

Acts Chapter 13

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Date: 09 December 2012

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[0 : 00] Well, you have a new sheet, but we're not quite up to it yet. We've got just a couple of verses that I don't have extra sheets for, but some of you already have them. And we are in chapter 13, where we are dealing with the Apostle Paul just recently, having gotten underway with his first missionary journey.

And I don't want to overemphasize this, but I think it is safe to say without fear of contradiction, that next to the person of Jesus Christ, who he was and what he did, the most important, significant individual who has ever arrived on the scene is this man that we are considering now, Saul of Tarsus, later to become Paul the Apostle.

It would be utter foolishness to put them on the same plane, because no one, no human being deserves to be on the plane of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He stands utterly, completely alone. No one is in his class. He is the God-man. But among men who are not God-men, but just mere men as we all are, there is no individual so stellar in his life or his devotion or the consequences that have issued from his life than this man whom we are studying now, Paul the Apostle.

That which made him, of course, so utterly significant is the first person that we mention. The ministry of Jesus Christ and the effect that he had on Paul's life is what made Paul what he was.

[1 : 42] Paul the Apostle was not a self-made man. He was a Christ-made man, and that's what made him so significant. He is engaging in his first missionary journey, of which there will be three plus a trip to Rome, and it is going to have enormous consequences.

This man set out on a mission prompted by the Spirit of God with a partner by the name of Barnabas for the sole purpose of explaining to people, wherever they went, who Jesus Christ really was, what he did, why it matters, and how they may have a personal relationship with him.

This is one of the very earliest expressions we have of the proclamation of the gospel of Christ. And I'm just going to begin in verse 4 of chapter 13 of Acts.

If you have that sheet that has it on it, or if not, we won't be on it for long anyway. We'll be under the new sheet you were given this morning. We read in verse 4, So being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

Cyprus, of course, is on the map that we've given you before. It's an island not located too far from either Asia Minor or the land of Israel in Antioch, Syria.

[3 : 04] And when they reached Salamis, that was the principal city in the island of Cyprus, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.

And they also had John as their helper. This was John Mark who wrote the gospel of Mark. And in Romans, Paul makes it quite clear that this gospel of the grace of God was to go to the Jew first. It's striking that the Jew and the Jewish people had the first dibs on the gospel because they were the original recipients of the person of Christ who came. It's made clear in John 1.

So it's only natural that they go to the synagogues where they know they're going to find an audience that is familiar with the Old Testament. And this is an important point to bring out, guys. It's very important. When Paul has an audience before him, he always addresses spiritual issues and spiritual matters on the basis of where that audience is.

[4 : 12] And when he goes into the synagogue of the Jews, he knows up front that his audience is going to consist of people who know, believe, and to some degree understand the Old Testament.

And bear in mind, on the missionary journeys of Paul, the Old Testament was all that existed. The new hadn't even been written yet until he begins adding some epistles to it to the churches, etc. So he goes into the synagogue of the Jews. He has only the Old Testament to draw from. But that's all he needs. Because the person of Christ is found throughout the Old Testament.

And when Paul teaches it, he is going to reveal to them from Isaiah 53, this is Christ. From 2 Samuel 7, this is Christ. From all these other passages, Psalm 8, Psalm 82, this is Christ. And it's all going to make sense and come together for these Jews who could never figure out these passages in the Old Testament or of whom they might be speaking. And Paul straightens them out regarding that.

[5 : 19] And many of them come to faith and believe in the Lord Jesus as their Messiah, Savior. So we read that opposition is going to mount in verse 6.

And by the way, keep this in mind. Wherever truth is proclaimed, error is always present. And keep in mind also, there is a lot more error than there is truth.

Always has been, always will be. Error abounds everywhere. Truth is singular, and it is sometimes difficult to discover. The verse in Proverbs talks about how precious and priceless truth is.

That truth is that thing which you buy the truth, you pay for it if you have to. But you're never to be willing to sell it.

It's a beautiful concept. It means you are to expend whatever energy or effort is required to get at truth. And when once you arrive at truth, and you get it, you hold it close, and you never let it go, and you're not willing to sell it or put a price upon it.

[6 : 32] That's how valuable truth is. Truth is, well, Jesus Christ is referred to as the way, the truth, and the life.

And wherever truth is proclaimed, there will be opposition, and there will be error. And it is confronted by Paul here for the first time on his missionary journey. We're told in verse 6, when they had gone through the whole island, as far as Paphos, another city in the island, they found a certain magician, a sorcerer, a soothsayer, a Jewish false prophet, whose name was Bar Jesus.

Now, the name Jesus, of course, that is attached to this false prophet, has nothing whatever to do by relationship of any kind to our Lord Jesus.

The name Jesus is a common name in the Bible, and it was the name that the angel told Mary she was to name his son.

Thou shalt call his name Jesus. Why? Because he shall save his people from their sins.

[7 : 48] And the name Jesus means Savior, Deliverer, Rescuer. That's why he's called that. That's why he's given that name. In the Old Testament, we find a person by the name of Joshua.

Actually, if you wanted to be Hebrew about it, you would call Jesus, not Jesus, Jesus, which is Anglican, or English, or American, you would call him Yeshua.

It would be, actually, it would be spelled J-E, well, it wouldn't even be spelled J, because in Greek or in Hebrew, there is no letter J. It just doesn't exist.

So, they substitute J with a Y, and his name is Yeshua. Yeshua. Y-E-S-H-U-A.

Yeshua. That is the counterpart to Yeshua in the Old Testament, which in the English is pronounced Joshua. So, the Jesus of the New Testament is Joshua of the Old Testament.

[8 : 52] And in the Old Testament, it means the same thing, Savior or Deliverer. And Joshua had that principal role, of course, when he took over the reins from Moses. Moses represented the law.

And Paul tells us in Romans 8, for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did in the person of Christ, his son, in bringing many unto salvation, or bringing many sons unto rest, as Hebrews puts it.

So, we've got Moses representing the law, and Jesus Christ representing grace and truth. Moses gave the law to Israel, but he could not deliver them and bring them into the promised land.

We know Moses had issues of his own that prohibit him from doing that. So, where Moses could not deliver, whatever, Joshua did.

And Joshua is a type of Christ who was to come. The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. And where Moses failed, Joshua succeeded.

[10 : 05] So, in the New Testament, where the law, where the law does not do what needs to be done, in that it was weak through the flesh, that's your flesh, and my flesh, God did in the person of Christ, his son.

So, this Bar Jesus is just by coincidence, that's what his name was. And when you see the word Bar, it means son of.

It's the way it's translated. Barnabas is B-A-R. Barnabas literally means son of comfort or son of consolation because he was an encourager.

father. We've got Barabas who was set free rather than Christ.

And the B-A-R in his name simply means son of Abbas. Abbas was his father and Bar simply means the son of. So, this Jewish prophet is named Bar Jesus.

[11:06] He is the son of Jesus or the son of Jehoshua, but of course it is an entirely different one. And he was with the proconsul Sergius Paulus.

The proconsul was a Roman official officer serving under the Roman government. He was probably the man with the most clout on the island.

Rome ruled the whole world at this time. And this man, Sergius Paulus, was stationed there representing the Roman government, exercising authority, etc.

He was a man of intelligence. This guy was no slouch. He had some brains about him. He was able to think and think clearly and he was not about to be buffaloed.

This man, Sergius Paulus, summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

[12:05] It appears that he is requesting a private audience. I would put this together in such a way and I trust I'm not reading in the white spaces, but I think as Paul and Barnabas went through this island, they stirred up a lot of interest and a lot of commotion and a lot of people were talking about these men and what they had to say.

And Sergius Paulus, who is by all accounts a complete pagan, he's not Jewish, and he's just a Roman pagan like most of the Romans were at that time.

He heard about Saul and Barnabas and about all of the interest that was being aroused by the people and he says, you know, I'd like to hear these guys, I'd like to hear what they've got to say.

See if you can find them, bring them here. I want to talk to them, I want to hear what they have to say. So he summoned them and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas, the magician or the soothsayer, for thus his name is translated, was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

Now this man is already identified as a false prophet. That means God has nothing to do with what this guy is saying. False prophets abound.

[13:33] They did in the Old Testament, they do in the New Testament, and they do today. False prophets always have one particular game in mind, and that is some kind of self-aggrandizement.

Either they are using their talents, if you want to call them talents, they are using them to somehow personally enrich themselves financially, or they are using them to gain influence and control over people.

This is always the agenda of false prophets. They are class A manipulators. They know how to use people to get to their end.

And they are ingenious at scheming and plotting and using working people against people to gain their own end. They almost always are seeking some kind of a financial advantage or leverage or some kind of an inside something or other.

They are always with a hidden agenda. These people never divulge what they are about up front, because if they did, their followers would peel off and have nothing to do with them.

[14:51] So they always have a secret agenda, and it is in keeping with the Old Testament principle of the false prophets there, and also has to do with idolatry, which in fact is really the worship of demons.

And the whole science, the pseudo science of witchcraft and all that goes with it, it's all summed up in the same ball of wax, and it all has to do with manipulation of people in order to get what you want.

And this guy, this Elymas, had somehow ingratiated himself or was working this proconsul. I get the impression he was kissing up to this proconsul.

He was using him and his influence to realize his own ends. He's connected to this guy. And we are told that Elymas, the magician, for thus his name is translated, or sorcerer, was opposing them.

Why was he opposing them? Because this Sergius Paulus showed an interest in what Paul and Silas, or Paul and Barnabas, were proclaiming, and Elymas, the sorcerer, immediately saw these two strange guys, Paul and Barnabas, who just came to town, as competition.

[16:21] They are threatening to cut in on his territory of influence. We don't know exactly what kind of hold this Elymas had on Sergius Paulus, how much influence he had with him, but it appears that he was connected with him, and he feared that if Paul and Barnabas got to this guy, he could win him away from whatever they were trying to use him for.

And all he's doing here is protecting his self-interests. And we are told that he is seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze upon him. I've often wondered, what must that have looked like?

I'll bet that was something. I would imagine that Paul the Apostle could give you a look that would bore right through your skull.

This man, and it all has to do with who sent him and what he knows. And he is not one to be trifled with.

[17 : 44] this guy, Elemus the sorcerer, is saying, uh-oh, I've got a major problem here.

These guys are for real, and they've got something. And he gave him a penetrating gaze. He fixed his gaze upon him.

I think he just bore a hole right through him. And I can see this old Elemus squirming and very uncomfortable under the look that he was giving him.

And, again, this is an unusual situation. This is a man who has been sent by God, by the Holy Spirit, and he is to deliver this message.

and here he finds himself in this hotbed of sorcery, if you will, but he is more than sufficient for the task because of the one who is in him is greater than the one who is in the world.

[18 : 50] And here he is operating under a divine information act as to who this guy is and what he is about. It is a supernatural thing.

I think Paul was given an insight to this guy, and he's got him pegged. And notice how he addresses him. He fixed his gaze upon him and said, You who are full of all deceit and fraud.

This is not politically correct language. This is calling a spade a spade. and that's exactly what he's doing.

This is not a compliment. He is calling him out. And he is using very strong language in doing so.

You who are full of all deceit and fraud.

Remember the definition of deceit and deceiving. Deceiving someone is telling them, is giving them information that will make them think other than the truth.

[20 : 09] When you deceive someone, you make them think something is true and it isn't. You are deliberately misleading them. You're leading them astray.

And that's what this elements, the sorcerer, was doing. And in addition to that, it is fraud. He is misleading them, and the product that he has, that he is giving them, is absolutely phony.

It is fraudulent information that he is dispensing. saying, you who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, wow, you see smoke coming out of this, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?

In other words, you would twist and turn the truth, make the truth crooked, make it into something that it isn't. And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time.

And immediately, a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand. Boy, this is heavy stuff.

[21 : 34] This is an immediate pronouncement. I would emphasize that there are some who believe these kind of powers are available today. I respectfully decline to buy into that position.

I think Paul is acting under what we call apostolic authority. And I do not have any reason to believe that this gift exists today, although there are some who believe it does.

You can see them mainly on television, some of the televangelists. They claim to have mystical powers and the gift of this and the gift of that, and sometimes they dazzle audiences.

But let me tell you, fellas, apostolic power is something that is real, and it is directly from God, and I don't think it exists today.

I don't have any doubt that there are Christians who have some special sources of wisdom and insight, but I do not think it exists today the way it did.

[22 : 40] Apostolic power died with the apostles. It served its purpose, which was temporal, and it involved walking by sight. And the people who were there, and this elements, the sorcerer, were experiencing firsthand, physically, visibly, obviously, something very dramatic that was happening.

This is akin to the kind of miracles that Christ did when he was here. And these are the kind of miracles that he gave to the apostles to be able to do. But that has passed because this is not the day of sight.

We are not living in the day of sight. When Paul said, writing to the Corinthians, for we walk by faith, not by sight. That means we are living in an age, and I think Paul was part of that age.

He was living in both the old and the new. He was an apostle of transition. We are living in an age where these miracles have ceased.

Am I saying that God cannot do miracles today? Of course not. God can do anything he wants to, anytime he wants to, any way he wants to. I am saying that there are specific patterns of ministry and involvement that God is in that were for one day that have become passé.

[24 : 10] And along with that I would include the gift of speaking in tongues, the gift of healing, etc. And all I am saying is when these things were frequent and operating under apostolic power, they were the common, they were the norm.

They were not terribly unusual. You read from the book of Acts, and they were almost to be expected, and they did them as part of standard operating procedure.

That was walking by sight. That means you believe because you see. And when somebody is struck with blindness like this, or somebody is healed from being blind, or the lame walk, or some other kind of miracle is manifested, what are those things?

They are items of sight. You believe because you see what happened. You have the evidence there. The contrast of that in what Paul said, we walk by faith, not by sight.

That's a powerful verse, and it means the time of walking by sight has passed. Now, we walk on the basis of faith. What does that mean? It means we conduct our daily living, we conduct our routine lives, we conduct our modus operandi on the basis of faith, which means you simply believe what God says in his word.

[25 : 42] I believe God not because I see certain miracles. I believe God because of what he said. Is that enough?

Is that good enough? Can you take God at his word and believe it just because he said it and for no other reason? And a classic example is in connection with our Lord's own resurrection when Thomas refused to believe.

Remember? Thomas said, except I see the print and the nails of his hand and put my hand into his side, I will not believe. Thomas is saying, seeing is believing. I've got to see this.

Now, I know you guys said that you've seen it, and that's okay for you, but I have to see it for myself. And when the Lord appeared to him and invited him to do exactly what he was requiring, Thomas fell on his knees and said, my Lord and my God.

And Jesus said something to him that was really very significant. he said, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed.

[26 : 54] Would Thomas believe without seeing him? No! He already said he wouldn't. Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they who have not seen, yet still will believe.

And fellas, that includes us. I have not seen the Lord. I haven't seen him. He hasn't appeared to me physically, visibly. I haven't witnessed the wound in his side, or the prints of the nails in his hands. But I believe him. And why do I believe? Because of what God says in his word regarding his son. That is taking it by faith.

Doesn't mean that there's no evidence. There's a lot of evidence. But it means you don't have to see those things personally up front by yourself in order to believe. You believe on the authority of the word of God.

That's why we believe today. Because God said. Not because I've seen this, I've seen that, I've heard this, I've heard it. No. I believe it because God said it. Someone has said God said it, I believe it, that settles it.

[28 : 04] And that ought to be our modus operandi for today. Richard? Yeah.

Well, that's a good statement. Absolutely, we're human. And we need him to help us believe. We do.

And you know, the best way, the best way to address your unbelief, and we are all contaminated with that.

In the midst of our belief, there are pockets and areas where we have difficulty in believing. There are people who can trust God and believe God for everything except their kids.

Can't believe me for that. That I've got to spend time worrying, wondering, pacing the floor, agonizing, etc. Bargaining with God, complaining, all the rest of it. We all have pockets of unbelief in us.

[29 : 12] None of us has arrived in this thing called faith. So, the man was perfectly on track when he said, Lord, I do believe. I want to believe. Would you help me in my areas of unbelief those things of which I'm not certain that I really want to be and need to be?

And I'm convinced that God will rise to that occasion. So, this man is called out by the Apostle Paul and he calls him what he is.

It reminds me, and food is here so I'll close with this story. I'm sure that you've all heard the name Charles Haddon Spurgeon. He was arguably one of the greatest men of the pulpit who ever lived. I've still got, I've got 3,000 of his sermons in print, in books, and they are masterful. Even reading in that old hundred-year-old English, they are just tremendous.

And Spurgeon was making quite a splash in London. he was gaining a worldwide reputation, which was something to behold in the 1800s with communication being what it was then as compared to today.

[30 : 27] And many of you are familiar also with the name of P.T. Barnum. Phineas T. Barnum was a great expositor, not of the scriptures, but of events and features.

He had a big circus and a big sideshow, and it would travel around, and you've heard of the Barnum and Bailey Circus. Well, this is the P.T. Barnum who was part of that. And he was always looking for a way to make a buck.

And when he heard about the enormous success and the huge crowds that Charles Haddon Spurgeon was drawing in England, he sent him a cable and asked him to come to the United States and that he, P.T.

Barnum, would arrange all of these venues where Spurgeon could go and preach and make him a very wealthy man. And he would handle all of the arrangements if Spurgeon would just be willing to come and follow this itinerary, and he would see to it that Spurgeon left the United States a very wealthy man.

And when he sent this wire to Spurgeon, he was, of course, anticipating Spurgeon's response. And Spurgeon sent him back a wire, and here is what the wire said.

[31 : 44] You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? That was Spurgeon's answer.

I don't know how long it took P.T. Barnum to find out what it was all about and look it up, but at any rate, Spurgeon wanted nothing to do with it, and he considered the whole thing a fraud.

So, this is a fascinating passage of Scripture. And then, Paul went on to say, the hand of the Lord is upon you, you will be blind.

This is what I call healing in reverse. Healing in reverse. He took him from perfectly good eyesight to blindness. blindness. And I don't know that the blindness was permanent, but at least it was temporary enough that it rendered him impossible to see.

So, as a result, it had a favorable impression upon the proconsul, and he saw what happened being amazed at the teaching of the Lord. And we'll pick up on this next time.

[32 : 47] Have you comments or questions? Richard? What amazes me is that his life is terrible. Yeah. Yeah.

Acts 5 and Ananias and Sapphira. Yeah. Yeah. Apparently so. Apparently so. But it wasn't so with Ananias and Sapphira.

They were just spitting on the spot. And that too was deceit and fraud in both cases. Joe? It says here that thou shalt with one seed, not for a season.

Not seed the son for a season. Yeah. Yeah, it was temporary. And I often wondered what did the sorcerer, what did he think after his sight was restored again?

We aren't told, but I would like to think that he was thinking in a different vein and quite seriously than before. Because the guy was just phony as a three dollar bill and he knew it. But people, I'll tell you, when people are in difficult situations, when people are desperate, they reach out for anything and everything that might help them, that might rescue them.

[34 : 05] And when somebody is given a diagnosis of terminal cancer, you've got six months to live. Well, I don't know that they'll do any good, but there is this faith healer who slays people in the spirit and who claims all these kind of powers.

maybe it's an outside shot, but maybe it would work. And this is who they pray on. They pray on desperate people, people who are in real straits.

And desperate people are vulnerable people. They are open to almost anything. They're grasping at straws. And you can easily understand how folks in dire straits like that can be taken advantage of.

And there are plenty out there who are willing to do it, as we all know. Any other comments or questions? Yeah, Roger? When Paul went into the synagogue, would his main purpose be to grant Jesus to the Messiah?

Oh, absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. He, he, when he went to the synagogue, I think, I think he did the same thing that Christ did on the road to Emmaus when he confronted the two disciples and they didn't know it was Jesus.

[35 : 25] And we are told that he showed them all things concerning himself from Moses and the prophets.

And I can just see him going through their minds with these passages. And they were all familiar with him, but they weren't able to make sense of them. What would you do with, if you were a Jew in the first century, and you read a passage from the Psalms, it says, My Lord says unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies a footstool.

What does that mean? My Lord said to my Lord? What kind of talk is that? Well, Christ explained, this is my Father speaking to me.

And many such other places like that. And if David, David, David writing in the Psalms, David calls his son Lord.

Well, what does that mean? How can David call his son Lord? How can he be his son and David's Lord at the same time?

[36 : 39] That doesn't make any sense. But when you understand that David's son was Jesus Christ of that direct lineage, that direct bloodline born 1,000 years later.

So, David's Lord was David's son at one and the same time. But that never made any sense until the Messiah came on the scene and explained that.

And I'm sure that these Jews to whom this was given, including those on the road to Emmaus, were saying, so that's what that means. Now it makes sense. Now it comes together.

It's a beautiful thing. Yeah. Oh, absolutely.

Absolutely. In virtually every synagogue that Paul went, he never converted everybody there. There were always detractors and there were always believers. And with this I'll close.

[37 : 40] Go ahead and eat your breakfast and enjoy. But when you close the book of Acts, Acts chapter 28, Paul is remaining there in his hired condo, if you will, still under house arrest.

And we are told that every day there was a number of Jews who lived there in Rome who came to Paul in his hired quarters.

and we are told that Paul taught them from the scriptures from morning until evening. Think of that. Think of that. What a Bible conference that must have been. From morning until evening, Paul was explaining the scriptures, the Jewish scriptures, Old Testament, to Jews.

And he was pointing out Christ in all of those places from morning until evening. and when the text closes, it says this was the result. Some believed and some believed not.

[38 : 44] Not even Paul was responsible or accountable for converting all of them. And by the way, fellas, in closing, let that be a reminder to us. We are not responsible to convert anybody.

That's not our charge. That's not our responsibility. Our responsibility is to just be faithful in giving out the word. And the conversion of people is the business of the Holy Spirit.

You and I cannot do that. But what does the Holy Spirit use to convert people? He uses the word. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.