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**A0903 – January 18, 2009 – Acts 13:4-12 – The Satanic Attack of Bar-Jesus**

**Acts 13:4-12** Αὐτοὶ μὲν οὖν ἐκπεμφθέντες ὑπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος κατήλθον εἰς Σελεύκειαν, ἐκεῖθεν τε ἀπέπλευσαν εἰς Κύπρον <sup>5</sup>καὶ γενόμενοι ἐν Σαλαμίῃ κατήγγελλον τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς τῶν Ἰουδαίων. εἶχον δὲ καὶ Ἰωάννην ὑπηρέτην. <sup>6</sup>Διελθόντες δὲ ὅλην τὴν νῆσον ἄχρι Πάφου εὗρον ἄνδρα τινὰ μάγον ψευδοπροφήτην Ἰουδαῖον ᾧ ὄνομα Βαριησοῦ <sup>7</sup>ὃς ἦν οὖν τῷ ἀνθυπάτῳ Σεργίῳ Παύλῳ, ἀνδρὶ συνετῷ. οὗτος προσκαλεσάμενος Βαρναβᾶν καὶ Σαῦλον ἐπεζήτησεν ἀκοῦσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ. <sup>8</sup>ἀνθίστατο δὲ αὐτοῖς Ἐλύμας ὁ μάγος, οὕτως γὰρ μεθερμηνεύεται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, ζητῶν διαστρέψαι τὸν ἀνθύπατον ἀπὸ τῆς πίστεως. <sup>9</sup>Σαῦλος δέ, ὁ καὶ Παῦλος, πλησθεὶς πνεύματος ἁγίου ἀτενίσας εἰς αὐτὸν <sup>10</sup>εἶπεν· ᾧ πλήρης παντὸς δόλου καὶ πάσης ῥαδιουργίας, υἱὲ διαβόλου, ἐχθρὲ πάσης δικαιοσύνης, οὐ παύσῃ διαστρέφων τὰς ὁδοὺς [τοῦ] κυρίου τὰς εὐθείας; <sup>11</sup>καὶ νῦν ἰδοὺ χεὶρ κυρίου ἐπὶ σὲ καὶ ἔσῃ τυφλὸς μὴ βλέπων τὸν ἥλιον ἄχρι καιροῦ. παραχρῆμά τε ἔπεσεν ἐπ’ αὐτὸν ἀχλὺς καὶ σκότος καὶ περιάγων ἐζήτηται χειραγωγούς. <sup>12</sup>τότε ἰδὼν ὁ ἀνθύπατος τὸ γεγονός ἐπίστευσεν ἐκπλησσομένος ἐπὶ τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ κυρίου. (NA27)

**Acts 13:4-12** So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus. <sup>5</sup>When they reached Salamis, they *began* to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper. <sup>6</sup>When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus, <sup>7</sup>who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. <sup>8</sup>But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them,

seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. <sup>9</sup>But Saul, who was also *known as* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, <sup>10</sup>and said, “You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? <sup>11</sup>“Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time.” And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand. <sup>12</sup>Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord. (NASB95)

We’re trying to emphasize the missions tactics of the early church, tactics which were ultimately decided upon by God the Holy Spirit. So we want review the tactics we’ve seen so far. Since His strategy comes out of His unlimited resources it might be wise to base our strategy on His? The first tactic He uses in the overall strategy is the urban first approach. They did not start out in the rural areas. They went to the metropolis’ of the Roman Empire. Take Antioch of Syria, Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire. The population was about 750,000 people. If you want to reach the most people you start where the most people are. And the apostles understood they had limited lifespan and so they started with the major population centers. Not only are the major cities the most heavily populated, but they are also the centers of education, the university campus, the library; this is where all the major ideas are being discussed and if you want your ideas being discussed among the world players you do not go to some town of 500 people, you go to the great intellectual centers, and that’s the university campus. So they used an urban approach. Eventually the gospel would trickle down into the surrounding countryside.

The second tactic we observe is the training of these men. Remember the quality of the five men in v 5. And the two chosen by the Spirit of God, Barnabas and Saul, had more Bible doctrine, had more years of training and had advanced further in the word of God than any of the men on that list. Take Saul; a son of a Pharisee, he had moved up to Jerusalem to train to be a rabbi under Rabban Gamaliel, one of the top seven minds ever produced by the Jewish people, Saul’s personal instructor. Then Saul got another teacher after his conversion on the Damascus road, this one greater than Gamaliel, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And He and Saul went at it for three years

out in the Syrian Desert, just those two head to head. And then he went up in the Cilician and Syrian region and taught the word of God for about 10 years. That's the quality of man we're talking about. Saul was an absolute theological genius, probably never rivaled by any individual the church has produced since. These two men we could say are the two most valuable assets, humanly speaking, to the Church at Antioch. Then one day the Holy Spirit moves them out, moved out the well-trained men into new regions, that's a part of the missions tactics of the Holy Spirit..

The third tactic we want to recall is the natural background and resources of the missionaries. What resources we ask? Well for one Barnabas, we know was wealthy. He'd sold a large plot of land and given all the proceeds to the church treasury back in Acts 4, so he's a man of means and if you're going to go on a missionary expedition you sort of need funding to do that. The early church did not support its missionaries. That may startle some of you but the church at Philippi was the first to provide funding for its missionaries. The earliest missionaries had to support themselves. And who better than Barnabas to support the first missionary expedition? And the second resource Barnabas had was contacts, contacts on the island of Cyprus. Where is the very first place they go on the missionary journey? Cyprus. And here's a man from the island of Cyprus and so when they arrive he already knows the people, he already knows the language, he already knows the culture and he already has contacts, people who he knows and who are known by him. So who is the very best person to go to Cyprus? When we turn to Saul what do we find? Where is he from? He's from Tarsus Asia Minor. Now what region do these two visit after the island of Cyprus? They go into Asia Minor, the region that was the stomping grounds of Saul since he was a young boy. He knows the people and he knows the ideas that float around that region of the Roman Empire. Does that appear to you a random strategy or a divinely chosen strategy?

The fourth tactic was they came in with an evangelistic thrust and then they followed it up with teaching. Evangelism then teaching. The first wave of attack was simply to get conversions. But they didn't leave them on the doorstep after they converted. They quickly followed up with a second wave of attack and that's the training. It's very easy to compute the number of hours that the first Christians were taught. This is astounding. Some of you have heard in the Book of Acts how the first century Christians turned the world

upside down; you wonder, “Oh, they must have more power than we had.” No they didn’t, the Holy Spirit is the same today, yesterday and forever. Well, they must have had more education than we have. No, they had less education than we have. Well then they must have had more believers than we have. No, they had less believers than we have. As of last week 37% of Americans claimed to be born again. Now if that is the case then that is a serious blight on Christianity. How is it that far less than 5% of Roman Christians had a far greater impact than 37% of American Christians? Something is obviously different. It can’t be the Holy Spirit, it can’t be the education, it can’t be the number of believers. What’s different? The one that was different was their system of teaching. In the ancient world Paul’s first year he would teach approximately 1,500 hours to new Christians; you can estimate that by the number of hours he teaches per day in Ephesus, which was about 5 hours, multiply it by six days a week, and multiply that by 52 weeks a year and you come out to about 1,500 hours of instruction. That’s how much instruction a new convert to the faith was given. Now even in the best Bible teaching churches today, figuring an average of, say, three hours a week, it would take ten years for us to cover the amount of information the apostle Paul did in just one. Now is it any wonder why those people turned the world upside down? And so hour after hour after hour they heard the word of God and that’s how society changed.

The fifth tactic to review has to do with the Jew first and that’s broached in verse 5 so we’ll leave it for then. Now, let’s finish vv 1-3 and then we’ll move on to vv 4-12. When you look at vv 1-3 you have five men. One thing these men all had in common was training. They weren’t born trained, they disciplined themselves to study the Scriptures. All of them had once been baby believers and had risen through the rank and file of the church to show themselves approved unto God, workmen who needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. And eventually they became the leaders at Antioch. There are no such things as born leaders. Training produces leaders, not birth. But the men are all very diverse in background. Barnabas was a wealthy Jew, Lucius was a black Gentile, Manaen came out of elite Roman society, Saul was the first persecutor of the church. And the point of this mixture is that God’s grace had worked in these men’s lives such that their unity in Christ overshadowed the lesser distinctions. And it’s unfortunate today that the Church is split over the same areas this early church was unified. And out of these gifted men God today sends out Barnabas and Saul.

Verses 2 and 3 quickly, While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, now notice they were already doing something in the Christian life when the Holy Spirit stepped in to direct. Some of you are standing still saying, “I’m just waiting on you Lord.” These men didn’t stand still, they had obligations in the church and they were fulfilling them and that’s when the Spirit came in to direct. If you’re just waiting nothings going to happen. We already have obligations in the word of God, get to it. Now, two things they were doing here, first they were ministering to the Lord, which means serving others, serving others is how we serve the Lord. It’s an indirect procedure. Second, they were fasting. Now, they probably didn’t know all the physiological effects of fasting but what happens physiologically when we eat is the blood rushes to the digestive tract. Away from where? The brain. You can’t focus intently very long when you’ve eaten because all the nutrients needed are down in your stomach. So if you have trouble concentrating put your fork down, get a cup of water and get to work. These men fasted and it enabled them to concentrate, concentrate, concentrate for hours on end. Sometimes spiritual things are so important that you just skip eating and that seems to be the case here. Even though I never thought of the mechanics of fasting before I have used it just for the sake of thinking through the spiritual material, it can be a terrific help and I find by 5 o’clock I never missed lunch. Man does not live on bread alone.

So in the midst of these two things, while they’re moving in the Christian life, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Now, the Holy Spirit did this in a verbal way, evidently through one of the three prophets, Barnabas, Simeon or Lucius, we’re not told but God speaks to the prophets. This is divine guidance and while this verbal revelation occurred in the early church you can’t make this the norm for all time, he guides in different ways today so don’t expect this in your own life. This, incidentally, is a very definite proof of the personality of the Holy Spirit. Every once in a while you run into people who believe the Father and the Son are persons but the Holy Spirit, “Oh, he’s just a force or something, an influence in your life.” “Well, excuse me, but could you please tell me when an influence said words like this?” The Holy Spirit is not just a force, He’s a person who speaks and who reveals the word of God.<sup>i</sup>

And so here we have His personal, verbal selection of the first two missionaries, Barnabas and Saul. He said it just like that, it was not an impression, it was not a hallucination. Now Barnabas is a prophet as we learned last week, Saul is a teacher, He selected one man from each group listed in verse 1. Now observe, did these two people select themselves? Did they do the modern song and dance, "I want to go to Argentina and be a missionary?" No, these men were just carrying out their ministry, exercising their spiritual gifts and the Holy Spirit yanked them out. He took the greatest resources from Antioch and sent them somewhere else. This may sound strange to you that He would take the two most advanced believers at Antioch. Why do you think He did that? Why do you think that strategy was chosen by God the Spirit? Because these men had the highest level of training and therefore were the most useful and prepared for the tasks to come. Not only that but he's using their natural background and resources to go into Cyprus and Asia Minor. So, being well-trained might not be important to you but it's important to God the Holy Spirit. When He wants to get some work done He does not send out some new believer who knows nothing about the word of God. He sends out mature believers, men who've spent years and years faithfully training in the word of God. Training, training, training, then they are hand picked for this mission trip.

Alright, let's move to verse 3, Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, that is the church, the church went through this procedure, they laid hands on them, that was a formal commissioning, they didn't pour oil all over their heads, this was a dry ceremony where they authorized them to be represent the Church of Antioch. Barnabas and Saul were an extension of the ministry of that local church. This was not a para-church organization. And with that said a note about para-church missions' agencies. Missions is to be an extension of the local church, not an independent organization. I have sympathies for para-church because the history of missions in local churches is a nightmare. Some of the first modern missionaries like William Carey and later Hudson Taylor were completely rejected by their churches. So they formed their own organizations, the problem there was they organized them after secular companies, there were even annual dues, a total rejection of the grace principle of giving. Today some churches have come around and seen the need to seal the gap between church and para-church. Just last week I was discussing this very problem with a man involved in para-church ministry. He told me how important the

local church is but at the same time they're so busy with the para-church that it's very hard to find the time to get involved at the local church. These people are struggling with this. We don't have time to go into all the drawbacks of the para-church, we've got a whole series on missions if you want. The only problem we'll mention is this: when a missions agency goes out and through evangelism and teaching establishes a local church, what other local church is that church connected to? They're not, they're connected to an organization. And that's problematic because the church is the "house of God" and "the pillar and ground of truth." If on the other hand the missionaries were connected were sent out by their home church then the new church is connected to their home church. And that's exactly what Paul and Barnabas did. Every church Paul and Barnabas established was anchored back to Antioch and Antioch was anchored back to where? Jerusalem. There are close ties. Today we don't have any ties. And it's a tragedy, the church is split into a 1,000 different groups, and it's just a big mess.

Now let's move into vv 4-12, the first missionary expedition. Let's read to get the flow.

**So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus. <sup>5</sup>When they reached Salamis, they *began* to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper. <sup>6</sup>When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus, <sup>7</sup>who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. <sup>8</sup>But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. <sup>9</sup>But Saul, who was also *known as* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, <sup>10</sup>and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? <sup>11</sup>"Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time." And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand. <sup>12</sup>Then the proconsul**

**believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.**

So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, yes being sent out by the Church at Antioch but primarily sent by the Holy Spirit to fulfill His purposes. Missions work is very difficult. It is not an easy life. The missionary is going to have to face difficult circumstances, foreign cultures, and dangerous circumstances, it's not just fun and games. It's the front lines of battle between the forces of darkness and the forces of light, and today we get a glimpse of the front line action between God the Holy Spirit and Satan.

So they went down to Seleucia which was about a fifteen mile hike from Antioch and from there they sailed to Cyprus, which is this island in the NE corner of the Mediterranean. It's the third largest island in the Mediterranean. Barnabas was from there, he knew the island, the people and the culture, it's the perfect place to start. Further, when Stephen was murdered in Acts 7 Saul began his campaign of persecution and the Hellenistic Jews were forced out of Jerusalem. Where did many of them go? Cyprus. So there may already be some Christians on the island. Well, the first city they go to in v 5 is a place called Salamis. Now why did they go to Salamis? What's in Salamis that makes this an attractive starting point? Verse 5 gives the answer. When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; Salamis evidently had a large Jewish population, so large that multiple synagogues were needed to accommodate the practitioners of Judaism. And indeed profane history tells us that Salamis was the center of Judaism on the island of Cyprus. So, this is our fifth point in the missions methodology. Our first point was it was urban, second, trained believers, third, God the Spirit used natural background and resources and fourth, they went in with an evangelistic thrust followed up by teaching, the fifth is that they sought out the Jew first. Now, this is the doctrinal principle of Rom 1:16, "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Both clauses are governed by the present tense verb *is*. In other words the gospel *is* the power of God unto salvation and the gospel *is* to the Jew first. If you try to say the gospel was to the Jew first until Acts 28 at which point you have a shift in evangelistic procedure and you're no longer required to take the gospel to the Jew first then you have a problem. Because now you're saying the gospel *was* to the Jew first, but once you've



said that you also have to say that the gospel *was* the power of God unto salvation. They are both controlled by the same verb. Maybe you object, "But I've got a special leading of the Spirit and that leading is not to the Jewish people." Well what do you do about Paul, Paul of all people was the apostle to the Gentiles. He was commissioned explicitly to go to the Gentiles. Yet every city he enters he goes to the Jew first and when the Jews reject then he goes to the Gentiles. What does this teach us? That regardless of individual calling the doctrinal principle of Rom 1:16 takes precedence. In other words, the parameters of the individual calling are defined by the doctrinal principle of Rom 1:16. Paul always followed this practice; every time he visited a new city he went to the synagogue and gave the Jews the gospel, the rest of this chapter is a sermon given at a synagogue. If they rejected the gospel he would go to the Gentiles of that city. Then when he left that town and went to a new one, once again he would seek out the Jews at the synagogue. If there was no synagogue he went down to the river, the water source for the city because that was the designated place Jews without a synagogue would meet on Sabbath, and then he would follow the same procedure. He did this in every city in the Book of Acts because of the doctrinal principle of Rom 1:16. So on Cyprus he and Barnabas began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And the words began to proclaim are an imperfect, they translate it as an ingressive imperfect, I take it as a continuous imperfect which means this went on for some time, they went in and proclaimed the gospel in each of these synagogues Sabbath after Sabbath after Sabbath. Now, what are the advantages of going to the Jew first? And why has the church neglected this?

Now think back to the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2. Hundreds of thousands of Jews had assembled in Jerusalem? Where did they all come from? If they came to Jerusalem they were not from Jerusalem. Where were they from? Cities of the Roman Empire. Now, if you were called by God to go out and evangelize country X, Y, Z, in the middle of Timbuktu, what would you face as a problem, immediately. You might know a lot of Bible doctrine, you might have great Christian maturity but you'd still have a major stumbling block. First of all, you don't know their language, you don't know their customs, there are certain things you ought to do, certain things you ought not to do, or you're going to just foul up the image of Christianity. So how are you going to do it? How are you going to cross over from your culture to theirs? There's no way you can do it without very extensive preparation, and so today

missionaries spend sometimes years preparing to cross cultural barriers, and even then it's very difficult.

So Barnabas and Saul, knowing this difficulty, what did they do? They made use of the Jewish population out in the Roman Empire. Not only are these people Jews and they know Hebrew, they know the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, they know all these things, so Barnabas and Saul have a common ground with them in the area of communication. But not only are they Jews, they're Cyprians, they're vehicles of communication to the people of that island. They know Cyprus like the back of their hand; they know the customs of the land, they know the language of the people, and so now Barnabas and Saul are forming the bridge to communicate the gospel into this foreign culture. And he does it by means of the Jewish links to those places and thus every town you see the Book of Acts the first place he hits is the local Jewish synagogue.

Now this is a system of very rapid evangelism. By the way, I know of very few evangelistic missions today that follow this procedure, but it was the procedure in the early church and, AND, it will be the procedure in the future tribulation. There will be 144,000 Jewish evangelists and in the tribulation they are going to make use of the same missionary dynamic that Paul made use of; again in those days, those horrible days just before the return of Christ, when the world is in geophysical upheaval, economic, politic and religious upheaval, the world will be completely evangelized, everyone will have the opportunity to hear the gospel on multiple occasions. You say, "Well look, it's taken us 1900 years to evangelize the world once, how's it going to be done in a seven year period?" It's very simple; they're going to go back to the missionary strategy of Paul and they're going from Jewish ghetto to Jewish ghetto to Jewish ghetto and then from there out into the countryside, always to the Jew first, and then the local Jews who are already a part of that culture can evangelize that culture.

They crossed from Antioch to the eastern side of the island at the major metropolitan area of Salamis. In verse 6 they traveled to Paphos which is the major metropolitan area on the west side of the island; from there they're going to cross up into Asia Minor. Notice they hit the major areas, the port cities; they don't spend time in between, they haven't got time to do that; the Christians they leave behind can do that. Then the little cryptic remark at

the end of verse 5 is to prepare us for something that is coming up, and they also had John as their helper, that's John Mark that was with them, not John the apostle, John Mark is the author of the second Gospel.

Verse 6, When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus, he's the main character, <sup>7</sup>who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, he's the secondary character. Paulus is one of the guys who the liberals about a 150 years ago would always pull out as totally unaccounted for in the pages of secular history, the guy never existed, therefore Luke is a worthless historian, we can't find any evidence of Sergius Paulus on Cyprus.

But in the 1970's a man named William Ramsay, and those of you who are interested in the life of Paul might be interested to get his book, *St Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* noted by the famed Book of Acts scholar, F.F. Bruce as one of the greatest works ever written on the apostle Paul. Dr Ramsay was a scholar who worked for years behind closed doors and finally he got the itch to go into the field and see these things firsthand. So he worked the Mediterranean world as a field archaeologist and discovered two inscriptions of Sergius Paulus, one in northern Cyprus, later a third was found, possibly related to this family. He reports, "A Greek inscription of Soloi\*on the north coast of Cyprus is dated "in the proconsulship of Paulus," who probably is the same governor that played a part in the strange and interesting scene now to be described."<sup>ii</sup>



So much to the chagrin of the liberals, the word of God is always confirmed by the archaeological evidence, it cannot be otherwise for we serve a God of truth and His servant Luke was an excellent historian. And now we know of

Sergius from other sources as well, he was a real historic Roman ruler. He was a member of the governmental establishment; it says here he was a man of intelligence and that means he was able to make fine distinctions in philosophical thought, the ability to distinguish slight nuances of apparent insignificance to the average Joe. This man was a thinker and as a thinker he surrounded himself with an entourage of thinkers, men of different backgrounds with different interests and talents who were leaders in their fields and who could keep him up to date on the latest ideas. And one of the men he had chosen for his elite entourage was the Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus, which means “son of Jesus” but who Paul says in verse 10 was not at all a son of Jesus at all but a “son of the devil,” a play on words. So we’re going to have a conflict here between one of Satan’s foot soldiers, Bar Jesus, and one of God’s foot soldiers, the apostle Paul.

So let’s look at Satan’s man of the hour. Bar-Jesus is said to be a magician and that means he practiced secret arts. He would be something today like the modern scientist as well as a modern fortune-teller. These people were able to do things that astonished people, whether they really did them or they appeared to do them is a matter of controversy. But from the text I imagine if you’d met Bar-Jesus he would have been able to do marvelous things that would be difficult to explain other than the supernatural and indeed if we take seriously verse 10 then they were supernatural and so what we have here is a forerunner of the false prophet. There are false Christ’s and false prophets, this man is of the latter and were he here today he would amaze you. And one such character who was amazed by him was Sergius Paulus. He was so impressed with his abilities he asked him to be on his personal staff. And as a member of his staff Bar Jesus benefitted with notoriety in the community, he satisfied his own vanity as well as worser passions.

Now the Christian position insists that the princes and powers of darkness rule this world. It insists that the powers of darkness have tremendous influence over government officials. Take the Book of Daniel chapter 10, you have a strange angelic conflict, there’s a certain angel sent by God to give a message to Daniel, but when he gets in the airspace above Daniel he gets held up by a demon he calls “the prince of Persia.” And he gets held up for 21 days, he can’t get through to Daniel because a whole pack of demons control that airspace and so Michael has to come and help him break through the line of defenses. I imagine if you take every nation on the continent, go over

to the borders and just extend an imaginary border up into space you'd see there are demonic beings holding sway over those territories. And the leaders of those territories are their number one targets because if they can control them then you can control the people under them. It's that simple, it's a very simple strategy. It's a strategy that's operational in the good ole' US of A, don't be fooled into thinking your president because he names the name Jesus is a great Christian. This man had Jesus in his name! So Satan is always targeting the higher-ups and the way he does this is bring in some mysterious right hand man who advises the leader. And so it was in Paul's day, Satan had positioned in this government a man right up close to Sergius Paulus, he was an important advisor who influenced Roman policy, very heavily, with satanic ideas..

But nevertheless, This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. Apparently the word had gotten around and Paulus, who was interested in every new idea that came down the pike asked the source of the idea for a personal hearing. Can you imagine this happening today? A high level government official asking to have one of the stalwarts of the faith come in and explain to him the Christian worldview? Marvelous situation.

But then it says in verse 8 they had a problem; Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. Constantly opposing them, and from what Paul says in verse 10 we can infer certain tactics that this man used. First of all the man, like most of these men, he was a coward, he would never openly debate Paul and Barnabas, face to face, man to man. He was a chicken who always used to wait until after Paul left, then very deceitfully he'd crawl in and say Mr. Paulus, "You really don't want to go with these Barnabas/Paul characters because you know, after all, they say that God is sovereign over history; now we can't have that, it would mean that we're not in charge, don't you want to be in charge, don't you want to have control over your kingdom Mr Paulus so that you can have the final say in history?"

So every time Paul and Barnabas would go out to teach this man would go to un-teach, but he was always sneaky and deceitful, he'd never come out into the open and carry on a rational discussion. And this is why we have in the last part of verse 8 the statement, seeking to turn the proconsul away from

the faith. The faith is referring to the Christian worldview. This was not some quick pitch, “Will you accept Jesus, He’ll give you a wonderful life, Mr Paulus.” As an intelligent man Sergius Paulus knew all the big philosophical questions. What is Being? How do I know? How should I then live? Those are the three biggies. And being an epistemologically self-conscious individual who knew the answers given by pagan philosophy, Paul, what’s so different about the Christian position? On the question of what is being? Do you too Paul hold that being is one and continuous, do you hold to the ancient Continuity of Being or do you hold that being is two and discontinuous, the Creator-creature distinction. On the question of How do I know? How do I know what I know is true? Do you too start with reason as autonomous and self-sufficient or do you start with revelation? And third Paul, how should I then live? What are morals, ethics and law? Does man generate these from his finite resources or does God generate these from His infinite resources? And the answer a logically follows from question two. If we make the rules then there’s no ultimate responsibility, if God makes the rules then we live under Him and are responsible to Him.

Bar-Jesus and the rest of his entourage had fed him the Satanic philosophy and Paul gave him the Divine philosophy. And there’s not a shade of agreement between these positions. They are antithetical at every point.

But Saul, in verse 9, who is now called Paul. Some people think that Saul was his non-Christian name and Paul was his Christian name. Not so. Saul was his Hebrew name and Paul was his Roman name. Paul adapted himself. He said later, “to the Jews I made myself as a Jew that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law as under the law (though not myself under the law); to them that are without the law as without the law; I am become all things to all men; and I do all for the Gospel’s sake.” So Paul stands before a Roman official as a Roman. It’s simply adapting to something the Christian can adapt to. Paul was shrewd and when he saw a benefit by doing a Jewish thing he does that, but here the benefit is as a Roman.

<sup>9</sup>But Saul, who was also *known as* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, the fixing his gaze on him is fixing his gaze on his eyes, he’s looking right into his eyeballs and the reason is apparently because this man is demonic. It is true that demonically afflicted people can often be identified by their eyes and particularly by the pupil of the eye. The eye is the doorway

to the soul and we don't want to get too spooky here but all the nerve endings are on the back of the eye and the pupil is the doorway to that and since demons want to possess beings that have a central nervous system then when they do you can often see it in the eyes of the person. So the eyes of this man are the place and Paul fixes his eyes on them, and then he does something many Christians dislike, he pronounces an imprecatory curse upon him. This is a no-no in Christian circles, but it's a yes-yes in the Scriptures.

What this is in verse 10 is the imprecatory curse. Do you know what that means? It means you are really damning someone. Now it isn't saying just "damn you." This means "damn you in the name of Christ." That is an imprecatory curse and it was a literal cursing of anyone who was seriously opposed to the text of Scripture. Anyone who manipulated and twisted the content of Scripture was asking for damnation. To show you this and show you that the Bible itself is protected by an imprecatory curse, turn to the Book of Deuteronomy, chapter 4. Verse 2, this to the nation Israel, "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. <sup>3</sup>"Your eyes have seen what the LORD has done in the case of Baal-peor, for all the men who followed Baal-peor, the LORD your God has destroyed them from among you." What had their eyes seen in the case of Baal-peor. The story is in Numbers chapter 25. The Moabites had a little plan to work one over on the Israelites and the plan was to send their women out in the streets practically naked, this is the sex appeal chapter in the Bible. And the women used sex appeal to seduce the Jewish men. And the men of course were ga-ga-goo-goo, putty in the women's hands and they were all off worshipping idols so they could get some sex. The result of that little escapade was the Lord said, take them out in the main square and have them all executed. I want it done right out in broad daylight so men, women and children can see what happens when you turn someone away from the truth." It was pretty serious to God. So therefore, Deut 4 is issuing an imprecatory curse on anyone who would turn someone away from the truth. God loves you and He loves me and He loves the entire human race to the point that He pronounces His curse on anyone that obstructs a person's access to His grace. And access comes through the word of God, so anybody that tampers with the word of God is to be cursed because he's an obstruction to God's love and grace.

Now this curse that we see in Acts 13, it's the same kind of thing. Verse 8 has prepared us for this kind of a curse because this man has deliberately obstructed another member of the human race from hearing the gospel, and cursed be the man who does this. And thus in verse 10, when Paul says, You who are full of all deceit, that means sneakiness, it means that the man didn't directly confront them, he went behind their back. And he said and all fraud, it means the pagan answers to those three big questions we covered, are all lies, they are lies perpetrated on the human race, ultimately by Satan but through men like Bar-Jesus. you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, now that wasn't too nice, Paul operated on Biblical principles of righteousness. And when there was unrighteousness he'd label it as unrighteousness. You're doing someone a favor to do this. will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? It's a quotation from Proverbs, the straight ways are the truths of Scripture and that tells us why Paul cursed this man; cursed him because he opposed the word. When you see the imprecatory curse in Scripture it's a stiff reminder that biblical ethics is not always southern hospitality. Southern hospitality is interesting but Paul wasn't buying it, Paul, when he saw unrighteousness at this level did not invite this man in for tea. He damned him in the name of the Lord.

Verse 11, the curse upon him, "Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time." And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand. Now wouldn't it be a spectacle to have a key cabinet advisor of our new President, a man who is a graduate of an Ivy League school, a man who is supposed to know the issues, being led around as a blind man. Do you see the sarcasm here; that's what the Holy Spirit is using, sarcasm to ridicule the opponents of the gospel; the man can't even find the doorknob. So the irony of God's judgment.

Now in verse 12 the result, Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened," not because of what had happened, not because of the miracle but the reason he believed is because he was amazed at the teaching of the Lord. It's always the content, the miracles authenticated the content, but the content is what he believed, it was the doctrine of the Lord, and by that is meant the system of Christianity. The emphasis when people truly come to the Lord is always on content. You can't get saved because you have an experience and I'm convinced one of the reasons there are so few conversions



is because since the time of the Great Awakening in America some 200 years ago, which was supposedly a great revival, but what happened over time was less and less content and more and more experience. And that undercuts the power of the gospel. You simply cannot get very far on an experience, you have to have content to believe and that's precisely what Paul gave Sergius Paulus. And further that's exactly what Sergius Paulus passed on to his family. Because the final end of this story is that this man had a daughter named Sergia Paulla, we've got her inscription up in Antioch of Syria, she was named after daddy, and he evangelized her. Then when she grew up and married Gaius Caristianus Fronto, who was also a Christian and they had a son who was also a believer. So the content passed on by Paul to this man Paulus became a family heritage passed on from generation to generation. And so we see the gospel making inroads. We see the power of God defeating the power of Satan.

Now why of all the things Paul and Barnabas did on the island of Cyprus is this the only story related by Luke? Why is the only story this one of a prominent government in the Roman Empire? Remember what I told you in the very first lesson, one of Luke's arguments in the grand scheme is that Christianity was well-received by people high up in the Roman Empire. It was not a problem. It was a help, it cleared some of the fraudulent types off the political pavement. And can you imagine the revolution we would have today if the same thing happened to some of our higher ups. Real, genuine conversions of people who thought about the word of God and less and less of the mystery men making decisions in dark places.

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<sup>i</sup> William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995), Ac 13:2.

\* Found and made known by General Cesnola: but more accurately and completely published in Mr. D. G. Hogarth's *Devia Cypria*, p. 114 ,

<sup>ii</sup> William Mitchell Ramsay, Sir, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, Includes Index. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research System, Inc., 1995, c1896), 74.

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