

## Episode #1211 Acts 13 Part 3-Paul in the Synagogue of Pisidian Antioch

I. Acts is unique in the New Testament. Rather than the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth, it focuses on what came after, when the Lord had ascended back into heaven. The Lord left His disciples with many commands to carry out, and Acts tells us how they did them.

II. In chapter 13 of Acts, we saw Barnabas and Saul separated from the other leaders in Syrian Antioch to go out directly under the control of the Holy Spirit. They ministered on the island of Cyprus in all the synagogues, and then appeared before the Roman proconsul. When they were opposed by a magician named Elymas, Paul took charge and proclaimed blindness on him. When Sergius Paulus saw this, he believed. Then, they left Cyprus and sailed to Perga. Paul leapfrogged Barnabas, and is considered the one in charge from now on.

III. Paul's Proclamation at Pisidian Antioch. Acts 13:14-41.

A. Verse 14. They arrive at Antioch.

1. They had left from an Antioch, but we must not get these two places mixed up. The Antioch that was their "home base" was in Syria, Syrian Antioch, on the east side of the Mediterranean Sea just north of Israel. This Antioch was in Pisidia (Pitchy), Pisidian Antioch, in Asia Minor on the northern side of the Mediterranean. Antioch (Driven Against) was derived from various monarchs who held that name, like the cities named Alexandria named after Alexander the Great in different parts of the world. This Antioch was the capital of Pisidia, a Roman colony.
2. Notice they did nothing in Perga that we have recorded, passing right from there to Antioch, where there is a synagogue. Their primary mission was to go to synagogues, and not to Gentiles. If there were no Jews in a place, then there was no ministry for them there!
3. They find a synagogue. These (as a reminder) were community centers where Jews of all views and backgrounds would meet, unlike our churches. The Israelites scattered out among the nations would have a synagogue if they had sufficient numbers. They were not strictly religious organizations. There were no religious ceremonies or rituals carried out there. Those were all done in the temple. Synagogues had certain rules and orders of procedure. It did have a ruler (or rulers), but he was more a facilitator than anything else. There was no formal "service." While there could be a Levite there who was supposed to be the teacher, there was no priest. They came there for mutual help, and there would always be the reading of the Word of God.
4. Many would go to synagogue on the Sabbath, yet this was not a requirement. Since they could not work on the Sabbath, however, it became a convenient day to meet. This is an unusual word for "Sabbath day," and may be the day after Passover.

B. Verse 15. The "synagogue rulers" = Greek *archisunagogoi*, had the right to commission or *apostello* men to speak to Paul and Barnabas. Notice this was no formal thing, and they were not "scheduled" in advance. News at that time was largely carried by word of mouth. Travelers were rare, and so a traveler who had been to any place was expected to remember all the names of those in that place and any details of news he could carry about those people. This was often imparted privately, but Paul may have some news which would interest all. Travelers could sometimes

speak encouraging words and sometimes discouraging ones, depending on their news. These rulers wanted comforting or encouraging words from Paul and Barnabas. Positive exhortation = *parakleseos* in Greek.

- C. Verse 16. The synagogue was probably divided into many groups of people talking. Motioning with the hand was customarily the sign that all should pay attention to him, as he was about to say something of the utmost importance. This will not just be the gossip about if crops are good in the last city and so forth.
  - 1. He addresses his words to the men of Israel. These were not Israelite by citizenship, since they were born outside the land, but rather Israelite by ancestry, and they counted themselves as such if they were meeting in the synagogue.
  - 2. The God-fearers were what we might call reverent Gentiles. As a rule, wherever there was a synagogue, you would find some Gentiles who would attend. They would get sick of the idolatry and disgusting licentiousness of the pagan religions of the day, and be attracted to the God of Israel. Many would not go so far as to become proselytes. Circumcision as an adult could have been quite a deterrent, among other things. So they would like to listen in on the meetings from seats outside the synagogue and hear the reading of the Scriptures. The Israelites were happy to allow them to do this.
- D. Verse 17. Paul reviews the history of the people of Israel. “Chose” is *eklektos*, and here is your doctrine of election! Who is elected? Israel! “Fathers” is put for “ancestors”: here probably Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel. This is a brief summary of the book of Genesis. This is similar to Stephen’s address in Acts 7. Dwelling as strangers and bringing them out of Egypt summarizes Exodus. An uplifted arm is a strong arm. The Bible speaks of “arms that hang down,” which is a symbol of weakness, and this is the opposite. God did show great power when He brought millions of people out in one night!
- E. Verse 18. This summarizes Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Their ways in the wilderness often involved rejecting God. Now Israel had done a similar thing by rejecting their Messiah, Jesus.
- F. Verse 19. This summarizes the book of Joshua. Joshua 3:10 lists the seven nations. The land was distributed to each of the twelve tribes, much like the fifty states of the United States. They started out as a loose coalition of twelve tribes, but gradually developed a strong, centralized government, much like the USA has done in its history.
- G. Verse 20. A long time with no centralized government! Paul summarizes the book of Judges.
- H. Verse 21. This begins to summarize the books of Samuel with Israel’s first king.
- I. Verse 22. The LORD removed Saul for rebellion and set up David instead. The quote is Psalm 89:20 and I Samuel 13:14 joined. We complete the summary of the books of Samuel.
- J. Verse 23. Paul breaks off his summary of the Old Testament to bring them to the important truth for them to understand. It was from the seed of David God raised up for Israel a Savior: Jesus. Notice: Israel’s Savior. He is also the Savior of the world. Yet He is Israel’s Savior, Deliverer and Rescuer, for they are to be saved nationally

and as a company of people. He is the only hope for saving them. Without Him, they will never be restored.

K. Verse 24. The *Resultant Version* has, “**The previous proclaiming of John, before His personal entrance, was the baptism of repentance to the entire people of Israel.**” John’s proclamation came before Christ’s ministry. It was an identification with the *metanoia* company in Israel (those who had the after-mind).

L. Verse 25. John’s witness.

1. We have no single statement elsewhere like this. We could combine John 1:20 with Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:7-8, and Luke 3:16 to produce something like this.
2. Finishing = *pleroo*, “to fill up” or “fill full,” completing. The “course” is mentioned here by Paul in regards to John, and by Paul in regards to himself in Acts 20:24 and II Timothy 4:7. He was referring to a course laid out by the Lord for them to complete.
3. Perhaps some in the crowd wondered if John was the Messiah. He tells them he is not, but implies that the One coming after him is He, the Christ. He will not be worthy to loose His sandals. High praise to offer to a man, but the Lord Jesus was more than a Man. He was God Himself!

IV. Conclusion. Paul and his company moved on from Perga to Pisidian Antioch, but again there they go first to a synagogue of Jews. There Paul stands up to speak an important message. He starts reviewing the history of the nation of Israel, and leads them on to their Savior of the seed of David, Jesus Christ. He presents Him to Israel as their Savior. My question for you is: is He your Savior? Do you recognize He is the Savior? Great! But have you ever received Him as your personal Savior, to save you from your sins? I pray that you have!