



BIBLE

STUDENT BOOK

▶ **8th Grade | Unit 6**

BIBLE 806

The Early Churches

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Author:

Douglas Williamson

Editor-in-Chief:

Richard W. Wheeler, M.A.Ed.

Editor:

Daniel W. Hill, Ph.D.

Consulting Editor:

John L. Booth, Th.D.

Revision Editor:

Alan Christopherson, M.S.

Westover Studios Design Team:

Phillip Pettet, Creative Lead

Teresa Davis, DTP Lead

Nick Castro

Andi Graham

Jerry Wingo



804 N. 2nd Ave. E.

Rock Rapids, IA 51246-1759

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The Early Churches

Introduction

Beginning with the ministry of the Apostles, the propagation of the Gospel expanded to become a witness to the entire world. Witnessing to the world was to extend the local ministry of the church. In the church at Antioch were several ministers and teachers. No doubt the congregation was quite large and the people were dedicated to the Lord God. While they were praying, the Holy Spirit began to witness. His message was that Saul (Paul) and Barnabas were to be separated for a special work. This special work was a ministry that would change the entire world. The missionary journeys would establish churches throughout Asia Minor and parts of Europe. The apostle Paul was to become the leading missionary and minister of this period of early Christianity. The church at Antioch experienced some controversy over the question of circumcision. However, the situation was resolved, preventing a serious split in the body of Christ. The faith survived to witness to the uttermost parts of the world. The early Christians also experienced severe persecution, the doctrine of false teachers, and the forms of apostasy. However, Christianity survived with one faith, united in Jesus Christ

Objectives

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAAC. When you have finished this LIFEPAAC, you should be able to:

1. Trace Paul's first and second missionary journeys.
2. Trace Paul's third and final missionary journeys.
3. Describe the problems encountered by Paul on his missionary journeys.
4. Identify the churches visited by Paul and his companions.
5. Describe the characteristics of the churches at Ephesus and Crete.
6. Describe the persecuted church.
7. Identify the apostate church.
8. Define the faith as being one in Jesus Christ.

1. THE EARLY MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

The mission venture of the early church began with Peter's accepting Cornelius, a Gentile, into the faith. Cornelius was not required to partake of the rite of circumcision. The requirement of circumcision created a controversy among the Jewish church leaders. Only after Peter explained the vision God had given him did the Apostles accept the Gentiles. Shortly after Paul's first missionary journey, the Jerusalem Conference was held to resolve the subject of

circumcision required of the Gentiles by some Jewish Christians. The Jerusalem Conference, as a result of controversies, was held in Antioch, a church that became exceptionally strong and sound. From Antioch, the apostle Paul launched both his first and second missionary journeys. An exciting period for the faith resulted as Christians grew and prospered under the inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit.

SECTION OBJECTIVES

Review these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Trace Paul's first and second missionary journeys.
3. Describe the problems encountered by Paul on his missionary journeys.
4. Identify the churches visited by Paul and his companions.

VOCABULARY

Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.

credulity (kru dū' lu tē). A too great readiness to believe.

godspeed (god' spēd). A parting wish of a success to someone taking a trip or an undertaking.

Judaizers (jū' dē īz urs). Jews who wanted Christians to live according to the Jewish Law.

pagan (pā' gun). A heathen; a person who worships many gods or no god.

proconsul (prō kon' sul). A governor or military commander of an ancient Roman province.

proselyte (pros' u lit). Someone who has changed from one religious belief to another.

soothsayer (sūth' sā ur). Someone who claims to know what will happen.

sorcerer (sôr' sur ur). Someone who practices magic with the supposed help of evil spirits.

stringent (strin' jint). Strict; severe.

Note: All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAC appear in boldface print the first time they are used. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.

Pronunciation Key: hat, āge, cāre, fār; let, ēqual, tērm; it, īce; hot, ōpen, ôrder; oil; out; cup, pūt, rüle; child; long; thin; /ʃh/ for then; /zh/ for measure; /u/ represents /a/ in about, /e/ in taken, /i/ in pencil, /o/ in lemon, and /u/ in circus.

CHURCH AT ANTIOCH

The church at Antioch was founded soon after the stoning of Stephen. This church was founded by those converts who were scattered abroad in the persecution that developed in Jerusalem (Acts 11:19). In about AD 42, certain Christians of Cyprus and Cyrene, who had heard of the reception of Cornelius into the church, came to Antioch. These Christians began to preach to the Gentiles that they could be Christians without first becoming Jewish **proselytes**. Luke wrote (Acts 11:21) that “...the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.” The church at Jerusalem soon heard of the new believers in Antioch. The Jerusalem church, after being convinced by Peter’s story of Cornelius that such mission work was of God and not of man, sent Barnabas to Antioch to carry the message of Jesus Christ and extend the blessing of the church at Jerusalem. Barnabas was full of the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of the Lord; multitudes of Gentiles were added unto the Lord (Acts 11:24).

Barnabas went to Tarsus, about one hundred miles northwest from Antioch, to find Saul, whom he brought to Antioch. Barnabas went to find Saul more than ten years after Saul’s conversion. Saul had spent three years in Damascus and Arabia, and seven years in Tarsus. God had called Saul to be His servant and to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21). The time had now come for Saul to launch into a new venture.

The city of Antioch was the third city of the Roman Empire with a population of about five hundred thousand citizens. Antioch was surpassed in size only by Rome and Alexandria: Antioch, located three hundred miles north of Jerusalem, was the Mediterranean gateway to the Eastern highways. The citizens of Antioch worshiped Ashtaroth and indulged in immorality and unbelievable indecency. In spite of the

Read Acts 11:19–30 and chapter 12.



| Barnabas Preaching at Antioch

conditions, however, multitudes of Antioch’s citizens accepted Jesus Christ and were added to the church. Antioch would become the birthplace for the missionary journeys of the Apostles. Here at Antioch the term *Christian* was first applied to one who believed in Christ.

Soon after Barnabas and Saul arrived in Antioch, a prophet named Agabus, directed by the Holy Spirit, told of a great drought and famine that was to occur throughout the world. This famine took place during the reign of Claudius Caesar (Acts 11:28). Antioch decided to send relief to Jerusalem by Barnabas and Saul. This journey was Saul’s second trip to Jerusalem following his conversion (Galatians 2:1). Saul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem shortly before the killing of James and the imprisonment of Peter (Acts 12:1–4).

The Apostle James, brother of John, was one of the three inner-circle friends of Jesus. Killed in AD 44, James was the first of the Apostles to die. Herod the king also imprisoned Peter only to have God Himself miraculously deliver Peter (Acts 12:7). Because of the persecution of Herod against the children of God, an angel of the Lord smote him (Acts 12:23).

Antioch rapidly became the leading center of Gentile Christianity. One of the teachers in the Antioch church was the foster-brother of Herod (Acts 13:1); this fact helped give this particular

church considerable prestige. From Antioch the apostle Paul was to launch his first and second missionary journeys.



Write the correct letter and answer on each line.

- 1.1 The church of Antioch was founded soon after the stoning of _____.
 a. Peter b. Philip c. Stephen d. Barnabas
- 1.2 The Antioch church was founded by believers from _____.
 a. Cyprus and Cyrene b. Jerusalem
 c. Cyprus and Alexandria d. Rome and Tarsus
- 1.3 The first pastor of the Antioch church was _____.
 a. Paul b. Philip c. Barnabas d. Peter
- 1.4 Barnabas was assisted by _____.
 a. Philip b. Saul c. Barnabas d. Peter
- 1.5 The third largest city in the Roman Empire was _____.
 a. Jerusalem b. Alexandria c. Athens d. Antioch
- 1.6 The citizens of Antioch worshiped the god _____.
 a. Ashtaroth b. Jupiter c. Zeus d. Apollo
- 1.7 The believers were first called Christians at _____.
 a. Antioch b. Jerusalem c. Alexandria d. Cyprus

FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

The successful establishment of the church at Antioch created a headquarters for a greater missionary endeavor extending to the uttermost parts of the world. While Paul and Barnabas were ministering to the church at Antioch in Syria, the Holy Spirit directed the church leaders there to release Paul and Barnabas from their duties in the church so that they could minister in other parts of Asia Minor. The means by which the Spirit directed the church leaders are not expressly given. Three factors that should be mentioned are included in the Acts account. The first factor was an urging within the Apostles themselves; at this particular time they were fasting when the direction came. The second factor was a prophetic utterance on the part of one of the members of the church. The third fact was the assurance given by the Spirit to the body of believers that the release of Paul and Barnabas was the will of God.

Read Acts chapters 13 and 14.



Paul's first missionary journey resulted in the opening (Acts 14:27) of "...a door of faith to the Gentiles." As far as we know, this trip was the first church-sponsored missionary journey. Barnabas and Paul were not freelance missionaries, as Philip and the Hellenists were (Acts chapter 8). Barnabas and Paul were personal representatives of the local church at Antioch. This particular church supported them and stood behind them in every way necessary. At the departure of Paul and Barnabas, the Christians of Antioch extended to them **godspeed** and sent them forth with prayer, fasting, and the laying on of hands. Acts 13:3 states, "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." Paul and Barnabas took John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10) from Jerusalem (Acts 12:12) with them.



Cyprus. The initial target of this first missionary journey was the isle of Cyprus, the home of Barnabas. Barnabas was eager to bring the Gospel of Jesus to his own people (Acts 4:36). The first highlight of this journey came when the **proconsul** of the territory requested that Paul and Barnabas preach their message to him. Paul and Barnabas had preached the Gospel through the entire island. They preached first (Acts 13:5) "...in the synagogues of the Jews..." At Paphos, however, Proconsul Sergius Paulus requested to hear the message of Jesus. The meeting may have been intended only as an inquiry about the preaching of Paul and Barnabas, in order to prevent any teaching that might possibly cause a disturbance within the Jewish community on Cyprus. At Paphos, Paul and Barnabas also encountered the **sorcerer**, Bar-jesus (Acts 13:6–12). In spite of the opposition by Bar-jesus and impressed by the effect of the curse that was pronounced by Paul upon Bar-jesus, Sergius Paulus believed the message of Paul and accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour. The conversion of

Sergius Paulus was quite unexpected, because the Roman proconsul does not seem to have been related in any way to Judaism or any of its institutions. The conversion of Sergius Paulus could be compared to the conversion of the Roman centurion Cornelius at Joppa (Acts 10:1–11:18). On Cyprus, Paul began to be called by his Roman name, Paul, rather than his Jewish name Saul (Acts 13:9). To Paul the Jews were still the people of God. Paul believed that the Jews still had a very special place in God's plan and that they should receive the message first because the Saviour had come through the Jewish nation. The Jews, however, continually rejected Paul and his teaching as seen in Acts 13:40–54 and Romans 10:18–21. Paul never gave up on the Jews, and he continually directed his message to them first (Romans 1:16). He gave the Jews no grounds for complaining or for excusing themselves. Only when Paul was forced to go elsewhere did he then direct the message of Jesus Christ to the more receptive Gentiles.



Complete these statements.

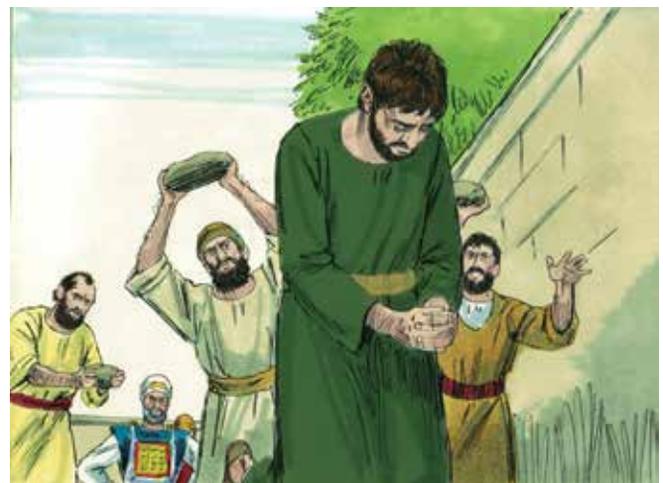
- 1.8 The Holy Spirit directed the church leaders at Antioch to release a. _____ and b. _____ to minister in other parts of c. _____.
- 1.9 Paul and Barnabas were personal representatives of the _____ church.
- 1.10 Paul and Barnabas took _____ with them on their missionary journey.
- 1.11 The first stop on the missionary journey was the island of _____.
- 1.12 At Paphos the Roman proconsul _____ was converted.
- 1.13 Paul and Barnabas were opposed by the sorcerer _____.
- 1.14 The apostle Paul's name was changed from _____ at Paphos.

Perga. From Cyprus Paul and Barnabas sailed to Perga of Pamphylia in Asia Minor. At Perga, John Mark left Paul and Barnabas and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). Because of the Gentile conversion at Paphos, some discussion occurred among the missionaries concerning their further ministry. The possibility that John Mark did not want to be involved in a controversy may have caused him to return to Jerusalem. Pamphylia was also known for its highway robbers and treacherous areas, which may have been the factors that caused John Mark to return to the security of his home.

Antioch of Pisidia. At Antioch of Pisidia, Paul preached the Gospel to the Jews who assembled in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Paul's message, that Jesus is the Messiah and the Saviour promised in the Scriptures (Acts 13:14–43), was heard by many. Controversy soon developed when on the next Sabbath, a great number of Gentiles expressed their interest in Paul's message. The Jewish community made clear that they were in opposition to the Gospel. As a result of this opposition, Paul turned his attention directly to the Gentiles and continued his mission in the city. Paul found the Gentiles to be very receptive to the Gospel (Acts 13:44 through 49). At Pisidia, the pattern was established of Paul's visiting the Jews, being rejected by them, and then taking the message of Christ to the Gentiles. At Antioch of Pisidia, opposition to Paul himself occurred (Acts 13:50). The Jews opposed Paul because he approached the Gentiles with the Gospel. The Jews were so angered (Acts 13:50) that they "... stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts." Paul and Barnabas went to Iconium; there they went to the synagogue first. The reaction of these particular Jews to Paul's ministry was highly emotional. They responded to Paul's message so violently that he and Barnabas barely escaped with their lives (Acts 14:1–6).

Lystra. Leaving Iconium, Paul and Barnabas came to Lystra. They received there, a different reception (Acts 14:8–18). At Lystra, Paul and Barnabas were welcomed as Greek gods. If Paul had permitted them to do so, the people would have offered sacrifice to them. When Paul healed a man who had been crippled from birth, the people became convinced that Jupiter and Mercurius had returned to earth in disguise. The people were determined not to make the same mistake of their ancestors, and they were about to go to hospitable extremes until Paul and Barnabas assured them that they were making a mistake. After explaining the matter, Paul preached to the people.

Because these people were **pagans**, Paul neither quoted the Scriptures nor argued the Law. Instead, he reasoned from nature (Acts 14:15–18). The people were attentive for quite a time, until a delegation from Iconium came and convinced the people that Paul and Barnabas deserved stoning, not sacrifice. The crowd, becoming disillusioned and angered, stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, fully convinced that they had killed him. Acts 14:19 relates "...and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead." Paul, however, was a man of amazing stamina and was full of the Holy Spirit. His mission was not completed. The next day, he was found



| Paul Stoned in Lystra

preaching in the nearby city of Derbe. After a brief ministry in Derbe, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra.

In the face of previous events, considerable courage was required to return to Lystra. Paul, however, had that courage, and spent much time in both Lystra and Iconium exhorting the disciples and proclaiming the Gospel in both word and deed. Before Paul and Barnabas left the region, they made sure that an organized community of believers was established.

Because of the effectiveness of their ministry, Paul and Barnabas were able to appoint qualified elders to every established church during the first missionary journey. When they had accomplished this task, they returned to Antioch. Upon arriving in Antioch, they reported to the brethren (Acts 14:27) "...all that God had done with them..." All they had undertaken and attempted had been accomplished; the process of world-wide evangelism was underway for the young Christian faith.



Write true or false.

- 1.15 _____ Paul and Barnabas went to Perga from Cyprus.
- 1.16 _____ John Mark left Paul and Barnabas at Pisidia.
- 1.17 _____ John Mark may have left Paul and Barnabas because of the controversy over the conversion of the Gentiles.
- 1.18 _____ Paul preached to the Jews first when he entered a new city.
- 1.19 _____ The Jews always accepted the message Paul preached.
- 1.20 _____ The Jews were so pleased with Paul's message they sent the leading officers of the city to hear Paul.
- 1.21 _____ Paul and Barnabas then went to Iconium to preach the message of Christ.

Complete these statements.

- 1.22 The people of Lystra thought that Paul and Barnabas were the gods
a. _____ and b. _____ .
- 1.23 Paul neither quoted Scripture nor argued the Law because the people of Lystra were _____ .
- 1.24 The people of Lystra were convinced by some men from Iconium that Paul should be _____ .
- 1.25 Paul and Barnabas went from Lystra to _____ where they organized a church.

SELF TEST 1

Match these items (each answer, 2 points).

- | | | | |
|-------|----------------------------|----|--|
| 1.01 | _____ Antioch | a. | Greek god |
| 1.02 | _____ Barnabas | b. | worshiped by citizens of Antioch |
| 1.03 | _____ Ashtaroth | c. | site of first European missionary activity |
| 1.04 | _____ John Mark | d. | Roman proconsul |
| 1.05 | _____ Cyprus | e. | Paul's companion on second journey |
| 1.06 | _____ Sergius Paulus | f. | opposed the Gentiles |
| 1.07 | _____ Bar-jesus | g. | first pastor of Antioch |
| 1.08 | _____ Jupiter | h. | first European convert |
| 1.09 | _____ Jerusalem Conference | i. | sorcerer |
| 1.010 | _____ Judaizers | j. | accompanied Paul and Barnabas |
| 1.011 | _____ Silas | k. | call came to Paul to go there |
| 1.012 | _____ Macedonia | l. | located in Athens |
| 1.013 | _____ Philippi | m. | church founded after stoning of Stephen |
| 1.014 | _____ Lydia | n. | located in Thessalonica |
| 1.015 | _____ Mars Hill | o. | circumcision |
| | | p. | first stop on first missionary journey |

Complete this activity (each answer, 2 points).

1.016 Arrange these places visited by Paul in their proper order. Number 1 through 8.

- | | | | |
|----|---------------|----|--------------------|
| a. | _____ Cyprus | b. | _____ Berea |
| c. | _____ Troas | d. | _____ Thessalonica |
| e. | _____ Corinth | f. | _____ Philippi |
| g. | _____ Athens | h. | _____ Perga |

Complete these statements (each answer, 3 points).

- 1.017 The Antioch church was founded by believers from a. _____
and b. _____ .
- 1.018 The third largest city in the Roman empire was _____ .
- 1.019 The believers were first called _____ at Antioch.
- 1.020 Barnabas did not go with Paul on his second missionary journey because of a dispute over _____ .
- 1.021 The Roman name for Silas was _____ .
- 1.022 Paul and Silas were later joined by _____ .
- 1.023 Timothy's grandmother was a. _____ and his mother was
b. _____ .
- 1.024 Philippi was an important crossroads for both a. _____ and
b. _____ .
- 1.025 Paul went to Corinth from _____ .
- 1.026 Paul's opposition became worse after when the leader of the synagogue,
_____, was encountered.
- 1.027 The Jews brought Paul before the proconsul Gallio on a charge of _____
_____ .
- 1.028 Paul stayed in the home of a. _____ and Priscilla while in
b. _____ .

Write true or false (each answer, 1 point).

- 1.029 _____ The people of Lystra were convinced by some people from Derbe that Paul should be stoned.
- 1.030 _____ The Apostles learned that God is no respecter of persons.
- 1.031 _____ Instead of moaning and complaining, Paul and Silas sang hymns and prayed while in the Philippian jail.

78 97	SCORE _____	TEACHER _____	initials	date
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804 N. 2nd Ave. E.
Rock Rapids, IA 51246-1759

800-622-3070
www.aop.com