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Paul's Message in Pisidian Antioch

13: 13-52

45 AD

Paul's message in Pisidian Antioch DIG: From Cyprus to Pisidian Antioch is about 350 miles by sea and land. What does their willingness to travel so far show about Paul and Barnabas? Compare 13:5 and 15. Why are they using this strategy? What is significant about Paul's audience? From verses 17-23 list all the things Paul says God has done. How do God's actions prepare the way for Paul to speak about Jesus in verse 23? Compare verses 22-23 and 36-37 with Romans 1:3 and Acts 2:29-31. What is the connection between David and Yeshua? Why is this so important to Paul and Peter? What things about Messiah is Paul emphasizing by his use the three quotes in verses 33, 34 and 35? The resurrection is mention four times in verses 30-37. How does the resurrection confirm the meaning of these quotes? In verses 38-39, what does Paul say is the central meaning of the resurrection for his listeners? Compare verse 39 with Romans 3:20-24 and 8:3-4. From these verses, how would you explain what Paul means by being justified? Why would Paul end his sermon with a warning of judgment from Habakkuk 1:5?

REFLECT: If you were to emphasize one central truth about the gospel, what would it be? What difference would it make to your faith if there was no Easter to celebrate, but only a Good Friday to remember? How do you think Paul would respond to a modern-day skeptic who felt Jesus was a noble, but misguided, martyr? What role would the TaNaKh play in his answer? How would knowing the TaNaKh help you to understand and share your faith better? What kind of opposition have you faced because of your faith? How do you usually respond to opposition? Does it make you stronger? Why? Would it be tougher for you to face opposition from community or from your family members? Why? Who are some of the people that have had the greatest influence on you? How have they earned the right to speak into your life? What qualifies them to be

respected and reliable?

It is quite possible that the reason **Barnabas** and **Paul** went off to **Pisidian Antioch**, which was not necessarily the most obvious choice for the next place to evangelize, is that **Sergius Paulus**, who had family connections in that region, suggested it. Perhaps **he** even wrote a letter of recommendation to aid **them** along the way. Therefore, the contact with **Sergius Paulus** is the key to the following itinerary of the **First Missionary Journey**.²⁸⁴

The arrival: Although **Luke** provides no information regarding how long **the trio** remained on **Cyprus**, **they** apparently experienced no difficulty in finding a ship to take them to the Asia Minor coast. **Setting sail from Paphos**, and traveling 180 miles by water, **Paul’s company came to Perga** (the capital) **in Pamphylia** (modern day Turkey), given over to the worship of Artemis. This **city** was located in Asia Minor and is not to be confused with **Antioch** in Syria, from which the missionaries set out on their journey. **Perga**, the metropolis of the region, could be reached by traveling seven miles up the Cestrus River from the Mediterranean port of **Attalia**, and then going about five miles west by foot. At that point **John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem**. The Bible does not tell us why **Mark** chose to leave them at this important time. However, what is clear that **Paul** did not consider **his** leaving a good reason. Later, **Paul** refused to take **Mark** with **himself and Barnabas** on a return visit to Syria and Cilicia because he felt that **Mark** had deserted **them** in **Perga**.

Apparently **Paul and Barnabas** did not preach in **Perga** at that time, but **they** did on **their** way back to Syrian **Antioch** in **14:24-25**. But going through the low swampy lands of **Pamphylia**, a region through which **Paul** passed on **his** way to **Pisidian Antioch**, **he** contracted an oriental eye disease called ophthalmia (see the commentary on **Galatians, to see link click Bp - Until Messiah is Formed in You**). **So, they passed on from Perga and came to Antioch of Pisidia**, about a hundred miles north on foot (**13:13-14a**). It was a rugged and dangerous trail across the Taurus Mountains to the city of **Antioch, Pisidia**, on a plateau 3,600 feet above sea level. **Antioch** was a common town name. This was one of sixteen **Antioch’s** in the ancient world that were established by Seleucus Nikator to honor his father, Antiochus.²⁸⁵ Historians point out that **Antioch of Pisidia** was actually in the province of Phrygia. This has been confirmed by two inscriptions. But **Antioch** was also located very near **Pisidia**. Since **Pisidia** was the more prominent and well-known region, it was common to distinguish it as **Pisidian Antioch**.²⁸⁶ It

had a very large **Jewish** population. **Josephus notes that two thousand Jewish families lived in the area (Antiquities 12.3.4).**

After **their** difficult trip was over, **Paul and Barnabas** arrived in Pisidian **Antioch**. In what was to become the pattern for **Paul’s** ministry, **they entered the synagogue on the Shabbat and sat down. The primary and seminal element in the synagogue was scripture reading - prayer being a secondary activity. The most important piece of furniture was the ark, containing the Torah scrolls. It is likely that most synagogues possessed the whole Torah, together with the psalms and the Prophets. The Torah reading was conducted in Hebrew, accompanied by a vernacular translation. Paul and Barnabas probably communicated with their various audiences in Greek. They synagogue possessed no specific person appointed as a teacher and the “sermon” delivered on Shabbat was not considered to be a true part of the service. After the reading of the Torah and the Prophets, the synagogue leaders sent word to them, giving them a polite invitation to speak from the text, saying: Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, speak (13:14b-15). If a rabbi like Paul was present he would presumably have been asked to address the people. They were held in high esteem. In fact, people were required to rise in his presence and to give him special consideration in his efforts to earn a living. As a Levite (4:36-47), Barnabas would normally have been eligible to read the second portion (Git. 5:8).²⁸⁷**

After the reading of the Torah and the Prophets: Then as now, on **Shabbat**, there was added to the service a reading from **the Torah** (the Five Books of Moshe) and the *haftarah* (or conclusion), which consisted of a reading from *the N’vi’im (the Prophets)* or *the K’tuvim (the Writings)*. Following this would be a *drashah* (meaning *investigation*, that is, *a teaching or sermon*), depending on who was available to teach or preach. Hospitality often dictated offering this honor to a visitor, if he was competent (see **Luke 4:16-17**). Obviously both **Paul** and **Barnabas** were competent, but **Paul**, taking the lead, was the one who spoke.



The message: So Paul, standing up on the bema seat, and motioning with his hand, to quiet everyone down and get their attention, said: **Men of Isra’el and God-fearers**, which would have both groups who would be at the synagogue on a typical Shabbat, **listen (13:16)**. Paul’s sermon in this **synagogue** illustrates how **he** went about presenting the gospel to **Jews**. As with Stephen (see [Aw](#) - **Stephen’s Testimony to the Sanhedrin**), the appeal is through the history of **God’s** dealings with the people of Isra’el. **Yeshua** is presented as **the Son of David**, a term everyone knew to mean **the Messiah**.

God-fearers: Besides **Paul’s** conviction that it was right to present the gospel first to **the Jew**, **he** also knew that it was in the synagogues where **he** would find **Gentiles** most likely to be responsive, since “proselytes at the gate” (see [Bb](#) - **An Ethiopian Asks about Isaiah 53**) were already interested in the one true **God**. One aspect of communicating the gospel consists of trying to determine which people are most likely to respond to it. **Paul** wasted little time in reaching people open to it. In this regard **the Jewish community** is not different from **Gentile** communities: there is a full spectrum of receptiveness, from people stubbornly opposed to those whose hearts are waiting and aching for **the Good News** of **ADONAI**.²⁸⁸ **Here’s the heart of Paul’s sermon in a few sound bites:**

Sound bite number one. Isra’el has always been the object of God’s special care. The God of this people Isra’el chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an outstretched arm (the phrase the TaNaKh uses repeatedly to describe **God’s** judgment on those who rebel against **Him** and His people Isra’el) **He led them out**

of there. This was the exodus, then **for about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness. And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He gave their land as an inheritance to the Israelites - all of this took about 450 years,** starting with the birth of Isaac and ending with the actual conquest of **the Land by Joshua (13:17-20a).**

Sound bite number two. God gave Isra’el Canaan as their homeland and great leaders - judges, kings, especially King David, a man after God’s own heart. After that, He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. Then, after the judgeship of Samuel, they asked for a king, and God gave them Sha’ul, son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. The TaNaKh does not state how long King Sha’ul reigned, but Josephus said forty years in his *Antiquities of the Jews* 6:14:9. After removing him, He raised up David to be their king. He also testified about him and said, “I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do My will” (13:20b-22). The point of this historic review is that **ADONAI** had prepared for the coming of **the Messiah.**

If you look up all the times **God** speaks about meditation in the Bible, you will be amazed at the benefits **He** has promised to those who take the time to reflect on **His Word** throughout the day. One of the reasons **ADONAI** called **David, “a man after My heart,”** is that **David** loved to reflect on **God’s Word. He said: O how I love Your Torah! It is my meditation all day long (Psalm 119:97).** Serious reflection on **God’s** truth is a key to answered prayer and the secret to successful living.²⁸⁹

Sound bite number three. God promised to send David’s descendant to rescue both the Jewish children of Abraham and Gentile friends of God. Paul deals with the messiahship of **Yeshua. Psalm 89:27-30** declares that **the first-born, son’s seed shall be established forever. The Messiah** will be **the first-born son to God,** and will be elevated as eternal **King.** But how can a human king have eternal **seed?** **Paul,** reflecting on the words of **Psalm 89** wrote: **From David’s seed, in keeping with His promise, God brought to Isra’el a Savior - Yeshua (13:23).** The reason that the seed is eternal is because the source of **the seed** is eternal **Himself!** In addition, it is clear that the source of **the seed,** and of **the Messiah,** is eternal and heavenly (**Second Samuel 7:13-16**).²⁹⁰ So in the past **YHVH** prepared for the coming of **the Messiah,** in the present **the Messiah** has come, and **God** has sent **the Messiah** to **Isra’el.**

Before His coming, John had proclaimed an immersion of repentance to all the people of Isra’el (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Be - John the Baptist Prepares the Way](#)). **As John was completing his service, he said: What do you suppose me to be? I am not He. John** clearly denied being **the Messiah**, but responded to **his Lord** right away. **He** prepared the hearts of others toward the coming **Messiah** because **he** saw **Yeshua** for who **He** really is. **He** knew **Jesus** was more than a great teacher, **He** was **the Lord God** we must all answer to. **But behold, One is coming after me, whose sandal I’m not worthy to untie (13:24-25)**. This statement shows that **John** knew **Jesus** was high above him. **In that day, it was not uncommon for a great teacher to have disciples follow him, and it was expected that the disciples would serve the teacher in various ways. This arrangement came to be abused, so the leading rabbis established certain things that were too demeaning for a teacher to expect of his disciple. It was decided that for a teacher to expect his disciple to untie the strap of his sandal was too much; it was too demeaning.** Here, then, **John** insists **he** wasn’t even worthy to do this for **his Lord and Savior**.²⁹¹

Paul deals with the **death** and burial of **the Messiah**, two of the three points of the **gospel**. And emphasizing **their Jewishness**, he said: **Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham and those among you who are God-fearers, it is to us Jews the message of this salvation has been sent.** Then **he** dealt with the death of **Messiah (13:23-26)**.

Sound bite number four. The people and their leaders in Jerusalem failed to recognize the Messiah. He was crucified and buried, but ADONAI raised Him from the dead. Everything YHVH promised Isra’el is fulfilled in the resurrected Yeshua. For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers were responsible for **His** death- **not recognizing Him or the sayings of the Prophets that are read every Shabbat - fulfilled these words by condemning Him. They** did it out of ignorance, but **their** ignorance did not absolve **them**. **Though they found no charge worthy of a death sentence**, but in spite of the lack of evidence, **they** nonetheless **asked Pilate to have Him executed. When they had unintentionally carried out all that had been written about Him, the Jewish leaders** wanted **Him** taken **down from the tree** (Greek: *wood*) before sundown **and laid in a tomb (13:27-29)**. It should be noted how often **Jews** avoid using the term “cross,” which is offensive to them. Even today in Jewish evangelism the term **tree** is used which is less offensive.²⁹²

Fourthly, **Paul** deals with **the resurrection of the Messiah**, the third point of **the gospel**, “**But** (Greek: *de*, is emphatic here). **But God raised Him from the dead! For many days He appeared to those who had come up from the Galilee to Jerusalem, those who knew Him best are now His apostles to the people**” (**First Corinthians 15:6**). The **Paul** applied the truth of the resurrection. **And we proclaim to you Good News - the promise of the Messiah, made to the fathers, has arrived! For God has fulfilled this promise to the children - to us - by raising up (the birth) Yeshua, as it is also written in the second psalm:**

**You are My Son.
Today I have become Your Father (13:30-33).**

Luke quotes the TaNaKh almost always in a form either corresponding to the **LXX** or close to it, and not according to the Hebrew Masoretic Text. Here **Psalm 2:7** is quoted verbatim from the **LXX**. **And indeed, the rabbis took this to be a messianic Psalm.**

But since God raised Messiah up from the dead, never to return to decay. Meaning **Messiah** will never die again. **He is the firstfruits** of the First Resurrection (see the commentary on **Revelation Ff - Blessed and Holy are Those Who Have Part in the First Resurrection**). **He** has a resurrection body and has put on immortality. **He has spoken in this way, “I will give you the holy and sure mercies of David” (13:34).** Again **Isaiah 55:3** is quoted close but not exactly corresponding to the **LXX**. By **Messiah's** resurrection, the Davidic Covenant is assured (see the commentary on **the Life of David Ct - The LORD's Covenant with David**).

Therefore, ADONAI also says in another psalm, “You will not permit Your Holy One to see decay.” And again, **Psalm 16:10** is quoted verbatim from the **LXX**.²⁹³ Then we have the application of that Psalm. **For after David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he went to sleep and was laid with his fathers and saw decay.** So the application of **Psalm 16:10** cannot possibly be to King **David** because **he died and saw decay.** **But** it is applicable to **the One whom God raised up did not see decay - Yeshua Messiah (13:35-37).**

Sound bite number five: Anyone may be forgiven for their sins and justified (found not guilty) before God through faith Yeshua Messiah's death, burial and resurrection. Therefore, let it be known to you, brothers,

that through this **One** that was killed and raised from **the dead**, is proclaimed to you the removal of sins, including all those from which you could not be justified (Greek: *dikaiountai*, meaning the act of **God** whereby, negatively, **He** forgives our sins, and, positively, **He** declares us righteous by transferring all the obedience and righteousness of **Messiah** to us by faith), by the Torah of **Moses**. According to the Oral Law (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ei - The Oral Law**), there are thirty-six transgressions for which the Torah specifies the punishment as being *karet*,” that is, being cut off from Isra’el (K’ritot 1:1). For these the Torah provides no sacrifice for atonement to restore fellowship.²⁹⁴ Through this **One** everyone who keeps trusting is made righteous. Be careful, then, so that what is said in the Prophets may not come upon you (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Mt - The Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple on Tisha B’Av in 70 AD**):²⁹⁵

“Look, you scoffers,
be amazed and vanish away.
For I am doing a work in your days -
a work you will never believe,
even if someone tells it to you in detail” (13:38-41 LXX)

This is a reference to the Babylonian invasion of 586 BC, but the application is to the 70 AD judgment. The one point of similarity is that they were both confronted with **scoffers**). **Luke** quotes the TaNaKh almost always in a form either corresponding to the **LXX** or close to it, and not according to the Hebrew Masoretic Text. Here **Habakkuk 1:5** is quoted close but not exactly corresponding to the **LXX**.²⁹⁶

The results: The initial effect of **Paul’s** sermon was to arouse interest, not opposition. **He** did not alienate **his Jewish** hearers by denouncing them as opposing **God** or following a man-made religion, as some zealous but mistaken Christian evangelists do today. **As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging them to speak these things to them** again at the next **Shabbat**. This request was probably made by the elders of the **synagogue**, giving them a week to investigate any false claims. **When the synagogue meeting broke up, many of the Jewish people and Gentile proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who were speaking with them and trying to persuade them to continue in the grace of God (13:42-43).** They didn’t want to wait because **they** had already become **believers** as a result of **Paul’s** message

that **Shabbat**.

The following Shabbat, almost the entire city, both Jews and Gentiles, came together to hear the word of the Lord. They came to hear the Word of God and the synagogue was overflowing with people standing outside. Since the town’s citizens had the opportunity to hear the Torah read every Shabbat, they were presumably drawn to Paul’s preaching of the Word in regard to Jesus.²⁹⁷ The teaching of the Torah, requiring circumcision, attracted only a few Gentiles, but the preaching of grace, attracted a multitude of Gentiles who had heard Paul’s sermon the previous Shabbat and understood that the salvation he proclaimed in Messiah included them! The word had spread like wildfire through the Gentile community and they were there in masse. But when the unbelieving Jewish leaders saw the Gentile crowd, they were filled with zealotry (Greek: *zelos*), as the Great Sanhedrin had been previously (5:17). Their zealotry was over the presence of all those Gentiles. It was one thing to proclaim the coming Messiah to the Jews. It was quite another to maintain that the Messiah God accepted the Gentiles on an equal basis. To them this was a little short of blasphemy,²⁹⁸ and they tried to contradict Paul’s interpretation of Scripture by continually reviling him. Both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said: It was necessary for the word of God to be spoken to you first (Romans 1:16). Since you reject it and judge yourselves unfit for eternal life - behold, we are turning to the Gentiles (13:44-46). This would turn out to be the pattern of evangelism in the book of Acts.²⁹⁹

**For so the Lord has commanded us,
“I have placed you as a light to the [Gentile] nations,
so that you may bring salvation to the end of the earth” (13:47 LXX).**

Luke quotes the TaNaKh almost always in a form either corresponding to the LXX or close to it, and not according to the Hebrew Masoretic Text. Here Isaiah 49:6 (and separately citing Amos 9:11-12) is quoted close but not exactly corresponding to the LXX.³⁰⁰ It is essentially the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) given to the Jewish people. The phrase light for the Gentiles recalls Isaiah 60:1-3 CJB: Arise, shine, for Your light has come, and the glory of Adonai has risen upon You . . . and Goyim (Gentiles) will walk in Your light. Yeshua is the light of the world (John 8:12).

When the Gentiles heard this, they were thrilled and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as had been [predestined] for eternal life believed

(13:48). Here we have a clear picture of the sovereignty and the doctrine of **predestination**. It was those who **ADONAI predestined for eternal life that believed**. While it is true that **believers are chosen in Christ before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4)**, and that **God foreknew, predestined, and called the elect (Romans 8:29; Jude 1)**, it is also true that the Bible says that **God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16)**. I believe this is an antinomy, or *two contradictory statements that are both true*. For example **the Trinity** is an antinomy. **God** is one (**Deuteronomy 6:4**) and is reflected in three **Persons**. We don’t have to choose. I also believe we don’t have to choose on this issue. The Bible teaches both, **believers have been predestined for eternal life**; and we have a choice in this life, **whoever believes in Him shall not perish**. But **those** who go to hell do so because **they judge themselves unfit for eternal life (13:46)**. It doesn’t make sense to our finite minds, but **the Lord** will explain it all to us when we get to heaven.

Evangelism always follows true salvation, as those who are saved naturally desire to share their faith. **The converts in Pisidian Antioch** were no different. Through **their** enthusiastic testimony, **the word of the Lord spread throughout the whole region**. The strategic position of **Pisidian Antioch** would help to cause the spread of **the gospel** in spite of opposition.

Unable to win the debate against **Paul and Barnabas, the Jewish leaders invited** some of **the wealthy Gentile women of high standing** (women could be quite wealthy in the Roman world, and many were attracted to **Judaism**) who attended the synagogue with **their** husbands, **the leading men of the city**.³⁰¹ Evidently **they** had sufficient social standing to force the departure of **Paul and Barnabas**. **They stirred up persecution against the two missionaries and they drove them out of their district**. **Paul** refers to this persecution in **Second Timothy 3:11**; possibly **he** and **Barnabas** were **beaten with rods or whips (Second Corinthians 11:24-25a)**. In any event, **Paul and Barnabas** followed the advice given by **Jesus** for dealing with an unreceptive city: **If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town, as a testimony against them**, and go where **their** ministry would be more fruitful (**Mattityahu 10:14; Mark 6:11; Luke 9:5**). In other words, **they** were not only to leave such **a town or home**, but such was to be considered and treated as a pagan. The emphasis here is on those who were not **worthy**. The procedure was that a sandal was taken off and **the dust** was **shaken**

off as a traditional Jewish symbol of separation and warning of judgment.³⁰² As a result, **they shook the dust off their feet against them, and they went on to Iconium (13:49-51).**

And the new Jewish and Gentile believers in the city of **Pisidian Antioch** were continually **filled with joy and the Ruach ha-Kodesh (13:52).** **Believers** are immersed with **the Holy Spirit** once at the moment of salvation (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Bw -What God Does For Us at the Moment of Faith**), but we are leaky vessels and we need to be continually **filled**. As **Paul and Barnabas** started out for Iconium (about eight miles away), **they** left behind **them** two completely different groups of people: the rejecting, prejudiced, hate-filled **Jews**; and the joyous, **Spirit-filled believers**.

These verses paint a stark picture of the choice facing every person on the earth. People either have faith/trust/belief in **Yeshua Messiah** and are saved for all eternity . . . or they reject **Him** and are lost for all eternity. As **He Himself** put it: **Whoever is not with Me is against Me, and whoever does not gather with Me scatters (Matthew 12:30).** He left us not third alternative.³⁰³

ADONAI, help me to always speak what is consistent with being **clear minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love and in patience.** May I be **sanctified in demeanor - not backbiting or enslaved by wine, teaching what is good (Titus 2:1-3).** My desire is to be someone others can trust - in the same measure that I trust in **You**.³⁰⁴