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First published in Malaysia in 2014 by Pristine World Sdn Bhd

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Epic of the Apostles Vol.2 - Paul and the Early Missionary Journeys

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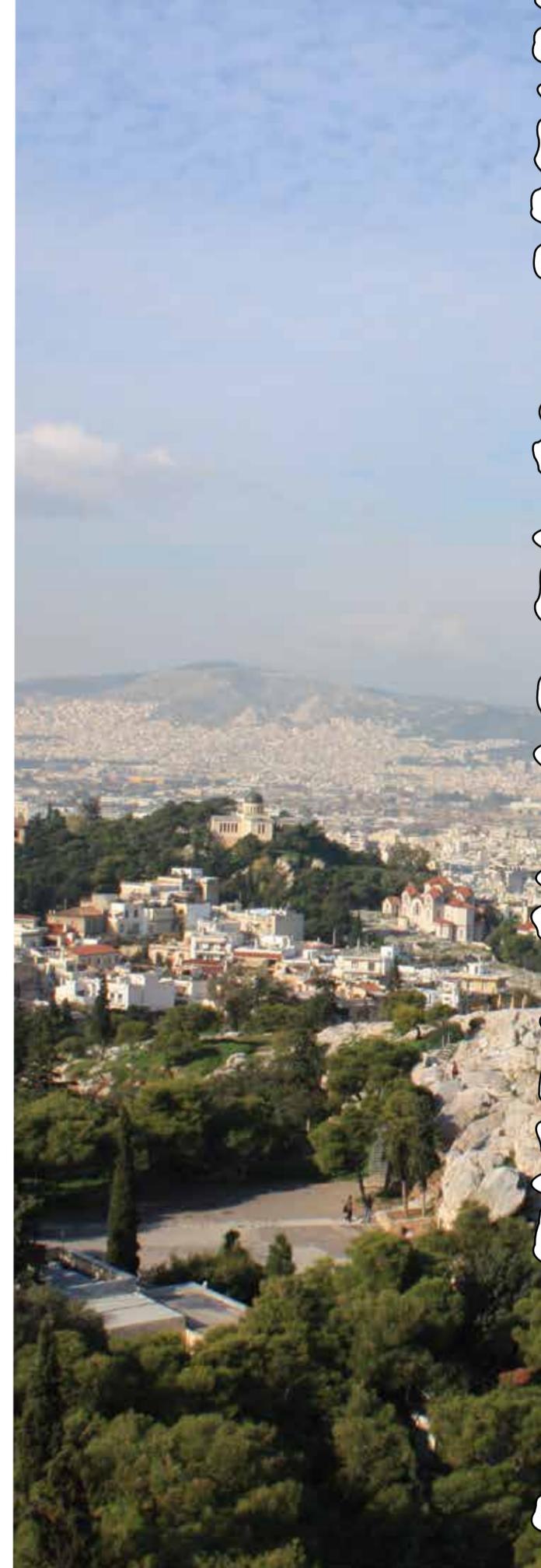
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1. The First Missionary Journey

Acts 13 Barnabas and Paul on the first missionary trip of the Antioch Church



One day while the leaders of the Antioch Church are fasting and praying ...



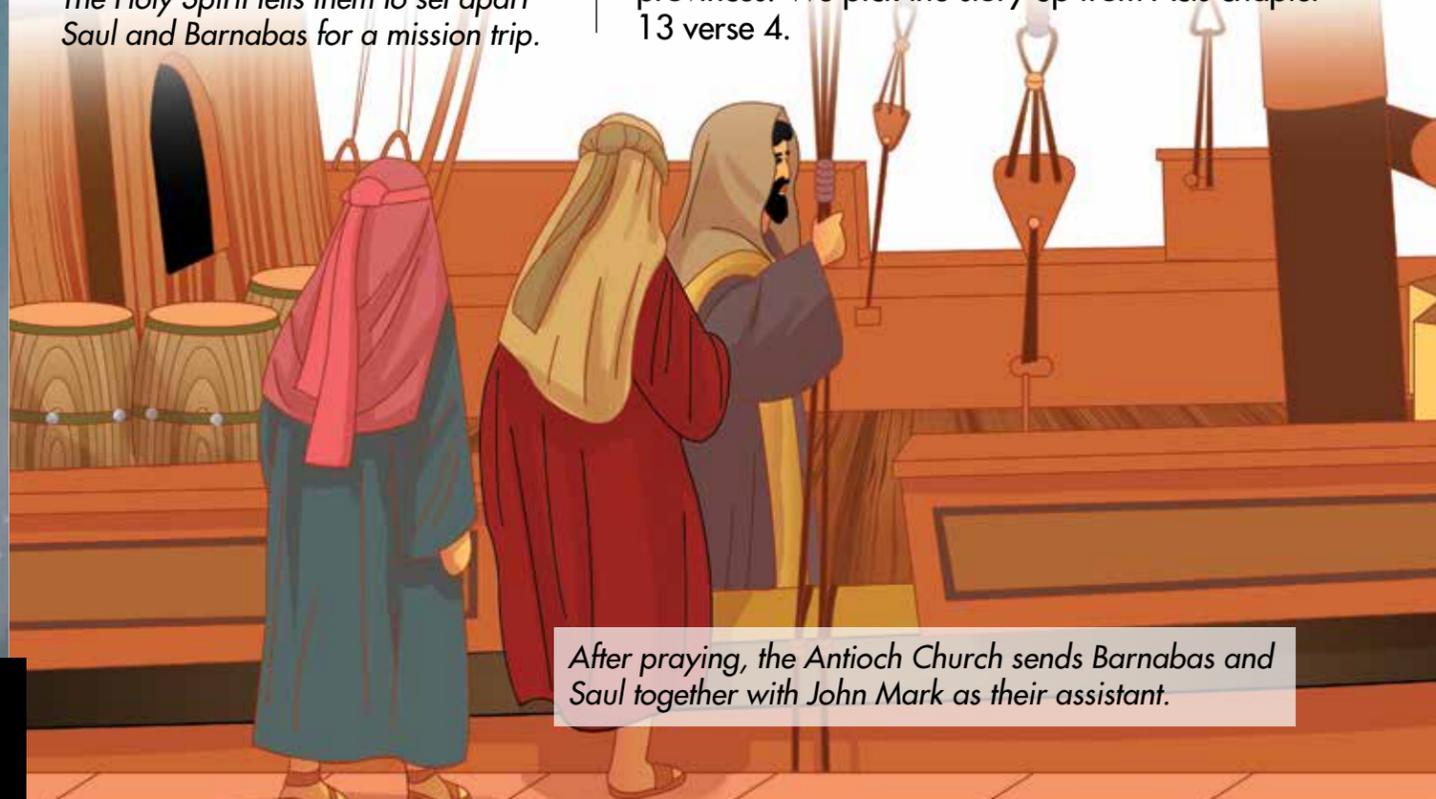
The Holy Spirit tells them to set apart Saul and Barnabas for a mission trip.

Timeline: Around AD 46

Acts: 13

From Acts chapter 13 onwards, we focus on the story of Paul, the Antioch church and the churches in the countries outside of Israel. Now the church in **Antioch, Syria** had grown. There were prophets and teachers among their leaders. These included Barnabas, Simeon, Saul of Tarsus, Lucius – from Cyrene and Manaen – a childhood companion of King Herod Antipas.

One day while they were worshipping 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 the leaders and the church prayed and fasted for some time, they were convinced that God had called Barnabas and Saul for a special missionary trip among the Gentile provinces. We pick the story up from Acts chapter 13 verse 4.



After praying, the Antioch Church sends Barnabas and Saul together with John Mark as their assistant.

Acts 13:4 So Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit. They went down to the seaport of Seleucia and then sailed for the island of Cyprus. 5 There, in the town of Salamis, they went to the Jewish synagogues and preached the word of God. John Mark went with them as their assistant. (NLT)

They travelled from town to town across Cyprus until they reached Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer, a false prophet named Bar-Jesus or Elymas as his name was called in Greek

Elymas kept himself very close to the governor, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. The governor invited Barnabas and Saul to visit him because he wanted to hear the message of God.

Now Elymas, was worried that the proconsul would believe in the gospel that Barnabas and Saul were preaching. He would be out of a job if that happened..

So he opposed Barnabas and Saul and tried to convince the governor that they were teaching false ideas. He kept interrupting and objecting to everything that was said by Barnabas and Saul. Finally Saul, filled with the Holy Spirit decided to confront Elymas directly.

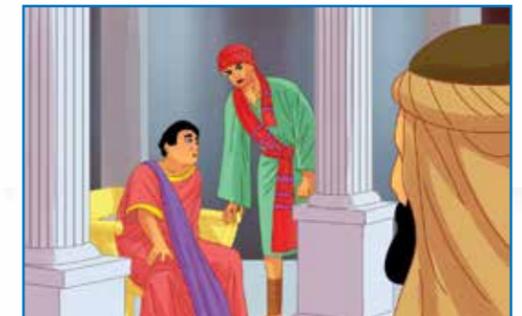
Elymas keeps opposing Saul and Barnabas.



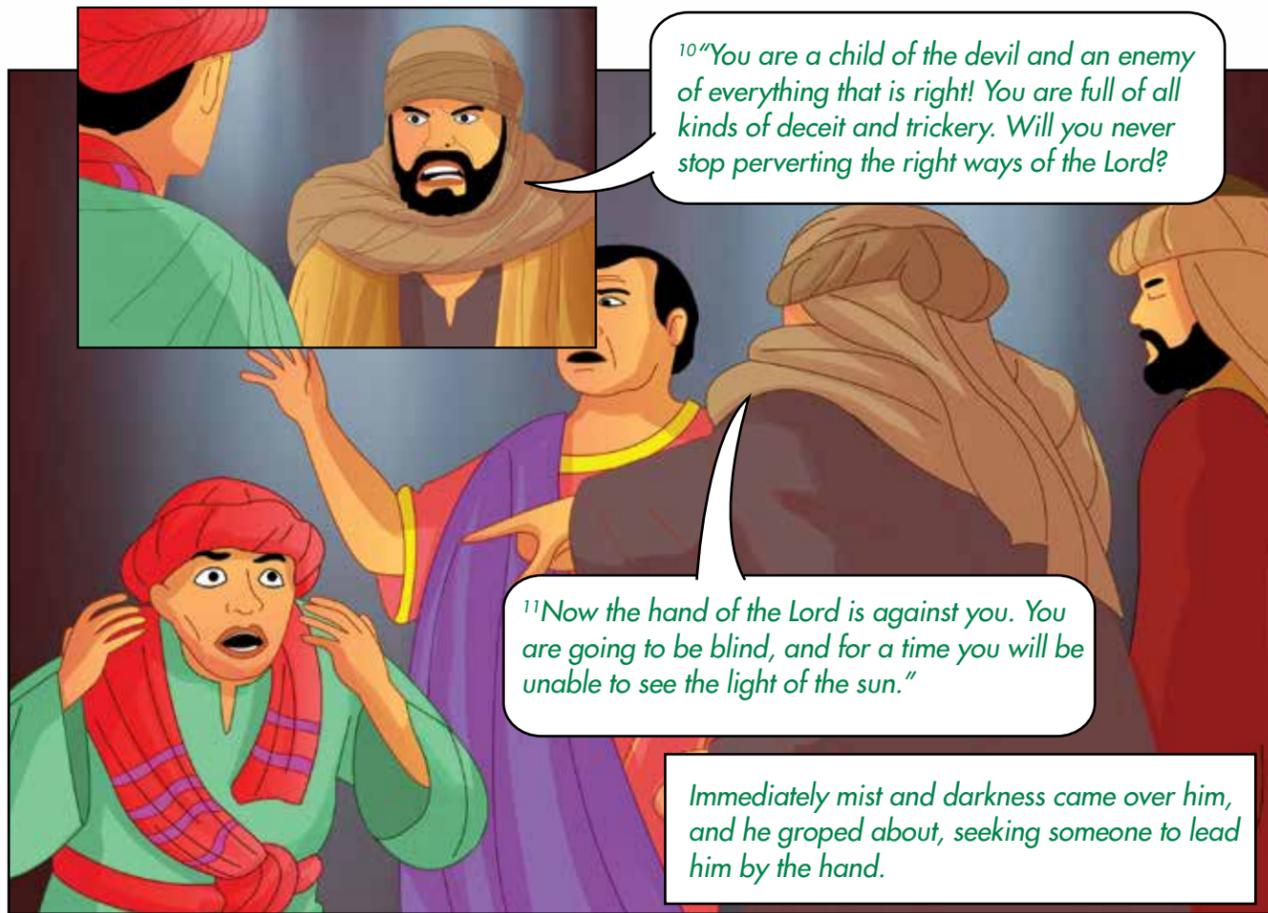
They sail to Cyprus.



In Paphos of Cyprus, they meet the governor Sergius Paulus ...



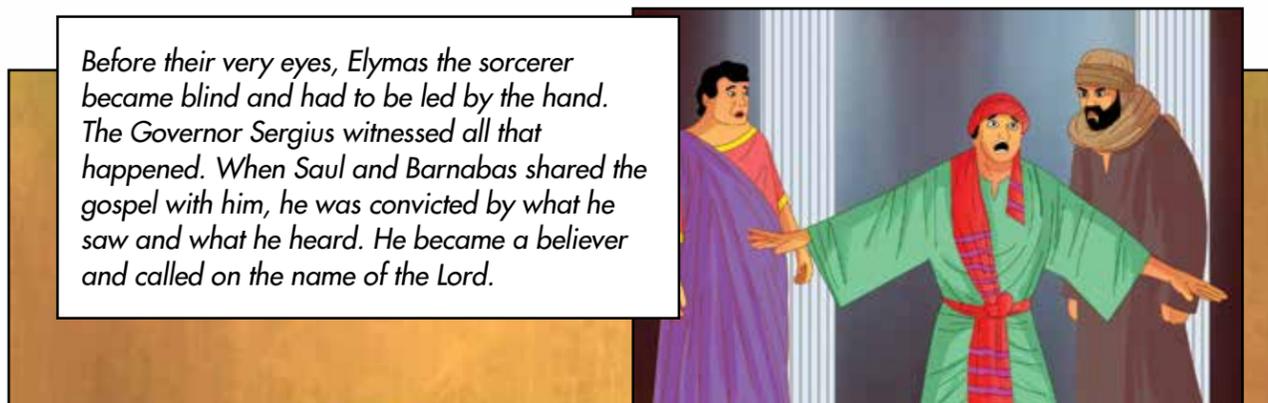
... and his Jewish Sorcerer Elymas.



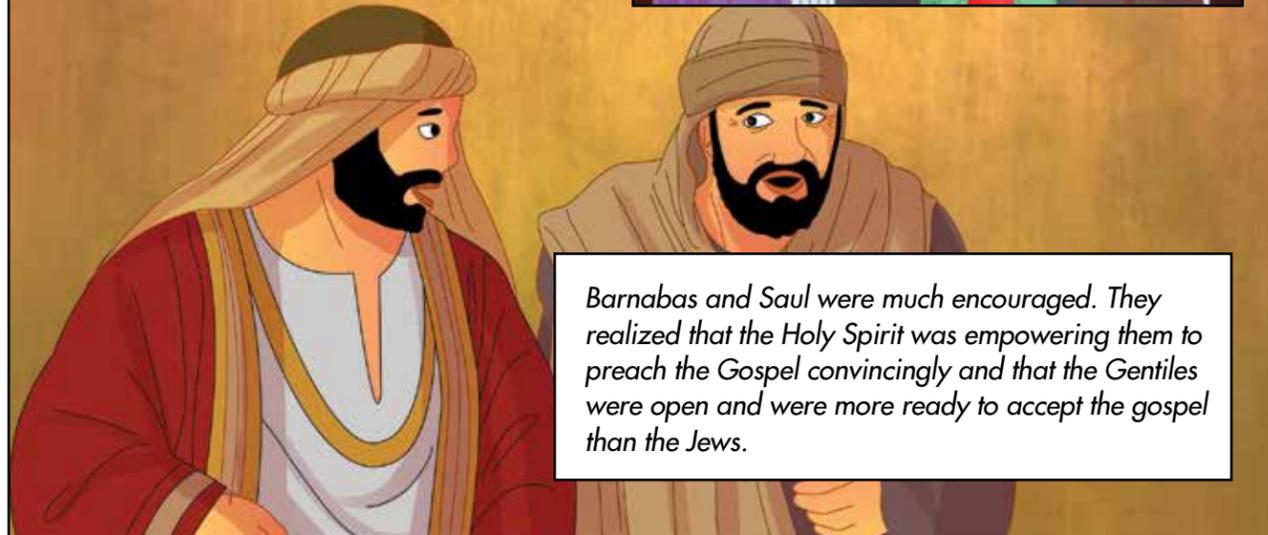
¹⁰"You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?"

¹¹Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun."

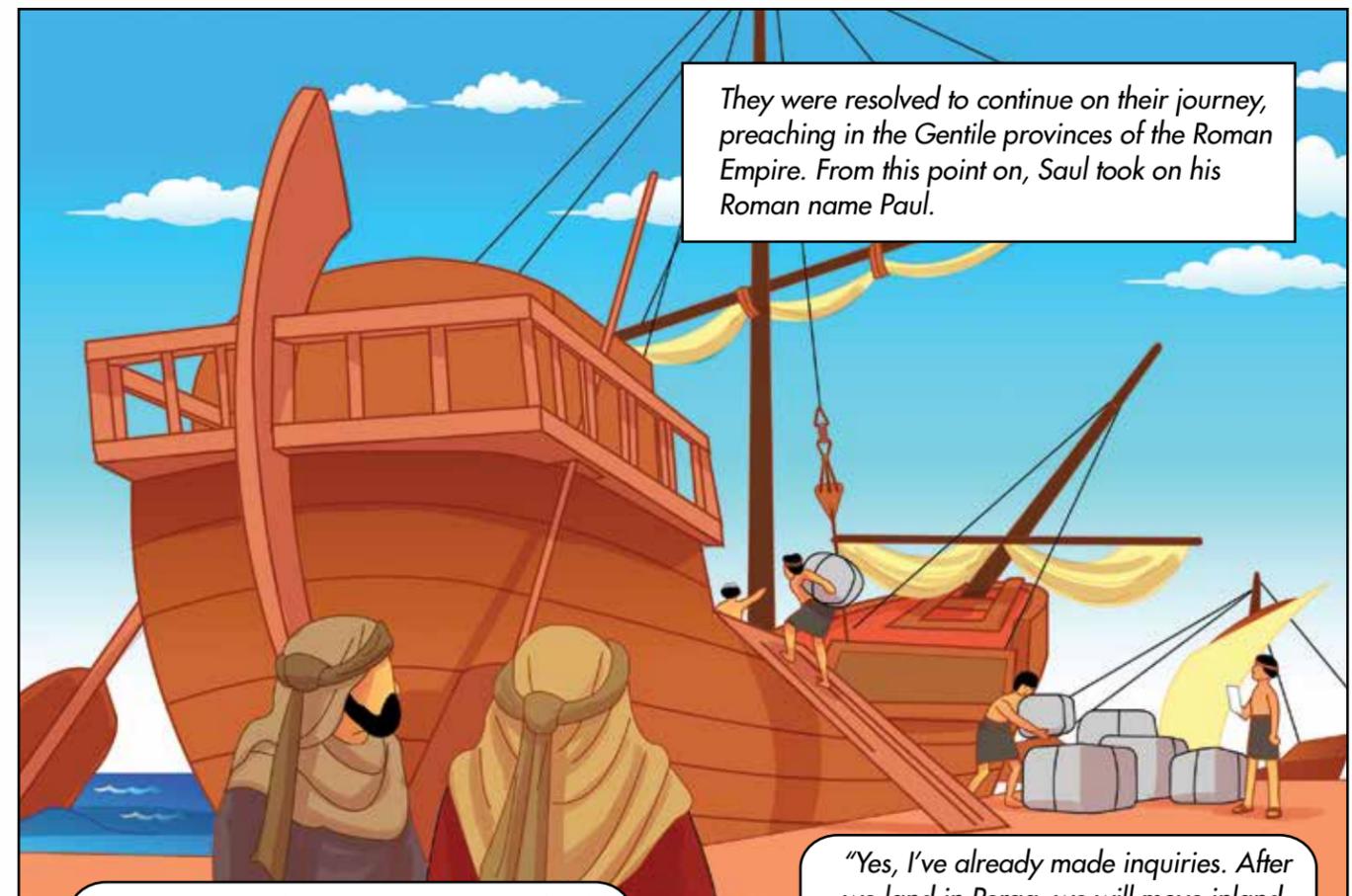
Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand.



Before their very eyes, Elymas the sorcerer became blind and had to be led by the hand. The Governor Sergius witnessed all that happened. When Saul and Barnabas shared the gospel with him, he was convicted by what he saw and what he heard. He became a believer and called on the name of the Lord.



Barnabas and Saul were much encouraged. They realized that the Holy Spirit was empowering them to preach the Gospel convincingly and that the Gentiles were open and were more ready to accept the gospel than the Jews.



They were resolved to continue on their journey, preaching in the Gentile provinces of the Roman Empire. From this point on, Saul took on his Roman name Paul.



"Barnabas, Mark, I am convinced we should continue our journey beyond Cyprus. We can catch the next ship to Perga and bring the Gospel message to Asia."

"Yes, I've already made inquiries. After we land in Perga, we will move inland perhaps to Antioch of Pisidia."

"Paul, Cyprus is my homeland. I know the people here. They are willing to help and listen to us. Asia is a foreign land. Are you sure this is where we should go?"

"Alright Paul, if you feel this is where the Holy Spirit is leading us, I am with you."



"We have to be prepared to suffer for the sake of the Gospel."

"Cousin, you can't be serious about this. We don't know these territories. I heard the road inland especially to Antioch Pisidia is dangerous and ridden with bandits who rob, beat and murder travellers."



He explained to the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles present that God had chosen the nation of Israel to reveal Himself and be a channel of blessing to all nations. He told how the Law and the Prophets had pointed to the coming of God's Messiah who would come as a descendant of King David.

Paul explained, "The people in Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah whom all the prophets had spoken about. Instead, they condemned Him to die on the cross and in doing this they fulfilled the words of the prophets, which we read every Sabbath.

Acts 13:29 When they had done all that the prophecies said about him, they took him down from the cross and placed him in a tomb. ³⁰But God raised him from the dead! ³¹And over a period of many days he appeared to those who had gone with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to the people of Israel."

Paul explained that salvation and the way back to God was only possible through Jesus the Messiah and that this good news was for both the Jews and the Gentiles. Acts 13:38 "Brothers, listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for our sins. ³⁹Everyone who believes in him is declared right with God ..."



Paul preaches to the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles.



He preaches the gospel to them.



He tells them about the death and resurrection of Jesus.



They travel to Pisidian Antioch.

Paul and Barnabas were determined to go further inland travelling by a dangerous road to **Pisidian Antioch**.

On the Sabbath, they went to the synagogue. After the usual readings from the books of Moses and the prophets, those in charge of the synagogue invited Paul and Barnabas to share any word they might have with them.

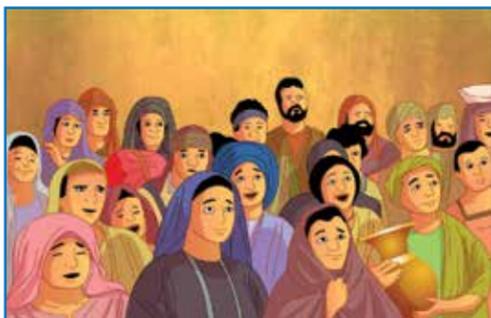
Paul took this opportunity to give them an eloquent and convincing speech.

Paul tells them Jesus is the only way back to God.





The people ask him to return and preach again the next week.



Paul agrees and returns the next week.



But this time they argue against everything Paul has to say.

The people begged Paul and Barnabas to speak to them again the next week. Many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas who continued to teach them about God's grace made available through Jesus Christ.

Acts 13:44 On the next Sabbath almost all the people in the city came together to hear the word of the Lord.⁴⁵ When the Jews there saw all these people, they became very jealous.

Shouting insults, they argued against everything Paul said.^(ERV)

⁴⁶But Paul and Barnabas spoke very boldly. They said, "We had to tell God's message to you Jews first, but you refuse to listen. You have made it clear that you are not worthy of having eternal life. So we will now go to those who are not Jews."

⁴⁶"This is what the Lord told us to do: 'I have made you a light for the other nations, to show people all over the world the way to be saved.'" ^(ERV)

When the Gentiles heard this they were glad and felt blessed. Many of them believed in the word of the Lord and received salvation. When the Jews saw so many Gentiles following Paul and Barnabas, they became even more jealous.

They stirred up the influential religious women and the leaders of the city and incited a mob against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them out of the city.

Acts 13:51 So they **shook the dust from their feet** as a sign of rejection and went to the town of Iconium.⁵² And the believers were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. There was now a small church in Antioch of Pisidia.



Paul and Barnabas shake the dust of their feet before they leave.

Understanding the Story

1. The church of Antioch Syria is led by the Holy Spirit to send Paul and Barnabas on this historic missionary trip. The Gospel now is taken to Gentile countries being led by the Holy Spirit.
2. When the Gospel message is rejected by the Jews at Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas decide to take the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think Saul started using his Roman name Paul?

2. Why do you think John Mark left them and how do you think Paul and Barnabas felt when John Mark left them?

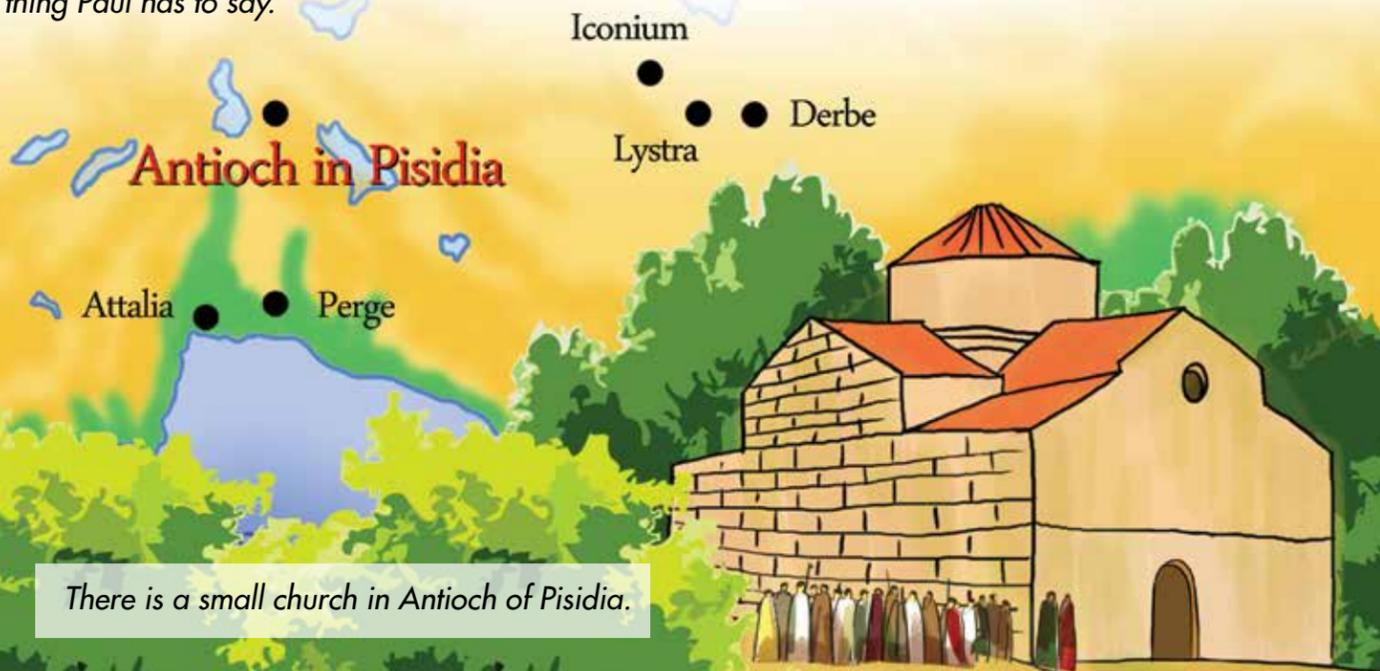
3. What lessons can we learn and apply from this story?

Interesting Information

Antioch of Syria

Syrian Antioch was built around 300 BC by Seleucus Nicator one of the generals of Alexander the Great. In 64 BC it was annexed to Rome by Pompey. Syrian Antioch became the third largest city in the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria. It was a cosmopolitan city strategically located for trade between the West and East of the Mediterranean.

Seleucus Nicator had settled a number of Jews in the city, granting them equal rights with the Greeks. Syrians, Greeks, Jews and later Romans, made up the main people groups. It was here that the followers of Christ were first called 'Christians'.



There is a small church in Antioch of Pisidia.