

# The Context Bible

Life Group Lesson 29

July 14 - 20, 2014

## Acts 13:13 – 14:28

### Introduction to the Context Bible

Have you ever wished the Bible was easier to read through like an ordinary book – cover to cover? Because the Bible is a collection of 66 books, it makes reading like an ordinary book quite difficult. Compounding this difficulty is the fact that the later writers of the New Testament were often quoting or referencing passages in the Old Testament. In fact, much of the New Testament makes better sense only if one also considers the Old Testament passages that place the text into its scriptural context.

You are reading a running commentary to The Context Bible. This arrangement of Scripture seeks to overcome some of these difficulties. Using a core reading of John’s gospel, the book of Acts, and the Revelation of John, the Context Bible arranges all the rest of Scripture into a contextual framework that supports the core reading. It is broken out into daily readings so that this program allows one to read the entire Bible in a year, but in a contextual format.

Here is the running commentary for week twenty-nine, along with the readings for week thirty appended. Join in. It’s never too late to read the Bible in context!

### *Week Twenty-nine Readings*

<p><b>7/14 Paul and Barnabas at Pisidian Antioch</b></p> <p>Acts 13:13-13:52 Zech 7 2 Kgs 22-23</p> <p><b>7/15 Paul and Barnabas at Galatian Cities</b> Acts 14:1-14:28</p> <p><b>Paul to the Galatians :</b> The Gospel Gal 1:1-1:10 Prov 16:1-16:3</p> <p>Paul’s Call Gal 1:11-2:10</p> <p>Opposing Peter Gal 2:11-2:14 Prov 10:8</p>	<p><b>7/16 Paul to the Galatians – Justified by Faith</b></p> <p>Gal 2:15-2:21 Luk 18:9-18:14 Prov 25:27 Luk 18:18-18:30 Rom 9:1-9:13 Mal 1:2-1:5 Rom 9:14-9:24 Jer 18 Rom 9:25-9:33</p>	<p><b>7/17 Paul to the Galatians – Justified by Faith</b></p> <p>Gal 2:15-2:21 Isa 10 Isa 45:1-45:13 Rom 10 Prov 25:25 Rom 8:1-8:17</p>	<p><b>7/18 Paul to the Galatians – By Faith not Works</b></p> <p>Gal 3:1-3:9 Num 28-29 Heb 11:1-11:10 Gen 12:1-12:3</p> <p><b>7/19 Paul to the Galatians – By Faith not Works</b></p> <p>Gal 3:1-3:9 Heb 11:11-11:31 Josh 2 Heb 11:32-11:40</p> <p>7/20 OFF</p>
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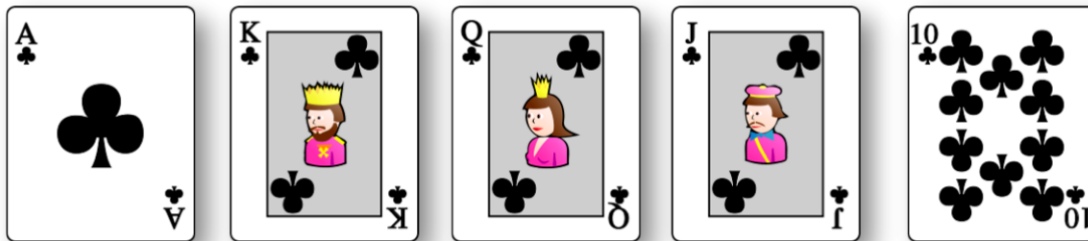
**READING PURPOSE:** This week’s core reading explores the early missionary efforts of Paul and Barnabas. The missionary team go through cities of Galatia, and most scholars place Paul’s letter to the Galatians shortly after that mission excursion. Therefore, we have used this as the time to consider Paul’s letter to the Galatians along with additional supplements from the Old Testament.

The context readings give insight into the core message Paul preached as well as the way that message was misunderstood in the early church. Paul writes to clarify misunderstandings and set aright those who were distorting his core message.

The teaching to accompany this week’s reading sets out the history and real world circumstances and culture that made Paul’s missionary effort “workable.” Next week’s lesson will work through the core texts of Galatians.

### Paul’s Missionary Work (Acts 13:13-14:28)

If our class had 649,739 people in it, and each were dealt a hand of five cards, the odds are that one, and *only one* would get a royal straight flush. This is a five-card hand, with all the cards in the same suit, in order, ace – king – queen – jack – ten.



A royal straight flush in clubs

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Look carefully at the picture above of the royal straight flush and ask yourself this question: Which of the cards, more so than any other, makes the hand? You might say, “The ace, of course. For you can’t have a royal straight flush without an ace.” But can’t that be said also of the king? You could never have a royal straight flush without a king. Or a queen either. Or a jack or a ten. In fact, each of the cards is integral to a royal straight flush, and if you remove any of the five and replace it with any other card in the deck, you cannot possibly have a royal straight flush.

This illustration helps me appreciate the missionary story that we begin to unfold in the book of Acts. The illustration works in two ways. First, just as each card is required to

make the hand, so each of several factors was required to allow the church to establish and grow into the worldwide influence it became almost overnight, at least in the historical sense of “overnight.” Without the Roman peace, the Roman roads, the Jewish dispersion, the temple worship, the key people in the key places, the church would have never made it. This confluence of these important factors works the same as the cards in the flush. Without each one, the hand does not make. God’s hand and timing were (and are) perfect. Yet these “cards” alone will not make the hand without divine intervention, which brings us to the second usage of this illustration.

A second way the illustration speaks to me about Acts is the consideration of the odds. The confluence of factors we find in history applicable to our study this week are much more odd than those of a royal straight flush. Think about the church establishment as you might an investment. If you were an investor, would you invest in this idea?

There are a few rag tag, uneducated fishermen in a backwater of the Roman Empire who are by and large illiterate, who have no real following, who believe that one of their buddies, who was labeled a criminal and subjected to capital punishment, came back from the dead. They claim they saw him over a few weeks after his death. They can’t show him to you or anyone else, because they had no video taping ability. Furthermore, he didn’t stay beyond a few weeks and then he shot up into the sky with a promise he would come back at some unknown point. This buddy, they say, was “God.”

The plan you are being asked to invest in is for these uneducated folks to take a belief in this resurrection global. They are going to make this into a movement! They can offer no earthly benefit to their movement. They can only sell people on the idea that while it might make their life on earth miserable, if folks join, they might get a great life after death.

Now before you decide whether or not to invest in the movement, let me add a few more details:

This is a spur of the moment idea. It was launched seemingly on a whim. The uneducated fellows starting it have no business plan, nor do they have any authoritative backers or notable supporters. In fact, the authorities were seeking to destroy the movement and its ideas, just as they killed the original fellow they deemed a rabble-rouser. I should add that these very enemies are the ones upon which the enterprise will rely for its growth. Their minds must be “changed.” No groundwork was laid for the enterprise. The starters have no money, are relatively poor and living hand-to-mouth. They have no way to sustain the enterprise, short of volunteers and donations.

There are no emails, no Facebook connections, no mass-mailings or printed books. There are no cell phones or landlines to enable ready communication. People are without all of the modern aids of communication. There is no hierarchy or structure in place to govern or guide the enterprise. The movement has no army, no police force, and no real base of operations.

Over time, many have tried with better resources and training to start something profound and meaningful, often claiming to follow some charismatic leader (granted, the leader was generally alive and not simply a “reputation”). Those have each failed and faded into the anonymity of history.

Would *you* invest in the success of this effort? Would you stick all your money into it? Your odds of success are MUCH less than a royal straight flush. Yet we are describing the reality of the Christian faith, the movement that conquered the world. This success was not logical. It was statistically impossible. It happened only by the hand of God!

## **PAUL’S MISSIONWORK IN ITS HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

In the three synoptic gospels, we read about Jesus using a parable of the sower to explain people’s reception to the teaching about the kingdom of heaven. The teaching of the kingdom was likened to seed. For some, the seed (teaching) fell on the path and was eaten by birds, never even sprouting. For others, the seeds fell on rocky ground with enough dirt to sprout the seed, but not enough for the roots to grow. So the seed sprouted and quickly died. A third soil type was weedy, and seeds that fell there grew, but were choked out by the weeds. The final seeds fell on good soil and grew, produced grain, and multiplied many times over (See, Matt 13:1-13:9; Mrk 4:1-4:9; Luk 8:4-8:8). That parable speaks directly to the heart of people, but it also marvelously displays the truth of the kingdom on a larger scale.

The book of Acts unfolds astronomical church growth in a soil that, while statistically improbable, turned out to be the perfect environment for the church to grow as it did. We place Acts into a historical context by considering several of the “cards” that made the hand.

*The Jewish Dispersion (The “Diaspora”<sup>1</sup>)*

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<sup>1</sup> Scholars use the word “diaspora” to refer to the voluntary dispersion of Jews, as opposed to “exile” or “captivity.” While historically it might have its genesis in a captivity, once Jews were allowed to return to their land, but instead chose to remain where their lives had taken root, they became a part of the

As a nation, the Jews were repeatedly exiled from the physical boundaries of their homeland in the centuries before Christ. After the Babylonian captivity (586BC), many exiled Jews carefully maintained their faith and its practices, even though separated physically from Jerusalem and the temple. They still maintained important ties back to the homeland, returning to Jerusalem to celebrate various festivals and important religious events that required presence at the temple. This would continue until the Romans destroyed the temple in 70AD. The temple served as an umbilical cord that kept the Jewish faithful tied to the homeland for faith and practice. It was a regular draw that brought back the devoted from the far regions of the Roman Empire. This is why so many were present in Jerusalem on Pentecost when Peter unlocked the doors to the kingdom with his Pentecostal sermon. Acts tells us there were Jews who were,

devout men from every nation under heaven... Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome ... Cretans and Arabians (Acts 2:5-2:11).

Look at these places on a map of the Mediterranean world:



These were the nations represented in Jerusalem that heard Peter’s sermon. It is much of the known world. Of course, any of Luke’s contemporaries who read his Acts would

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diaspora. The word “diaspora” comes from the Greek *diaspora* (διασπορά) and means simply “dispersion.”

register these places in their minds. As we do so today, we can readily note a glaring area missing: Greece and Macedonia (north and east of Greece). It would have provoked in me a question of how God was going to reach the Greek world. This is a geographical set-up of the insistence of the Holy Spirit that Paul's mission efforts, planned for Asia and Bithynia, were instead pushed across the Bosphorus Straights and into Macedonia and Greece.

Among these nations, save Macedonia and Greece, there were Jews and "proselytes" (or converts to Judaism) who were all on a spiritual trek to Jerusalem. These were the seeds that heard the words of Peter's sermon, were convicted by the Spirit, placed their faith in Christ, and took the faith back home. Once home, they were not isolated in their faith, but had synagogues in which they were able to share and study more.

Undoubtedly, some were not so readily convinced, but the seed was taking root and upon their return home, they were wrestling with what they heard and were weighing it against what they knew and the Scriptures they had to study. That brings us to another card that was critical to the growth of the church: the Septuagint.

### *The Septuagint*

We have spoken before of the influence Greek culture had upon the Mediterranean world after the conquests of Alexander the Great. His city in Egypt, appropriately named Alexandria, became Egypt's capital. Successive rulers (the "Ptolemies") built great structures for learning there. They built a massive lighthouse, which was known as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, just offshore on the island of Pharos. The body of Alexander the Great was embalmed and placed in a glass sarcophagus for viewing in Alexandria. By the 200's BC, Alexandria was not only the largest city in the world, it also featured the world's largest library. Although scholars are uncertain of the size or content, a reasonable estimate of 400,000 volumes is frequently given.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that Alexandria also held a large Jewish population, a part of the diaspora.

It is not surprising that the Greek intelligentsia, including the ruling authorities, sought to have the Jewish Scriptures and other important writings translated into Greek. This was the birth of what scholars today call the Septuagint (abbreviated "LXX," the Roman numerals for "70"<sup>3</sup>). The first Jewish Scriptures translated were the Torah, the

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<sup>2</sup> Lewis, D. M., et al., *The Cambridge Ancient History* (Cambridge 1994), 2d Ed., Vol. VI, at 416.

<sup>3</sup> The name "Septuagint" comes from the Latin title of the translation: *Versio Septuaginta Interpretum*, which means "version of the seventy interpreters." This also explains why the abbreviation for the Septuagint is the Roman numeral for 70. Somewhere around 200BC, a letter from "Aristeas to Philocrates" was written containing an account, generally accorded to be legend in many aspects, about the writing of the Septuagint. In the letter, it is explained that the Alexandrian librarian Demetrius of

five books of Moses generally agreed to have been translated into Greek around 250BC.<sup>4</sup> The remaining Jewish Scriptures followed, and many other Jewish writings were included as well. By the time of Acts, these Greek translations were important in the Greek-speaking Jewish communities throughout the diaspora. Most Jews living outside the Semitic countries likely were more familiar with Greek than Hebrew.

This Septuagint was the Scripture Paul generally quoted in his letters to the churches outside Judea. Luke also had great familiarity with the Septuagint as evidenced in his usage in Luke and Acts. Not only did Greek-speaking Jews know the Septuagint translation, but it was understandable by Greek-speaking Gentiles as well. The ramifications of the ready availability of the Septuagint are profound.

First, the obvious result is the ready availability of Scriptures that Paul, Barnabas, and others could use in their mission efforts. They were able to go into areas and use Scriptures that people had at their disposal. These were not “invented” by the church, but had been in place for over a century or two. They were already established before the birth of Christ. Consider the impact this would have on the story of Jesus’ birth. Luke informs us in his first volume (his gospel) that Jesus was born of a virgin. Many skeptics are quick to point out that when the New Testament speaks of Jesus born of a virgin as fulfilling Isaiah 7:14 (“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel”), it uses the Greek word “*parthenos*” (παρθένος), which clearly means “virgin.” Yet the Hebrew of Isaiah, the critics add, speaks of an *almah* (עלמה), which means “maiden.” Now a “maiden” was typically a virgin, as a young unmarried woman; however, it is possible that the word might simply mean a young unmarried woman and leave no comment on the question of promiscuity. Yet Jews and others would have been readily able to determine what the understanding of the Old Testament passage was by people uninfluenced by the birth of Jesus or the Christian faith. Simply by looking at the Septuagint, they would see that their Jewish fathers understood “*almah*” in its normative sense of “virgin” because the Jewish scholars translated the word into Greek as *parthenos* (παρθένος), a “virgin.”

A more subtle way the Septuagint influenced the Scriptures and the spread of the church is seen in the writings of Luke, both his gospel and Acts. As Edward Fudge wrote me recently, if Paul was Luke’s spiritual mentor, then Isaiah would qualify as

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Phalarum persuaded Ptolemy II (309-246 BC) to enrich the library with a set of the Jewish Scriptures. The king sent ambassadors to the High Priest in Jerusalem asking for help. The High Priest sent 72 scholars (representing six from each tribe) to do the work. Supposedly (and this is generally deemed to be part of the legend as opposed to fact) the scholars finished their work in exactly 72 days. For more, see, Wasserstein, Abraham, and Wasserstein, David, *The Legend of the Septuagint, From Classical Antiquity to Today* (Cambridge 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Jobes, Karen, and Silva, Moises, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, (Baker 2000), at 29.

Luke's Old Testament godfather. Luke was clearly wise to the Scriptures and deeply influenced by them such that even his writings reflect it in structure as well as quotations. Consider the following:

- Luke includes five extended quotations from the Septuagint of Isaiah, two in his gospel and three in Acts (Isa 40:3-40:5/Luk 3:4-3:6; Isa 61:1-61:2/Luk 4:18-4:19; Isa 66:1-66:2/Acts 7:49-50; Isa 53:7-53:8/Acts 8:32-8:33; and Isa 6:9-6:10/Acts 28:26-28:27). These are more extended quotations from Isaiah than found in any other book of the Bible.
- Scholars have found over 100 verbal allusions to the Septuagint of Isaiah in the writings of Luke.<sup>5</sup>
- This leads some scholars to think that “Luke probably had access to Isaiah LXX (an abbreviation for the Septuagint) scrolls, if not his own copies.”<sup>6</sup>

Luke's fondness for Isaiah might stem from his personal study, from his walk with Paul, who often referred to Isaiah<sup>7</sup>,

If we consider the structure of Acts, we see,

Luke outlines the ministry of Jesus and that of the disciples and in particular that of Paul by means of quotations from or allusions to Isaiah... In this way, Luke uses Isaianic ideas as a framework, illustrating at crucial points the ministries of his protagonists.”<sup>8</sup>

Luke's fondness could also be explained by the fact that Luke was the only Gentile writer in our New Testament Scriptures, and as a Gentile, he must have been impressed that Isaiah, of all the Old Testament prophets, spoke the most of God's salvation going forth among the Gentiles. It is in Isaiah 2 that we read of “the latter days” when “all the

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<sup>5</sup> This is found in Appendix IV of Nestle Aland's 27<sup>th</sup> edition of the Greek New Testament; Aland, B. K., *et al.*, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Mallen, Peter, *The Reading and Transformation of Isaiah in Luke-Acts*, (T&T Clark 2008), at 3.

<sup>7</sup> Paul used the Septuagint of Isaiah regularly in his sermons (Isaiah 42:5 is quoted nearly verbatim by Paul in his Mars Hill sermon recorded in Acts 17:24-25; Paul also used Isaiah 42 and 49 in his sermon at Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13:15-47). In Acts 26, Paul explained to Agrippa Paul's apostolic commission to the Gentiles by referencing Isaiah. See a good explanation of this in Fudge, Edward, “Paul's Apostolic Self-Consciousness at Athens,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (1971), Vol. 14:3.

<sup>8</sup> Koet, B.J., *Five Studies on the Interpretation of Scripture in Luke-Acts*, (Peeters Publishers 1989), at 145.



nations” will “flow” to Jerusalem (the “mountain of the house of the LORD”). There the “many peoples” will seek “his [God’s] ways...that we might walk in his path.”

There is still another way the Septuagint played a critical role in preparing the soil for the growth of the church. Think again of those Jews who heard the gospel message in Jerusalem and then returned to their homes. A significant part of the story in Acts was that the speech Peter delivered, which most likely was in Aramaic, a language closely related to Hebrew, was understood by the foreign Jews in their own tongues. For many of them, they certainly would have had a decent comprehension of Greek. That was the language of the international world. That was the language of their Scriptures (the Septuagint). As the people returned to their homes, they had the Septuagint to search and study to determine whether Jesus was indeed the Messiah. There was a resource of God’s revelation available in a tongue they could understand. This brings us to another card in the royal flush – the synagogue.

### *The Synagogue*

The dispersed Jews built local synagogues as places of community, teaching, and worship. I agree with the assessment of Louis Rabinowitz,

[The synagogue] has had a decisive influence not only on Judaism throughout the ages, but on organized religion as a whole.<sup>9</sup>

The synagogue as a community site of meeting and formal worship/teaching would become the basic form and idea followed by the Christian church as well as the Muslim mosque.

While its origins are not definitively known, the synagogue was clearly a creation of the diaspora. Jews sought to maintain meeting places that reinforced and nurtured their faith and community as they lived away from Jerusalem and the temple. By the first century, the synagogue is well established. We read of the synagogues in the New Testament, but we can just as readily read of them from the pens of non-Christian first-century Jewish writers like Philo of Alexandria (c.20BC-c.50AD) and Josephus (37-c.100 AD).<sup>10</sup>

These synagogues provided a place for Paul and other missionaries to go and find people who already believed in God’s Scriptures. They were places of teaching and discussion that provided a rich and ready mission field for the word of God. Over and

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<sup>9</sup> “Synagogue,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, (Keter Publishing House 1972), Vol. 15, at 579.

<sup>10</sup> Philo, *Legatione ad Gaium*, at 132f.; Josephus mentions a number of different synagogues throughout his writings.

over in Acts we read that Paul went into the synagogues and taught of Jesus (Acts 9:20; 13:5, 14ff.; 14:1; 17:1, 10ff.; 18:4ff.; 18:19, 26; 19:8; 24:12).

These synagogues provided not only a place for the Jews to fellowship, worship, and study, but they also provided a forum for Gentiles who were interested in the Jewish conception of a single God rather than many. A number of Greeks had grown semi-attached to the worship found in the Jewish faith. The Greek mythologies we learn in our history classes were held true by a number of people; however, a growing number of Greek “thinkers” had decided that the gods taught through the myths and legends had to be that – myths and legends. As the Greeks grew in their learning and thinking, and as philosophy became the leading rudder of Greek society, many came to believe that there had to be a single guiding force behind the universe and world as we saw it. For many, this became an understanding of a singular power considered “god,” though not necessarily in a personal sense that we understand God.

With the Roman Empire, Greek philosophy and language were never fully displaced. Though perhaps an oversimplification, the Romans, by and large, were more focused on building an Empire that provided peace and stability by emphasizing government and regulation. The Greeks were the ones more bent on figuring out why things were the way they were. Greek philosophy probed the basics of mathematics and geometry, the stars in the sky, the science of medicine and physics as well as the more esoteric problems of human existence, the presence of evil, and the destiny of a human after death. A number of these Greeks took their belief in one “god” or the unity of all things and found the Jewish faith appealing. In the Jews, Greeks saw a people who from antiquity (and Greeks were fond of things old!) had worshipped only one God and held detestable the idea that there could be more.

In the first century, the Greeks who appreciated the Jewish faith, even though never formally converting, were called “God-fearers.” But, these God-fearers brought another aspect of soil that was ripe for the fullness of teaching on the one true God, his morality, his interactions with humanity, and his plans for the human soul. Greek philosophy would ultimately become a central breeding ground for the church. The issue of how to get the gospel to these Greeks was met by using one of the principal assets of the Roman Empire, the roads! This leads us to the next critical card making the circumstances precisely what were needed for the church to grow.

### *The Roman Empire*

One final element of the soil that we would be remiss for failure to mention is the Roman Empire itself. As mentioned earlier, the Romans were careful to meld together a coherent empire built upon regulations and consistency. Critical to maintaining the empire was the means to travel the empire easily. So Rome built roads, some of which

are still with us today.<sup>11</sup> These roads and the travel ease of the Empire would allow the church to spread easily. History recognizes Caesar Augustus (63BC-14AD) as the Emperor first initiating the purposeful building and maintenance of roads as an integral part of the Empire.<sup>12</sup> Along with the roads and trade routes were shipping lanes that moved people and ideas with consistency from port to port. For the first time in history, there was consistency in coinage, in trade, and in interaction between what had historically been distrusting people who would have little or no interaction. And into this ripe soil, the church as an idea and faith were easily transported around the civilized world.

The Roman structure included a core value in citizenship. Initially the class of “citizen” was enjoyed by the ruling few in Rome and select places. The core right of citizens was that of participating in Roman politics. As a result of a war against Rome in 91BC, Roman citizenship was extended to all free males living on the peninsula of Italy.

Over the next generation, the rights of citizenship were extended to certain favored people, who were well-off, entitling them to the right of participation not only in local politics, but also in other Roman rights as well.<sup>13</sup> This became important to the spread of the gospel because it was a right that by the time of Christ had spread outward to places like Tarsus, where the family of Saul enjoyed the privilege of Roman citizenship. Citizenship was given as a means of shoring up needed community support or as a reward for loyalty. This included a right to appeal a criminal finding in the court of Caesar in Rome. Paul availed himself of this right as a means of going to Rome both to encourage the church and also to preach and evangelize the unsaved (Acts 25:6-25:12).

Rome also had armies of great size stationed throughout the Empire. At a cost of one-half the state’s entire budget, these armies kept a peace (popularly called the *pax Romana*, or “peace of Rome”) ushered in by Augustus Caesar. That is not to say that there was no conflict, but that the civil wars and wars of expansion known in earlier centuries were replaced with a general stability that enabled freedom of travel and trade.

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<sup>11</sup> The roads are with us in two forms. One can go find these roads amidst ruins in archaeological areas of the Roman Empire. A second way the roads are with us is in the form of current roads. There are numerous places in the Mediterranean world today where the roads are just modern pavements over the older roads that the Romans originally established!

<sup>12</sup> Boatwright, Mary, *et al.*, *The Romans – From Village to Empire*, (Oxford 2004), at 343.

<sup>13</sup> Woolf, Greg, ed., *Cambridge Illustrated History of the Roman World*, (Cambridge University Press 2003), at 124ff.

Augustus also established a “Praetorian Guard,” an elite group of personal bodyguards for the Emperor paid at three times the rate of normal soldiers.<sup>14</sup> These were important individuals, and it is no small thing that Paul, while imprisoned in Rome awaiting his appeal to Caesar, saw his testimony before the Praetorian Guard as an amazing work of God. (Phil 1:13 – called the “Imperial Guard” by the ESV).

A final important note on the timing of the church’s growth recorded in Acts and the Roman factor: Rome recognized the Jewish religion. Jews in Rome were credited with providing Julius Caesar with the necessary funds to rise to power. As a reward, Julius issued a decree that recognized the rights of the Jews to freely practice their religion.

All other measures notwithstanding, I allow these persons [the Jews] to gather and to organize their community following the customs of their fathers and according to their own laws.<sup>15</sup>

This would get reinforced by Caesar Augustus and Claudius Caesar. Claudius’ edict would be the last to recognize Jewish freedom in this way:

Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, pontifex maximus, holding the tribunician power, proclaims: . . .Therefore it is right that also the Jews, who are in all the world under us, shall maintain their ancestral customs without hindrance and to them I now also command to use this my kindness rather reasonably and not to despise the religious rites of the other nations, but to observe their own laws.<sup>16</sup>

Once the Jewish rebellion began in 66AD, the window of Roman approval of Jewish practice began to close. Yet by this time, the Book of Acts is complete, and the church had taken on a life of its own.

## CONCLUSION

This must have impressed Paul as he went about his first missionary journey. Paul wrote about it to those churches he evangelized on that journey.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons (Gal 4:4-4:5).

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, at 336.

<sup>15</sup> Callewaert, Joseph, *The World of Saint Paul*, (Ignatius Press 2011), at 14.

<sup>16</sup> Edict of Claudius on Jewish Rights, 41AD.

Paul understood that at the right time in history, Christ came. This was a magnificent crescendo of history, all culminating at a precise moment in time. Christ was born into the world at the right moment, died at the right moment, ascended at the right moment, and sent the Spirit to launch the church at the right moment. Twenty years later? Too late! Twenty years earlier? Too early! This is the precision of God that no one could ever have imagined.

## PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

We find the story of Paul's first missionary journey beginning in Acts 13. We might borrow a timeline with some modification from F. F. Bruce to place the journey into time perspective:

Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost	April-May 30
Conversion of Saul of Tarsus	c. 33
Paul's first post-conversion visit to Jerusalem	c. 35
Paul in Cilicia and Syria	35-46
Famine in Judea; Paul and Barnabas sent with relief	46
First Missionary Journey	47-48 <sup>17</sup>

Luke begins this part of his history with Paul and Barnabas in Antioch as part of the team of prophets and teachers. Luke adds in passing that another of the teachers is Manaen, who had been “a member of the court of Herod the Tetrarch.”<sup>18</sup> The Greek for “a member of the court” is *suntrophos* (σύντροφος). This title “was given to boys of the same ages as princes, who were brought up with them at court.”<sup>19</sup> As a *suntrophos*, Manaen would “have been brought up with” Herod, hence some translators even use

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<sup>17</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, (Eerdmans 1977) at 475. See also Bruce's *The Acts of the Apostles, The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Eerdmans 1951) at 55. McRay dates it slightly differently arguing that Paul's conversion came in 34 making his first visit to Jerusalem in late 37. McRay places Paul in Cilicia and Syria in 37-43 adding placing Paul in Antioch from 43-47. McRay does agree with Bruce, however, on the first missionary journey explaining it started in late 47 and lasted to mid 48. John McRay, *Paul, His Life and Teaching*, (Baker Academic 2003) at 73-75.

<sup>18</sup> There are many Herods in the New Testament. Josephus gives us enough history to put together a family tree of the Herods. See the Herod family tree from last lesson, also downloadable at [www.Biblical-Literacy.com](http://www.Biblical-Literacy.com).

<sup>19</sup> Bruce, *Greek Commentary on Acts* at 253.

the term “foster brother” for *suntrophos*.<sup>20</sup> Other literature of the period used the word for “an intimate friend.”<sup>21</sup>

Luke does not want the informed to miss the point; Herod Antipas and Manaen are brought up together as playmates at the royal court. Herod Antipas goes on to behead John the Baptist and participate in the killing of Jesus, while Manaen becomes a Christian leader in the Antiochian church whose name is set out for the ages in Acts. What a difference choices in life can make!

### *The Call*

So in this growing church, the Holy Spirit staked claim on a mission for Paul and Barnabas, as noted earlier:

“Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul [aka “Paul”] for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13:2).

This was God’s plan. We are about to see God’s calling on Paul bear fruit in a most remarkable way. God (the Holy Spirit) is the true missionary here. Barnabas and Paul (still called by his Hebrew name Saul) were called to be the tools of the Spirit; but it was the Spirit who had the mission. It was the Spirit who made the call. It was the Spirit who was giving direction.

### *The Trip*

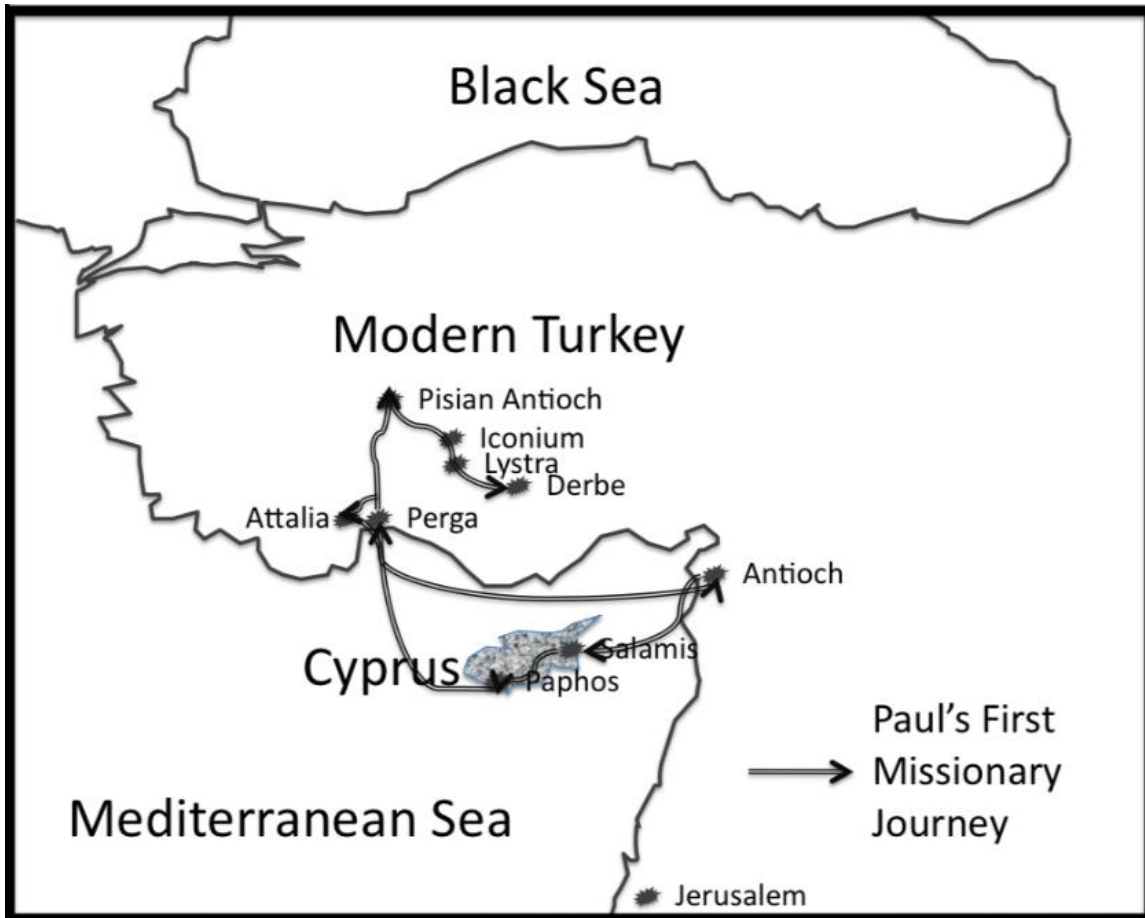
Barnabas and Paul did not make this trip alone. They took with them John Mark “to assist them” (13:5).<sup>22</sup> The early church identified this as the Mark who authored the second gospel. The three left Antioch and headed by boat on the Mediterranean Sea to the island of Cyprus. We are not told why Barnabas and Paul chose Cyprus as their first destination. We do know that Barnabas was from Cyprus (Acts 4:36), so he would have likely been returning to share the gospel with some of his own relatives, friends and acquaintances. Since John Mark was a cousin of Barnabas’s (Col 4:10) it is also reasonable to assume that he had relatives of some degree on the island as well.

The following map gives us orientation to their journey:

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<sup>20</sup> Vincent, Marvin, *Vincent’s Word Studies of the New Testament* (Hendrickson 1888) Vol. 1 at 514.

<sup>21</sup> Danker, Frederick, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 3d ed. (U. Chi. Press 2000) at 976.



The three sailed into the Cyprian port of Salamis, 130 miles from Antioch, and wasted no time presenting the Word of God in the synagogues. Going through the island, they arrived at the far port of Paphos, a three to four day journey depending on which road was taken. In Paphos, Luke detailed a specific encounter.

### **Paphos**

While at Paphos, Paul and Barnabas were summoned by the Roman Proconsul Sergius Paulus. The Proconsul kept near him a false Jewish prophet named Elymas Bar-Jesus (“Bar Jesus” meant “Son of Joshua”) who was constantly opposing the teachings of the missionaries, trying to turn away the Proconsul from any faith. We have then a pivotal place in Luke’s Acts narrative:

But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him [Elymas] 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 (Acts 13:9-13:11).

Immediately, we are told, mist and darkness fell on Elymas and the Proconsul “believed” being “astonished at the teaching of the Lord” (Acts 13:12).

This passage is pivotal for several reasons. First, this is the first place where Luke gives us Paul by his Roman name “Paul” rather than his Jewish name “Saul.” From here on, Luke uses “Paul” and does not return to “Saul” except for three places where Paul is telling the story of his own conversion, quoting the usage of “Saul” by Jesus and Ananias (Acts 22:7, 13; 26:14).

We are not told why Paul began using his Roman name, although there are many reasons that seem reasonable if not obvious. One might be that Paul’s common Roman name (“Paulus”) was the very same as that of the Proconsul. It would have been a logical point of connection that Paul would not likely overlook. A second possible reason is that the Roman Proconsul was not Jewish. We know that Paul was sensitive to this as he interacted with people. Paul would later write,

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law (1 Cor 9:19-9:21).

A third possible reason is that, up to this point, Acts has always spoken of “Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:26, 30; 12:25; 13:2, 7) giving Barnabas the leadership role of first listing. That changes with Paul taking charge before the Proconsul. As Paul calls God into play with Elymas, Paul becomes the leader henceforth. Now Luke will write of “Paul and Barnabas” (Acts 13:42, 43, 46, 50; 14:1, 3, 23, etc.).<sup>23</sup> It is as if we are seeing Paul “come into his own” in modern speak. God had planned much more for Paul than Paul thought of on his own.

Finally, in this verse (Acts 13:12) we see for the first time Paul as God’s hand in a miracle that attests to the power of God in conjunction with the delivery of God’s message. Before this time, we read of God working miracles through Peter and the

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<sup>23</sup> There are two more places where Luke reverts back to “Barnabas and Paul.” The first is Acts 14:12, 14 where the pagans think that Barnabas is Zeus and Paul Hermes. Yet even here, we are told that Paul was Hermes because he was the chief speaker. In Greek mythology, while Zeus was the lead God, he was always assumed to be too high and mighty to even have much interaction with humanity. Therefore, Zeus had others do his speaking for him, principally Hermes. We see that Barnabas was taking the quiet role at this point while Paul was the outspoken leader. The second place where Luke returns to “Barnabas and Paul” is Acts 15 where the two are back in Jerusalem. Before the church “Barnabas and Paul” recount the stories of the missionary trip. No doubt out of longstanding respect and history with the Jerusalem church, Barnabas again takes lead position.



apostles, but Paul was God's tool through his teaching and words. Now Paul was used by God in a profound miraculous way, as would soon become very common in his ministry. God always gave Paul what was needed for the moment, whether common in the eyes of man or miraculous. God empirically showed that as the mission was His, so was the ability to complete the mission!

After their experiences in Paphos, the missionaries, now "Paul and his companions" in Luke's writing, sailed to the mainland putting in at Perga (now modern south-central Turkey). In Perga, Paul and Barnabas decided to head inland up into the mountain regions going first to Pisidian Antioch.<sup>24</sup> John Mark, however, did not continue on. John Mark turned back and returned to Jerusalem.

Luke stayed silent on why John Mark left the mission field at this time. Scholars, always trying to find any morsel of information, have offered a number of reasons. Sir William Ramsay in *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* set out one possible reason that is often cited by scholars since. Ramsay, as we have noted in previous lessons, was a first rate scholar, historian, and archaeologist who wrote a definitive book on Paul, Acts, and the archaeology of the region in the late 1800's.

Ramsay believed the key to understanding Mark's departure lies in a change of plans that Paul put into place. Ramsay pointed out that the narrative style of Luke lets careful readers realize that Paul and crew had planned on staying and teaching in the lowland town of Perga, but instead, journeyed deep inland up to the mountainous region of Pisidian Antioch. Ramsay noted that Luke tied this change of plans into Mark's departure. Ramsay then added that while Luke did not give the reason for the change of plans, Paul himself did in his letter to the Galatians.

We should note here that the Galatians are the very churches that Paul and Barnabas started up in the mountainous lands of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Ramsay pointed to Paul's passage to the Galatians about why Paul came to preach to them. Paul wrote in Galatians 4:13:

You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first.

This was an illness that was apparent to people and was of some duration, for Paul adds,

...and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God.

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<sup>24</sup> Pisidian Antioch is a different city than the Antioch where Paul and crew began this journey.

Ramsay concluded that “Paul had a serious illness in Pamphylia, and on that account he left Perga and went to Antioch.”<sup>25</sup> Ramsay believed the illness was something that was prevalent at sea level with a perceived advantage for treatment coming from higher altitudes. Ramsay suspected the illness was likely some kind of malaria.

Anyone who travels much knows the difficulties of travel, especially when one gets severely ill. It seems normal to expect that if Paul were sick, *Paul* would be the one to call off the mission and return, or at least head home to family in nearby Tarsus. But not Paul! Paul was there because God put him there. This was the most important thing in Paul’s life. If Paul could not do this, Paul had no reason to stay on earth. As Paul would later write the Philippians,

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith (Phil 1:21-1:25).

While we do not know for certain the reasons, we do know that John Mark did not continue the journey, but instead returned home. We also know that John Mark’s departure left “a deep and painful impression on Paul and remained rankling in his mind for years.”<sup>26</sup> Luke noted as Paul and Barnabas prepared for their second missionary journey that Barnabas again wanted to take John Mark, but

Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work (Acts 15:38).

### **Pisidian Antioch**

Pisidian Antioch was a difficult journey up through the Taurus Mountains onto a plain that was about 3,600 feet above sea level. Archaeologists have uncovered some key information at Pisidian Antioch. One of the most important discoveries might shed some additional light on Paul’s and Barnabas’s selection of this area for missionary work. The Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus who came to faith on the island of Cyprus was actually from the area of Pisidian Antioch. His family was a prominent family in the Pisidian Antioch region, and archaeologists have uncovered inscriptions of the family name in the region.

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<sup>25</sup> Ramsay, Sir William, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (Baker 1949) at 93.

<sup>26</sup> Ramsay at 90.

For this reason, a number of scholars have traced the logical point that Sergius Paulus would have not only likely sought Paul and Barnabas to go share his new, found faith with his family, but would also have given letters of introduction and recommendation as well.<sup>27</sup>

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One can find this stone on display at the Yalvac Archaeological Museum in Yalvac, Turkey. The stone is seen as confirmation of the large land holdings the family of Sergius Paulus would have had in the area. It is easy to see the letter “P” in the center of the stone’s top line. From there one can see the Latin spelling of P-A-V [modern U] L L I S as well as the SERG in the following line.

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Who were the people of this area? We know a number of things about them both from the Bible as well as from other historical sources.

First, Paul wrote to them as “Galatians.” That is the title that most assigned to these people at the time (and for several hundred years before). The Galatians were originally marauding soldiers of Celts that came to the area from “Gaul” (parts of modern France, Germany, Western Switzerland, and Northern Italy). These Gauls were active in the region fighting around 278 BC and then staying afterwards. As the Gauls became more and more Hellenized (mixing with Greeks in both race and custom), they became known as “Gallo-grecians.” It is the Gaul, or “Gallo” part of their name and heritage that is the source of the word for their territory, “Galatia.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles, A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Eerdmans 1998) at 403 and cites therein. See also Gill and Gempf, *The Book of Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting* (WIPF and Stock 2000) at 386-387.

<sup>28</sup> Gill and Gempf, at 381.

Not all the people in Galatia were Gallo-grecians. There were also a good number of Jews. Josephus, the Jewish historian, wrote (just a few decades after Paul's first missionary journey) of the Jewish settlement in the Galatian area. He explained that when Antiochus III "the Great" (242–187BC) was in power, there were rebellions in the Galatian region of Phrygia and Lydia. Antiochus decided to move 2,000 Jewish families into the region "because of their piety towards God, and because I know that...they are faithful, and with eagerness do what they are desired to do."<sup>29</sup> Antiochus not only relocated these Jews, but also gave them land, possessions, and ten years of "tax free" status! The Jews were also allowed to use their own laws.<sup>30</sup>

Of course, these Jews with these special privileges quickly became established as a wealthy segment of the population. It is not surprising that over the next 200 years they were able to build synagogues for worship.<sup>31</sup> It is to one of these synagogues that Paul and Barnabas first went.

We read the story of Paul and Barnabas in Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13:13-13:52. Paul and Barnabas arrive and immediately, as Luke wrote up, "on the Sabbath day, they went into the synagogue and sat down."

### **The Synagogue Service**

If we were in a time machine and got to attend that service, what would we have seen? We have ancient Jewish sources that detail for us the procedure behind such a Sabbath synagogue service in Greek areas outside of Palestine. In some ways, these synagogue services differed little from 21<sup>st</sup> century church services, and in other ways, they were quite different.

We would find the synagogue likely around a river or some type of water, typically on the outside of town. This provided easy access to the water needed for purification by the priests or others as deemed necessary under the law.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 12, Ch. 4, v. 149-150 (Whitson translation, Kregel Publications 1999).

<sup>30</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities* at Book 12, Ch. 4, v. 150-153.

<sup>31</sup> In fact, the letter where Antiochus orders the Jewish relocation even provides that the state was also to pay for the Jewish religious "functionaries." These Jews were being relocating to provide for a military stability in the region. See, Safrai and Stern, *The Jewish People in the First Century*, (Fortress Press 1974) Vol 1 at 469ff.

<sup>32</sup> Emil Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* (Hendrickson Publishers 1998 reprint of 1890 publication), Div. II, Vol II at 69.

As we walked into the synagogue, we would first find a very special seating arrangement. We catch glimpses of this in the New Testament as we read Jesus talking of hypocritical scribes and Pharisees who sought “the best seats in the synagogues” (Matt 23:6; Mrk 12:38-12:39; Luk 11:43, 20:46). Schurer wrote, “The congregation sat in an appointed order, the most distinguished members in the front seats, the younger behind; men and women probably apart.”<sup>33</sup>

Once we took our seats, we would have time to look around. We would see a closet (*tyboh* תיבה) that held scrolls of the law and the other “books” of the Old Testament. Each scroll would be wrapped in linen and have its own case.<sup>34</sup> At the front would be a raised platform (*bema* במה) which would hold a “pulpit” or “reading desk.” This *bema* would be for reading the scriptures as well as for preaching.<sup>35</sup> We would also likely pick out the “ruler of the synagogue.” Luke used the term *archisunagogoi* (ἀρχισυνάγωγοι). His responsibility was to make sure the needs of the service were taken care of and were supervised. He was not the one who actually read the scriptures, prayed, or preached. The members themselves typically did those tasks, but he would choose those fit to perform those functions and secure their help before each service. Schurer called him the “conductor of their assembly.”<sup>36</sup>

There was someone we might call a “minister” in the synagogue.<sup>37</sup> This man was responsible for bringing out the scriptures and replacing them after their use (Luke 4:20). This was also the man who had to execute any required scourging and would provide the instruction for children to learn to read.<sup>38</sup>

The final things we might notice were containers for the alms or tithes. There was a box that was for money. This is where the hypocrites Jesus spoke of would sound a trumpet (an expression for exaggerated displays of “showiness” in giving) as they made their donation (Matt 6:1-6:2). There was also a plate or dish that was for the giving of natural products. This would include the “mint and rue and every herb” that Jesus spoke of some tithing, even though they neglected the important matters of mercy, justice, faithfulness and the love of God (Matt 23:23; Luk 11:42).

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* at 75.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* at 74.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* at 75.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* at 65.

<sup>37</sup> In the Greek, Luke uses the word *huperetes* (ὑπηρέτης) and the ESV translates this man as “attendant” in Luke 4:20.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* at 67.

The main purpose behind the synagogue services was not so much corporate praise and worship, but “instruction in the law.”<sup>39</sup> We read constantly in the New Testament about Jesus “teaching in their synagogues” (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 13:54; Mrk 1:21; 6:2; Luk 4:15; 13:10; Jn 18:20). We would see this as the service itself began to unfold.

The service would have a reciting of the *Shema*. The *Shema* is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-6:9, 11:13-11:21 and Numbers 15:37-15:41. In the main, it contained the core confession,

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one (Deut 6:4).

In fact, the word “*shema*” is the first Hebrew word in Deuteronomy 6:4 translated “Hear.” There would be prayers recited with the *Shema*, although the *Shema* was considered a confession of faith more than a prayer.<sup>40</sup> Certain formula prayers were offered rather than extemporaneous prayers. The whole congregation did not say the prayer, but rather the one assigned to pray. This prayer leader would typically stand in front of the chest of scrolls while pronouncing the prayers. The congregation would answer the prayers with “amen.” Schurer wrote that the prayers were typically offered while standing and facing Jerusalem. This is also consistent with what we read in the New Testament.<sup>41</sup>

Following prayers, the scripture readings would occur. Two parts of the Old Testament were read, one section from the Law (*Torah*)<sup>42</sup> and a portion from the prophets. The Law section was rather large so that the entire Law would get covered every three years. The prophet section was simply a paragraph and was typically chosen by the reader. The reader of the scripture would stand while reading.<sup>43</sup> We also see this in the New Testament (Luk 4:16 speaks of Jesus going to synagogue on the Sabbath stating

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<sup>39</sup> Schurer, Div. II, Vol II at 54. The Jewish Philosopher and historian Philo (born around 20 B.C.) wrote of the synagogue services as focused on teaching the law. In his *Hypothetica* (7:12ff), Philo wrote of the Sabbath assemblies as “sitting together in a respectful and orderly manner [to] hear the laws read so that none should be ignorant of them.” Philo, (Loeb 2001) Vol IX at 433.

<sup>40</sup> Schurer at 77-78.

<sup>41</sup> Matt 6:5, “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues.” Standing in prayer was not only in the synagogue. Jesus also spoke of others standing while praying. See, Mrk 11:25, “And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone...”; Luk 18:11, “The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus...”

<sup>42</sup> These were scrolls of what we consider the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

<sup>43</sup> Schurer at 79-81.

“he stood up to read” choosing to read from Isaiah 61:1-61:2, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor...”).

After the reading, an “edifying lecture or sermon”<sup>44</sup> was given in explanation of the scripture read. The role of teaching, like that of the readings and the praying were open to qualified members of each congregation. The ruler of each synagogue typically gave the assignments.<sup>45</sup>

The service was closed with a benediction or blessing which was announced upon the congregation with hands raised to shoulder height. The congregation responded with “Amen!” and the service was finished.<sup>46</sup>

### **Paul at Synagogue**

We now return to the story of Paul and Barnabas at the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch found in Acts 13.

In verse 14, we read that Paul and Barnabas,

came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.

Which seats they took, we do not know. We are then told,

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.’” (Acts 15:15)

While Luke did not tell us what the readings were, many scholars note that the words Paul used in his sermon echo the words from passages that are conjectured to be the texts. A number think that the Law reading was likely Deuteronomy 1 (where Moses recounts the Israelites refusal to enter the Holy Land) or Deuteronomy 4:25-4:46 (where Moses recounts God’s faithfulness and power as the only true God).

Paul accepted the offer and stood to speak. Paul addressed both the Jews in attendance and the Greeks who were there.

Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen! (Acts 13:16).

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* at 82

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* at 65, 82.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* at 82.

Paul then began discussing God's faithfulness in making the Jews "great" while in Egypt, then redeeming them from their captivity. God "put up with" the Jews for 40 years in the wilderness before giving them their inheritance. Paul then recounted God's provision of judges, prophets, and kings. Paul added that with King David, God promised a Savior through David's offspring. Paul explained that Jesus was this promised Savior. John the Baptist had come immediately before Jesus proclaiming a baptism of repentance while noting that one was coming "the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie" (Acts 13:25).

Paul then explained that the rulers in Jerusalem failed to understand the Prophets and the Law and condemned Jesus the Savior. The irony, as Paul explained, was that by attempting to dispel any role Jesus could have among the people as their Messiah, the rulers actually fulfilled the prophecies and brought about Jesus' necessary death. Paul explained that although Jesus was executed and buried, God raised him from the dead. There were many witnesses to the resurrected Lord, and Paul and Barnabas came to Pisidian Antioch to bring the good news. Paul then cited several Psalms as texts to support the resurrection events.

Paul explained that even the great King David's body was destroyed after death, yet the body of Christ never faced "corruption." In Jesus, Paul explained, was a forgiveness of sins for people. This, Paul said, was the work Habakkuk spoke of when he prophesied,

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 (Acts 13:41; Hab 1:5).

After the synagogue meeting, many came to Paul and Barnabas asking them to stay around and return to speak more on this subject the following Sabbath. Paul and Barnabas continued to work there and then proceeded similarly in other cities in Galatia. Next week we will focus on the letter Paul subsequently wrote to these churches.

### **Questions for Discussion**

Consider building questions around these passages:

1. If your life story were written, what factors have made you who you are today? Are you able to see how God has used a perfect convergence of factors to make you who you are today?
2. Do you see yourself uniquely positioned today to serve and love God in your sphere of influence?
3. How does thinking through the majestic hand of God change the way you are going to live the rest of your life?



*Week Thirty Readings*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7/21 Paul to the Galatians</b> By Faith, not Works Gal 3:1-14</p> <p>Ezek 20 Rm 1:1-15 Rm 2:1</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>7/22 Paul to the Galatians</b> By Faith, not Works – Cont'd Gal 3:1-14</p> <p>Ezek 22 Rom 2:6-27</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7/23 Paul to the Galatians</b> By Faith, not Works – Cont'd Gal 3:1-14</p> <p>Amos 1:1-3:6, 9-15 Jer 11</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>7/24 Paul to the Galatians</b> By Faith, not Works – Cont'd Gal 3:1-14</p> <p>Rm 3:1-18 Ps 53 Prv 20:9 Isa 59 Rm 3:19-31</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7/25 Paul to the Galatians</b> Law and Promise Gal 3:15-29</p> <p>Lev 14:33-57 Lev 22:17-33 Num 35 Dt 4:41-43 Heb 10:1-18</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7/26 Paul to the Galatians</b> Sons and Heirs Gal 4:1-31</p> <p>Rm 6 Prv 24:15-16 Rm 7 Ps 127 Isa 54:1-10</p> <p style="text-align: center;">7/27 OFF</p>
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