

The Church in the New Testament

(Sunday AM — Church Campus)

Week 6: Mission and Sending-- Acts 13:1–12

The church at Antioch was not content to keep the gospel to itself. While the prophets and teachers were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” After further fasting and prayer, the church laid hands on them and sent them off.

This moment marks the beginning of the first organized missionary journey in the history of the church. It is significant not only because of who was sent, but because of how it happened. The mission did not originate from human ambition or institutional planning. It began in worship and prayer. The congregation recognized God’s direction, confirmed it corporately, and supported the work.

On Cyprus, Barnabas and Saul encountered both an eager seeker—Sergius Paulus—and a determined opponent—the false prophet Bar-Jesus. The gospel advanced against opposition because God’s power stood behind it. This passage teaches the church that its evangelistic mission is not optional; it is the natural outflow of a congregation devoted to God. When the church worships, prays, and listens for God’s direction, it will be moved to send workers into the world with the saving message of Christ.

Group Discussion: The church at Antioch sent two of its best teachers on a mission trip. What does it say about a congregation’s priorities when it is willing to send its strongest members to do gospel work elsewhere?

Personal Reflection: How does our congregation support mission work? What role do you personally play in praying for, supporting, or participating in the spread of the gospel beyond the local community?

Read Acts 13:1–12

Study Questions

1. In verse 1, the church at Antioch is described as having “prophets and teachers.” What does this tell us about the leadership and spiritual maturity of the Antioch congregation?
2. Verse 2 says they were “worshiping the Lord and fasting” when the Holy Spirit spoke. What does this teach about the relationship between a church’s devotional life and its openness to God’s direction?
3. The Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (v. 2). What does this reveal about the origin and authority behind the church’s missionary work?

4. In verse 3, the church fasted, prayed, and laid hands on Barnabas and Saul before sending them. What is the significance of this process, and what does it teach about how mission work should begin?
5. Verse 4 says they were “sent out by the Holy Spirit.” How does understanding that missionaries are sent by God—not merely by human decision—change the way we view mission work?
6. In verses 5–6, Barnabas and Saul begin by proclaiming the word of God in synagogues. Why did they consistently begin with the Jewish community, and what does this teach about strategy in evangelism?
7. In verses 6–8, they encounter Bar-Jesus (Elymas), a false prophet who opposes them. Why does the gospel consistently provoke opposition, and how should missionaries expect to face resistance?
8. In verses 9–11, Paul confronts Elymas directly and strikes him with blindness. What does this confrontation teach about the seriousness of opposing the truth?
9. Verse 12 says the proconsul Sergius Paulus “believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.” What ultimately persuaded him—the miracle or the message? Why does this distinction matter?
10. Looking at Acts 13:1–12 as a whole, what does this passage teach about the church’s responsibility to support, send, and sustain gospel workers?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: **Romans 10:13–17** — How shall they hear without a preacher being sent? * **3 John 5–8** — Supporting gospel workers who go out for the name * **Philippians 4:14–19** — The partnership between a church and its supported workers