

5. Paul's Missionary Journeys

I. First Missionary Journey

A. The Church in Antioch

Here the gospel was first preached to pagan Gentiles (11:20). The church was a mixed community of Jews and Gentiles, sharing table fellowship. Barnabas, as the Jerusalem church's delegate, gave official approval (13:22-24). He enlisted Saul's help to teach in Antioch for a year. It was from this church not the Jerusalem church that Paul was sent out.

The Holy Spirit instructed the leaders of the church in Antioch, "Set apart from me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2), but did not specify what that work was. These two were released (ἀπολύω) by the church leaders (3) but sent out (ἐκπέμπω) by the Holy Spirit (4). They took with them as their helper (ὑπηρέτης) John Mark (Heb. name Johanan; Roman name Marcus), Barnabas' cousin (Col 4:10), whom they had brought from Jerusalem (12:25). Barnabas is presumably the leader of this party.

B. Cyprus

Barnabas and Saul sailed from Seleucia (Antioch's port) to Salamis on Cyprus, c. 210 km/130 mi. This was a logical choice since Barnabas was a native of Cyprus (4:36), and the Antioch church had been started by people from Cyprus and Cyrene (11:20). Barnabas and John Mark later returned to Cyprus (15:39).

- Salamis: proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues. Later tradition: Salamis was Barnabas's home town; he was martyred here in 71 (5th cent. church over his tomb). He is the patron saint of Cyprus, founder of the Cypriot Orthodox Church (431 granted independence from Antioch). Now in N. Cyprus.
- Paphos: capital of the province. The proconsul, Sergius Paulus, summoned them to a command performance to preach to him. They were opposed by the magician (μάγος) Elymas Bar-Jesus (cf. Simon Magus 8:9-24). Saul (whose name Luke now switches to Paul) resisted Elymas who is struck blind. The astonished proconsul believed. Paphos is a UNESCO World Heritage Site; European Capital of Culture 2017.

C. Galatia

Paul and his companions (note change) sailed to Perga in Pamphylia (a region of Lycia province). Here John Mark abandoned the journey to return home to Jerusalem. Why? Perhaps because they never intended to go to Anatolia, but to Africa. Paul and Barnabas later parted company over John Mark (15:38), but he became a trusted coworker of Paul's (Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11; Philem 24). Most identify John Mark with Mark the Evangelist, who, per tradition, was born in Cyrene, visited Alexandria and founded the church there, serving as first bishop.

Paul and Barnabas did not stay in Perga, but headed inland. Why? sickness such as malaria

They visited four cities in the southern part of the province of Galatia: Antioch (region of Pisidia), Iconium, Lystra & Derbe (both in region of Lycaonia).

Pisidian Antioch: the chief city of southern Galatia; in Phrygia, adjacent to Pisidia. Sergius Paulus' family had property in this area. They attended the synagogue, where, in response to an invitation to give a word of encouragement (λόγος παρακλήσις), Paul proclaimed the gospel of the risen Christ. This aroused great interest in the city, but opposition from jealous Jews, who incited persecution leading to the expulsion of Paul and Barnabas. A pattern was set: in each city Paul and Barnabas would first visit the synagogue; when ejected from there they would turn to the Gentiles. Many Gentiles believed, but Jews drove them out. They shook off the dust from their feet.

Iconium (14:1-6): an ancient city on the high plain (modern Konya). The preaching of Paul and Barnabas was validated by signs and wonders. Again jealous Jewish agitators provoked trouble. Aware of a plot, Paul and Barnabas fled the city.

Lystra (14:6-20): 22 mi/35 km sw of Iconium. Today an unexcavated mound (37.6020, 32.3384) in Lycaonia region of Galatia, hence a different jurisdiction. Paul's healing of a cripple led to him and Barnabas being mistaken for Hermes (messenger god; Rom. Mercury) and Zeus (chief god; Rom. Jupiter). Timothy (Gentile father, Jewish mother Eunice, grandmother Lois) was probably converted during this visit. Jews came from Antioch and Iconium to organize resistance; the crowd stoned Paul, leaving him for dead.

Derbe (14:20-21): mound Kerti Hüyük (37.3486, 33.3615), excavations began 2013 (Selçuk Univ.). Positive response.

Paul and Barnabas did not continue eastwards to Tarsus, but retraced their steps, strengthening the new churches and appointing elders.

Perge: this time they did stop in Perge and preach.

D. Return to Antioch

Paul and Barnabas reported back to the Antioch church about this expansion to the Gentiles. Churches had been established in several cities in southern Galatia.

Soon thereafter, Palestinian Jewish believers from Judea visited Antioch, teaching that Gentile believers must become observant Jews (15:1). They probably carried on into Galatia, teaching the same thing. In response, Paul wrote a letter to these Galatian churches—Galatians, his first extant letter.

II. Letter to the Galatians

III. Jerusalem Council

Return to Antioch

The Jerusalem church delegated Judas Barsabbas and Silas to accompany Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch to give the personal validation of the Jerusalem church to the letter written at the Jerusalem Council (15:22). The letter was addressed to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia.