

## The Most Significant Battle in Human History Acts 13:4-12

What was the most significant battle in human history? Some historians consider the Battle of Salamis the most significant battle in human history. It was the battle that ended the Greco-Persian Wars. The city where this battle was fought, Salamis, is referred to in our passage. Salamis was located on the eastern coast of the island of Cyprus. On the western coast of Cyprus there was another city, Paphos. This is where a different kind of battle was fought. The battle for the soul of the Roman proconsul. It illustrates the battle that is the most significant battle in human history, the battle for human souls, that are eternal.

As we walk through Acts 13:4-12, we will find the answer to three questions: What precedes this battle? What reveals this battle? What determines this battle?

What precedes this battle? Before traveling to and arriving at Paphos, the place where the battle for the proconsul's soul was fought, Barnabas and Saul proclaimed the Word of God in the synagogues in the city of Salamis. Again, this is where "the most significant battle in human history" was fought, according to some historians. Paul would later write these words, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation, for everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greeks. First, they went to the synagogues to preach the gospel to Jews.

What reveals this battle? The efforts of a sorcerer to turn the proconsul from the faith being proclaimed by Barnabas and Saul makes this battle visible. Notice how the opponent is introduced: "a certain magician" "a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus". When we read "magician" we shouldn't think of a person who pulls a rabbit out of a hat or someone who has the talent to trick others with sleight of hand. Think instead of a sorcerer, someone with occult beliefs and practices, a psychic. Someone who engages in black magic. The fact that he is called a Jewish false prophet is also interesting. He is Jewish. But he is also engaged in practices forbidden by the Jewish Scriptures, "There shall not be found among you anyone who... practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or a charmer or a medium or ...one who inquires of the dead." (Deut. 18) He was probably a person who made crooked the straight paths of the Lord because he mixed up some Jewish beliefs and practices with many occult beliefs and practices. He had been and was an advisor to the proconsul and didn't want to lose his cabinet-like position. During the years when Ronald Reagan was president there were rumors and there was evidence that Nancy Reagan had an astrologer whose advice she followed. It was also rumored that the President began to be influenced in his decision making by his wife and this advisor. If true, this situation with the President would have been similar to the one we find here with the Proconsul.

What determined this battle? The outcome of this battle was determined by the sovereign power of the Holy Spirit working through Barnabas and Saul in the communication of the word of God and through Paul in the confirmation of the word of God. Let's look first at the confirmation of the Word of God, the miracle that was done. This miracle done through Paul was unlike most miracles. It was a miracle of cursing rather than a miracle of blessing. Elymus became physically blind because he was already spiritually blind. He was made blind so the proconsul would see how blind he always was. He had been misleading the proconsul, now he needed someone to lead him. But it was decisively the communication of the word of God that produced the proconsul's faith. Our text ends by saying "for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord". "For" means because. This is the ultimate reason he believed. The Bible does not say "miracles are the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes." It says, "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes." The Holy Spirit caused this Roman proconsul to be astonished at the teaching of the Lord and believe. According to a famous archeologist and New Testament scholar, there are inscriptions bearing Sergius Paulus' name that have been found on Cyprus confirming that he was a Christian and that his entire family became Christians. The astonishing teaching of the Lord, or about the Lord Jesus, was that God became man in order to become sin as he died, and then he rose from the dead so that rebels would be saved from the penalty and power of sin through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that the outcome of the battle for your soul will be that you will believe in the name of Jesus.