



The Parish of Peasedown St John

Acts 13:13-43 - The gospel message

Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

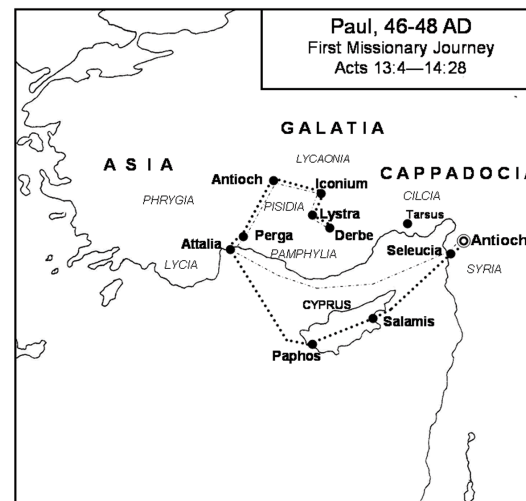
1. Talk Passage – Acts 13:13-43

13 From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. **14** From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. **15** After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak.”

16 Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: “Fellow Israelites and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! **17** The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt; with mighty power he led them out of that country; **18** for about forty years he endured their conduct in the wilderness; **19** and he overthrew seven nations in Canaan, giving their land to his people as their inheritance. **20** All this took about 450

years. “After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. **21** Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. **22** After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’ **23** “From this man’s descendants God has brought to Israel the Saviour Jesus, as he promised. **24** Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. **25** As John was completing his work, he said: ‘Who do you suppose I am? I am not the one you are looking for. But there is one coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.’

26 “Fellow children of Abraham and you God-fearing Gentiles, he is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. **27** The people of



Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognise Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. **28** Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. **29** When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. **30** But God raised him from the dead, **31** and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.

32 “We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors **33** he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm:

“‘You are my son; today I have become your father.’ **34** God raised him from the dead so that he will never be subject to decay. As God has said, “‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.’ **35** So it is also stated elsewhere: “‘You will not let your holy one see decay.’

36 “Now when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed. **37** But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

38 “Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. **39** Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a

- Having announced the new truth about Jesus and sin, Paul now shares with them an even more explosive truth about Jesus and his death: ‘*But God raised him from the dead,*’ (Acts 13:30) Jesus had been resurrected.
- The Jews in Pisidian Antioch may have heard about Jesus’ death and how the crowds asked Pilate to have Jesus crucified: ‘*they asked Pilate to have him executed.*’ (Acts 13:28) and how he was taken from the cross and buried: ‘*they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb*’ (Acts 13:29) but had they heard and fully understood about Jesus’ resurrection.
- Most of Jews sitting there in Pisidian Antioch would have believed in an eventual resurrection: that is, that God would look after our mortal soul after death until, at the last day, God would give his people new immortal bodies at the time when he judged and remade the whole world. ‘We have a mortal soul in need of an immortal body’
- This is what Martha assumes Jesus was talking about in their conversation beside the tomb of Lazarus: *Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”* John 11:23-24
- The explosive truth that Paul shared with his fellow Jews in Pisidian Antioch that day was that God had brought Jesus back to life in his resurrected body – Jesus is the first person in history to do this.
- Two important things flow from this:

- i) That Jesus is alive, we can talk to him and know him. Paul explains to his fellow Jews in Pisidian Antioch that many people saw Jesus in his resurrected body: ‘*for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.*’ (Acts 13:31)
- ii) Jesus is the prototype or first fruit of what all of us have to look forward to – That we too will be resurrected and given new bodies. In Paul’s letter to the Corinthians he states in verses 51- 54 of Chapter 15: *Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: Death has been swallowed up in victory – This is the prize at the end of the race that we all can look forward to.*

2.5 Conclusion

- With the words of Paul’s sermon ringing in our ears what will our reaction be. Will we be like those who were the first to hear it who invited Paul and Barnabas back to talk further: *As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath.* (Acts 13:42) or are we convinced, like Paul and Barnabas, about who Jesus is and what he came to do. Are we still talking about Jesus or are we people who are witnessing in our lives what is it like to know Jesus and to be saved by him.

3. Questions to consider at home

3.1 From Paul’s sermon to those gathered at Pisidian Antioch what do you see as the significance of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead?

3.2 Given all the heritage of God’s promises that belonged to the Jews why do you think they rejected Jesus and the message that Paul and Barnabas were preaching?

3.3 Look at verses 16, 26 and 46. a) Who is the ‘us’ to whom the message of salvation has been sent in verse 26? b) Notice from verse 46 how the rejection by the Jews meant the Gospel came to the Gentiles. Through this sad turn of events prophecy was fulfilled (v 47) Can you think of other instances, either in the Bible or in your own experience, where good comes out of something that seems less than ideal? c) Given all this does God still have a purpose for the Jews? Look at Romans 1:16 and any other passage you feel might be relevant.

3.4 ‘All who were appointed for eternal life believed’ (v 48). If that is the case where does faith and personal response to the Gospel come in?

justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses. **40** Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you: **41** “Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you.” **42** As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. **43** When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

2. Talk Notes

2.1 Introduction

- Imagine the scene inside the Synagogue at Pisidian Antioch on that Sabbath day: the reader has just finished reading the lesson when the lay church elders turn around and invite one of the church visitors to give a ‘word of encouragement’: ‘*On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak.”*’ (Acts 13:14-5)
- Following a successful time in Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas have sailed from Paphos to Attalia and then went to Perga. It is in Perga that John Mark leaves Paul and Barnabas: ‘*John left them to return to Jerusalem*’ (Acts 13:13). From Perga Paul and Barnabas would have had to travel north about 100 miles through the difficult and dangerous Taurus mountains to reach Pisidian Antioch.
- Pisidian Antioch, named to differentiate it from the Antioch from which Paul and Barnabas had started their missionary journey, was in the Roman province of Galatia and was the chief military and political centre in the southern part of the Galatian province. Paul and Barnabas would have encountered seven different types of people here: synagogue officials, Jews, proselytes, God-fearers, devout women of high standing, Gentiles, and leading men of the city.
- Doctor Luke, the author of Acts, records for us here, in full, the first of many of Paul’s addresses or ‘words of encouragement.’
- Like every good address or sermon Paul has three points to make.
 - i) His address or sermon starts with his fellow Jews sitting alongside him in that synagogue on that Sabbath in Pisidian Antioch and with their **Past**. (Acts 13:16-25)
 - ii) He then moves on to talk about their **Problem** with Jesus. (Acts 13:26-29)
 - iii) And concludes by sharing God’s **Purpose** and **Plan** not only for Jesus but also for them (Acts 13:30-41)

2.2. Past (Acts 13:16-25)

- Paul masterfully starts his address or sermon with his fellow Jews sitting alongside him in that synagogue on that Sabbath in Pisidian Antioch. He starts by reminding them of all that God has done for them over the last 1,500 years:
 - i) God **chose** them: ‘*The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors*’ (Acts 13:17)
 - ii) God helped them **prosper** whilst they were in Egypt: ‘*he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt*’ (Acts 13:17)
 - iii) God **guided** them: ‘*he led them out of that country*’ (Acts 13:17)
 - iv) For forty years God faithfully **endured** their constant moaning and groaning in the wilderness: ‘*for about forty years he endured their conduct in the wilderness*’ (Acts 13:18)
 - v) God **kept his promises** by conquering and giving them the Promised Land: ‘*he overthrew seven nations in Canaan, giving their land to his people as their inheritance.*’ (Acts 13:19)
 - vi) God **gave** them judges and prophets to rule the people and the land: ‘*God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet.*’ (Acts 13:20)
 - vii) He even **gave** them the king they demanded so that they could be more like the nations around them: ‘*Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul*’ (Acts 13:21)
- What has God been doing in our lives? Like the Jews sitting in that synagogue on that Sabbath in Pisidian Antioch, can we too look back and see what God has done for us?

2.3 Problem with Jesus

- Having spent time reminding his fellow Jews what God had done for their ancestors, Paul now moves on to talk about the **problem** with Jesus and ‘*how the people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognise who Jesus was*’ (Acts 13:27)
- ‘Who is Jesus?’, is a question that has reverberated down the corridors of history. It is a question we need to ask ourselves and it was the question Paul was asking his fellow Jewish worshippers sitting in that synagogue on that Sabbath in Pisidian Antioch.
- Those worshippers along with all their fellow Jews were looking forward to a messiah, a new king in David’s line who would be a military leader who would forcibly boot out the Romans from their occupation of Israel and make their nation great once again.
- The **problem** then, and the **problem** today, is that God rarely moves in the way we expect. The prophet Habakkuk reminds us: “*Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you.*” (Habakkuk 1:5, Acts 13:41) No one was expecting God himself to become human and live amongst us. And yet that is exactly what God did.
- If we had asked Jesus who he was, he would tell us that he was indeed the son of God:
 - The Samaritan woman at the well rightly claims, in her discourse with Jesus, that the only person who can answer the debate about whether Mount Gerizim or Mount Zion is God’s holy mountain is God himself: “*I know that Messiah*” (called Christ) “*is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.*” (John 4:25) Jesus’ answer to her is stunning: “*I who speak to you am he.*” (John 4:26).
 - At the last supper Jesus reminds Philip: “*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*” (John 14:9)
- The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognise what God was doing in Jesus because they were gripped by religion rather than relationship. They were more concerned about the rules, the regulations and the ritual and had forgotten that their job was to witness to those nations around Israel what it was like to be in relationship with the living God.
- Has the same thing happened to our faith? Is our faith all outward show? Are we more concerned about the rules, the regulations and the ritual, than we are our relationship with the living God?
- The **problem** with religion is that it inevitably leads to death. For Jesus, it led to his actual death: ‘*When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb.*’ (Acts 13:29) but for us it leads to the death of relationship.

2.4 God’s Purpose and Plan not only for Jesus but also for them

- Fortunately for us all, including the Jews Paul was speaking to in Pisidian Antioch, Jesus had a greater **purpose** to fulfil. Jesus had left heaven for earth to put into place the greatest rescue **plan** in history. Paul explains it to them as follows: “*Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses.*’ (Acts 13:38-9)
- In his letter to the Romans, Paul reminds us that “*All have sinned.*” (Romans 3:23) We have all in our own way rebelled against God. Paul also reminds us that ‘*the wages of sin is (spiritual) death*’ (Romans 6:23) a severance of relationship with God.
- Every Jew sitting in that synagogue in Pisidian Antioch would have known that the only way to deal with their ongoing disobedience or sin, under the law of Moses, was through the ritual sacrifice of an animal. Its blood was shed to atone for their sin.
- But Paul announces to his fellow Jews in Pisidian Antioch an explosive new truth about Jesus and sin. At God’s instruction Jesus came to deal with the penalty for our sin once and for all. Jesus, a Jew, a member of God’s covenant people lived a perfect life. He is the only person who has completely satisfied the law and never sinned. As Jesus dies on the cross he pays or atones for our sin. We are ‘*set free from every sin*’ (Acts 13:39) or justified by God’s grace (**God’s Riches at Christ’s Expense**), Paul explains.