

The First Missionaries

Key Verse:

“...Go into the world and preach the good news to all creation.”

Mark 16:15

Extra: Find out and write down as many things as you can about the life of a missionary.

Level 4 lesson 26

Read Acts 12:25-35 and Galatians 1:13-24

So Saul escaped into the darkness and made his way to safety. This was just the first of many exciting adventures and difficulties Saul would experience in his new life as a Christian! Today we're going to look at how his work of serving God began.

Remember, before the Lord Jesus went back up to Heaven, He told his disciples that they were to preach the Gospel in Jerusalem (the city in which they lived), in Judea and Samaria (the surrounding districts), and all around the world (Acts 1:8). But by the time Saul came along, the spread of the Gospel still had a long way to go! So Saul and a man named Barnabas, moved to Antioch to spread the wonderful news that Christ died for sinners and rose again from the dead.

Many people believed the message of salvation from sin and became obedient followers of the Lord Jesus. The local people began to call them 'Christians.' This simply meant, 'Christ's ones' - those who had accepted Christ as their Saviour and wanted to devote their lives to following and serving Him. That name has carried on through the ages and is commonly used today.

Like them, we can become Christians when we repent of our sin, trust Christ as Saviour, and follow Jesus' example obediently. Being born in a so-called 'Christian' land does not make us a Christian. Even being born in a Christian family does not make us a Christian (although it is a wonderful help and privilege). It is a conscious decision we must each make for ourselves. This is such an important matter. Are you a Christian? Make sure today!

The Christians in Antioch really wanted the Gospel to spread throughout the world. As they were praying about it one day, they became convinced by the Holy Spirit of God to dedicate Saul and Barnabas to this task. Both men agreed, so the Christians held a special church service. The elders in the church put their hands on the heads of Barnabas and Saul and committed these two men to God's care, asking His blessing and protection on them in this great work. Everyone understood by this that the Holy Spirit of God had called these men to do this work.

So Barnabas and Saul set out, taking with them a young man named John Mark. Firstly, they travelled to a seaside town called Seleucia. There they boarded a ship and sailed for the island of Cyprus. Barnabas used to live in Cyprus, and many people there knew and respected him. This would help in having the gospel message accepted. We too, should try and earn a 'good name' in our local community to bring glory to God and help others believe the message we preach.

Landing at Salamis, the capital of Cyprus, they explained the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Jews in the synagogues. Afterwards, they went on to a town called Paphos, visiting people and speaking about the Lord Jesus as they went. So began a missionary work that has been carried on for centuries. From this small beginning it has grown until now there are thousands of missionaries in different parts of the world, seeking to share the Gospel story with those who have never heard it. You and I can be missionaries in our area too, sharing the good news of Jesus. We can help other missionaries by our prayers, gifts, and letters, or perhaps even by visiting them.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What did the Lord Jesus tell His disciples just before He went up into Heaven?

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2. What is the meaning of the word 'Christian'?

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3. How do we become Christians?

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4. What does it mean to preach the 'good news' to all creation? (See the Key Verse)

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5. How can we be 'missionaries' where we live?

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A Roman Governor

Key Verse:

“But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”

John 12:32

Extra: See if you can find any records of famous people being followers of Jesus.

Level 4 lesson 27

Read Acts 13:6-12 and Psalm 19:7-14

God created humans to worship Him and to enjoy fellowship with Him. Of course, sin has ruined us and prevents us doing that, and so people still have a desire to worship something - anything other than God! Satan desires more than anything to be worshipped as god, (remember, he even tempted Jesus and tried to get Jesus to worship him)! Satan also deceives people into worshipping false gods, rather than the true God. Even today, in many countries of the world, you can still see people worshipping idols of various kinds. This always leads to all kinds of sinful practices.

It was like this in Paphos, where the people worshipped a false goddess called Venus and trusted the word of a so-called magician, named Elymas BarJesus. Elymas had been born a Jew but had rejected the Word of God and become a servant of Satan. The Bible doesn't teach that Satan doesn't exist or that he has no power. Instead, it's quite the opposite...

Do you remember the magicians in Moses' day, who copied many of the miracles Moses did before Pharaoh? Such people - and others like 'psychics' or 'fortune tellers,' - display special power and knowledge of the future. But God's Word makes it very clear that we are NEVER to visit or consult them, because this makes us fear them and become trapped by their evil advice.

Satan, who empowers these people, is a liar and a destroyer. He only uses them to gain an evil influence over people's lives. Satan is a powerful foe; but he is NOT all-powerful. Only God is! God's Word tells us to put our faith and trust in Jesus, our Creator, and worship and obey **Him only**. God alone is worthy of worship!

Sergius Paulus was a well-educated man who had been sent by the Roman Emperor to govern the island province of Cyprus. But even wise, intelligent men can be deceived by Satan, and Sergius Paulus was no exception. In his ignorance of God's Word, he too sought the advice and counsel of Elymas the Magician. However, it seems that he was genuinely seeking the Truth. When he heard about Barnabas and Saul he immediately sent for them, to hear what they had to say. They took the chance to tell him about Jesus and urged him to believe in Him, and follow Him.

Elymas was upset and angry about this. He knew that if his master Sergius Paulus accepted Jesus, his own job would be gone and he would get no more money out of him. When he saw his master was starting to believe Saul and Barnabas' message, he tried to prove they were telling lies.

Saul, who was also called Paul, recognised that Elymas was controlled by Satan and rebuked him sternly. "You are a child of the Devil!" he said. "Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?" To punish him and show that God was far more powerful than any Satan-controlled 'magician', Saul told him that God would blind him for a while.

Immediately, judgement came on Elymas and he was blinded; then he groped about, seeking someone to lead him around. Sergius Paulus was astonished! He immediately believed the words of Saul and Barnabas and trusted Christ as Saviour. This was a wonderful conversion and a great victory for the Gospel. Even today, the power of God can still change the hearts and lives of all who believe the Gospel and trust Christ as Saviour.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why should we never consult people like 'psychics' or 'fortune tellers'?

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2. Why was Elymas upset and angry? (Fill in the vowels)

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G_ T _N_ _M_ R_ _M_ N_ Y _ _T _F _H_ M.

3. Write down what you think about Elymas.

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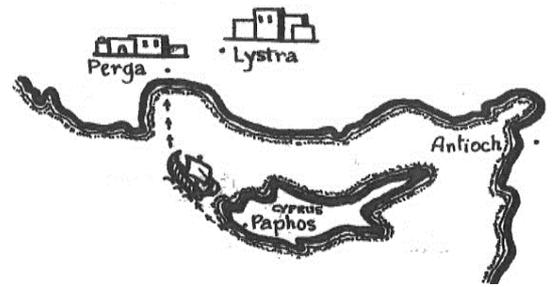
4. What was Elymas' punishment?

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5. What did Sergius Paulus do when he witnessed Elymas' judgement?

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A Paralysed Man



Key Verse:
“...Whoever comes to Me, I will never drive away.”

John 6:37b

Extra: What further miracles can you find from Paul's life?

Level 4 lesson 28

Read Acts 13:13-14; 14:1-23

Saul was also known as Paul (see 13:9), which was his Roman name, and so the Bible calls him Paul from this point on. Leaving Cyprus, Paul and his two companions sailed to Asia Minor, landing at a place called Perga. Sadly, at this point, their young helper John Mark decided to leave Paul and Barnabas and return to Jerusalem. This was, no doubt, a big disappointment to both men.

After saying farewell to Mark, Paul and Barnabas travelled further inland to a town called Lystra, where they again began teaching and preaching. Apart from a few Jews, the people of Lystra were superstitious Greeks who worshipped false gods. Yet some of them listened eagerly to Paul, and even a poor man who had been born crippled. Seeing him listening intently, Paul turned to him and said in a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet!” Immediately, the man jumped to his feet and he could walk!

The people watching were amazed and they began calling out, “The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men!” Barnabas, the bigger of the two men, they called Zeus, the name of their most important ‘god,’ and Paul they named Hermes, Zeus’s supposed spokesman. This was tremendously exciting for these pagan idol worshippers, but it was a great mistake! Soon there was such an uproar Paul and Barnabas had to go inside for a while. However, while they were inside they heard an even greater commotion outside. Someone had run to the temple of Zeus, and told the priests that Zeus and Hermes had appeared in the city! They quickly organised a huge procession. Some brought oxen, others gathered flowers, while others began playing music and celebrating this great event.

Then, shouting and making music, the large procession made its way to where Paul and Barnabas were. They intended to sacrifice the oxen, all decorated with flowers, in honour of them, as an act of worship.

Paul and Barnabas heard the music, but when someone ran in to tell them what it all meant they were horrified! They did not want to be worshipped! Tearing their clothes (which is a Jewish way of showing extreme sorrow or regret) they rushed outside. They told the crowd, “Men why are you doing this? We too are only men just like you, and are telling you to turn from these worthless things to worship the living God!”

The crowd was so excited that it was hard for Paul and Barnabas to convince them that they were just normal men, and so were not to be worshipped (v18). This clearly shows that they were not preaching merely to gain followers or to make themselves famous. No - their one desire was to tell people about the Lord Jesus Christ and the wonderful truth that Jesus was God, who had “come to this earth in the likeness of men”, which is what the crowd mistakenly thought their false gods had just done!

As a result of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas, it seems that some people (besides the healed cripple) had listened and believed in Jesus, and so had turned from idols to follow Jesus. We know this because verses 21-22 say that when they next visited Lystra, they taught and encouraged these new Christians. Next month you will be amazed how quickly people can change their minds, and what shocking thing happened to Paul and Barnabas!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What did John Mark do when they reached Asia Minor?

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2. What happened to the crippled man at Lystra?

3. What great mistake did the people make?

4. As a result of the preaching, what did some people do?

5. Why do you think people worship idols?

Please complete and return by post to

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