



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V28 N27

July 5, 2026

POWER AND PURPOSE

"Set Apart, Sent Out"

Acts 13:1-12

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Evangelism

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Acts 1:8



Q?

When did the church first send out missionaries?

Something new happened in Antioch (Ac 13:1-3). One commentator explains: "Up to this point, contacts with Gentiles (one might almost say, missionary activity in general) have been almost fortuitous [happening by chance]. Philip was despatched [sic] along an unusual road not knowing that he would encounter an Ethiopian eunuch reading Scripture; Peter was surprised by the gift of the Holy Spirit to an uncircumcised and unbaptized Gentile; the missionaries to Antioch did not set out with the intention of evangelizing Gentiles. Here, however, though the initiative is still ascribed to the Holy Spirit (v. 2), an extensive evangelistic journey into territory in no sense properly Jewish (though there was a Jewish element in the population, as there was in most parts of the Empire) is *deliberately planned, and two associates of the local church are commissioned to execute it*" (C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1, ICC, 598-99, italics added). To put it differently, the first church to become a *missionary church* was the church at Antioch.

At first, Aramaic speaking Jewish believers shared what they believed about Jesus with other Hebraic Jews, namely, that "God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Ac 2:36). Peter put it this way in his message to Jews gathered at Solomon's portico following the healing of a lame beggar: "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witness-

es" (3:13-15). But by the time readers of Acts get to chapter 6, Greek-speaking Hellenistic Jews have been added to the disciples' number, perhaps as a result of the fact that "every day in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus" (5:42).

That said, the Jewish believers in Jerusalem did not commission any among them to carry the message of Jesus to other Jews outside of Jerusalem, much less to Gentiles. However, when persecution against the church arose, the disciples that scattered carried the gospel with them. Philip carried the gospel to Samaria (8:4-13) — as did Peter and John (vv. 14-25) — and to the Ethiopian eunuch (vv. 26-40), but not because they were commissioned and sent out by the church to do so. They did so on their own initiative or at the direction of the apostles. Peter, of course, carried the gospel to Cornelius, but neither on his own initiative nor at the direction of other apostles. He did so at the direction of the Holy Spirit (10:19-20).

At the same time, other disciples that scattered carried the gospel with them "as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch" (11:19) where they shared it for the first time with Greeks, Gentiles with no connection to Jews (v. 20). They were "preaching the Lord Jesus" (v. 20), "and a great number who believed turned to the Lord" (v. 21). It was the church in Antioch that commissioned and sent out missionaries to take the gospel to Jews first and to Gentiles. "For the first time a local Christian church was led to see the need for a witness beyond them to the larger world and commissioned missionaries to carry out that task" (Polhill, 288). Knowing the gospel was for all, they followed the Spirit's direction to take it to all.

Read Acts 13:1-12

1 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. 5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them. 6 When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. 7 He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him 10 and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? 11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. 12 Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline "Barnabas," "Simeon," "Lucius," "Manaen," and "Saul" in v. 1.
- Circle "Herod" in v. 1.
- Bracket "worshipping the Lord and fasting" in v. 2.
- Circle "Set apart" in v. 2.
- Bracket "fasting and praying" in v. 3.
- Circle "they" in v. 3.
- Circle "John" in v. 5.
- Underline "Bar-Jesus" in v. 6 and "Elymas" in v. 8.
- Underline "Saul" and "Paul" in v. 9.
- Circle "proconsul" in vv. 7, 12.
- Box "But" indicating *contrast* in vv. 8, 9.
- Circle "believed" in v. 12.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Summarize what you know from Scripture about the church at Antioch.
2. Describe what the Antioch church did for the very first time.
3. To whom does “they” refer in verses 2 and 3?
4. Do you think the “fasting” referred to in verses 2 and 3 was customary or related to special circumstances? Explain.
5. Setting apart and sending out missionaries—whose strategy was it?
6. When Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark reached Cyprus, where did they preach the gospel?
7. Who was Sergius Paulus? Describe him.
8. Who was Bar-Jesus/Elymas? Describe him.
9. What does Paul’s reaction to Elymas tell you?
10. **Discussion.** This passage is especially difficult to apply. Discuss what you think Luke wants his readers to *know, do, or be*.

Commentary On The Text

On the next section of the book of Acts, one commentator writes: “Chapters 13-15 begin the story of the mission to the ‘ends of the earth.’ The Gentile mission started in earnest with Paul and Barnabas’s work on Cyprus and in the Roman province of Galatia (chaps. 13-14). Their successes provoked a reaction from the more conservative Jewish Christians of Judea, which led to a major conference on the Gentile question in Jerusalem (chap. 15). The conference worked out a solution agreeable to all; the legitimacy of the Gentile mission was recognized, and Paul was given the go-ahead for continuing his outreach to the larger Greco-Roman world” (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 287).

The first stage of the first journey documenting the missionaries’ ministry in Cyprus is recorded in Acts 13:1-12. It contains an account of the setting apart and sending out of Barnabas and Saul (vv. 1-3), their journey to Cyprus (v. 4), their preaching throughout Cyprus in the synagogues (vv. 5-6a), and their encounter with Bar-Jesus and meeting with Sergius Paulus (vv. 6b-12).

The narrative ends on a note of success with the conversion of the proconsul before the missionaries sail from Paphos and arrive in Perga in Pamphylia, a part of Galatia. On the significance of his conversion one commentator writes: “The conversion of Sergius Paulus was, in fact, a turning point in Paul’s whole ministry and inaugurated a new policy in the mission to Gentiles—viz., the legitimacy of a direct approach to and full acceptance of Gentiles apart from any distinctive Jewish stance. This is what Luke clearly sets forth as the great innovative development of this first missionary journey (14:27; 15:3)” (Richard N. Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *John-Acts*, vol. 9, EBC, 420).

Barnabas and Saul were among a recognized group of “prophets and teachers”—Barnabas noted among the prophets and Saul among the teachers. While the believers were worshipping and fasting, the prophets and teachers among them, the Holy Spirit directed the church to “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (v. 2). The “worshipping” and “fasting” was likely connected to the church’s deliberations regarding spreading the gospel, and the “work” to which the Spirit called Barnabas and Saul, while not specified, becomes obvious as the story continues.

When the missionaries arrive in Salamis, on the northeast end of the island about 130 miles southwest of Seleucia in Syria (see *ESV Study Bible*, Map 13: Paul’s First and Second Missionary Journeys), they proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews all across the island as far as Paphos, the provincial capital at its southwest end about 90 miles distant. “But Luke did not dwell on this. He rather focused on the high point of the Cyprus experience—the conversion of the proconsul and the defeat of a false prophet’s attempt to thwart their witness to him” (Polhill, 292).

In Paphos, they encounter a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. He was a false prophet because he claimed to be a prophet but wasn’t—not because his predictions were necessarily false. He was also called Elymas because he was a “magician,” who happened to serve Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man and highest ranking official in a Roman senatorial province. “The setup was a lucrative one; and Bar-Jesus saw the Christian missionaries as a potential threat, so he attempted “to turn the proconsul away from the faith” (v. 8).

“At this juncture Saul, now for the time called Paul, stepped to the fore and assumed leadership . . . From this point on Paul was the leader and his name preceded Barnabas’ name except when they were in Jerusalem (15:12, 25)” (Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 388). Paul would have none of it and delivered a scathing rebuke against Elymas (vv. 9-10), accompanied by an announcement: “Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time” (v. 11).

When Sergius Paulus saw blind Elymas being led by the hand, he believed and was truly converted. “This was the first appearance of Christianity before Roman aristocracy and high authority, which was a new benchmark for the advance of the Christian mission” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Acts,” 2026 ed., 262, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf).

The message and application of this narrative is difficult to discern. Does Luke want his readers to *know* something, *do* something, or *be* something? Presumably, he wants them to *know* about the first church to send out missionaries and apparently wants other churches to follow the example of the church in Antioch by being a missionary church with a desire to send others to share the gospel with those who have never heard.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 **Barnabas, Simeon** . . . “There were five prominent ‘prophets and teachers’ in the Antioch church at this time. The Greek construction suggests that ‘Barnabas,’ ‘Simeon,’ and ‘Lucius’ were prophets (forth-tellers and perhaps foretellers), and ‘Manaen’ and ‘Saul’ were teachers (Scripture expositors). The Greek particle *te* occurs before ‘Barnabas’ and before ‘Manaen’ in this list, dividing the five men into two groups . . . ‘Barnabas’ (cf. 4:36-37; 9:27; 11:22-30) seems to have been the leader among the prophets and teachers. The priority of his name in this list, as well as other references to his character qualities, suggests this. ‘Simeon’ is a Jewish name, but this man’s nickname or family name, “Niger,” is Roman and suggests that he may have been dark skinned, possibly from Africa . . . ‘Lucius’ was a common Roman name. ‘Luke’ was his Greek name. He was from North Africa (cf. 11:20). It seems unlikely that he was the same Luke who wrote this book . . . ‘Manaen’ seems to have been the foster-brother of ‘Herod the tetrarch’ . . . ‘Saul’ was evidently the newcomer (cf. 7:58–8:3; 9:1-30; 11:25-30). This list of leaders shows that the church in Antioch was made up of diverse people and that God had gifted it with several speakers who exhorted and taught the believers.” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Acts,” 2026 ed., 254, 55, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf). And of course, Saul, whose other name was Paul (v. 9).

v. 1 **Herod** “Herod the tetrarch was Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptist and tried Jesus (Mark 6:14-19; Luke 13:31-33; 23:7-12)” (Constable, 255). “He reigned in Galilee during Jesus’ ministry (cf. Matt. 14:1; Luke 3:1; 23:8; Acts 4:27) 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. He was a son of Herod the Great (Matt. 14:1), and his nephew Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, reigned as king in Judea A.D. 41-44 (Acts 12:1-23)” (*ESV Study Bible* note on Ac 13:1).

v. 2 **worshipping, fasting** Fasting did not characterize Jesus’ disciples (cf. Mt 9:14; Mk 2:18; Lk 5:33), and is mentioned only three times in Acts (13:2, 3; 14:23), all in connection with the appointment to service. “‘They’ likely refers to the entire Antioch congregation gathered for worship, but the directive of the Holy Spirit may well have been mediated through the inspiration of the prophet-teachers . . . The association of fasting with worship suggests a time of intense devotion when normal human activities like eating were suspended” (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 290). “The call takes place during a time of spiritual focus on God” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 438). Worship took precedence over eating—they worshipped without stopping to eat.

v. 2 **Set apart** “Or ‘Appoint’” (NET Bible, 8tn on Ac 13:2).

v. 3 **fasting and praying** Prayer, like worship, took precedence over eating—they prayed without stopping to eat. “They ‘fasted’ and ‘prayed,’ presumably for God’s blessing on them (cf. 14:23; Neh. 1:4; Luke 2:37). They probably fasted while they prayed, demonstrating the priority that they placed on seeking God’s blessing in prayer” (Constable, 256).

v. 3 **they** “That the whole congregation, together with its leaders, was involved in attesting the validity of the revelation received, laid hands on the missionaries [*sic*], and sent them out. This is confirmed by the reference to the whole church in 14:27. For just as it was the whole church that sent them out, so it was the whole church the missionaries [*sic*] reported to on returning to Antioch” (Richard N. Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *John-Acts*, vol. 9, EBC, 417). The whole church surely sent them out, but perhaps only the other church leaders laid hands on Barnabas and Paul (see Constable, 256).

v. 5 **John** I.e., John Mark (Ac 12:12, 25; 15:37), Barnabas’ cousin (Col 4:10).

vv. 6, 8 **Bar-Jesus, Elymas** Cf. Ac 8:9-13. “In v. 8 Luke added that the magician also had the name of Elymas and that ‘is what his name means.’ The etymology is anything but clear, but the connection seems to be between ‘magician’ and Elymas, not with ‘Bar Jesus’” (Polhill, 293). “Evidently ‘Bar-Jesus’ (lit. ‘Son of a Savior’) was ‘a Jewish false prophet,’ in the sense that he claimed to be a prophet of God but was not. He was only a ‘magician’ who may have had some Satanic power (cf. 8:9)” (Constable, 259).

vv. 7, 12 **proconsul** “The proconsul was the highest-ranking official in a Roman senatorial province. A few inscriptions have been found around the Mediterranean bearing the name **Sergius Paulus**, but it is difficult to be certain which, if any, relate to the proconsul mentioned here” (*ESV Study Bible*, note on Ac 13:7).

v. 9 **Saul, Paul** Saul is his Jewish name; Paul is his Roman name.

v. 12 **believed** While some commentators doubt Sergius Paulus’ conversion (for examples see F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, NICNT, 265; Bock, 447), another writes: “The statement that Sergius Paulus believed can hardly be taken with any less significance that Luke’s use of the same word in 14:1; 17:34; and 19:18, where baptism is also not mentioned yet where we might well assume it was performed” (Longenecker, 420; cf. Polhill, 294-95).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

Recognizing the gospel is for Jews and Gentiles alike, the Antioch church followed the command of the Spirit to send missionaries to preach the gospel to both.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does the author of this passage want me to *know*?

2. What does the author of this passage want me to *do*?

3. What does the author of this passage want me to *be*?



PARENT CONNECTION

Recently, a mom shared with me how she had been trying to talk with a neighbor about Jesus for years but the neighbor was extremely resistant. She even went so far to hold her hand up to stop the conversation, making clear that she didn't want to hear anything "religious." There will always be people in this world who are resistant to things of God. They will stop the conversation, pick a fight, and do their best to turn others away from biblical truth. Sadly, this causes some to be resistant to share what they know—the good news of Jesus Christ means salvation for sinners and eternal hope and joy. We can help our kids be bold in sharing the Gospel by explaining this reality. Help them understand that we can't allow fear of a negative reaction stop us from offering what we know to be true: Jesus died on the cross and paid the price for sinners so we can have an eternal relationship with God. The more we're prepared for the reactions of others, the easier it will be to comfortably share. Role-play with your child, or better yet, model boldness in the most random places—grocery store, car wash, at the mall or while having a family dinner. Show them that some will want to hear the good news, and others won't. Model for them a tender heart and thick skin. Help your child understand that God is the one who softens hearts; our job is simply to obey. We're praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Acts 13:1-12.

1. What did the Holy Spirit tell Barnabas and Saul to do?
2. Who wanted to hear the word of God? Who opposed the message?
3. What happened to Elymas?

What Do You Think?

Do you think Paul was harsh with the man? Why or why not?

What Do You Do?

Things are always easier when we prepare. Make a list of reasons why someone might not want to hear about Jesus. Next to each reason, write down your response.

CORE COMPETENCY: Evangelism

I share Jesus with others with my words and actions.

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 19:1

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.