

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

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### Study Notes: Acts 13:2-3

- **A History Primer On Missions:**

“Missionaries” and “Missionary journey” are not terms that the Early Church used. They would not be used for fourteen more centuries.

The Latin root for the word "missionary": An equivalent to the Greek word “Apostolos” – a “sent one”.

1590s: Jesuit Priests began describing the process of sending out its members to evangelize others as “missio” – from the Latin word, “missionem” - an "act of sending or dispatching”.

1640's: Documents begin speaking of a missionary post or station. By 1769, the word “missionary” was adopted to describe the "body of persons sent to a foreign land.”

- **Ministering and Serving: v. 2**

“While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said...”

This was an intense time of worshipping, fasting, and prayer. While the NIV and other translations say that they were “worshipping” (God) – others use the word “ministering”.

Kenny Buchard: Ministering and Serving:

Greek text: “While they were doing liturgy (to the Lord).” The Greek word, leitourgounton is a combination of two words: “leitōs” which basically refers to a people or community, and “ergon”, which has to do with work or works. So liturgy can be accurately described as “the work of the people.”

The prophets' and teachers' “liturgy” to God led to the sending out of Barnabas and Saul for more ministry to others.

Kenny Buchard: "Liturgy part A – service to God, results in Liturgy part B – service in God's mission to the world." The work of the people is both toward God and toward the world that God has made in which we are called to be his imagers."

- **Worshipping and Fasting: v. 2**

Fasting – which is primarily refraining from eating – either entirely or partially – is mentioned in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. See: Nehemiah 1:4; Psalm 35:13; Esther 4:3; Luke 4:1, 2

Examples in Church History: John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, fasted twice weekly from sunup until late afternoon. Charles Finney, a revivalist in the 1800s, fasted regularly each week.

- Motivations For Fasting:

The Bible does not give any definite rules on how it should be done or for how long. Instead, the relevant passages focus on the motivations for fasting.

- Isaiah 58:9–10: "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday."

- Matthew 6:16-18: "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting ... But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

### **"What Does Biblical Fasting Accomplish?"**

1. Focuses our spiritual attention on hearing from God.
2. Helps us learn self-denial as we seek God.
3. Strengthens our confidence and faith in God.
4. Assists us in setting aside time for spiritual development.

- **A Setting Apart: v. 2**

“...The Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

The Holy Spirit: The Greek words here are, “The Hagion Pneuma”. A literal rendering is closer to “The Sacred Spirit”. As the Church was ministering to the Kurios – the Master or Supreme Controller, the “Sacred Spirit” spoke.

Church leadership is necessary – Pastors, Teachers, Leadership boards, Committees, various ministry teams, etc. A local church must have some organization to keep from being a circus!

The Spirit’s Choice: As the leadership and laity were fasting and praying, the Sacred Spirit spoke – and gave them their next marching orders.

Luke uses the Greek word, “Eipen” when he says the Spirit “spoke”. The basic idea is that the Spirit brought a word or gave a command. We have seen this in Acts 8:29, 10:19, and 11:12.

- **The Break Down:**

“Set apart”: Greek, “Aphoristate” – “to separate, place apart, set off by boundary, exclude, or appoint. The phrase, “For Me” is “Moi” – a first person possessive pronoun.

The Holy Spirit told those gathered: “Separate, place apart, set off by boundary, exclude, appoint to Me personally, Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

- **The Message And The Messenger: v. 2**

Why doesn’t Luke tell us the name of the person through whom the Spirit indicated His will? We have the names of the three prophets and teachers. Beyond Barnabas and Saul we have Simeon, Lucius, Manaen.

A Theory: The individual vehicle through which the message came was not important for us to know. Barnabas and Saul were being called by the Spirit – not a human agency.

- **A Surprise Or A Confirmation?**

“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

One commentator’s note on the Spirit’s directions for Barnabas and Saul: “It was very vague. The nature of the work ... was not specified. It was not unlike the call of Abram ... ‘Go to the land I will show you.’”

Was this a surprise set of directions or was it a confirmation of something Barnabas and Saul had previously sensed and discussed among themselves?

Note their very definite travel itinerary outlined in verses 4-5:

“Barnabas and Saul went down to the seaport of Seleucia and then sailed for the island of Cyprus. There, in the town of Salamis, they went to the Jewish synagogues and preached the word of God.”

It seems that Barnabas and Saul had a very clear idea of where they were going. Is it possible that Barnabas and Saul had already had a vision of taking the Gospel to Cyprus?

- **Sending Them On Their Way: v. 3**

“So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.” v. 3.

There was neither haste nor reluctance in the Church’s decision to send Barnabas and Saul to the mission field. Luke says that there was more fasting and prayer before the leaders placed their hands on these men and sent them on their way.

It seems as if more fasting and prayer served the point of both confirmation of what the prophets had said, and preparation for the journey ahead.

From what followed those moments of dedication, we know that the leaders were wise to prolong their season of fasting and prayer before they sent Barnabas and Saul away from a very fruitful ministry to a very challenging one.