

# SALAMIS

On the first missionary journey, the first stop on Cyprus was Salamis, an important commercial center and the metropolitan port on the eastern coast of the island (Acts 13:4, 5). It was located at the mouth of the Pedieos River, about four miles north of modern Famagusta. The missionary team first preached the gospel in the synagogues (*plural*) of Salamis, a detail indicating that a large Jewish population existed there. This was the pattern that Paul used in all of his missionary journeys—offering the gospel to Jews first before turning to the Gentiles (see Rom. 1:16).

The city of Salamis was built about the twelfth century B.C. Yet, the ruins visible today are from the Roman period, including a gymnasium, agora (forum), baths, toilets, and a theater. The theater is the largest on the island, with a maximum seating capacity of 15,000 spectators. The city also had a bathhouse with a steam room. The floor would be heated underneath, and then cold water would be poured on the floor to produce steam.



Columns of the Gymnasium



Roman Theater with Seating Capacity of 15,000



Elevated Floor in the Steam Room of a Roman Bathhouse



While preparing for the second missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas had a sharp disagreement over taking John Mark along, which led to the two men going in different directions. Paul took Silas and traveled over land through Syria and Cilicia, whereas Barnabas took John Mark and sailed to Cyprus (Acts 15:36-41). Perhaps Barnabas and John Mark followed up with contacts made on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:4-12). Barnabas' interest in Cyprus can be explained in light of Acts 4:36, which indicates that he was a Levite from Cyprus. It made sense for him to go back home to share the gospel with his family and friends, just as Paul had apparently done in Tarsus (Acts 9:30; 11:25). Barnabas had a special connection to John Mark, who was his cousin (Col. 4:10) from Jerusalem (Acts 12:12).

According to Greek Orthodox tradition, Barnabas remained on the island for the rest of his life and was the first archbishop of Cyprus. However, such an office did not actually exist in the first century when Barnabas lived; independent congregations were simply governed by a plurality of elders. These "elders" ("presbyters") were also known as "shepherds" ("pastors") or "overseers" ("bishops") (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). The only office above the elders in a local congregation belongs to Jesus, the head of the church, who reigns in heaven. He is the "Chief Shepherd" and "Overseer" of our souls (1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4). According to legend, Barnabas was also martyred in Salamis and buried on the necropolis of the city (see the apocryphal *Acts of Barnabas*). The location of his tomb was supposedly revealed in a dream to Bishop Anthemios in the fifth century A.D.



The Mausoleum of St. Barnabas



The Tomb of St. Barnabas



Icons of St. Barnabas (Left) and Jesus Christ (Right)