

The Blinding of Elymas Acts 13:4-13

Introduction:

1. Paul and Barnabas left their home church of Antioch for the purpose of doing missionary work for the Lord. vs. 1-3
2. Their first stop was the island of Cyprus (vs. 4). They preached God's Word in the city of Salamis on the east edge of the island (vs. 5), and then traveled to the city of Paphos on the western edge of Cyprus (about 100 miles away).
 - This was an important city politically, as it was the seat of the Roman government on the island.
3. At Paphos they were confronted by a Jewish man named Bar-jesus, also known as Elymas. This man was a sorcerer (vs. 6). He practiced satanic witchcraft.
4. This sorcerer was with a Gentile man named Sergius Paulus. He was the head governing official on the island of Cyprus (vs. 7). Things got very interesting when this sorcerer met Paul face to face. Read verses 8-12.
5. On the surface, this may not look like a prominent, key event in the book of Acts. But this story will provide a composite picture that summarizes the rest of the book of Acts.
6. This is the first recorded experience of Paul as a missionary, and in this story we have a pattern that God gives us for the rest of the book, and for the rest of Paul's ministry.
7. In this message we will examine four facts from this passage, and then we will see the picture that each one teaches us.

First, Elymas (a Jew) failed to bring God's light to Sergius Paulus (a Gentile).

1. Sergius Paulus had Elymas as his advisor, but Elymas was a sorcerer and false prophet.
 - Being a sorcerer, Elymas would practice astrological predictions, witchcraft, divining, communicating with dead spirits, etc.
 - All of these practices are satanic and are condemned by Scripture. This is why Paul calls him a "*child of the devil*." vs. 10; cf. Deuteronomy 18:20
2. Elymas' given Jewish name was Bar-jesus which means "son of Jehovah; Savior." He must have been raised by Jewish parents that had knowledge of God's truth.
3. But rather than being a light to Sergius Paulus (a Gentile heathen), showing him the true God and the way of salvation, Bar-jesus led Sergius into Satan's darkness.
4. What does this picture for us?
 - The nation of Israel was to be a light to the Gentile nations and bring salvation and blessing to them. This was God's prophetic plan.
 - In the book of Acts, Israel failed to be the light that God planned for them to be. Instead they were stumbling around in darkness and rejecting Christ.

5. Elymas' (a Jew) failure to be a light to Sergius (a Gentile) is a picture of Israel's failure to be a light to the Gentiles.
6. We know that God eventually set Israel aside, and now He is working through the church, the body of Christ. How are we doing with our light? Are you shining your light for Christ at work, to your family, to your neighbors, etc.?
Ephesians 5:8; Philippians 2:15
7. If we have the light of God's truth and don't shine it, we play the part of Elymas.

Second, Elymas (a Jew) rejected the truth of God, while Sergius Paulus (a Gentile) sought the truth of God.

1. In verse 7 it says that Sergius "*desired to hear the Word of God.*" But in verse 8 it says that Elymas withstood them. This means he rejected the truth of God.
2. What does this picture for us?
 - This is a pattern we see over and over again in this book. Israel rejects the truth of God while the Gentiles readily receive it. 13:42, 46-49, 17:4-5, 18:4-6, 28:28
3. Elymas had many spiritual advantages, yet rejected God's truth. You can be raised in a Christian home, go to church, hear the finest preachers, go to a Christian School, and yet miss it all. America is saturated with the gospel. There are so many opportunities for people to seek out and receive God's Word, yet so many squander this spiritual opportunity.
4. It is a serious thing to reject and turn your ear away from God's truth. Mark 6:11

Third, Elymas (a Jew) sought to turn away Sergius (a Gentile) from the truth of God.

1. It wasn't enough for Elymas to simply reject the good news of Christ, but rather he actively sought to turn away Sergius from the gospel. vs. 8
 - People sure haven't changed. Misery always loves company. People who are in rebellion against God and his truth always desire to have others rebel with them.
2. What does this picture for us?
 - Again, this will be a recurring a theme in the book of Acts.
 - The Jews not only rejected God's truth, but sought to turn the Gentiles away from it. 13:44-45, 50; 14:2, 19; 17:5, 13; 21:27
3. Practical note: Whenever God is doing a work, the devil will always be right there to vehemently oppose it. Why? Because God's work is damaging to the devil's work.
4. This is why Satan will always find ways to oppose churches and individuals who uncompromisingly stand for God's truth.

Fourth, Elymas (a Jew) was temporarily blinded, while Sergius (a Gentile) was saved.

1. Paul condemned this sorcerer in the strongest terms (vs. 9-10). Paul exposed this man for what he was - a false prophet, a child of the devil, and an enemy of all righteousness.
2. What was the result of Paul's condemning rebuke? vs. 11-12
 - Elymas was completely blinded for a season. The one who was supposed to possess insight into the unknown was enveloped in darkness and rendered powerless.
 - Sergius believed Paul's gospel and was saved.
3. What does this picture for us?
 - Satan successfully blinded Israel (as a nation) to the gospel of Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:4
 - But because of their rejection and blindness, salvation would be sent to the Gentiles, and they would hear and believe. 13:46-48, 18:5-8, 28:25-28; Romans 11:7-11
 - But the blinding of Elymas was temporary. So it is with the nation of Israel. They are blinded for a season (Romans 11:25), but one day they will see the light and receive Jesus Christ as their Messiah and Savior.
4. Some may say, "Wasn't Paul hard on Elymas?" Sergius got saved because Paul took a firm stand. We do not help the cause of the gospel by treating sin lightly. Sin must be exposed for all its treachery so men will see clearly their need of salvation.

In Conclusion:

1. In this story we see two "Pauls."
 - The apostle Paul - once a religious Jew, but was lost and in need of a Savior
 - Sergius Paulus - a lost, pagan Gentile
2. Both were sinners that needed to be saved by the grace of God and Jesus Christ. That is the pattern for today. Romans 10:12-13