

The First Missionary Journey

Paul and Barnabas are set apart by the Holy Spirit to bring the gospel to Cyprus and Asia Minor, planting churches among the Gentiles.

Acts 13:1-14:28

CHARACTERS: Paul, Barnabas, John Mark, Sergius Paulus, Elymas

THEMES: Missions, Gospel to the Gentiles, Persecution, Church planting, Boldness

IN ANTIOCH, AS the church was worshiping and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' After fasting and praying, they laid hands on them and sent them off.

They sailed to Cyprus, where they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues. At Paphos, they encountered a false prophet named Elymas who opposed them, trying to turn the proconsul Sergius Paulus from the faith. Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, pronounced judgment on Elymas, who was struck with temporary blindness. The proconsul, seeing this, believed.

From there they sailed to Perga and traveled to Pisidian Antioch. In the synagogue, Paul preached that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. Many Jews and devout converts believed, but when the gospel was extended to Gentiles, the Jewish leaders became jealous and contradicted Paul. He declared, 'Since you thrust the word of God aside, we turn to the Gentiles.'

The Gentiles rejoiced and many believed, but persecution arose. Paul and Barnabas were driven out and went to Iconium, where again many believed—both Jews and Greeks. When a plot formed to stone them, they fled to Lystra.

In Lystra, Paul healed a man lame from birth. The crowd thought Paul and Barnabas were gods and tried to offer sacrifices to them. Paul tore his garments and cried out, 'We are men just like you, bringing you good news!' Yet Jews from Antioch came and stirred up the crowd. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, supposing him dead. But as the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and entered the city again.

After preaching in Derbe, they retraced their steps, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.' They appointed elders in every church and returned to Antioch, where they reported all that God had done through them—how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

The first missionary journey had established the pattern: preach the gospel, endure persecution, plant churches, appoint leaders, and trust God for the increase.