the Prophets and looked at two new individuals in the synagogue and invited them to speak. They would have gone in. They would have introduced themselves so that the people would have known where they came from and what their qualifications were and what their background was. And it is in that sense, in that context that Barnabas and Paul are invited to speak. So Paul gets up and he gives a concise message on the history of Israel, culminating in the message of the gospel.

So verse 42 of chapter 13, "As they went out," it tells us, "the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and (devout Gentiles) devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God." So these people are deeply impacted. The Jews begged them to return the next Sabbath. Not to mention the devout converts to Judaism. And of course, what that means is God-fearers. They are not exactly full converts to Judaism. They're not proselytes as such. They followed Paul and Barnabas, and so Paul and Barnabas urged them to continue on in the things that they've heard, the grace of God. But verse 44, "The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord," which is not what the people of the synagogue were expecting, particularly the Jews. Verse 45, "But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him." So the Jews were jealous because now you didn't just have God-fearers and proselytes. Now you had Gentiles of every stripe who had never darkened the door of a synagogue, who knew nothing about Judaism, knew nothing about the Law of the Prophets. Here they are and they're ready to hear the message.

If you go back to some of the content of the message, which I will argue here was the trigger for the Jews so that they began to behave in opposite fashion to their response the prior week, if you come with me early on in the chapter, let's start reading from verse 34. It says, "And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.'" Verse 35, "Therefore he says also in another psalm, 'You will not let your Holy One see corruption.'" For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the Law of Moses." And of course, he finishes off in verse 40, "Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about: 'Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you.'"

But the key issue there, "By him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the Law of Moses." And of course, the Jewish contingent of the audience during this particular Sabbath, what they heard was everyone who was Jewish and God-fearers, proselytes,

particularly the proselytes. So they filtered what Paul had said. Now, the Jewish people, who were part of the synagogue as proselytes or God-fearers, they went back, they heard everyone, and they heard everyone in a different way than the Jews did in the synagogue. So the very next week, you got almost the whole city gathered at this synagogue and the Jews see that everyone means everyone and they don't like the implication, so they begin to oppose Paul.

Verse 46, "And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, 'It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.' And when the Gentiles heard this (verse 48), they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed." That is, Gentiles. So all of a sudden, you have a Gentile harvest of souls, of people redeemed by the message of the gospel. "And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region (verse 49). But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district."

This is Pisidian Antioch. This is part of Southern Galatia. And Southern Galatia, of course, is where Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey occurs. And of course, soon after this, Paul will have to write the letter that is called the letter to the Galatians. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, not from men nor by any man, but by revelation of Jesus Christ to the churches which are at Galatia. So Galatians 1:1 to 1:2. That's how Paul starts his letter. Paul is the sole author of that letter. He doesn't even use a secretary. So exercised is he about what they allow themselves to fall back into after he leaves. But Galatians, the letter to the Galatians, would, in effect, be the second document of the New Testament. So you have James and now you have Galatians. Galatians is not written yet, but it will be. But this is Paul's first missionary journey. He's going to evangelize four cities in the Phrygio-Galatian region, and Pisidian Antioch is the first. And he and Barnabas have made a big splash. The word of God is spreading throughout the whole region.

And what do the Jews do in response? Verse 50. They incite the women, the devout Gentile women who attend synagogue. They have high social standing. And the leading men of the city, also God-fearing Gentiles. They stir them up, probably by beginning to pull them back to the whole notion of Torah or by any other means. They stir up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and they drive them out of the district. One might suppose that the women of high standing and the leading men of the city who are synagogue attendees don't necessarily receive the message of the gospel because they are heavily invested in Judaism. One could make a case for that. It's a possibility at the very least. So what do these men do? Paul and Barnabas shake off the dust of their feet against them and they go to Iconium, also in the Phrygio-Galatian region. So that's the second city that they will visit. In the meantime, Verse 52, "The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." In the next section, we're going to cover Paul and Barnabas at Iconium and Lystra and Derbe, and that will conclude their first missionary journey.