

## The Book of Acts: Verse-by-Verse

---

### Study Notes: Acts 13:1

The day Agrippa had intended to kill Peter, the Angel killed Agrippa.

Luke's return to the epicenter of the Gentile Church – Antioch. His chronicle of the far-reaching efforts of Barnabas and Saul is the start of the next and longest phase of Acts.

The Prelude: Barnabas and Saul have returned from Jerusalem and have resumed their teaching ministry among the new converts. They have now spent roughly a year teaching and preaching at Antioch.

They have also brought with them John Mark. We do not know their original intention was for this decision.

- **Prophets and Teachers: v. 1**

“In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.”

Luke immediately recognizes the ministry of both prophets and teachers within the Antiochene Church. There is no lead in or explanation for their presence.

Luke is demonstrating that prophets and teachers were already part of the leadership in this new Gentile Church at Antioch - even though it is barely a year old.

- **Ephesians 4:11-16: The “Five-Fold” Ministries of the Church.**

Paul make it clear that all five offices or ministries were “given by Christ” to the Church in order to help it grow into maturity. (Our

modern Evangelical world seems to have reduced this to three: Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers.)

The reciprocal relationship between the Gentile Church at Antioch and the Primarily Jewish Church at Jerusalem: The Antiochene Church has sent famine offerings to Judea, the Jerusalem Church has sent leaders to Antioch.

In the Acts narrative we only find a few prophets – but they are there: Agabus (11:28; 21:10), Judas and Silas (15:32), and the daughters of Philip (21:9).

Acts 13 indicates that Antiochene Church had several prophets and teachers. Their ministry shaped the Antiochene Church and gave it context.

In the New Testament, the terms “prophets” and “teachers” are not identical, but they do have some overlap. 1. Prophets “foretell” or “forthtell”. Their function was more spontaneous than scheduled. 2. Teachers also declare God’s message, but their ministry involves regular instruction to others. By Acts 13, these teachers are focused on spreading and explaining the apostle’s teaching – not their own.

From Acts and the rest of the New Testament we gather that the Early Church used doctrinal summaries, hymns, and ordinances like baptism and The Lord’s Table. (1 Cor 8:4–6; 11:23–26; Rom 1:2–4; Col 1:15–20).

### **- The Prophets and Teachers by name:**

- **Barnabas:**

Barnabas was well-known within the Early Church – having been with the apostles almost from the Day of Pentecost. See: Acts 4:36-38. He was a Cyprian Jew with a Levitical heritage. Barnabas was commissioned as a teacher by the Jerusalem Apostles (See: Acts 11).

He was the primary person responsible for much of the spiritual and organizational growth of the Antiochene Church. (See: Acts 11:25–26)

- **Simeon or Niger:**

Not much is known about Simeon. The text indicates that he was called “Niger”. In Latin, “Niger” not only means “black”, but any dark color. The Romans described Ethiopians as black (Niger).

“Niger” was probably a reference to the fact that Simeon was ethnically or geographically different from the rest of Antioch’s leaders.

- **Lucius of Cyrene:**

Cyrene was a city in North Africa, It has several New Testament connections. Simeon (Simon) from Cyrene was forced by the Romans to carry Jesus’ cross beam. See: Matthew 27:32. In addition, people from Cyrene heard Peter’s message on the Day of Pentecost. See: Acts 2:10.

It was a group of believers from Cyrene who planted the Gospel in Gentile Antioch (Acts 11:20). As such, it would not be surprising if Lucius was one of the founding members of the Church in Antioch.

- **Manaen:**

Luke tells us about “Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch.” This could mean that Manaen was either Herod’s foster brother or childhood friend.

Dr. Ellicott’s Notes on Manaen:

When Herod the Great was still a child, a Jewish (Essene) prophet predicted his rise to greatness. That prophet’s name was either Menahem or Manaen.

According to Josephus, when Herod became famous and powerful, he sought to honor that prophet. It's possible, if not probable, that Herod the Great had the son or grandson of the Essene prophet raised in the royal court along with his grandson, Herod Antipas.

At some point, Manaen came to Christ and became part of the Church at Antioch and was acknowledged as a prophet – even though Herod Antipas had executed John the Baptist and tried Jesus.

- **“Saul”:**

The last person Luke identifies is “Saul”. Despite Luke's close relationship with Saul/Paul, Luke places him last on the list of prophets and teachers.

At this point Saul was not recognized as a prophet or apostle. He was a teacher, working alongside Barnabas – who heads up the list of five prophets and teachers.

Point: Saul did not have a meteoric rise to apostleship. Despite his abundance of spiritual revelations, he submitted himself to Peter's leadership and Barnabas' guidance. It would be many years before Saul would be identified with Christ's core apostles.

- **A Variety Of Backgrounds:**

These five prophets and apostles came from a variety of backgrounds.

One was a Jewish man who grew up on a Roman island. Two of them were likely inhabitants from North Africa. One was a socially elite man who grew up alongside Herod I. The last was a highly educated Pharisee who once sought to destroy the Church.

The Church at Antioch was, indeed, a picture of diversity in the Early Church. Its leadership reflected the community they were ministering to.