

- Last week we looked at some key events in the early church. We looked at how the apostle Peter was following Christ's instruction and example by preaching and healing. We also looked specifically at how Peter was instructed by God to preach to the Gentiles, including the vision Peter saw and his interactions with Cornelius. We also looked at some actions Herod took against the early church and how he eventually died. Finally, we looked at how Stephen's martyrdom caused the spread of the Christians fleeing persecution in Jerusalem and how that caused the early church to grow. We also looked at where the term "Christian" originated.
- This week we are going to look at the first missionary trip the new apostle Saul made, who went with him, and some of the adventures they faced. We will also study about a meeting that was held at Jerusalem of many of the leaders of the Church and the guidance that came out of this meeting. We will conclude with a look at the way the apostles decide to team up in the future.
- We continue to find Saul, Barnabas, and John Mark in Antioch. There were several people together there with them praying and fasting. The Holy Spirit clearly tells them to send Saul and Barnabas on another missionary trip. John Mark goes with them. (Acts 13:1-3)
- It is important to note that the apostles were fasting. Remember that Christ himself explicitly told the apostles that He assumed fasting would be part of their lives. (Matthew 6:16-18) In every case where we read of an example of fasting, it is linked to prayer (as it is here). Christ tells his apostles this combination is very powerful. (Mark 9:14-29) (Note that some translations like the ESV omit the final word "fasting", while other translations like the King James Version, show that word.)
- The Holy Spirit leads them to the island of Cyprus. They go all through the island preaching Jesus. They are summoned by the governor of the island that the Romans have put in charge, a man named Sergius Paulus, who wants to know more about their preaching. Here we find out that the man Saul is also called Paul, and that name is used from then on in scripture. As Paul is preaching, a man in Sergius Paulus's court, called Elymas who is a magician, opposes Paul's preaching and tries to get Sergius Paulus not to listen. Paul, being filled with the Holy Spirit, recognized this fact, stares him down and tells him off, then blinds him for a while. Sergius Paulus sees this happening then believes. (Acts 13:4-12)
- Paul and company leave the island and go to a town called Perga (in modern day Turkey). John Mark (who we talked about last week) leaves them and goes back to Jerusalem, we're not told why but this will be important later. (Acts 13:13)
- Paul and Barnabas then go back to Antioch. After the traditional Jewish services, the Jewish leaders asks if anyone has anything to add. Paul stands up and goes through a brief Jewish history, quoting from several Psalms David wrote, talks about John the Baptist, and then mentions how Christ fulfilled prophecies they were looking for. (Acts 13:14-41)
- The Jews are not happy about Paul's message but the Gentiles were and wanted to hear more. Paul quotes Isaiah 49:6 to them, which points out that they were predicted to bring

salvation to the Gentiles too. This enrages the Jews even more to the point that they kick Paul and Barnabas out of the city. Paul and Barnabas “shake the dust off their feet” and move on. (Acts 13:42-52) Remember, Christ had told them that if anyone would not listen to them to “shake the dust off their fee” and move on. (Matthew 10:14)

- Next Paul and Barnabas went to a city called Iconium. There some people (both Jews and Gentiles) believe and some (again, both Jews and Gentiles) don't. The unbelievers start to stir up trouble and Paul and Barnabas leave to escape persecution and go to the towns called Lystra and Derbe. (Acts 14:1-7)
- Paul and Barnabas are preaching in Lystra. Paul causes a lame man to walk again. The people start saying that Barnabas and Paul are Greek Gods and they want to make sacrifices to them. Paul and Barnabas explain they are just men representing the one true God. They are barely able to keep the people from making sacrifices. Next all the non-believers from the last two towns Paul and Barnabas had been too (Antioch and Iconium) come to Lystra where they take Paul out and stone him. They think he is dead so they leave. When the Christians arrive, Paul gets up and walks away with them on his own, then goes to a town called Derby close by. (Acts 14:8-20)
- They preach there and then make the rounds back through the cities of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. They appoint elders in all the churches, and they pray and fast, most likely with the elders and in each place. They end up back in Antioch, telling people there that the message was opened to the Gentiles. (Acts 14:21-28)
- A division arises because certain Jewish followers of Christ want to impose the law of Moses on the Gentiles – they think it is important to require the Gentiles to keep the laws of the Jews too. Paul and Barnabas do not agree, so they all agree to put this question to the church at Jerusalem which is strongest. They all head to Jerusalem to put this question before the leaders gathered there. We popularly call this today the “Judiazing Teachers” problem, and refer to the meeting as the “Jerusalem Council.” Peter stands up and defends the Gentiles, notes that God searches the heart and says that we should not be throwing up roadblocks to the Gentiles’ salvation. James quotes the prophet Amos (Amos 9:12) and notes that this has all been prophesied and recommends that they send a letter to other Churches saying all the Gentiles need to do is abstain from sexual immorality, not practice idolatry, and not eat food from strangled animals or food with blood. That makes sense to the church leaders so they do that. (Acts 15:1-29)
- Several people go back to the Church at Antioch and deliver the letter there. Paul, Barnabas and Silas are going out to do more missionary work. Barnabas wants to take John Mark, but Paul objects since John Mark had left them on the last journey they made (remember that he had left them in Perga to return to Jerusalem). The argument is so intense that they agree to go separate ways. Barnabas takes John Mark and they sail off to the island of Cyprus again (then scripture never mentions them again) and Paul takes a man names Silas and pays return visits to the churches in the area. (Acts 15:30-41)
- We don't know why John Mark left them in Perga. This has been the source of a lot of speculation, but scripture just doesn't tell us. We do know that Christ set the bar high for reasons his followers would give for discipleship, even to the point of saying that going to

20180311 Sunday AM

Acts 13-15

p 3 of 3

bury one's father is not a good excuse. He says that those who are spiritually dead can oversee that. (Matthew 8:22)

Questions:

1. Who called Saul and Barnabas to do mission work? Who goes with them?
2. What is the significance of the fact that the apostles were praying and fasting?
3. Who is Sergius Paulus and Elymas and what happens to them?
4. Who leaves Paul and Barnabas in Perga to go back to Jerusalem?
5. What does Paul do in his speech at Antioch?
6. What happens in Antioch when the Jews will not agree with Paul's message?
7. What happens to Paul and Barnabas in Iconium?
8. What happens to Paul at Lystra?
9. What do Paul and Barnabas do after the incident at Lystra?
10. What problem is brought to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem?
11. What do Peter and James say at the Jerusalem Council?
12. What does the Jerusalem Council ultimately do?
13. Why do the apostles split up? Why? How do they resolve this argument?
14. What did Christ say was not a good excuse for not following Him?

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