



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

LESSON 12 – STUDY QUESTIONS ACTS 13:1-52

DAY ONE

1. In last week's lesson we covered two chapters of the Acts of the Apostles: Chapters 11 and 12. Record a thought from the Spiritual Reflection or commentary from last week that was especially important to you.

Read Acts 13:1-12

2a. In today's lesson, the focus shifts from Peter, who dominated the first 12 chapters of Acts, to Paul for the remaining chapters (13-28). As Chapter 13 opens, we are in Antioch, which has become the center of Christian missionary activities. Verse 1 tells us that there were two types of leaders in the church at Antioch. Name the types, the names of these men, and anything else you find out about them.

b. What was this group of church members doing when the Holy Spirit spoke to them, according to verse 2, and what was the Spirit's message?

NOTE: The Greek word *leitourgeo* that Luke used for "worshipping" in verse 2, means more than simple prayer. It was used in the Old Testament to refer to the sacrifice of animals in the Temple by the Levitical priesthood. The Church Fathers also used the same word to describe the Eucharistic liturgy. Ignatius Catholic Study Bible, The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 37-38.

3a. According to verse 3, after they had all fasted and prayed more, what did the people of the church do for Saul and Barnabas?

b. Paul and Barnabas were missionaries. The word *missionary* comes from the Latin word *mitte* meaning to send. Notice that the Holy Spirit asked the church leaders to set them apart and send them on their way as missionaries. What might be reasons that the Holy Spirit worked in this way?

4. In verse 4, we see that Barnabas and Paul traveled by land from Antioch to the port city of Seleucia, and then sailed to the Mediterranean island of Cyprus. What did they do in Salamis on the eastern shore of Cyprus, and who did they have to assist them (verse 5)?

5a. When they had reached the other side of Cyprus (Paphos), they met a magician, named Bar-Jesus, accompanied by the Roman proconsul, Sergius Paulus. How were these two men described (verses 6 and 7)?

b. Sergius Paulus summoned Barnabas and Saul and wanted to hear the word of God. How did the magician feel about this, according to the end of verse 8?

6a. Saul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked at the magician intently, rebuked and blinded him. Record his angry words from verses 10 and the first half of 11.

b. In what ways were Saul's angry predictions fulfilled in Elymas, according to the end of verse 11, and what effect did this have on the proconsul in verse 12?

7. CONNECTION: Saul (Paul) rebuked and blinded Elymas, the magician, just as he himself had been rebuked and blinded by Christ on the road to Damascus. His angry tirade, inspired by the Holy Spirit, was in fact an act of love. The proud magician was reduced to “groping for someone to lead him by the hand” in “mist and darkness.” We do not know whether Elymas received the rebuke humbly and allowed it to change his heart away from pride and superstition, but for Paul, the rebuke brought him to his senses, took away his pride, and led him to salvation in Christ. Have you ever found yourself being rebuked by the Lord after holding on to a wrong or hurtful attitude? Was your rebuke instrumental in leading you to a more humble, loving and Christ-like outlook? Share some thoughts with your small group.

Read and record 1 Peter 5:6 and let these thoughts lead you into prayer for a more humble spirit.

DAY TWO

Read Acts 13:13-22

8a. To this point in Acts, Luke referred to these disciples as “Barnabas and Saul.” Now he has changed the order. Paul (Saul) is mentioned first - indicating that he has taken charge - and Barnabas is not even mentioned by name. The wording is “*Paul and his companions.*” What do verses 13 and 14 tell us about this group?

b. Verse 13 tells us that “John” left them. "John" was his Jewish name, "Mark" was his Roman name, and thus he is referred to in Acts 12:12 as "John Mark." After John Mark left Paul and Barnabas, he became close to Peter, and is thought to be the author of the Book of Mark. How is John Mark referred to in 1 Peter 5:13?

NOTE: Later we will read that John Mark's departure resulted in a dispute between Barnabas and Paul in Acts 15:37-38, although later they were reconciled.

9a. Paul, Barnabas and their companions continued on their journey from Perga to Antioch in Pisidia. What did they do when they arrived there (verse 14)?

b. After reading from the Torah, officials of the synagogue asked their visitors, whom they addressed as brothers, to give a “word of exhortation for the people....” (verse 15). In response, Paul stood to address them (verse 16). In what manner did he address them, and to what two groups could he have been referring?

10a. Verses 17-21 contain a brief, succinct history of Judaism proclaimed by Paul. Briefly itemize the history as related by Paul.

b. Paul's first sermon shows that he was a biblical scholar. Like Stephen in chapter 7, he reviewed Hebraic history for his audience. What is a reason he might have done this?

11. In verse 22, Paul stated that God made David king, and said about David: “I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes.” What do you think it means to be “after someone’s heart”?

12. CONNECTION: Paul reminds his listeners that God found David to be a man after God’s own heart. David was dear to God. Of course God loves everyone, yet Scripture mentions David in particular as being dear to God. Do you have someone who is “after your own heart” and so particularly dear to you, or is there someone to whom you have been particularly dear? Give some details and explain what this has meant in your life.

Read and record: Isaiah 49:15-16. Keep in mind that you are dearer to God than the dearest of your friends or relatives is to you. Pray for the person you described above as you begin your prayer today.

DAY THREE
Read Acts 13:23-31

14a. As today's lesson begins, Paul continued his sermon in verse 23. Who did he say God brought to Israel out of King David’s descendants as He had promised?

b. Paul wants the synagogue members to know that Jesus is Israel’s long awaited Messiah, the heir to the Davidic Kingship of Israel. Read the following passages and identify the link described between Jesus and the Davidic kingship.

Luke 1:31- 33

John 12:12-15

15. Because many of his listeners would have heard of John the Baptist and would have considered him a prophet, Paul then went on to tell how John the Baptist had proclaimed "a baptism of repentance" (verse 24) and prophesied the coming of Christ. Record the words John spoke in verse 25 that tell of the coming of Christ.

16a. Paul continued his sermon by addressing three groups in the synagogue. Who were they according to verse 26?

b. What message does Paul say God has sent them?

17a. Paul continued his sermon by telling his listeners that the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders should have known about Jesus because they heard the words of the prophets read every Sabbath. What happened as the result of their failing to recognize him (verse 27)?

b. Paul told his listeners that the residents asked Pilate to kill Jesus, even though no cause was found for sentencing Him to death (verse 28). When the residents of Jerusalem had carried out all the prophecies, what did they do to Jesus, according to verse 29?

18a. According to verses 30-31, what amazing things did Paul tell them?

b. Paul was impressing on his listeners that the apostles were witnesses to Jesus' resurrection through His appearances to them. Select a passage from one of the Gospels which recounts such an appearance and is particularly meaningful to you.

19. CONNECTION: Paul wanted his listeners to recognize that Jesus was the Messiah who had been foretold to them in the Hebrew Scriptures. He warned them against the blindness of the Jews of Jerusalem who had rejected the Messiah and had become complicit in His murder, in fact fulfilling those very prophecies. Sometimes we do not listen to the words of Scripture read in Mass and so we do not give them a chance to change our lives. Can you think of a time when you really "heard" a word of Scripture as if for the first time? What phrase or story was it? How did that "word" make a difference in you? Record some thoughts to share with your small group.

Read and record: Psalm 119:105. God's word is important and powerful in your life. Let that thought lead you into prayer.

DAY FOUR

Read Acts 13:32-41

20. Paul's sermon continues in today's passage. According to verse 32, Paul and his companions had good news for their listeners. What good news did Paul mention in verse 32 and the first part of 33?

21. In the second part of verse 33, Paul quoted from Psalm 2:7, which was originally a psalm about the anointing, as part of God's covenant, of the kings of Israel. Here, Paul used this psalm to tell them that Jesus is the king foretold of old. Record Paul's words, which explain Jesus' relationship with the Father.

22. As Paul continued his sermon, he showed an important difference between King David and Jesus. Verses 34 through 37 each contain the word "corruption" (bodily decay). For each verse state who did or did not experience corruption:

Verse 34

Verse 35

Verse 36

Verse 37

23. In verses 38-39, Paul told them that those who believe in Jesus will be forgiven of their sins, truly "good news" for those who would not have been forgiven by the law of Moses. Briefly describe what that means.

24. Having told his audience the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, Paul then quoted from the book of the prophet Habakkuk (verse 41), who prophesied that there would be scoffers that would not believe this amazing message. What does he warn will happen to them if they don't believe?

25. CONNECTION: In today's (and yesterday's) lesson, we studied the speech Paul delivered in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia. For most of Paul's audience, this was the first time they had

heard that the Nazarene Jesus was indeed their long-prophesized Messiah and heir to the Davidic throne. It is not surprising that some did not accept the message. No matter how elegant the words or how convincing the argument, people must accept or reject the Gospel message as an act of faith. Only the Spirit of God has the power to change hearts. Can you describe a time when you shared your faith with someone who was not a practicing believer? What was the outcome?

Read and record John 14:26 and begin your prayer by asking God for this Holy Spirit to nourish the seeds of faith that you plant.

DAY FIVE

Read Acts 13:42-47

26a. As today's lesson begins, Paul and Barnabas went out of the synagogue. What did the people urge them to do (verse 42)?

b. After Paul and Barnabas left the synagogue, many Jews and devout converts followed them. What words did they have for these people (verse 43)?

27. According to verse 44, what happened on the next Sabbath?

28. When the Jews saw the crowds listening to Paul and Barnabas, how did they react, according to verse 45?

29a. Paul and Barnabas boldly responded to the Jewish leaders, telling them that the Word of God was to be spoken first to the Jewish people, but since they had rejected it, they would turn to the Gentiles (verse 46). How do you think the Jewish leaders would have reacted to this statement?

b. Read and record Romans 9:4-5, which explains why it was important for the gospel message to go first to the Jews.

30a. In today's passage, Paul quotes Isaiah 49:6 to show that God wanted the good news to be spread to the Gentiles. Record verse 47.

b. Who else quoted Isaiah 49:6 and in what context? See Luke 2:28-32.

31. CONNECTION: In this passage we read that the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia were jealous of the missionaries Paul and Barnabas. They may not have wanted the "Good News", but when the whole city turned out to hear them, they quickly determined they didn't want it spread to, or shared with, the Gentiles. We too, can become jealous of things we think we alone should have: "mine, mine, mine", as little children say. Can you think of a time when you were jealous or protective of something you had and didn't want to share, but found you were able to open your heart through grace? Share some details of your experience and how you found that in putting aside your jealousy you received the greater gift.

Read and record John 1:16. As you pray today, be aware of the abundance of grace that is poured out on you through Christ Jesus.

DAY SIX

Read Acts 13:48-52

32a. As this passage opens, the Gentiles "were glad and praised the word of the Lord." What else does verse 48 tell us about these Gentiles?

b. What was the result of their newfound belief (verse 49)?

33a. According to verse 50, the Jews incited two important groups of people against Paul and Barnabas. Who did they incite?

b. What did the Jews do to Paul and Barnabas?

34a. Paul and Barnabas "shook the dust off their feet" in protest and went to Iconium, a city about 80 miles southeast of Antioch (verse 51). Read Mark 6:11, in which Jesus instructed his disciples about rejection. What connection can you make between this verse and Acts 13:51?

b. Read and record verse 52, which tell us that in spite of the challenges they met in Antioch, the disciples were filled with missionary zeal.

35. CONNECTION: Paul and Barnabas must have been disappointed in the outcome of the missionary trip to Antioch in Pisidia; however, rather than blaming themselves or others, they chose to acknowledge their defeat and move on to other places. This was a positive ... a "life-giving" choice. God has given us free will - we are free to make our own choices every day of our lives. When faced with a disappointment, we are often tempted to blame ourselves or others and dwell on the defeat rather than shaking the dust from our feet and moving forward. Consider a time when you had to decide to move forward from a difficult or disappointing situation and, with God's help, you made the "life-giving" choice.

Read and record Deuteronomy 30:19 and write a prayer that God helps you continue to make healthy, positive choices!

After completing this lesson, read Chapter 13 (refer to pages 88–93 in the edition copyrighted in 1992 by Our Sunday Visitor or pages 97-105 in the edition reprinted in 2013 by Saint Benedict Press) in the *Meditation and Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* by Alfred McBride, O. Praem. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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