

Acts Chapter 13

Theme of Acts: The Holy Spirit and the Birth of the Church

Personal Reflection

Complete this section in one sitting or little by little during the week. Begin with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit into your time. Spending time in the Bible, studying the original intent, meaning and cultural context helps you to understand how it applies to you now.

Further Study

Complete on your own or with your small group.

Personal Reflection

Song for the week: Made for More - Josh Baldwin

Song links: <https://youtu.be/Ov9Ls4nplrc?si=4A3AfzJTyxoy1R4->

Read Acts 13 Click on any Bible verse in the study to read it or use your own Bible.

By Acts 13 many things have already occurred. Jesus went to heaven and later He sent His Holy Spirit to the believers. Saul (Paul) persecuted the early believers, met Jesus, became a believer and was then sent by Jesus to preach. Barnabas introduced Saul to the disciples before Saul returned to Tarsus where he was for years until Barnabas brought him to Antioch so they could preach together. (Timelines vary, below is based on biblehub.com, viz.bible, blueletterbible.com.)

| Year | Events | Bible Verse |
|----------|--|--|
| 30 | Jesus gave the Great Commission & He ascended into heaven. On Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon the believers. Peter shared the good news of Jesus & performed miracles in Jesus name, proving the truth of Jesus. | Acts 1:1-10 Acts 2:1-4 Acts 3:11-26 |
| 31 | Stephen became the first mentioned martyr. Saul (Paul) approved of killing Stephen & continued to persecute believers. Phillip preached the good news in Samaria. Peter and John came to join him & there was a second Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the believers in Samaria. | Acts 7:54-60 Acts 8:1-3 Acts 8:5-8 Acts 8:14-17 |
| 34 or 36 | Saul (Paul) meet Jesus, became a believer & the 12th apostle who Jesus sent out to spread the good news. Barnabas introduced Saul (Paul) to the disciples, Saul (Paul) returned to Tarsus, | Acts 9:1-31 Acts 9:26-29 Acts 9:30 |
| 37 | Peter preached to the Gentiles and a third Pentecost occurred, the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentile believers. | Acts 10-11 |
| 42 or 43 | Barnabas was sent to Antioch. Barnabas got Saul (Paul) from Tarsus; they preached together for a year in Antioch. | Acts 11:22-24 Acts 11:25-26 |
| 44 | Herod died. | Acts 12:21-23 |
| | Saul (Paul) and Barnabas took John / Mark with them to Antioch. | Acts 12:25 |
| 47 or 48 | Saul (Paul) and Barnabas went on their first missionary journey. | Acts 13:2 |

From Saul's conversion to his first missionary journey 11-15 years had passed. During that time he was preaching the Gospel where he was. Then he spent another year preaching with Barnabas before the Holy Spirit sent them on Paul's first missionary journey.

Who are the people you are doing ministry with? What are you learning from them? What might they be learning from you?

The church in Antioch had geographic, cultural and ethnic diversity. Simeon was a Jewish name while Niger was a Latin name meaning black; he may have been from Africa. Lucius was from Cyrene, a Greek city in eastern Libya in northern Africa. Manaen was the foster brother or half brother of Herod. Barnabas was a native of Cyprus and a Levite. "And Saul was the heaven-appointed Apostle of the Gentiles. The list may be deemed in some sort typical of "all the world," into which the Gospel was now to go forth (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges)." *Optional, read Acts 13:1*

God's intent is for diversity. He created all of us and His message is salvation for all who accept it. As Christ followers we are to show love to all people out of the overflow of love we receive from Him. And we are to share the gospel with all. When or where is it a challenge for you to mirror Jesus' love to all or to share the gospel with all people?

For the first time, the church sent people out from Antioch instead of Jerusalem. It was "a new policy regarding evangelism. The church begins a direct mission to the Gentile, instead of simply evangelizing them as a result of the dispersion generated by the persecution in Jerusalem (the New Testament in Antiquity)." Yet, the sending out was not the church's idea. While they were together praying, the Holy Spirit communicated that Barnabas and Saul were to be sent out. *Optional, read Acts 13:2-3*

The Holy Spirit continues to speak to us when we spend time in prayer, talking with God and then listening for His voice. If you have recently heard from God, spend some time writing it down. Is there an action He has called you to?

Saul (Paul) and Barnabas's first missionary journey lasted two years and covered about 1,400 miles throughout the island of Cyprus where Barnabas was from to Asia minor. John Mark, Barnabas' cousin, joined them for part of the time. *Optional, read Acts 4:36, Acts 12:12*

Worship of other gods was common in the Greek and Roman cultures. On Cyprus just outside Paphos, there was a temple for Aphrodite, the goddess of sex, love and beauty. There were temple slaves (prostitutes) for worshipping her. She was also worshiped in Corinth. "So notorious for its licentiousness was Corinth that one of the Greek words for "fornication" was *korinthiazoma* (earlychurchhistory.com)." It was part of why Paul wrote two letters to Corinth about what the love of God, true love, is like. Interestingly, she is still worshiped today.

We are called to live from the overflow of God's love for us. How does this love look different from the world's view of love?

Acts is called the Acts of the Apostles but again and again it is evident it is also the Acts of the Holy Spirit - all the actions and messages point back to Jesus as the true Savior. The Holy Spirit's power in Saul (Paul) showed the power of the Gospel of Jesus over magic. It also confirmed Paul as an apostle; prophetic miracles verified that God was working through and leading him. *Optional, read Acts 13:9*

Paul and Barnabas next went to Perga where there was a temple for the goddess Artemis who was believed to care for the wild animals. She was also worshiped in Ephesus, another place Paul would visit and would follow up with writing Ephesians. Today people still worship her and ask for her help in protecting wildlife. Acts doesn't tell us what happened in Perga, but again, Satan was at work with the gods, distracting people from knowing the true God.

Satan also used people to distract from belief in the true God. Elymas the sorcerer was an attendant to Sergius Paulus. Much like Simon, the sorcerer in Samaria, people gave him their attention. While Simon ended up believing in God, we do not know if Elymas did. However, we do know that Sergius Paulus believed. Satan tried to distract, yet the Holy Spirit was at work and some people still chose belief in Jesus. *Optional, read Acts 8:9-13, Acts 13:6-12*

Satan is still using gods, people and things to distract from belief in Jesus. Where do you see evil at work around you? Ask the Holy Spirit to remind you to pray against it when you witness evil or things that distract from others hearing the gospel.

In Acts 13:13 "Saul is here for the first time called Paul, and never after Saul. Saul was his name as he was a Hebrew; Paul was his name as he was a citizen of Rome (Matthew Henry's Commentary)." Paul was ministering to the Gentiles; perhaps this is why Luke chose to switch to using only the name Paul from here on.

In Pisidian Antioch Paul began speaking in the synagogue as long as the Jews would allow it. Paul understood the Gospel was for everyone. "He was not neglecting his Gentile mission, for God-fearers and converts were part of the audience. (Archaeological Study Bible)."

"The prophetic word of the Old Testament rehearsed by the apostle Paul coupled with the undeniable historic events of Christ's crucifixion elicited both stubborn rejection and belief in the truth (Exploring Bible Prophecy from Genesis to Revelation)."

Paul's message was much like the disciples and apostles who had given messages earlier in Acts. From what you remember, what are some similarities? Why might they have each used these similarities?

Putting it into practice:

When we pray we talk to God. It is important that we also leave room to hear Him reply. Anything He says can be distinguished from the voice of the world or from the whispers of demons because His word will always align with scripture.

Spend time praying, presenting your requests and concerns to God. Lean on Him as you would a trusted friend. Ask Him what He may want to tell you. Remain quiet. Did you hear from Him? Did He remain quiet?

Pay attention today and this week - is He choosing to answer you in the words of a song, of a Bible verse, a message at church, through the words of a friend? Did He answer you by providing peace? Wisdom? Direction?

When He replies, rush back to Him and thank Him. Consider writing down both your request and His reply to remind you of His goodness to you.

Further Study

Spending time in the Bible helps you know what it says. For example, many believe “God helps those who help themselves” is in the Bible. It is actually a quote from Mahatma Gandhi, a Hindu from India. The truth is Jesus came and died to cleanse us from our sins because we cannot do it on our own; God helps us where we cannot help ourselves.

Luke records Paul speaking for the first time of justification by faith, something Paul wrote about in Romans and Galatians. The old covenant (law) made people aware of their sin and need for a Savior. In the new covenant, Jesus is the Savior. *Optional, read Acts 13:38-39*

Read Galatians 3. Paul wrote, “I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?” He continued writing explaining the law and the promise, saying “let me take an example from everyday life.”

When sharing the Gospel with someone who feels they are not good enough or that they must do something to earn their position with God, how could you explain justification by faith? What examples from everyday life could you use to explain it?

“In some ways “the “Christian” label is becoming discredited, largely due to the widening gap between Christ’s words and actions and those of many of the people who claim to be Christian (bibleversestudy.com).”

Read Philippians 2:3-8 which Paul wrote to the church at Philippi. While we are justified by faith, we are still called to action. How are we to live after salvation?

If there are any struggles for you in living out Christ’s words and actions, spend time talking about it. Are there any passages in the Bible which you could memorize to help you grow?

“Shaking the dust off your feet” is an idiom which means to reject something or seek a new beginning. The phrase was first used by Jesus. He encouraged His disciples to teach the Gospel but when their message was rejected, they were to leave. Those who rejected their message would be judged by God. When they left Antioch, the responsibility of sharing the Gospel shifted to those in Antioch who believed. *Optional, read Matthew 10:14-15, Acts 13:49-51*

“There are situations in our lives where God calls us to stand firm, proclaim truth, and give patient testimony. Sometimes we need to continue until we see the results of that testimony. Other times God gives us the freedom to move on. We figuratively “shake the dust off our feet” when, under the Holy Spirit’s direction, we surrender those people to the Lord and emotionally let go ... Jesus’ instruction to “shake the dust off our feet” reminds us that we are only responsible for our obedience to God, not for the results of that obedience (gotquestions.org).”

Who in your life is God encouraging you to share the Gospel with? Who is He giving you the freedom to be silent with your testimony and remain in prayer for the person? Remember, we are not responsible for others’ obedience to God, only to what He calls us to.

Prayer

Consider praying to become more like Jesus and for those who you are sharing the Gospel with.

Follow Up

Is there anything from this week’s personal reflection time which you would like to discuss more?