

Paul and his Journeys- Part 5 Paul's first Missionary Journey

Last month we read how Paul and Barnabas had established the church at Antioch, but were then separated by the Holy Spirit to carry out a special task. Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark all set out together to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the nations. The following diagram shows the paths that they took:



Part 1 – The three left Antioch and headed for the coastal city of Seleucia.

Part 2 – They sailed out from Seleucia to the island of Cyprus, a large island 100 miles off the Syrian coast. They did their first preaching in the city of Salamis in the synagogues of the Jews.

Part 3 – Over time they made their way across the island to the city of Paphos where they met Elymas (also called Barjesus) the sorcerer and false prophet. Word-of-mouth ensured that the gospel the three men were preaching, had already reached Paphos before their arrival. A deputy in the city desired to hear what the three were preaching, however Elymas who accompanied the man tried to withstand their presence, not wanting the deputy to be part of the faith. Paul, moved by the Holy Ghost called him ‘a child of the devil’, and rebuked him for continuing to ‘pervert the right ways of the Lord’. The Lord blinded Elymas for a period of time. This demonstration of power, convicted the deputy to join the faith.

Part 4 – The three set sail from Paphos and arrive in the town of Perga, situated in the province of Pamphylia. This town was famous for its pagan rituals such as the worship of the goddess.

Part 5 – John Mark returns to Jerusalem, leaving only Paul and Barnabas to carry out the work

Part 6 – From Perga, the pair arrive at Antioch of Psidia. The two men enter the synagogues, and being visitors there, they are asked to give a word of exhortation. Paul obliges with an expounding of Old Testament truths, and he tells of the recent fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies through Jesus Christ. Paul's speech gets around the town, and the next Sabbath day nearly the 'entire town' (including the gentiles) arrives at the synagogue to hear Paul preach again. This outraged the jealous Jews who expelled Paul and Barnabas, who then headed for Iconium.

Part 7 – At Iconium, again the pair preached in the synagogues, and a 'great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed' (Acts 14:1). There were also (as usual) unbelieving Jews who tried to stir up the gentiles against the brethren. Eventually, the whole town was divided between those that sided with the jealous Jews, and those that heard the word with gladness. The division led to the rulers of the town organising the stoning of Paul and Barnabas, who, once again fled

Part 8 – They fled Iconium and went to Lystra, where the preaching continues. It was in Lystra that Paul found a cripple that 'had faith to be healed'. Paul healed him with the simple words of 'Stand upright on thy feet.' (Acts 14:10). Onlookers were amazed and thought that Paul and Barnabas were gods. The people named Paul 'Jupiter' (or Zeus), and Barnabas 'Mercurius' (or Hermes) and the two men soon found that the pagan priest was going to offer sacrifices unto Zeus for the great miracle that was just performed. Paul and Barnabas confirmed they were as human as any other man, but encouraged them all to turn away from their false religion unto the living God. After some time it appears that the jealous Jews from Iconium and Antioch came to Lystra and brought about the stoning of Paul. After he was stoned, his lifeless body was taken out of the city. Amazingly, as the other disciples stood around him, he simply 'rose up', went back to the city to fetch Barnabas, and the next day they both left for Derbe.

Part 9 – In derbe they once preached to many people and 'taught many'. (Acts 14:21)

Part 10 – They departed from Derbe, and went back through all the cities on the mainland they had travelled through (Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch), and appointed elders in each Church. They encouraged all the disciples to 'continue in the faith', and that 'though much tribulation' they would enter the kingdom of God.

Part 11 – The city of Attalia was the final destination of the pair before returning to Antioch

Part 12 - Paul and Barnabas sail home, their first missionary journey completed after spreading the word to thousands of people. The entire first journey took around two or three years.