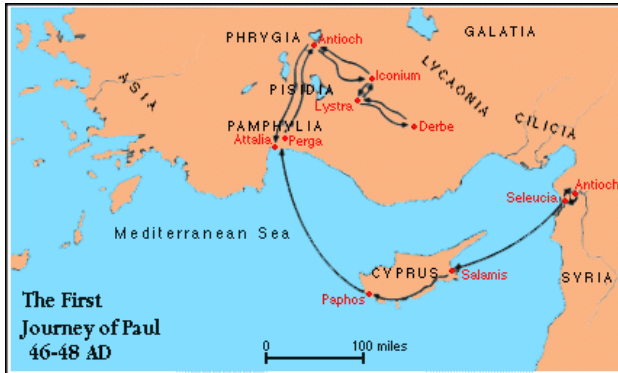


Men's Group 12th November 2013

Acts 13 – 14 Paul's first missionary journey



This starts in Cyprus but mainly takes place in central Turkey. One of these maps gives the dates as 46 – 48 which sounds a reasonable approximation (others suggest 45)

We know little about the internal structure of the early churches—it's just not documented. What kind of community does the Antioch church seem to have been? (*Chapter 11 – founded by refugees from the persecution of Stephen; Barnabas sent up from Jerusalem, and taught there; whether he had any leadership role is not clear*). How would it compare with e.g. St George's Men's Group?

Acts 13.13 John Mark leaves the group

This is described in neutral terms here, but we will see later that Paul was quite upset about it, seeing it as an act of desertion.

A Gospel for Jews, or for Gentiles

At first sight Paul could be regarded as a bit inconsistent, but in reality it was probably a matter of practicality.

He's just come from Jerusalem so he presumably knows about Peter's call to take the gospel to the Gentiles. Coming into a new town with a new religion, it's difficult to know where he could start apart from in the synagogue with the Jews and the 'God-fearers'. Having caused a big commotion and attracted a lot of attention in the town, he might then have gained the attention of non-Jews and have been able to reach out to them a bit more.

But then, arriving in Iconium—again, where else can he start but in the synagogue.

I wonder if Paul would be surprised to have known that 2000 years later Christianity would be 99.9% non-Jewish.

Acts 13.16 – 41 Paul's message

The bit about Jesus' body not undergoing decay is interesting. As a strict literalist, how would one understand this vis-a-vis Jesus' three days in the tomb?

13.38 – 39 gives us the core of Paul's gospel message, which is what?

'through him forgiveness of sin is proclaimed to you, and through him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses'

This could almost have been lifted out of Paul's letter to the Romans!

13. 48 *'as many as were appointed for eternal life believed'*. What does this mean? What would have happened if Paul had decided not to do this journey?

Acts 14.22

'... through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God'

What is this?

Acts 14.27

Paul's reference to *'opening a door of faith to the Gentiles'* suggests a transition of understanding for all of them.