

Fact Sheet for “Divine Appointments” Acts 13:1-12

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ESV ¹ ¶ Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, (τε 1) Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger (*black*), Lucius of Cyrene, (τε 2) Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

This was Herod Antipas who was born before 20 BC and died after 39 AD.
On “prophets and teachers” see Eph. 2:20; 4:11-16.

² While they 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.”

“The Holy Spirit said” – Remember there were prophets there.
Compare the idea of ordination. Compare the idea of a “call.”

³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

And so began Paul’s first missionary journey.
In an ordination service the Elders lay their hands on a candidate and pray.

⁴ ¶ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ^{5a} When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.

“Seleucia was the port city of Antioch of Syria, some sixteen miles west of Antioch and four or five miles northeast of the mouth of the Orontes River.”¹ Salamis was on the eastern coast of Cyprus.

^{5a} And they had John to assist them.

This was John Mark.

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.

Paphos – This was the seat of the Roman provincial government.

In thinking of “Bar-Jesus” consider this... “Bar (בַּר) is a [Jewish Babylonian Aramaic](#) word literally meaning son (ben (בֶּן) in Hebrew), bat (בַּת) is Hebrew for daughter, and mitzvah (מִצְוָה) is a commandment and a law.”² “Bar-Jesus” therefore means “Son of Jesus.”

Proconsuls were governors appointed by the Roman senate. And Sergius Paulus (*Paul*) was a man of intelligence (*intelligent, wise, with good sense*).

⁸ But Elymas (*E-lu’-mas*) the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

¹ The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, v. 9, p. 418.

² Wikipedia.

"Bar-Jesus is also called Elymas ('sorcerer,' 'magician,' 'fortune-teller')"³

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?"

Saul (*his Jewish name*) was called Paul (*a Roman name*) from here on, this being the first such record in the Bible. "Saul" was used only when referring to his former life (22:7; 26:14).

"will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord"

From Is. 40:3... See Matt. 3:3; Mk. 1:3; Lk. 3:4... See also Jn. 1:23

When people teach what is blatantly non-Christian they are guilty of the same thing... 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."

Elymas was in the wrong place, was there at the wrong time, and was on the wrong side!

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.

It's easy to remember this passage as the beginning of Paul's 1st missionary journey, or as the background of ordination, or even for Bar-Jesus. But look behind the scenes!

...the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (13:2)

being sent out by the Holy Spirit... (13:4)

But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit... (13:9)

... the hand of the Lord is upon you... (13:11)

God was directing the time, the places, the people, and the results. Sergius Paulus had a choice he needed to make? He sought out Barnabas and Saul, and listened to them. He believed.

Was part of the work that the Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul to include that conversation with Sergius Paulus? Had God been preparing Sergius Paulus? Had God called Sergius Paulus? Did Barnabas and Saul know this in advance? Was this a divine appointment?

Is God still this active in the affairs of people today? What has God called you to? Does God have divine appoints in your future? What is our role? Consider 1 Pet. 3:15 and 2 Tim. 2:1-2.

³ The Expositor's Bible Commentary, v. 9, p. 419.