

## Where Do You Find Wisdom?

(Acts 12:25-13:12)

### Introduction

1. Theme: Jesus accelerates us by the Holy Spirit to grow deeper through His family, wider in our impact for the gospel.
2. Issue: How to make wise decisions about how we live life & where we're going.
3. Background: God's focused, intentional, missional movement of the gospel into the Gentile world (cf. Acts 1:8)

### Wisdom comes from seeking God [Acts 12:25-13:1]

1. The changing church needs direction/wisdom
  - a. [25] Barnabas & Saul return to Antioch Church after delivering famine relief to Jerusalem church (cf. 11:27-30)
    - i. They bring John Mark (cf. 12:12): Not an apostle, a friend of Saul, interviewed Peter to write the gospel of Mark, Barnabas' cousin (cf. Col 4:10).
  - b. [1] Antioch church in Syria has a powerful ministry.
    - i. 5 prophets/teachers: Empowered by the Spirit to speak for God through the Word about Jesus.
    - ii. Includes Barnabas & Saul, Simeon (black man from Africa), Lucius from Cyrene (North Africa), Manaen (close friend who grew up with Tetrarch-Governor Herod Antipas; rich/influential).
    - iii. Multicultural church with pastor/leaders from different places, races, socioeconomic backgrounds.
  - c. The church is changing & growing, and trying to figure out what to do next.
2. [2] They discern God's will/wisdom through biblically-prescribed means of seeking God.
  - a. Through worship/the Word ("minister to the Lord"; liturgy: Church gathered in liturgical worship to sing, pray, read Scriptures, receive a sermon) & fasting/prayer (cf. Matt 6:10).
  - b. As they seek the Lord's will, the Holy Spirit speaks to them:
    - i. Set apart Barnabas & Saul for a special work, to be sent out to plant churches among Gentiles.
  - c. Through these Biblical means, we can ask God for wisdom in every area of life (cf. Jas 1:5-6; Rom 12:1-2).
    - i. Primary way we discern God's will/wisdom is through the Word of God.
    - ii. When prompted by the Spirit, see how it aligns with Scriptures; God will not contradict Himself.
3. [3] They confirm God's will/wisdom in the community of believers seeking His will
  - a. They fast & pray together some more, confirming God's will together.
  - b. They lay hands on Barnabas & Saul together: Pray for, bless & commission them to send them out.
    - i. They don't see it as losing Barnabas & Saul, but joining them to participate in Kingdom work together
  - c. We seek confirmation of God's wisdom with other Jesus followers seeking Him & His will.
    - i. Jesus will not contradict Himself when He speaks to us.
    - ii. This protects us from irrefutability or weirdness of "personal revelation."
4. Application: Are you seeking wisdom from God's Spirit? Through worship, the Word, fasting & prayer?
  - a. Do you persistently seek to connect with Jesus on a daily, regular basis?
  - b. Are you seeking confirmation in community as part of the Body of Christ?
  - c. Without seeking & confirming God's wisdom, we waste a lot of time, energy, resources doing a lot of good things, but not necessarily best things or God things.

### Wisdom requires openness & diligence [Acts 13:4-7]

1. [4-6] Mission to Cyprus
  - a. [4] Barnabas & Saul sent out as apostles.

- i. They travel ~16 mi to the port city of Seleucia & sail west to Cyprus
    - ii. Cyprus: very culturally diverse (Egyptians, Phoenicians, Greeks, Assyrians, Persians, Jews) & filled with many local religious cults, where the gospel has just begun to spread (cf. 11:19)
  - b. [5] They arrive in Cyprus at the East port city of Salamis
    - i. They proclaim the Word of God & good news about Jesus, first at Jewish synagogues (cf. Rom 1:16).
    - ii. They have John Mark accompanying as a trainee preacher/apprentice missionary.
  - c. [6] They minister & travel across the whole island, ~90 mi to the Southwest port city of Paphos.
    - i. Paphos is the local seat of Roman government on Cyprus.
  - d. They meet a magician, Bar-Jesus: Jewish man with Jewish name meaning “son of Jesus/Y’shua.”
    - i. Different from Simon the magician (cf. 8:9-24); not just tricks/illusions as a street magician.
    - ii. False prophet: Mixes Judaism with pagan beliefs/worship; claims supernatural, divine revelation (but not necessarily from God).
      - 1. Demonic influence: Mimic physical blessings/curses; use potions, amulets, spells
      - 2. Spiritual battle: False prophet vs. genuine prophets/teachers of the Word (cf. 13:1).
      - 3. Issue: Not just who puts on a better show, but who speaks for the real God.
2. [7] Wisdom for those who’ve not yet trusted/yielded their lives to Jesus
- a. Introduced to Sergius Paulus
    - i. Proconsul: Highest ranking Roman official in the area, like a governor.
    - ii. Bar-Jesus has some influence as his court astrologer.
  - b. Sergius Paulus is a “man of intelligence”: Biblically used to describe one with understanding and/or wisdom.
    - i. Why? Because he actively “sought to hear the Word of God.”
  - c. Even if we don’t know Jesus yet, wisdom is still seeking God.
    - i. Openness to hearing from God’s Word.
    - ii. Diligence in actively seeking to receive wisdom from God.
3. Application: Openness: Are you willing to hear from God’s Word? Or blinded as a skeptic/critic?
- a. Diligence: Are you actively or passively seeking Jesus & His will in your life?

### **False wisdom is based on twisting truth [Acts 13:8-10]**

1. [8-9] Competing sources of wisdom
- a. [8] Bar-Jesus’ Arabic nickname is Elymas the magician: “Wise one the wise man” (magus).
    - i. He has an elevated view of himself and his own wisdom.
  - b. [9] Paul is instead filled with the wisdom & power of the Holy Spirit
    - i. As a missionary outside Judea, he now goes by his Roman name instead of Hebrew to connect with & reach a wider audience.
    - ii. God also changes his identity with humility, from “desired” (life is about me) to “small/little” but still chosen & sent by Jesus.
    - iii. Filled with God’s Spirit, he unflinchingly confronts this enemy of the cross/gospel, & his false wisdom.
2. [10] False wisdom is based on lies.
- a. Paul reveals the source of Elymas’ false “wisdom”
    - i. “Son of the devil”: Instead of “son of Jesus” (Bar-Jesus).
      - 1. Satan is the father of lies (cf. John 8:44)
    - ii. “Enemy of all righteousness”: Opposing what is right, pure & true from Jesus.
    - iii. “Full of all deceit & villainy/corrupt ways”: Instead of truth & wisdom from God.
  - b. Impact on others: Twisted truth leads down “crooked paths”, instead of the “straight paths of the Lord.”
  - c. Decision making based on false wisdom from twisted truth
    - i. Listening to foolish counsel
      - 1. Blind leading the blind; trusting questionable sources
      - 2. Finding others’ opinions (not facts) that agree with us to suit our needs/desires
    - ii. Rationalization: Regarding sin; comparison with others; entitlement
    - iii. Internal voice of shame: Whether from past emotional baggage, Satan or self.
      - 1. Critical voice in head; plays on fears (failure/self-image); “deserve” bad circumstances
      - 2. Constant whisper of lies that guide faulty beliefs/decisions
    - iv. Believe lies about God:
      - 1. He is not good
      - 2. He is not sovereign
      - 3. He does not love me

- d. By trusting lies of false wisdom, we make choices that destroy ourselves, marriages/family, future & ability to experience Jesus' Kingdom in our lives.
3. Application: How do you allow false wisdom that twists the truth to lead & guide you?
- a. You can seek Jesus through worship & prayer, to be set free today.

### **Conclusion [Acts 13:11-12]**

1. Results of the different types of wisdom
- a. [11] Elymas judged
    - i. Bad news: Immediately struck blind (like Herod Agrippa; cf. 12:23)
      - 1. As a false prophet already in darkness, his outside now matches the blindness of his heart.
      - 2. Humbled, he no longer leads others astray down crooked paths, but needs help from others to be led by the hand.
    - ii. Good news: It's temporary; "for a time."
      - 1. Like Saul's Damascus experience (cf. 9:1-19), a time to reflect on the darkness in him & how he used it to blind others.
      - 2. Likewise, Elymas is given an opportunity to reflect & repent.
    - iii. Judgment miracle demonstrates Paul is equal to Peter in authority/apostleship (cf. 5:1-11).
    - iv. We never hear about Elymas again, as if we're to put selves into story & consider how we'd respond.
  - b. [12] Sergius Paulus believed
    - i. He sees the evidence of Jesus' miraculous power overcoming any demonic power Elymas calls on.
    - ii. He is "astonished" by the truth from the Word of God about Jesus.
    - iii. Wisdom recognizes truth: He believes Jesus to be Son of God, Savior & Lord.
2. Application: Where do you turn to for wisdom in how you practically & actually live, or determine the next step?
- a. Which one are you?
    - i. Are you a faithful follower seeking Jesus daily for wisdom?
    - ii. Are you like Elymas "the wise" or Sergius the intelligent?
  - b. Some are at a crossroad, needing wisdom. You can seek God for it today.
  - c. Some buy into lies that lead you down crooked paths. Ask Jesus to set you free today.