

Paul's Itinerary

Acts 13—14

Most people take Act 13 as Paul's first missionary journey. Instead of studying Scripture, we probably all get caught up in accepting the traditions of men. Calling this his first missionary journey is wrong on two counts. First, this is not his first excursion in proclaiming the gospel. As the last lesson pointed out, Paul had been traveling in regions surrounding his hometown, Tarsus. He also spent a year in Antioch preaching and teaching. Before preaching in Tarsus, he had ministries in Damascus and Jerusalem. He moved on from those cities because of death threats. Although the Bible does not say so specifically, churches were most likely formed from his early travels.

Second, this was not necessarily a missionary journey. Many of the places he visited were in areas he had visited in the past 10 years. He most likely visited churches that had been formed by him, or because of him, on his original trip. He certainly preached the Gospel of Grace wherever he traveled, but he also went to encourage and instruct believers saved under his previous ministry trip.

Formation of the Body of Christ

Another error comes in thinking that the Body of Christ was formed when Paul was specially commissioned by the Holy Spirit to travel with Barnabas and spread the Grace doctrine in Acts 13. Alongside that error is the idea that the Body of Christ began in Acts 2 (with the giving of the Holy Spirit), Acts 11 (when the Hebrew church declared that salvation had come to the Gentiles), Acts 18 (when Paul declared he was going to the Gentiles), and Acts 28 (when Paul once again said he was going to the Gentiles).

First, it helps to note that the term *Body of Christ* is never used by anyone other than the Apostle Paul. It also is important to note that the Holy Spirit was poured out on Israel in Acts 2 by Jesus Christ (Joel 2:28; Acts 1:5; 2:17—18, 33), while we in the church were baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27). The proof that this interpretation is correct can be found in the definition of baptism. Baptism is not about getting wet, it is about identification. When Jesus was baptized, He was identifying Himself as a sinner (He was not a sinner, but presented Himself as a sinner. 2 Corinthians 5:21). The same can be said about Israel being baptized into Moses, which was also a statement about identification. In this case, Israel was being identified with Moses (1 Corinthians 10:1—2).

With this knowledge, it now easy to verify what baptism is being spoken of in Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians 12:13. The first was Israel being identified with (being baptized into) the Holy Spirit. This can be verified because they all demonstrated the works of the Holy Spirit by being baptized into the Holy Spirit. They were identified with Him by speaking in tongues, and demonstrating other gifts of the Spirit. The baptism of 1 Corinthians 12:13 shows that we are identified with Christ because we have been baptized into Him. We know this because we are identified with Christ's death, burial and resurrection, but we are not identified with the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:4—11).

The other dates for the beginning of the Body of Christ can be eliminated by understanding that Israel had already fallen by the end of Acts (Romans 11:11), and that there is no indication that Paul had ever preached anything other than the Gospel of Grace. Scripture never shows him preaching one message to Israel about the Kingdom, and then later having the Gospel of Grace revealed to him. He did have a progression in his revelations, but it was always the same gospel (Acts 26:16). Since Israel had already fallen, and Paul had been given the task of reaching the Gentiles with the gospel, God told Paul to get

out of Jerusalem early in his ministry (Acts 22:17—18). This is in contrast to the Disciples who had been told to stay in Jerusalem to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to the religious leaders (Acts 1:4; 8:1). There would be no reason to bring Paul into the picture unless there was a dispensational change that had happened. The Disciples and the believing Jews could certainly carry on the work of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom to the whole world (Acts 1:8). The Gospel was to be dispersed through national Israel, but once they fell, Israel was no longer qualified for that task. This is why the Apostle Paul needed to be raised up, taking the place once held by Israel as the disseminator of God's word (Matthew 24:14; Isaiah 49:6; 52:10).

Paul was separated from his mother's womb to become the pattern for all who would follow him in the Body of Christ (Galatians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:16). He was separated out to begin his ministry when he was saved (Acts 9:15; 22:15). His calling to be an Apostle happened only after Israel had rejected the offer of the Kingdom. There were no early and later callings or commissions recorded because Paul was always the apostle to the Gentiles (and unbelieving Jews) with the Gospel of Grace. This means the Body of Christ had to be formed with Paul's salvation as recorded in Acts 9.

Itinerary

As outlined in the last lesson, Israel (pictured by Elymas the sorcerer) would not only reject Paul's message, but would do everything possible to make sure that the Gentiles would not come to believe what Paul was preaching, and this is exactly what the Jewish leaders did (1 Thessalonians 2:2). While the Jews did everything possible to hinder the word of God, the Gentiles gladly accepted Paul's preaching (Acts 13:48).

Here is a quick overview of Barnabas' and Paul's journey.

They were called, by the Holy Spirit, while Paul was preaching and teaching in Antioch. They first traveled to Seleucia, a city just 15 miles southwest of Antioch and on the Mediterranean sea coast. From there they sailed 135 miles to the Island of Cypress and landed on the eastern coast at the city of Salamis. Barnabas lived on the Island of Cypress. They then traveled west-southwest approximately 110 miles to Paphos on the western edge of Cyprus. From Paphos, they traveled about 175 miles northwest to Perga in present day Turkey. This is when John-Mark left Barnabas and Paul. They traveled north about 80 miles into Galatia to the city of Antioch in the region of Pisidia (not to be confused with Syrian Antioch). Here Paul preached at the synagogue, and this is where his first sermon was recorded. Many wanted Paul to continue the following Sabbath, but the Jews riled up the people and forced Paul out of the city. This is when we see Paul's first of three declarations against the Jews (Acts 13:46).

They left Antioch and headed east 60 miles to the city of Iconium. Paul once again preached to a mixed crowd in the synagogue. Many believed, but after many days, the unbelieving Jews stirred up the people and drove them out of the city to Lystra, a city about 20 miles south of Iconium. In Lystra, the people thought they were gods because Paul had healed a man of lameness. The Jews followed Paul to Lystra and dragged him out of the city and stoned him, leaving him for dead. Paul got up, went back into the city and then the next day they departed for Derbe, a city about 20 miles to the east of Lystra. They backtracked about 200 miles from Lystra to the region of Pamphylia then sailed back home, a trip of about 350 miles.

The report to the church at Antioch was about how God was working among the Gentiles. It's obvious that the Jews were blocking Paul every chance they had. They were blocking the word of God from going out to the Gentiles. They were jealous of losing their position and seeing God dealing directly with the Gentiles.

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