

# ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

## XXVIII. The Local Church And Missions

(Acts 13:1-3)

### I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 351.
- B. Accordingly, we can learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the Early Church era as it is presented in the book of Acts.
- C. Acts 13:1-3 records how God used the newly established local church at Antioch of Syria to launch Saul and Barnabas into the missionary outreach to which God had called them. This passage sets important precedents on the order needed for God's use of the local church in missionary outreach, so we view it for our insight.

### II. The Local Church And Missions, Acts 13:1-3.

- A. For the first time in recorded Church history, In Acts 13:1-2, God moved away from using Christ's apostles to take the lead in a church ministry issue, but to use leaders in a local church outside of Jerusalem to do so:
  1. The Holy Spirit directed certain prophets and teachers in the Church in Antioch of Syria, men who were not apostles of Christ, to take the lead in sending Saul and Barnabas out as missionaries, Acts 13:1-2.
  2. This was a first, for up to this point in time, God had directed the ministries of local churches through the leadership of the apostles in Jerusalem with their teaching (Acts 2:42), the distribution of goods (Acts 4:34-35), the appointment of deacons to handle the distribution of goods (Acts 6:1-6), the certification of the Lord's work among Samaritans (Acts 8:14-15) and among Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48) and the certification of God's work in the local church of many Greeks at Antioch of Syria itself (Acts 11:19-26).
  3. Remarkably, the men who were to be commissioned by these local church leaders had initially been the leaders of that church, for Barnabas had come to Antioch under the authority of the Jerusalem apostles (Acts 11:22-23) and he had brought Saul of Tarsus to Antioch (Acts 11:25-26) with Saul, who would later be called Paul, being called of God to be an apostle himself, cf. Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 9:1.
  4. In addition, the other men mentioned in Acts 13:1 whom God directed to send out Barnabas and Saul were not apostles, but prophets and teachers: one was Simeon who was called Niger, possibly indicating that he was an African from West Africa around the Niger River, another was Lucius of Cyrene in North Africa and the third was Manaen who was reared with Herod Antipas, the ruler who had beheaded John the Baptizer. (Ibid., p. 387; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Acts 13:1)
  5. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit directed Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen sovereignly to "set apart" (*aphorizo*) Barnabas and Saul for the work to which He had called them, Acts 13:1-2.
- B. The Holy Spirit gave this direction to these local church leaders while they were in fellowship with the Lord and ministering with their spiritual gifts in their local church at Antioch of Syria, Acts 13:2a:
  1. The KJV verb "ministered" in Acts 13:2a translates the verb *leitourgeo* that literally was used of the "service performed by priests and Levites in the temple," but in this context refers to prophets and teachers serving the Lord with their gifts of prophecy and teaching in the local church. (Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 471-472)
  2. These men were serving in these functions and fasting, a typical Hebrew practice of worship, so they were in fellowship with the Lord, they were worshipping God, and ministering for Him in the local church.
- C. Accordingly, indicating spiritual sovereignty in the matter, prophets and teachers Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene and Manaen fasted and prayed in devotion to the Lord before laying their hands on Barnabas and Saul, authoritatively commissioning them as local church leaders to go out as missionaries, Acts 13:3.

***Lesson:*** *Beginning at Acts 13:1-3, God indicated that the human authority for missionary ministries for the Church Universal upon the passing of Christ's apostles would be vested in local church leaders who worshipped and served the Lord in their local churches. All missionaries and mission organizations are thus subject to the spiritual leadership of local sending churches, the "pillar and foundation" of the truth, cf. 1 Timothy 3:15 NIV.*

***Application:*** *(1) May we who lead in the local church understand our responsibility to walk with the Lord and to worship and serve Him in the local church as overseers of the local church and its missionary outreach. (2) May we as a congregation understand that God uses our local church's leaders as His instruments to lead not only our local church, but to oversee the church's missionary outreach, that we function accordingly.*