

“How Did We Get Here?”

(“...the Holy Spirit said...”)

Acts 13:1-3

July 5, 2012

INTRO:

Have you ever asked yourself: ***“How did we get here?”***

Depending on your context, it’s a powerful question.

- Negative example = country of Godlessness
*** 4th of July weekend
*** **VIDEO:** “reminder”

- Positive example = children of God

“...I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

- Jesus, the Christ
(Matthew 16:18)

T/S: Acts 1:8 tells us how Jesus would fulfill His promise...
(His Spirit would empower His people!)

BIG IDEA: We need to recognize & remember our roots & responsibilities!

CONTEXT:

Acts 12:25 = Barnabas and Saul Sent Off

25 When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark.

CONTENT:

1Now – Note the transitional purpose of this word...

In order to fully appreciate the “now” of v.1, we need to contrast what follows with both the immediate context (12:25) AND the previous reference to Antioch (when Barnabas was so overwhelmed with the moving of God that he needed to go find Saul/Paul to come back and help shepherd the people there...)

Acts 12:25 introduced the shift of focus but 13:1 actuates it...

Peter is no longer the primary focus in terms of church leadership. From here on out Paul will be the leading character and Ambassador

Acts 13-14 “now” will chronicle what the church affectionately refers to as Paul’s (and Barnabas’) famous “1st missionary journey”

NOTE: See the promised power and presence of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8 & Matthew 28:18-20) “BEFORE, DURING, & AFTER”

there were at Antioch, - this is a geographic reference that is here, in part, to point out and emphasize the early affects of Acts 1:8...

“Biblical scattering is like a spiritual sneeze... Everywhere committed Christians go, they spread their victorious virus... In other words, the Gospel of Jesus Christ spreads like the common cold – life on life, hand to hand, ultimately, heart to heart; ALL by His grace and for His glory – Amen!” - JDP

Again, the geographical reference is, in part, to remind us that this is the same “church” group we met in Acts 11... but, as we will see shortly, something has changed in a beautifully powerful way...

in the church that was there, - Greek layout is KEY here

See the literal, word for word Greek text:

“There were, now, in Antioch, in the BEING church...”

“The BEST church is always the BE-ing Church!” - JDP

1st John tells us that the “BE-ing church” is the only Church. - JDP

NOTE: In the same way that there can “BE” no Christian without the miraculous & grace-filled power of the Holy Spirit, so it is with “church.” If there is an authentic church ANYWHERE, the people are the proof of the Spirit’s power and presence! (see last week when Peter shows up at the prayer meeting...)

The textual reference shifts from geographical to spiritual and positional...

“in” speaks to the positional...

“church” defines the position as spiritual

NOTE: *“in... church... there”*

This phrase demonstrates (and defends) the biblical “church” model (if not mandate) for “unity without proximity.”

The singular Church is made up of multiple churches... We “BE” here, there, and everywhere.

“That which God has brought together, let no man separate!”

prophets and teachers: - see Ephesians 4...

Ephesians 4 describes the 5-fold gifts (gifted servant leaders) God gives the church:

ILLUSTRATION: 5 gifts parallel 5 hand digits...

- | | | | |
|----|-------------|---|-----------------------------|
| A. | Apostles | = | thumb |
| B. | Prophets | = | pointer finger |
| C. | Evangelists | = | far reaching middle finger |
| D. | Shepherds | = | wedding ring wearing finger |
| E. | Teachers | = | smallest, weakest finger |

NOTE: 2 of the 5 are both listed here...

It is important to understand all 5 offices...

ALL 5 gifts are essential for church health!

This verse begs the question: Why these 2 here?

VIDEO:

See Neil Cole's 2014 Verge presentation (14 min.)

(see diversity in leadership... **QUILT!**)

Barnabas

- Jew raised with gentiles (Cypress)
- An early giant of the faith & N.T. Church

and Simeon

who was called Niger,

- “Niger” means “black” consequently, theologians tell us that this man was most likely from Ethiopia or some other sub-Saharan part of Africa
- NOTE: his inner description is of eternal value, whereas his external description is merely here to show us the Lord’s love and design of diversity

and Lucius

of Cyrene,

- Remember what we learned in Acts 11... Cyrene is a north African country (where modern day Libya is)...
- Two additional notes are worth mentioning:
 - Lucius is a LONG way from home...
 - Lucius is probably from Arab descent...

and Manaen

who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch,

- See the amazing diversity growing...
- Manaen is from the culturally ELITE...
- Manaen (like Moses in Hebrews 11:24-26) chose to give it all up...
- We've got the following represented:
 - The Altruistic
 - The Africans
 - The Arabs
 - The Affluent
 - The in Paul... the Awesome:
 - Awesome miracle
 - Awesome missionary
 - Awesome model for us all

and Saul.

- The in Paul... the Awesome:
 - Awesome miracle
 - Awesome missionary
 - Awesome model for us all

2While they were ministering/worshipping to the Lord

*** There are two keys to this clause...

- “*While*” denotes active, engaged obedience
- “Worshipping/ministering” reveals hearts

and fasting,

- *** Again, see two facets to their fasting...
 - More active, engaged obedience
 - Humble, fervent posture on their part

the Holy Spirit said,

- *** Do you know and believe that the Holy Spirit speaks?
- *** Do you hear and obey what the Holy Spirit says?
- *** If you don't “hear Him,” how do you know if you are truly following Him?

“Set apart for Me

- *** See that the Spirit “selects” and supplies leaders
- *** God goes so far as to “set apart” His chosen...
- *** See that God has a very specific plan...
- *** See that God's plans often include our obedience

Barnabas and Saul

- *** These are two active co-pastors...
- *** What seemed outrageous in our context was just obvious, obedience to the early church
- *** Note the selfless and supportive attitude...

for the work

*** The Lord does not call people to come and “sit” but rather, to join in the mission

*** See Ephesians 2:8-9... then read v.10

to which I have called them.”

*** The power and promise of Acts 1:8 is linked to the love and living out of God’s work... not our own plans.

3Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

*** See the continued commitment to faithful obedience.

*** We again see a continued passion for fervent prayer and fasting.

*** The church is obeying God... they are simply doing what the Holy Spirit told them to do. This is not rocket science...

*** NOTE: there was no internal, self-supplied power in the hands being laid on the men. The symbol of laying on of hands demonstrates a trust in the Spirit’s promised work and blessing in/on those in focus.

4So,

being sent out

by the Holy Spirit...

“Knowing WHO sends you... reveals why you’ve been sent!”

“The biblical Sender... defines the biblically sent!.” - JDP

Let’s Pray!

Study & Research:

Verse 1. *The church that was at Antioch.* [Acts 2:20](#).

Certain prophets. [Acts 11:27](#).

And teachers. Teachers are several times mentioned in the New Testament as an order of ministers, [1 Corinthians 12:28,29](#), [Ephesians 4:11](#), [2 Peter 2:11](#). Their precise rank and duty are not known. It is probable that those here mentioned as prophets were the same persons as the teachers. They might discharge *both* offices, predicting future events, and instructing the people.

As Barnabas. Barnabas was a *preacher*, [Acts 4:35,36](#), [9:27](#), [11:22,26](#); and it is not improbable that the names "prophets and teachers" here simply designate the preachers of the gospel.

Simeon that was called Niger. Niger is a Latin name meaning black. Why the name was given is not known. Nothing more is known of him than is here mentioned.

Lucius of Cyrene. Cyrene was in Africa. [Matthew 27:32](#). He is afterwards mentioned as with the apostle Paul when he wrote the Epistle to the Romans, [Romans 16:21](#).

And Manaen. He is not elsewhere mentioned in the New Testament.

Which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch. Herod Antipas, not Herod Agrippa. Herod was *tetrarch* of Galilee, [Luke 3:1](#). The word here translated, "which had been brought up" -[συντροφος](#)-denotes one who is educated or nourished at the same time with another. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. He might have been connected with the royal family; and being nearly of the same age, was educated by the father of Herod Antipas with him. He was therefore a man of rank and education, and his conversion shows that the gospel was not confined entirely in its influence to the poor.

And Saul. Saul was an apostle; and yet he is here mentioned among the "prophets and teachers." Showing that these words denote ministers of the gospel in general, without reference to any particular order or rank.

(*) "Manean" "Herod's foster brother"

[Verse 2](#). *As they ministered to the Lord.* It is probable that this took place on some day set apart for fasting and prayer. The expression "ministered to the Lord" denotes, as they were engaged in prayer to the Lord, or as they were engaged in Divine service. The Syriac thus renders the passage.

The Holy Ghost said. Evidently by direct revelation.

Separate me. Set apart to me, or for my service. It does not mean to *ordain*, but simply to designate, or appoint to this specific work.

For the work whereunto I have called them. Not the apostolic office, for Saul was called to that by the express revelation of Jesus Christ, [Galatians 1:12](#), and Barnabas was not an apostle. The "work" to which they were now set apart was that of preaching the gospel in the regions round about Antioch. It was not any *permanent* office in the church, but was a temporary designation to a *missionary enterprise* in extending the gospel especially through Asia Minor and the adjacent regions. Accordingly, when, in the fulfillment of this appointment, they had travelled through Seleucia, Cyprus, Paphos, Pamphylia, Pisidia, etc., they returned to Antioch, having fulfilled the work to which they were separated. See [Acts 14:26,27](#).

Whereunto I have called them.

This proves that they received their commission to this work directly from God the Holy Spirit. It is possible that Paul and Barnabas had been influenced by the Spirit to engage in this work, but they were to be sent forth by the concurrence and designation of the church.

(* "Separate me" [Galatians 1:13](#)

(* "for the work" [1 Timothy 2:7](#)

(* "whereunto" "To which"

[Verse 3](#). *And when they had fasted.* They were *fasting* when they were commanded to set them apart. Yet this probably refers to an appointed day of prayer, with reference to this very purpose. The first formal mission to the Gentiles was an important event in the church; and they

engaged in this appointment with deep solemnity, and with humbling themselves before God.

And prayed. This enterprise was a new one. The gospel had been preached to the Jews, to Cornelius, and to the Gentiles at Antioch. But there had been no solemn, and public, and concerted plan of sending it to the Gentiles, or of appointing a mission to the heathen. It was a new event, and was full of danger and hardships. The primitive church felt the need of Divine direction and aid in the great work. Two missionaries were to be sent forth amongst strangers, to be exposed to perils by sea and land; and the commencement of the enterprise demanded prayer. The church humbled itself; and this primitive missionary society sought, as all others should do, the Divine blessing, to attend the labours of those employed in this work. The result showed that the prayer was heard.

And laid their hands on them. That is, those who are mentioned in [Acts 13:1](#). This was not to set them apart to the apostolic office. Saul was chosen by Christ himself, and there is no evidence that any of the apostles were ordained by the imposition of hands. [Acts 1:26](#); [Matthew 10:1](#); [Luke 6:12-16](#). And Barnabas was not an apostle in the original and peculiar sense of the word. Nor is it meant that this was an *ordination* to the *ministry*, to the office of preaching the gospel. For both had been engaged in this before. Saul received his commission directly from the Saviour, and began at once to preach, [Acts 9:20](#), [Galatians 1:11-17](#). Barnabas had preached at Antioch, and was evidently recognized as a preacher by the apostles, [Acts 9:27](#), [11:22,23](#). It follows, therefore, that this was not an *ordination* in the doctrinal sense of this term, either Episcopal or Presbyterian, but was a designation to a particular work—a work of vast importance; strictly a *missionary appointment* by the church, under the authority of the Holy Ghost. The act of laying hands on any person was practised, not only in ordination, but in conferring a favour; and in setting apart for any purpose. See [Leviticus 3:2,8,13](#), [4:4](#),

[Leviticus 4:29](#), [16:21](#), [Numbers 8:12](#), [Mark 5:23](#), [16:18](#), [Matthew 21:46](#). It means, in this case, that they appointed *them* to a particular field of labour, and by laying hands on them they implored the blessing of God to attend them.

They sent them away. The church by its teachers sent them forth under the direction of the Holy Ghost. All missionaries are thus sent by the church; and the church should not forget its ambassadors in their great and perilous work.

Verse 4. *Being sent forth by the Holy Ghost.* Having been called to this work by the Holy Spirit, and being under his direction.

Barnes' Notes on the New Testament.

The Solemn Ordination of Barnabas and Saul, of Spreading the Gospel Among the Nations

[13:1-3](#)

We have here a divine warrant and commission to Barnabas and Saul to go and preach the gospel among the Gentiles, and their ordination to that service by the imposition of hands, with fasting and prayer.

I. Here is an account of the present state of the church at Antioch, which was planted, ch. [11:20](#).

1. How well furnished it was with good ministers; there were there certain prophets and teachers ([v. 1](#)), men that were eminent for gifts, graces, and usefulness. Christ, when he ascended on high, gave some prophets and some teachers ([Ephesians 4:11](#)); these were both. Agabus seems to have been a prophet and not a teacher, and many were teachers who were not prophets; but those here mentioned were at times divinely inspired, and had instructions immediately from heaven upon special occasions, which gave them the title of prophets; and withal they were stated teachers of the church in their religious assemblies, expounded the scriptures, and opened the doctrine of Christ with suitable applications. These were the prophets, and scribes, or teachers, which Christ promised to send ([Matthew 23:34](#)), such as were every way qualified for the service of the Christian church. Antioch was a great city, and the Christians there were many, so that they could not all meet in one place; it was therefore requisite they should have many teachers, to preside in their respective assemblies, and to deliver God's mind to them. Barnabas is first named, probably because he was the eldest, and Saul last, probably because he was the youngest; but afterwards the last became first, and Saul more eminent in the church. Three others are mentioned.

(1.) Simeon, or Simon, who for distinction-sake was called Niger, Simon the Black, from the color of his hair; like him that with us was surnamed the Black Prince.

(2.) Lucius of Cyrene, who some think (and Dr. Lightfoot inclines to it) was the same with this Luke that wrote the Acts, originally a Cyrenian, and educated in the Cyrenian college or synagogue at Jerusalem, and there first receiving the gospel.

(3.) Manaen, a person of some quality, as it should seem, for he was brought up with Herod the tetrarch, either nursed of the same milk, or bred at the same school, or pupil to the same tutor, or rather one that was his constant colleague and companion-that in every part of his education was his comrade and intimate, which gave him a fair prospect of preferment at court, and yet for Christ's sake he quitted all the hopes of it; like Moses, who, when

he had come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Had he joined in with Herod, with whom he was brought up, he might have had Blastus's place, and have been his chamberlain; but it is better to be fellow-sufferer with a saint than fellow-persecutor with a tetrarch.

2. How well employed they were ([v. 2](#)): They ministered to the Lord, and fasted. Observe,

(1.) Diligent faithful teachers do truly minister unto the Lord. Those that instruct Christians serve Christ; they really do him honour, and carry on the interest of his kingdom. Those that minister to the church in praying and preaching (both which are included here), minister unto the Lord, for they are the church's servants for Christ's sake; to him they must have an eye in their ministrations, and from him they shall have their recompence.

(2.) Ministering to the Lord, in one way or other, ought to be the stated business of churches and their teachers; to this work time ought to be set apart, nay, it is set apart, and in this work we ought to spend some part of every day. What have we to do as Christians and ministers but to serve the Lord Christ? [Colossians 3:24](#); [Romans 14:18](#).

(3.) Religious fasting is of use in our ministering to the Lord, both as a sign of our humiliation and a means of our mortification. Though it was not so much practised by the disciples of Christ, while the bridegroom was with them, as it was by the disciples of John and of the Pharisees; yet, after the bridegroom was taken away, they abounded in it, as those that had well learned to deny themselves and to endure hardness.

II. The orders given by the Holy Ghost for the setting apart of Barnabas and Saul, while they were engaged in public exercises, the ministers of the several congregations in the city joining in one solemn fast or day of prayer: The Holy Ghost said, either by a voice from heaven, or by a strong impulse on the minds of those of them that were prophets, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. He does not specify the work, but refers to a former call of which

they themselves knew the meaning, whether others did or no: as for Saul, he was particularly told that he must bear Christ's name to the Gentiles (ch. [9:15](#)), that he must be sent to the Gentiles (ch. [22:21](#)); the matter was settled between them at Jerusalem before this, that as Peter, James, and John laid out themselves among those of the circumcision, so Paul and Barnabas should go to the heathen, [Galatians 2:7-9](#). Barnabas, it is likely, knew himself designed for this service as well as Paul. Yet they would not thrust themselves into this harvest, though it appeared plenteous, till they received their orders from the Lord of the harvest: Thrust in thy sickle for the harvest is ripe, [Revelation 14:15](#). The orders were, Separate me Barnabas and Saul. Observe here,

1. Christ by his Spirit has the nomination of his ministers; for it is by the Spirit of Christ that they are qualified in some measure for his services, inclined to it, and taken off from other cares inconsistent with it. There are some whom the Holy Ghost has separated for the service of Christ, has distinguished from others as men that are offered and that willingly offer themselves to the temple service; and concerning them directions are given to those who are competent judges of the sufficiency of the abilities and the sincerity of the inclination: Separate them.

2. Christ's ministers are separated to him and to the Holy Ghost: Separate them to me; they are to be employed in Christ's work and under the Spirit's guidance, to the glory of God the Father.

3. All that are separated to Christ as his ministers are separated to work; Christ keeps no servants to be idle. If any man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work; that is what he is separated to, to labour in the word and doctrine. They are separated to take pains, not to take state.

4. The work of Christ's ministers, to which they are to be separated, is work that is already settled, and that which all Christ's ministers hitherto have been called to, and which they themselves have first been, by an external call, directed to and have chosen.

III. Their ordination, pursuant to these orders: not to the ministry in general (Barnabas and Saul had both of them been ministers long before this), but to a particular service in the ministry, which had something peculiar in it, and which required a fresh commission, which commission God saw fit at this time to transmit by the hands of these prophets and teachers, for the giving of this direction to the church, that teachers should ordain teachers (for prophets we are not now any longer to expect), and that those who have the dispensing of the oracles of Christ committed to them should, for the benefit of posterity, commit the same to faithful men, who shall be able also to teach others, [2 Timothy 2:2](#). So here, Simeon, and Lucius, and Manaen, faithful teachers at this time in the church of Antioch, when they had fasted and prayed, laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul, and sent them away ([v. 3](#)), according to the directions received. Observe,

1. They prayed for them. When good men are going forth about good work, they ought to be solemnly and particularly prayed for, especially by their brethren that are their fellow-labourers and fellow-soldiers.

2. They joined fasting with their prayers, as they did in their other ministrations, [v. 3](#). Christ has taught us this by his abstaining from sleep (a night-fast, if I may so call it) the night before he sent forth his apostles, that he might spend it in prayer.

3. They laid their hands on them. Hereby,

- (1.) They gave them their manumission, dismissal, or discharge from the present service they were engaged in, in the church of Antioch, acknowledging that they went off not only fairly and with consent, but honourably and with a good report.

- (2.) They implored a blessing upon them in their present undertaking, begged that God would be with them, and give them success; and, in order to this, that they might be filled with the Holy Ghost in their work. This very thing is explained [ch. 14:26](#), where it is said, concerning Paul and Barnabas, that from Antioch they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. As it was an instance of the humility of

Barnabas and Saul that they submitted to the imposition of the hands of those that were their equals, or rather their inferiors; so it was of the good disposition of the other teachers that they did not envy Barnabas and Saul the honour to which they were preferred, but cheerfully committed it to them, with hearty prayers for them; and they sent them away with all expedition, out of a concern for those countries where they were to break up fallow ground.

- Matthew Henry's Commentary

VIDEO:

See Neil Cole's 2013 Verge Presentation (12 min.)