

## I. Introduction

Good morning! Last week we saw how Barnabas and Saul departed from Antioch to go to Barnabas' birthplace, the island of Cyprus, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus. On the island of Cyprus, they had an amazing encounter with the Roman ruler of the island, Proconsul Sergius Paulus and, possibly as a direct result from this encounter, from this point on Saul will be known as Paul. So, people usually call this trip Paul's first missionary journey.



In today's Scripture reading, Paul and Barnabas depart from Cyprus to sail to Perga and then they travel on to Antioch in Pisidia. The ancient ruins of this city have been excavated. Perhaps you can imagine Paul and Barnabas walking down the main street through the city (photo). By the way, don't be confused by the fact that there are two cities named Antioch. To prevent confusion, this one is usually called Pisidian Antioch.



The Bible doesn't tell us why Paul and Barnabas chose this city as their next destination, but if we dig around in Roman history a bit we can come with an intriguing hint. It turns out, you see, that this is the hometown of Proconsul Sergius Paulus. It is not certain, but after he believed in Jesus, the proconsul may have encouraged Paul and Barnabas to go to his own hometown to proclaim the Name of Jesus. Let's read **Acts 13:14-31** and see what happens next.

## II. Scripture Reading: Acts 13:14-31 (NIV, 1984)

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 synagogue rulers sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak."

16 Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: "Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! 17 The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt, with mighty power he led them out of that country, 18 he endured their conduct for about forty years in the desert, 19 he overthrew seven nations in Canaan and gave 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. He 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 Savior 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 think I am? I am not that one. No, but he is coming after me, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'

26 "Brothers, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. 27 The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize 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 tree 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.

### III. Teaching

This photo shows the ruins of the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath, Paul and Barnabas went to this synagogue to join in the Jewish worship service. This reminds us that these men were devout Jews. The roots of the Christian faith are found in the Jewish faith. The apostles did not set out to start a new religion, rather, they intended to make it known that Jesus was the promised Messiah; the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies about the coming Savior. Christianity became a separate faith only because the council of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem refused to recognize Jesus as the Messiah.



**Acts 13:15, “After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue rulers sent word to them, saying, ‘Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak.’”** Here we see that the synagogue practice was to have two readings from the Scriptures and afterward to invite someone present to speak. The Jewish Scriptures are the same as the Old Testament of our Bibles. However, they are arranged differently. The Jewish Bible is called the Tanakh, and it is organized in three sections, the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Writings.



After a reading from the Law of Moses, and another from the Prophets, Paul was invited to speak. **Acts 13:16, “Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: ‘Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me!’”** Paul then gave a brief review of the history of the Jewish people. Let’s follow Paul’s example and go through a quick review of our own.



Paul started his review by reminding them that **(Acts 13:17a), “The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers.”** By this, Paul pointed to the Jewish Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who was later renamed as Israel, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. God chose these men and spoke to them, giving the promise that their descendants would become a countless multitude and that the Messiah would be from among their children.



The first of these promises came when God spoke to Abraham in Genesis 12. **Genesis 12:2** records these words from the Lord, **“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.”** The Lord continues to speak and the following verse ends with the promise, **“all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”** How could all of the peoples of the earth be blessed through the descendants of Abraham? There was only one way this could happen; the Messiah, the Savior of the nations, had to come through the children of Abraham.

Paul probably actually gave an extensive message about the history of Israel and the prophecies concerning the Messiah, who is Jesus our Lord. What is recorded in Acts 13 is most likely only a short summary. But even this brief summary shows that Paul spoke about the 400 years the people of Israel spent in Egypt before Moses led them out with powerful miracles. The 40 years of wandering in the wilderness during which God gave them the Law and instructed them in how to build the tabernacle for worship. The conquest of the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua and the time of the judges. And the time of the kingdoms under Saul and David and more.



**Acts 13:22 “After removing Saul, he made David their king. He 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.’”**

This quote about David seems to combine 1 Samuel 13:14 and Psalm 89:21. In any case, it is a wonderful word isn't it? Wouldn't we all like to become people after God's own heart? Although he made mistakes, David loved and served the Lord from his youth until his death.

The Lord recognized David's faithfulness and in **Psalm 89:3-4** gave him this promise, **"You said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, 'I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations.'"** This promise guaranteed that the Messiah would come from David's line, because only the Lord has a throne that remains forever.

The Old Testament records many prophecies that were given about the Savior, hundreds of years before Jesus was born. Again and again the prophets spoke about the Messiah to come, giving more and more details. Here are a few of those prophecies:

It was prophesied that the Messiah would be born of a virgin and that He would be called Immanuel, which means, "God with us." **Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."**

The birthplace of the Messiah was given by the prophet Micah. **Micah 5:2, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."**



It was also prophesied that the Messiah would be betrayed by a friend for a price of thirty pieces of silver which would be used to buy a potter's field (Psalm 41:9, Zechariah 11:12-13). These prophecies were fulfilled, of course, in the actions of Judah, the disciple who sold Jesus into the hands of His enemies.



The suffering and crucifixion of the Messiah was also prophesied in detail in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 52-53. These passages made it clear that the Messiah would suffer and die for the sins of the world, so that we might receive forgiveness and new life through trusting in Jesus.



The themes of death and new life are also symbolically portrayed in many Old Testament stories. Such as the story of Abraham offering Isaac in Genesis 22, and, the story of Jonah, who for three days and three nights was in the belly of a great fish before being spit out on the shore. These stories prophetically foreshadow the coming of the Messiah and His death and resurrection.

Of course, there are also direct prophecies of the resurrection. **Psalm 16:9-10** reads, **"Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay."**



There are many more prophecies and prophetic models that we could discuss, but I think this is enough for a short review. Paul gave a review of the facts of history and prophecy and challenged the people to believe in Jesus. **Acts 13:26 "Brothers, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent."** In saying this message of salvation has been sent to us, Paul is also showing that all who hear the message need to respond. After Christmas we will continue our study in Acts and we will see how the people of Pisidian Antioch responded to the message.

#### IV. Conclusion

But what about us? How will we respond to the facts of history concerning the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah? How we respond to the powerful miracles of Jesus and to His compelling words? Jesus gave sight to the blind, opened the ears of the deaf, strengthened the legs of the crippled, and gave new life to the dead in His ministry here on earth. These things all demonstrate that He is God and Savior, and these things also point to the time when all things will be restored by His mighty word.



Jesus has promised that He will come again in power and then all things will be restored. The promise of **Revelation 21:4** will be fulfilled, **“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”** It is difficult for us to imagine a world without tears, or death, or pain, but this is what God has promised to all who trust in Jesus.

How will we respond to Jesus? Or, should I say, how will we respond to God? God is the Creator and Giver of Life and all things come from His hand. God is not far off and indifferent to human suffering; He is here with us now through His Spirit. God is real. God spoke through the prophets. God came in the person of Jesus Christ. Next week, we will focus on Christmas and we will talk about more about how God came into this world in the person of Jesus Christ. It is my prayer that each and every one of us, and our families, friends, loved ones, and neighbors, would open our hearts to Jesus and invite Him in.

Let's close with a reading from Isaiah 45:18-22. **“18 For this is what the LORD says-- he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited-- he says: "I am the LORD, and there is no other. 19 I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness; I have not said to Jacob's descendants, 'Seek me in vain.' I, the LORD, speak the truth; I declare what is right. 20 "Gather together and come; assemble, you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save. 21 Declare what is to be, present it-- let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. 22 "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.”**

#### V. Prayer