

Acts 13:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus:

Analysis

A certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus (μάγον ψευδοπροφήτην Ἰουδαῖον ὃ ὄνομα Βαριησοῦ, magon pseudoprophētēn Ioudaion hō onoma Bariēsou)—Bar-jesus ('son of Jesus/Joshua') ironically bears a messianic name while opposing the true Jesus. Luke's triple description (μάγον, sorcerer; ψευδοπροφήτην, false prophet; Ἰουδαῖον, Jew) emphasizes the tragedy: a covenant member trading divine revelation for occult power. Paphos, Cyprus's western capital, was notorious for immorality and superstition.

The conjunction of Jewish identity with sorcery recalls Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24) and anticipates the sons of Sceva (19:13-16). Satan's strategy consistently infiltrates religious leadership to block gospel advance.

Historical Context

First-century Cyprus was dominated by the cult of Aphrodite centered in Paphos. Jewish magicians were common throughout the Roman Empire, blending Torah knowledge with Hellenistic occultism. Sergius Paulus (v. 7) as proconsul represented Roman governance of the senatorial province.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does religious pedigree (being Jewish) fail to protect against deception when divorced from genuine faith?
2. What modern equivalents of Bar-jesus—religious practitioners using spiritual language for personal power—threaten gospel witness?

Interlinear Text

διελθόντες	δὲ	τὴν	νῆσον	ἄχρι	Πάφου	εὗρον
when they had gone through	And	G3588	the isle	unto	Paphos	they found
G1330	G1161		G3520	G891	G3974	G2147
τινὰ	μάγον	ψευδοπροφήτην	Ἰουδαῖον	ῳ	ὄνομα	
a certain	sorcerer	a false prophet	a Jew	whose	name	
G5100	G3097	G5578	G2453	G3739	G3686	

Βαριησοῦς,

was Barjesus

G919

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 7:15 (Prophecy): Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

1 John 4:1 (Prophecy): Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Mark 10:46 (Parallel theme): And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.

Exodus 22:18 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

Zechariah 13:3 (Prophecy): And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.

Matthew 24:24 (Prophecy): For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Matthew 16:17 (References Jesus): And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

2 Corinthians 11:13 (Parallel theme): For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.