

## Seleucia to Cyprus

ACTS 13:4 *So they, {Barnabas and Saul} being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.* We have spent much time explaining how it was that Saul and Barnabas were sent forth by the Holy Ghost. Barnabas and Saul being sent forth by the Holy Ghost departed unto Seleucia. Seleucia is a city of Syria near the mouth of the Orontes river, down stream about 16 miles from Antioch. Seleucia was Antioch's very important sea port. Seleucia was named after Seleucus Nicator, it's founder, and one of Alexander the Great successors. Seleucus Nicator died in 280 B.C., so we see that the sea port of Seleucia was a little over three hundred years old at the point in time of our lesson. As I understand it there are two masonry piers that still mark the spot of where the old harbor was, and these two piers bear the names of Paul and Barnabas in recognition of this missionary journey. Seleucia's name means "white light." Interestingly the port of Seleucia is only mentioned by name this one time in scripture, and yet we know that both Paul and Barnabas must have sailed in and out of this port more than this one time during the course of their lives {see ACTS 14:26 and 15:39}. The sailing distance from Seleucia to the port of Salamis, Cyprus is about 130 miles. The island of Cyprus is a very fertile and delightful island located in the North Eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea. Cyprus is about 148 miles long, and 40 miles wide. Cyprus was an island full of Gentiles having been originally settled by the Greeks, and in Saul and Barnabas' time it was noted for being a lewd and wicked place where Venus was worshipped. Cyprus is mentioned by name eight times in the book of ACTS. ACTS 4:36 explains that Barnabas, a Levite, was from the island of Cyprus, and so it seems that the Holy Ghost has led Barnabas and Saul back to Barnabas' home country, familiar ground for Barnabas. Cyprus name means "love: a blossom." The preaching of Saul about the love of God is about to blossom here on the island of Cyprus. By the time Barnabas and Saul get to Cyprus the gospel has been already preached there to the Jews. ACTS 11:19 *Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.* Some of these Jews at Cyprus then became Christians. Some of the Christian men of Cyprus had then traveled to Antioch, and we read in ACTS 11:20 *And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, {Grecian -- a Jew who speaks Greek as his primary language} preaching the Lord Jesus.* Barnabas and Saul would have known these men of Cyprus, having spent a whole year at least in the assembly at Antioch before this missionary journey {see ACTS 11:26}. So we see that there were acquaintances of Barnabas and Saul from Cyprus, who may or may not have asked them to visit their friends and relatives at Cyprus. We know of a man ...*Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple*,... was very familiar with Paul by the time frame of ACTS 21:16, so we see that there were many acquaintances of Saul and Barnabas from Cyprus, and most likely these friendships were first formed when Barnabas and Saul were at Antioch, or possibly on this visit to Cyprus.

ACTS 13:5 *And when they {Barnabas and Saul} were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.* Before we get into the ministry part of this missionary journey, let's focus on the last phrase of verse 5: *...and they had also John to their minister.* The writer of ACTS, Luke, casually tosses out this fact that they had John with them on this missionary journey, as if the reader knew who this John was. We must realize that Luke did not set out to write books of the Bible, but rather was writing an account of Christianity to one of the elders of the church at Antioch named Theophilus {see LUKE 1:1-4 and ACTS 1:1-2}. The purpose of Luke writing Theophilus was *...That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.* {LUKE 1:4}. We gather from the way that this fifth verse of ACTS 13 is written that no doubt Theophilus knew who this John was. The John that is referred to here is John Mark, or as scripture calls him John, whose surname was Mark. The first time we find his name mentioned is in ACTS 12:12. In ACTS 12 the Apostle Peter has been taken prisoner by Herod to be brought before the Jews most likely to be executed, but the angel of the Lord released him from prison there in Jerusalem where there were many Christians praying for Peter's deliverance. In

ACTS 12:12 we read concerning Peter: *And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark;* (his Jewish surname was Mark) *where many were gathered together praying.* Thus we see that John Mark knew Peter from way back, and so we don't find it unusual for Peter to mention John Mark (also called Marcus, his Latin surname) in 1 PETER 5:13 *The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.* (The words ...my son... here means a close follower in the faith, and not a natural son. My son is an expression that Paul used a couple of different times in referring to those men who were begotten in the faith due to his ministry. An example of this is found in PHILEMON 1:10 *I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:* ). Thus we note that John Mark (Marcus) was a follower of Peter from the early years of his ministry, as was Barnabas. John Mark years down the road of his life will write the Gospel According to St. Mark, but he wasn't one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. In Mark's gospel he records an event that happened on the night that Jesus was betrayed by Judas; an event that isn't recorded in the other gospel records. We read this event in MARK 14:51 & 52 -- *51 And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: 52 And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.* Since this portion of scripture seems to have no real connection with the context of the rest of the story other than an interesting side light, one scholar notes that this may be a reference to John Mark himself. If that is the case then we note that John Mark was a young man at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus, and a first hand witness to Jesus arrest. In COLOSSIANS 4:10 John Mark (Marcus) is noted to be a close kinsman of Barnabas. Barnabas' name is often mentioned in association with John Mark. John Mark was at Antioch with Barnabas and Saul as a result of Barnabas taking John Mark with him when Barnabas and Saul left Jerusalem for Antioch noted this way in ACTS 12:25 *And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.* Our text of ACTS 13:5 states that: *...and they had also John to their minister...* meaning that John Mark was an assistant of the preacher of the gospel; in other words an aid to those preaching the gospel. Since John Mark was a close relative of Barnabas, and since Barnabas seems to be responsible for watching over John Mark at this point in time, it would only be natural it seems for Barnabas to bring John Mark along on this journey as his assistant. If you stop and think about it for a minute we get a good picture of the kind of man Barnabas was, and the kind of man Saul was here at the beginning of this first missionary journey. Barnabas (obviously the older of the two men) seems to take the lead in the direction that they would go. This missionary journey takes them to Barnabas' home country of Cyprus, and Barnabas brings along John Mark. Saul at this point in time goes along with Barnabas and his course of action, keeping in mind that since early on in their friendship Saul has followed Barnabas' leading. Certain doors of opportunity would be opened here at Cyprus because of the leadership of Barnabas. The bringing of John Mark along on this missionary journey wasn't exactly following the leading of the Holy Ghost however, for recall that ACTS 13:2 states: *...the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.* ACTS 13:2 does not state anything concerning John Mark, nor does it say Separate me Barnabas and Saul and John for the work whereunto I have called them. Jumping ahead a little to ACTS 13:13 we find John Mark leaving Barnabas and Paul and returning home to his mother at Jerusalem. The Lord wasn't through with John Mark, for the time of his being a minister himself wasn't yet. John Mark had some growing up to do probably both physically, and for sure spiritually. Barnabas, the patient man that he was, would be a big help to John Mark again later in his life, and it is with Barnabas were John Mark learns to be the kind of ministers assistant that is helpful to the ministry. John Mark years down the road will make amends with the Apostle Paul and become a fellowlabourer with the Apostle Paul, {see PHILEMON 1:24 and COLOSSIANS 4:10}. In his final letter to Timothy Paul writes: *Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.* {2 TIMOTHY 4:11}. Obviously over the years the Lord worked mighty and wonderful gracious things into the life of John Mark. His name is mentioned as Mark five (grace) times in scripture. John Mark would late write The Gospel According to Mark, where we find Jesus pictured as the servant, a position in life that John Mark could relate to have been a "servant" in the gospel to both Barnabas and

Paul. As a brief side light to our learning something about John Mark let me note that both the Gospel by Mark, and the Gospel by Luke were influenced somewhat by the teachings of the Apostle Paul, for both John Mark and Luke were Paul's assistants at various points in Paul's life, and both learned much from the Apostle Paul.

ACTS 13:5 *And when they {Barnabas and Saul} were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.* Salamis is on the eastern shore of Cyprus, and the closest sea port of Cyprus to Seleucia from whence Barnabas and Saul had sailed. Salamis is noted to be the Grecian capital of the island of Cyprus, and a great number of Jews were settled at this busy mercantile port. Since there were a great number of Jews at Salamis, there also were numerous Jewish synagogues at Salamis. Possibly Barnabas had many acquaintances at Salamis who would allow him and Saul to preach the word of God in these various synagogues. Nothing more is stated in scripture concerning Salamis other than this fact: *And when they {Barnabas and Saul} were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews:...* . Sixteen times in scripture we read Paul's name in association with a Jewish synagogue. Sixteen is the number of LOVE, and we know the Apostle Paul loved the Jews, himself being a well educated Hebrew Pharisee of the tribe of Benjamin. In ROMANS 10:1 Paul states his heart's desire concerning the Jew, saying: *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.* Thus the pattern of the Apostle Paul on his missionary journeys was to first go unto the synagogues of the Jews (if there was a synagogue to go to) in the cities he visited. ACTS 17:1 & 2 makes note of this fact, stating: *Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: 2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,...* . Back in ACTS 13:5 we are not told how long Barnabas and Saul was at Salamis, but apparently they were there long enough to preach the word of God to most, if not all, of the synagogues of the Jews that were there. Even though Saul preached to the Jews his calling wasn't to the Jew, but rather the Gentile. We have already noted this in ACTS 26:16 through 18 where the Lord told Saul of Tarsus on that road to Damascus that he had appeared unto him for this purpose, to me thee a minister and a witness to the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Paul several times in his writings notes that his calling was unto the Gentile, and he states in EPHESIANS 3:8 *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.* And again in 2 TIMOTHY 1:11 Paul writes: *Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.* So even though Saul's calling was unto the Gentile, we note that he went unto the Jews (his people) first. Barnabas was probably leading the way at this point in time. One commentator notes that by following the track of the synagogues the doors to reaching the Gentiles would soon be opened, for in some of the synagogues there would be proselytes, which are Gentiles who have come over to the Jewish religion, and these Gentile proselytes would spread the gospel message unto the Gentile community. As we move on in the next few verses we will see evidence of Saul's first recorded Gentile convert.

In ACTS 13:6 we read this phrase in the first part of the verse: *And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos,...* . We are not told the course of travel that Barnabas and Saul and John Mark took from Salamis to Paphos, but we are told that they traveled "through the island" probably by foot. The distance covered would be around a hundred and forty to a hundred and seventy miles, and would take several days, and probably took several weeks for, no doubt, Barnabas and Saul were visiting the many acquaintances and family of Barnabas as they journeyed through the island of Cyprus. Barnabas and Saul were on a missionary journey having been sent forth by the Holy Ghost so we know that they were preaching the gospel as they went through the island of Cyprus. The island of Cyprus' inhabitants were mostly all caught up in the worship of the mythological Greek gods. Barnabas and Saul were becoming quiet famous as they journeyed along, for as we will see shortly, the Roman governor of the island will request their presence at Paphos. Paphos was a maritime city on the west end of Cyprus,

with a harbor, and it was the residence of the Roman governor of the island of Cyprus. Paphos name means "suffering" or "boiling" or "hot," and was famous for being a unrestrained and immoral town who worshipped the Greek god Venus; Venus was also known as the queen of Paphos. A superb temple was built at Paphos in honor of Venus where she was worshipped with all her rites. In stating it another way we see that Satan was having his way at this time at Paphos. The temple and the town of Paphos were later destroyed by an earthquake.

## Opposition at Paphos

Thus we get a good picture of what Barnabas and Saul were about to face here at Paphos, for we next read in ACTS 13:6 that *...they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus:...* History notes that during this period of time the Jewish magicians (sorcerers) had great influence on the Roman leaders including even the Caesar's. Biblical history records various leaders turning to sorcery's, that is turning to the magicians for counsel and guidance. In GENESIS 41 the Pharaoh of Joseph's day dreamed a troubling dream, and in verse 8 we find: *And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.* Later in that chapter the Lord God gave Joseph the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream, and Joseph was exalted to second in command in Egypt. God had done this for Joseph. The Pharaoh of Moses day was asked nine times of God to "Let my people go." {See EXODUS 5:1; 7:16; 8:1; 8:20; 8:21; 9:1; 9:13; 10:3; and 10:4}. (Nine is the number that has to do with FINALITY and DIVINE COMPLETENESS). Six scriptures record Moses' Pharaoh calling for the magicians (sorcerers) for help. {See EXODUS 7:11; 7:22; 8:7; 8:18; 8:19; and 9:11}. One of the meanings of the number 6 that we learned in our numbers study was that often times the number 6 had to do with Satan, and with Satan's influence over worldly man. We listed in our numbers study in three different sets of six (6+6+6) the various names used in scripture of Satan. As we go through the following scriptures it will become more and more evident that Satan is power hungry, and since he is power hungry we don't find it unusual for him to be the influence behind many of these worldly men of power. Satan himself tempted Jesus with worldly power, and you can read this whole account in LUKE 4:1-13 for yourself, but for now let's look at LUKE 4:6 which reads: *And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.* Do you even think that this is a true statement? Many a power hungry man has fell for this lie of the Devil. Note what the scripture has to say concerning this subject. DANIEL 4:17 *...that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men. ...25 (and 32) ...the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.* DANIEL 5:21 *...the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will.* While we are in the book of DANIEL note the number six again where we find six scriptures in DANIEL showing both king Nebuchadnezzar and king Belshazzar calling upon magicians (sorcerers) for guidance, {see DANIEL 1:20; 2:2; 2:27; 4:7; 4:9 and 5:11}. Thus we find it rather common in scripture for the leaders to be influenced by the magicians (sorcerers). (If you want to study this subject out further look up the words: magicians, sorcerers, astrologers, soothsayers, stargazers, monthly prognosticators, false prophet(s), observer(s) of times, diviners, dreamers, adversary, enchanter(s), charmer(s), necromancer, witch, wizard, witchcraft(s), eloquent orator and cunning artificer; 18 different names describing Satan's followers. 18 is the number of BONDAGE). Further our passage in ACTS 13:6 points out that this sorcerer was also a false prophet, that is one who, acting the part of a divinely inspired prophet, utters falsehoods under the name of divine prophecies. Eleven times in scripture we find the words false prophet(s). Eleven is the number of INSUFFICIENCY. In MATTHEW 7:15-20 we read Jesus warning statements concerning false prophets: *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth*