

What is the significance of Cyprus in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Cyprus-in-the-Bible.html>

Cyprus is a large island in the Mediterranean Sea approximately 60 miles west of Syria and 50 miles south of Turkey. Cyprus is about 148 miles long and 40 miles wide. It was given the name Kypros (“Land of the Cypress Trees”) by the Greeks. In ancient times, Cyprus was known for its active commerce, producing corn, oil, wine, timber, and minerals, which were shipped to distant ports.

Cyprus (also called Kittim) is mentioned in Numbers 24:24 as a part of Balaam’s prophecy to Balak. The people of Cyprus would invade someday, afflicting Assyria and Israel, but they would ultimately fail.

In the New Testament, Cyprus is noted as being the home of Barnabas (Acts 4:36). Cyprus was also the home of Mnason, who was most likely one of the first converts at Pentecost (Acts 2:41; 21:16). After the martyrdom of Stephen, many Christians scattered from Jerusalem, and some “traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews” (Acts 11:19). Then some of the believers from Cyprus went to Antioch in Syria and began to evangelize the Greeks there, “telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus” (verse 20). The Lord blessed their efforts, and “a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord” (verse 21).

It was to the island of Cyprus that Paul took his first missionary journey with Barnabas and John Mark (Acts 13:4-13). They sailed from Syria to Salamis on the east end of Cyprus, where they preached in the synagogue. The missionaries then traveled west, crossing the island, but they apparently did not see much fruit from their labors. When they arrived at the city of Paphos in the southwest, the island’s Roman proconsul,

Sergius Paulus, summoned Paul and his companions and listened to their message. Unfortunately, the proconsul's associate, Elymas, was a sorcerer who contradicted the gospel and tried to keep Sergius Paulus from converting. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Paul caused Elymas to go blind, and Sergius Paulus exercised faith in Christ (Acts 13:4-12).

After sailing from Cyprus, John Mark abandoned the team, but Paul and Barnabas continued their pioneering missionary work in Asia Minor. Later, Barnabas returned to Cyprus, taking Mark with him for more evangelistic work in his native land (Acts 15:38-39). As far as we know, Paul never visited Cyprus again.

Referring to Cyprus may have been one way those in the first century gave directions, similar to our saying, "Go two miles past the big red barn." Luke mentions Cyprus twice as a place Paul passed while traveling to somewhere else (Acts 21:3; 27:4). The island's central location and busy ports would have been familiar to the original readers of Acts.