

# “CAESAR, SATAN, AND THE SAVIOR”

Acts 13:4-12

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## INTRODUCTION

What an exciting time for the Church of Antioch! They had just sent away their first two missionaries—Barnabas and Saul—their two best Prophets and Teachers. But really, it was not they who sent the missionaries out—it was the Holy Spirit (v. 4)

In this passage we see the Gospel of Christ coming into direct conflict with the “powers of this world”—Caesar and Satan. The enemy obviously is not happy to see Christianity spread; what will he do to try to stop it? Also, what positions will the political powers of the time take toward the Christian missionaries and the Gospel that they preach?

Can the Gospel be successful in such an environment? The human messengers are insignificant and weak; who are they in comparison with “the rulers of the darkness of this world”? The good news is that the missionaries faced these great powers head on, stared them in the face, **and did not blink**. The Gospel conquered Caesar and conquered Satan.

## GOD WILL USE YOU [and Berean Baptist Church] TO SPREAD HIS MESSAGE TODAY—Triumph in Him!

- Let’s trace the first part of the First Missionary Journey
  - 1) Seleucia—Port of Antioch
  - 2) Cyprus—island in NE Mediterranean Sea, not far from Antioch
  - 3) Salamis to Paphos
- Why did they begin in Cyprus?
  - 1) Likely it was God’s direction.
  - 2) It was Barnabas’s home.
  - 3) It was close to Antioch.
  - 4) Numerous ships went to and from Cyprus.
  - 5) There was a large settlement of Jews living there.
  - 6) There were already Christians living there—evangelism had taken place (11:19).
  - 7) The Church of Antioch owed its origin in part to preachers from Cyprus (11:20).
- Reasons that this Incident is important.
  - 1) This was the **first appearance** before a Roman aristocrat. [Eventually Paul will go before Caesar himself.]

- 2) The **effect upon the Apostles** themselves was profound; they were encouraged and amazed at the Gospel's power and influence. The experience here clarified their purpose and their goals—esp. “turning to the Gentiles.
- 3) The change of **Saul’s situation**—he comes to the forefront in leadership, and his apostleship is confirmed.

The details of this incident are seen in the **three main characters**: Sergius Paulus, Saul, and Bar-Jesus (Elymus).

## I. SERGIUS PAULUS

### A. His Relation to the Empire—Proconsul (v. 7)—historical accuracy of Luke

Two classes of Roman provinces since the days of Augustus:

1. Imperial: direct supervision of the emperor—governed by *propraetors* or *generals*. Often the case when the province was unruly.
2. Senatorial: under the supervision of the roman Senate—governed by *proconsuls*.

Cyprus’ situation changed three times from its original state as an imperial province. At this point—since 22 BC—it was Senatorial and under a proconsul.

### B. His Relation to Science (v. 7)—“A man of intelligence”—One who can put things together and who has practical discernment.

### C. Relation to False Religion (7a)—had Bar-Jesus at his court

### D. Relation to the Genuine Messengers of God (7)

1. He summons them—did he think that they were typical itinerant scholars?
2. He listens intently—“sought to hear “the Word of God.” The following information about the sorcerer trying to “turn the proconsul away from the faith” (v. 8) shows that he listened to and was responding to the preaching.
3. He was “astonished at the teaching” of Barnabas and Saul—esp. as reinforced by the miracle here.
4. He “believed”—the *blindness* of Elymus *opened the eyes* of the proconsul. Was this genuine conversion? Apparently so. We do have later evidence of both a daughter and grandson who were believers.

The Effect of the Gospel upon the first significant political leader encountered was profound. Now what effects did these incidents have upon Saul?

## II. SAUL

### A. His Relation to the Holy Spirit

1. “Sent out” by the Spirit (v. 4)

2. Filled with the Spirit (v. 9)—having just been filled right then for this special occasion.
- B. His Relation to the Jews (v. 5)
1. Preaching in the synagogues “the Word of God”—with which Jewish worshipers would be familiar. **This became their custom everywhere they went.**
  2. “Having gone through the entire island as far as Paphos”—missionary work; such is the common usage of this verb in Acts—9 other times.  
Paphos was the place of residence of the Roman governor.
- C. His Relation to John Mark (v. 5)—John was their “helper”—an assistant in any work. Mark was not officially selected by either *the Holy Spirit* or by *the church*. He could have assisted in baptisms, in filling in details about Christ’s life, etc.
- D. His Relation to Barnabas—
1. Leadership change—cf. vv. 2 & 7 with v. 9 & v. 13.
  2. Name Change—Paul—importance of the name in relation to Gentile work.
    - The similarity to Sergius Paulus is not the reason for the name here.
    - The text does not say that he first took the name here, only that here he began to use this Gentile name when ministering to Gentiles.
    - The proconsul had not even been saved yet at this point.
    - The “providential circumstance” is pointed out by the Holy Spirit.
- E. His Relation to Sergius Paulus
1. Testified to (implied)
  2. Converted
- F. His Relation to Elymus
1. Saw through him (9b)—“fixed his gaze on him”
  2. Revealed his actual character (10)
  3. Pronounced Divine Judgment (11)

The effects upon Saul (Paul) were indeed profound also. Now what about the third character of this passage?

### III. BAR-JESUS (Elymus)

- A. His Name: Elymas, translated by Greeks as Magus (rightly or wrongly)—magician. “Bar-Jesus” means “son of Jesus—Joshua”; this is not his true Jewish name which is not given here in the text; simply shows who his father is.
- B. His Office [Blend of science and cults]
- “Magian” describes the nature of and the importance of this man in Luke’s estimation. **Christianity is not related to him and what he stands for; rather it is in opposition and in conflict.**

- “False Prophet”—Knew some Scripture, but blended it with sorcery and error to form a false religion—compare **New Age Movement** and other cults today.
- C. His Nationality—Jewish
- D. His Position—a Friend and Associate with the proconsul.  
Thereby he had *privilege, power, influence, and wealth*.
- E. His Opposition to the apostles and their message (v. 8)
- He actively opposed them.
  - He sought to turn away the proconsul from the faith.
- F. His True Nature (v. 10)
1. Fraud—“full of all deceit”
  2. “All Recklessness”—to so boldly oppose the work of God through the Spirit.
  3. Child of the Devil—his true character; contrast “Bar-Jesus”
  4. Enemy of all righteousness—what is true and straight and in conformity with God’s nature. **Note that these last three items with the repetition of “ALL”—emphatic repetition—shows his total depravity.**
  5. Makes crooked the straight things of the Lord—Cf. Hos. 14:9; Lk. 3:4-5 (God makes crooked things straight!) **This is also the job of the preacher! ELYMUS HAS MANY SUCCESSORS.**
- G. His Divine Judgment (11)
1. The “Hand” of the Lord—for harm—upon him
  2. Blindness
    - a. Appropriate for his nature—spiritually blind; “the blind leading the blind.”  
But now Sergius Paulus comes to the light!
    - b. Means of getting true sight—turning to the Lord for help (cf. Saul’s experience on Damascus road)
    - c. “Mist”—foggy vision; “darkness”—total blindness
  3. Helplessness
    - Contrast his previous arrogance
    - “Went about seeking people to lead him by the hand—again cf. Saul.
    - No one dared to help him.

## CONCLUSION

God has been vindicated against the enemy of truth. So much false teaching and so many false miracles today. The culmination of this is found in Rev. 13:11-18: Read.

False Prophet—deception and miracles

Its final end—Rev. 19:19-20 (Read) You had better be on the right side!

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