

Acts Chapter 13

Luke's story of Paul's first mission is bracketed by Antioch, where he and Barnabas are commissioned for missionary service.

Paul and Barnabas now become the principal prophetic witnesses to Jesus. God calls them through the Holy Spirit and sends them to do God's work.

The chapter begins with a catalog of the leaders and their offices in the church in Antioch.

This identifies those who are working through and in the Spirit for the good of God's message.

Thus, in addition to sharing goods with Jerusalem, the resurrection practices of the Antiochene community also include fasting and prayer.

Once again the laying on of hands is the giving of apostolic authority.

Paul cannot claim apostolic status – he is sent by the Holy Spirit and according to the prophecy of the risen Lord.

Vvs 4-12

One must have a map at hand when reading Acts



Barnabas and Paul leave Antioch and go to Cyprus, arriving at Salamis. They cross to Paphos. They proclaim in the synagogues. John Mark joins but soon returns to Jerusalem.

They meet with the Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus (46-48 ce) They also meet a magician Bar-Jesus who is probably an advisor to the proconsul. It is thought that Segius is a type or typical of a Gentile convert and Bar-Jesus is a type or typical Jewish opponent.

The suggestion is that Bar-Jesus faults or false arguments are moral rather than theological.

he [Natural History](#) of [Pliny the Elder](#) (CE 23/24-79)^[24] is a voluminous survey of knowledge of the late Hellenistic era, based according to Pliny on a hundred or so earlier authorities. This rather extensive work deals with an amazing variety of issues: cosmology, geography, anthropology, zoology, botany, pharmacology, mineralogy, metallurgy and many others. Pliny was convinced of the powers of certain herbs or roots as revealed to humanity by the gods. Pliny argued that the divine powers in their concern for the welfare of humanity wish for humanity to discover the secrets of nature. Pliny indeed argues that in their wisdom the gods sought to bring humans gradually closer to their status; which certainly many magical traditions seek – that is by acquiring knowledge one can aspire to gain knowledge even from the gods. Pliny expresses a firm concept is firmly being able to understand this "cosmic sympathy" that, if properly understood and used, operates for the good of humanity.^{[24]:II:62[54]}

While here lies expressed the central tenets of magic Pliny is by means averse to using the term "magic" in a negative sense. Pliny argues that the claims of the professional magicians were either exaggerated or simply false.^{[24]:XXV:59, XXIX:20, XXVII:75} Pliny expresses an interesting concept when he states that those sorcerers who had written down their spells and recipes despised and hated humanity (for spreading their lies perhaps?).^{[24]:XXVII:40} To show this

Pliny link arts of the magicians of Rome with the emperor Nero (who is often portrayed negatively), whom Pliny claims had studied magic with the best teachers and had access to the best books, but was unable to do anything extraordinary.^{[24]:XXX:5-6}

Pliny's conclusion, however, is cautious: though magic is ineffective and infamous, it nevertheless contains "shadows of truth", particularly of the "arts of making poisons". Yet, Pliny states, "there is no one who is not afraid of spells" (including himself presumably).^{[24]:XXVIII:4} The amulets and charms that people wore as a kind of preventive medicine he neither commends or condemns, but instead suggests that it is better to err on the side of caution, for, who knows, a new kind of magic, a magic that really works, may be developed at any time.^{[24]:XXVIII:4}

If such an attitude prevailed in the Greco-Roman world this may explain why professional magicians, such as [Simon Magus](#), were on the lookout for new ideas. Pliny devotes the beginning of Book 30 of his work to the magi of Persia and refers to them here and there especially in Books 28 and 29.^[65] Pliny defines the Magi at times as sorcerers, but also seems to acknowledge that they are priests of a foreign religion, along the lines of the [druids](#) of the [Celts](#) in Britain and Gaul. According to Pliny, the art of the magi touches three areas: "[healing](#)," "[ritual](#)," and "[astrology](#)."^{[24]:XXX:1}

Magicians were involved in many aspects of daily life. Some saw Jesus as a magician

Saul blinds Bar-Jesus. He is thus showing the hand of the Lord has power. The text points out that false prophets make crooked that which is straight. Bar-Jesus was trying to blind people to Jesus and now received the same fate.

Vvs 13-16

Paul and his companions set out for Pamphylia and then to Perga. John Mark leaves them from here.

It is fascinating that the Jewish leaders invite Paul to speak. To literally give words of exhortation. This was a traditional edifying homily on God's saving acts – typically. So the story of Jesus would have fit in Paul's mind.

His speech calls us to pay attention as did his audience.

The crowd would have included God fearers (Jewish converts).

Vvs 17-25

Paul draws out Jesus' connection to the Davidic dynasty as royal Messiah. David become for Paul the prototypical type of king anointed by God from whom Jesus ascends.

David was found to be a man after God's heart who carries out God's wishes (1Sam 13). Paul leads this to the promise of an eternal kind ruled by a Davidic heir. It is now a realized kingdom marked by God's Spirit. Paul's movement to the proclamation of John the Baptist as a precursor to Messiah connects the story.

Vv26 – 37

The second section of Paul's speech begins as the first half began speaking to the whole audience. This allows him to connect Jesus to God's salvation history in a way that is befitting of the type of message he was asked to give.

Paul is convinced that those who condemned Jesus were ignorant of the words of the prophet that proclaimed him. Paul stresses Jesus' innocence.

God promised the salvation the people hear about every Sabbath but now has fulfilled the promise in Jesus.

Vvs 38-41

Paul begins the final section of his speech with his third appeal for his brothers to listen to his message.

We might even suggest that this is the final altar call.

In this instance an altar call is a missionary's appeal for his or her auditors to convert to Jesus

For Luke Acts forgiveness of sins is an important proclamation, not so for Paul typically in his letters.

Vvs 42-43

The congregation's initial response is cautiously positive. Paul and Barnabas are invited back.

Vvs 44-47

The return and almost the whole city is gathered. Probably a little hyperbole. Paul must be a powerful speaker.

This also explains why the Jewish opponents were filled with jealousy.

Paul's big crime in the eyes of the opponents is his influence and power in the community.

He is turning the old order upside down.

CHANGE.

Some argue Paul's Gentile mission is based on Jewish rejection of his gospel. But Paul does convert many Jews.

In reality Paul carries the Word to the Jews first then the Gentiles.

Paul is fulfilling his call to be a light to the Gentiles, to the ends of the earth.

Vvs 48-49

The Gentiles were glad to hear the message and praised the word of the Lord. It is still assumed all Gentiles did not believe.

It is God's saving word that calls the world to repentance and love. vs 46 As many has been destined for eternal life became believers.

Some commentators suggest this is the ultimate statement for predestination anywhere in Scripture.

For Luke – the plan and history of God's salvation are mapped by the prophecies of Scripture and everyone who experiences salvation's blessings does so because they have

turned to God in faith. Paul adopts the listeners in the people of God and their faithful response gives them the key to eternal life.

Once again the chapter ends with people in power and of means reject Paul. The woman are indicated as Jewish converts and indicate the rejection originates in the synagogue.

Paul will suffer. Suffering is a consequence of mission for Luke.

They shake the dust off their feet and move on to Iconium.

New prospects are on the horizon.