



The Book of Acts - Chapter Thirteen

IV Acts 12:1-13:3 - The Jerusalem church is persecuted (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Thirteen

The first section concludes the account of the activities of the church at Antioch. Saul and Barnabas had returned from their humanitarian mission to Jerusalem and, after giving a brief account of some of the gifted men in the church, Luke tells how Jesus instructed them to send out Saul and Barnabas, along with Barnabas' nephew John Mark, into a wider and new mission field.

The first part of their journey took them to Barnabas' native Cyprus. They travelled the full length of the island. Although we are given few details of their work, we do know they taught in the Jewish synagogues, until they reached the western end of the island. In Paphos, they met with the Roman proconsul, the senior official on the island, who had a Jewish sorcerer as an aid. The proconsul, possibly a proselyte but clearly a man who was interested in God had a Jew named Elymas as his aid and advisor in such matters. Elymas was as sorcerer and had been misleading the proconsul.

Saul, now called Paul, through the Holy Spirit, recognised the wickedness of Elymas and called out for him to struck blind, which he immediately was. This miraculous action opened the proconsul's heart and he came to believe in Jesus.

After this, they sailed for Pamphylia, in modern day Turkey, where Mark left them to return to Jerusalem. Travelling inland to Pisidian Antioch, they immediately started teaching in the synagogue. Paul gave a lengthy speech on the history of how God had raised up leaders for his chosen people, from the time of Moses to King David, and how he had promised a king, who would be of the line of David, who would rule them forever. This, he claimed from the same scriptures, was Jesus, who is the Christ. Many Jews, and especially the Gentiles there, believed their message and came to faith but even more of the Jews opposed their message.

The following week, the whole city turned out to hear Paul again and this enraged the Jews further through jealousy. Due to this opposition, Paul announced that he would focus his time and efforts on those Gentiles who wanted to come to salvation and so he did. The Jews then stirred up further opposition to Paul and Barnabas but the number of disciples continued to grow and they were full of joy.

The opposition in Pisidian Antioch grew so fierce from the Jews and some of the prominent Gentile men and women, who were also God-fearers from the synagogue, that Paul and Barnabas were expelled from the city and so they travelled on to Iconium.

¹ In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manæn (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.

Acts 13:1

Prophets and teachers are always distinct offices in the NT church. The word prophecy, Greek prophēteia, as used by Paul in 1 Corinthians, refers generally to speech that reports something that God spontaneously brings to mind or reveals to the speaker, but which is spoken in merely human words, not words of God. Therefore, it can have mistakes and must be tested or evaluated. An alternative view of this gift, held by some, is that it involves speaking the very words of God, with authority equal to the OT prophets and equal to the word of Scripture. A third view is that it is very similar to the gifts of preaching or teaching. This gift is widely indicated throughout the NT churches. Prophecy is used to build up, encourage, and comfort the gathered community. Prophecy is also used evangelistically to disclose the secrets of the hearts of unbelievers and lead them to worship God. Because God used this gift to build up the Christian community, Paul urged the Corinthians to value it highly: <<I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified>> (1 Corinthians 14:5).

Niger is Latin for black, indicating he likely came from Africa, as did the Cyrenæan Lucius.

Cyrene was the capital city of Cyrene, sometimes called Cyrenaica, a Roman province in Libya, on the north coast of Africa. Some have identified Lucius with Luke, but this seems unlikely, as Luke is a Greek name and Lucius is Latin.

Jesus had promised to give these gifts to the church: <<Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town>> (Matthew 23:34), and so he did: <<It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers>> (Ephesians 4:11).

Herod the tetrarch is Herod Antipas, who is mentioned frequently in the Gospels and who reigned in Galilee from 4BC to AD37, which was during Jesus' ministry, see Matthew 14:1, Luke 3:1 and 23:8, and Acts 4:27. He was a son of Herod the Great, see Matthew 2:1, and his nephew Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, reigned as king in Judæa between AD37-44, see Acts 12:1-23.

The Greek word syntrophos translates as lifelong friend, indicating that Manæn was a close friend of Herod Antipas and had been brought up with him from childhood.

² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Acts 13:2

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting. Though there were recognised prophets in the church (v.1) that did not guarantee that the Holy Spirit would speak to them apart from their spending such extended time in worship, fasting, and prayer.

They likely refers to the whole congregation at worship, although the five prophets may well have mediated the Spirit's message.

The bridegroom had now departed so his disciples can fast: <<Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and

on that day they will fast>> (Mark 2:19-20), which is a sign of our humility and acknowledgement of his suffering, although most of us suffer little in our discipleship.

³ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Acts 13:3

They again probably refers to the entire congregation, although only a small number would physically touch them, rather than just the five prophets and teachers of v.1, since Paul and Barnabas were a part of that latter group.

Placed their hands on them. The laying on of hands was a commissioning, indicating the church's support for the two in their mission, and providing a physical indication of imparting the Holy Spirit's power to them. See Acts 6:6, 8:17, 9:17 and 19:6 for similar examples.

The mission, at least in general terms, was known beforehand, revealed to Paul in Damascus (Acts 9:15, Acts 22:21 and Galatians 2:7-9), and possibly in Arabia and Tarsus as well. But they could not set out until the Holy Spirit authorised them to go. We should always be prepared to get out of the boat: <<"Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus>> (Matthew 14:29), but to do so before being called is presumptuous, although not forgetting the examples of others following those who have had the vision personally, e.g. Peter to go to Cornelius (Acts 10:20) and Paul to go to Macedonia (Acts 16:9). Their calling and sending was confirmed through prayer and the laying on of hands. The Holy Spirit now instructed them to go: <<Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe">> (Revelation 14:15).

V Acts 13:4-14:28 - The Witness in Cyprus and Southern Galatia

The two missionaries worked first on the island of Cyprus, Barnabas' home (Acts 4:36). This, the first of Paul's three missionary journeys, is narrated in Acts 13:4-14:26. It likely began in AD46 or AD47, and lasted perhaps a year and a half.

V.a Acts 13:4-12 - On Cyprus

⁴ The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

Acts 13:4

Sent on their way by the Holy Spirit. Luke continues his emphasis on the divine direction of all that is happening in the growth of the church. Setting out from Antioch (v.1), Paul and Barnabas travelled about 16 miles or 26 km down to the port city of Seleucia.

⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

Acts 13:5

Salamis was the closest port of Cyprus, about 130 miles or 209 km southwest of Seleucia.

John (John Mark) went as an assistant to Paul and Barnabas, clearly with the intention of allowing him to grow in his work.

They began their witness in the Jewish synagogues, a pattern regularly followed by Paul, see Acts 17:1-2. This was a natural starting point, since the Jewish people already believed that the OT Scriptures were the absolute authoritative and truthful words of God: <<For you are a

people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession>> (Deuteronomy 7:6). Paul confirms his choice of pattern as being that of God: <<but glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile>> (Romans 2:10), but qualifies it by further stating: <<For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him>> (Romans 10:12).

⁶ They travelled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus,



The map shows they travelled from one end of the island to the other.

Acts 13:6

Whole island probably means the major cities of their day. Paul tended to focus on locations that had Jewish populations in order to speak to them first.

Paphos was 90 miles or 145 km southwest of Salamis and was the seat of the Roman government of Cyprus. Some commentators believe that Paphos here likely refers to the port city of Nea Paphos rather than nearby Old Paphos, with its famous ancient temple of Venus or Aphrodite. First-century remains in Nea Paphos include an odeion, i.e. a small covered theatre, a larger theatre, and the Sanctuary of Apollo.

As there was a temple to the goddess Venus in Paphos and a sanctuary to Apollo in Nea Paphos, there was a clear need for the Gospel, proclaiming the one true God, to be heard in whichever place they were in. Although Venus is considered to be the goddess of love, she also represented many aspects of human life that are abhorrent to God, such as sexual immorality and some of the human desires that come from it, as described in Romans 1:26-27 <<Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion>>.

Bar-Jesus was a Jewish sorcerer or magician, Greek magos, similar to Simon in Acts 8:9-13. He was also a false prophet. Paul's subsequent characterisation of him as a child of the devil (v.10) suggests that his magic was assisted by demonic powers.

Magic in antiquity was practiced by both pagan and Jewish people, with the goals of healing diseases, bringing physical blessings, cursing or otherwise harming others, and guarding against both curses and demons. Magicians also claimed to foretell the future. Ancient literature, e.g. Pliny, Natural History, and discovered magical books, see Acts

19:19, indicate that magic often involved special incantations, frequently invoking magical names of deities and demons, potions, and the use of magical objects such as amulets, incantation bowls, or figurines.

⁷ who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God.

Acts 13:7

The proconsul was the highest-ranking official in a Roman senatorial province. A few inscriptions have been found around the Mediterranean bearing the name Sergius Paulus, but it is difficult to be certain which, if any, relate to the proconsul mentioned here.

Sent for Barnabas and Saul. Either their reputation had reached him and he wanted to hear them for himself or else the Holy Spirit was at work in his heart ahead of the apostles' visit.

⁸ But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith.

Acts 13:8

Bar-Jesus, also known as Elymas, opposed the missionaries because he viewed them as a threat to his profitable relationship with the proconsul. He was also clearly trying and possibly succeeding in turning the proconsul away from the faith with deceitful proclamations and claims. Elymas tried to use his powers on Paul and Barnabas as well but, just as Pharaoh's magicians failed to influence Moses, so Elymas would fail here: <<Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth — men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected>> (2 Timothy 3:8)

⁹ Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said,

Acts 13:9

This verse marks the transition in Acts from Saul to Paul. Now that he is working in Gentile territory, the Hebrew Saul becomes known by his Roman name, Paul. He will be so named throughout the rest of the book, except in Acts 22:7, 22:13 and 26:14, which recall earlier events. There is no evidence to support suggestions by some commentators that he changed his name as a mark of respect to the proconsul, who was also called Paul.

Filled with the Holy Spirit shows that, once again, God always ensures that his disciples are fully equipped for ministry: <<When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick>> (Luke 9:1-2).

Looked straight at Elymas and said: <<But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might>> (Micah 3:8a), and: <<He made my mouth like a sharpened sword>> (Isaiah 49:2a), shows the outcome of Paul's equipping. Thus demonstrating: <<the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth>> (Psalm 34:16).

¹⁰ “You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? ¹¹ Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun.” Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead

him by the hand. ¹² When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

Acts 13:10-12

Bar-Jesus means son of Joshua or son of salvation, but in reality he was a child of the devil: <<You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies>> (John 8:44), but he was probably a little more subtle and clever: <<Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made>> (Genesis 3:1).

The hand of the Lord can be against individuals: <<Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me – even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons – would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has gone out against me!>> (Ruth 1:12-13); against groups, such as the fighting men of Israel who had left Egypt but died in the wilderness: <<The Lord's hand was against them until he had completely eliminated them from the camp>> (Deuteronomy 2:15); and against nations, including Israel when they wilfully opposed him: <<Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the Lord was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. They were in great distress>> (Judges 2:15).

You are going to be blind indicates Paul's confidence in the Holy Spirit and he clearly had some foresight into the outcome.

Elymas was unable to see the light of the sun. That is, he was blinded for a time, or season in some translations. It should be our hope and prayer for such people that they would use this experience to see the truth and come to prayer, thus probably receiving healing. Again, we see an occasion of God judging instantly but the reason here was probably in aid of the message rather than as a punishment. If Elymas remained stubborn and refused to believe, and both history and the book of Revelation tell us that many have done, and will always do so, then he may well become like the wandering stars in Jude 13 <<wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever>>.

When Elymas was miraculously and immediately, if only temporarily, struck blind, the proconsul believed. This is the direct opposite of the healing miracles of Jesus: <<Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God>> (Luke 18:42). And Jesus' healings are not temporary.

Throughout Acts, miracles have a significant role in bringing unbelievers to genuine faith.

Tradition from the Roman Catholic Church states that Sergius Paulus later became the Bishop of Narbon in France, and was established in post by Paul on his way to Spain. There is no historical evidence to support either claim since records seem to show the first Bishop of Narbon was Paul I in AD251, and most commentators believe that the apostle Paul never made it to Spain despite desiring to do so, as recorded in Romans 15:24 and 15:28.

V.b Acts 13:13-52 - In Pisidian Antioch

From Cyprus the missionaries sailed to the southern coast of what today is Turkey. Nothing is said of Paul's other work in Cyprus or that when he arrived back on the mainland in Perga in Pamphylia, where there was a temple to Diana.



It was here that John Mark left them without their blessing to do so and returned to Jerusalem.

¹³ From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem.

The map gives an outline of Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey. We will see that they retraced their journey from Derbe to Perga before sailing back directly to Seleucia.

Acts 13:13

Perga was 8 miles or 13 km inland. Paul does not seem to have remained there long but witnessed there on his return journey (Acts 14:25). The reason for John Mark's departure is not specified, although Paul's later conflict with Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41) shows it did not please Paul and he had no confidence in him to go on the next journey.

Among the extensive archaeological remains at Perga are: the city gates, theatre, sports arena, and an unidentified temple dated to the time of Paul.

¹⁴ From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down.

Acts 13:14

Pisidian Antioch was one of 16 cities that the Syrian king Seleucus had named for his father Antiochus. The city had a large Jewish population and the high status of being a Roman colony. It is to be distinguished from Antioch in Syria, from where Paul and Barnabas had begun their journey (v.1).

Excavations at Pisidian Antioch have revealed much from Paul's day: city walls, a theatre, large streets, a temple to the Anatolian god Men Askænos, and a large temple platform probably related to emperor worship.

Again, they went to the synagogue on the Sabbath first, see notes on v.5, and: <<I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile>> (Romans 1:16).

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."

Acts 13:15

A typical synagogue service would focus on the readings of the Scriptures from the Law and the Prophets.

Traditionally, worship was led by the synagogue ruler.

According to Jewish tradition, the Law and Prophets were read from each Sabbath. Then Paul and Barnabas, as visitors and strangers, were asked to bring a word of encouragement to the brothers. We too must always be welcoming of newcomers in our churches but I don't believe it would be wise to give them such a public platform before getting to know

them. However, Paul may have been known, by reputation at least. Whether this was the old or new Paul can only be guessed at but he shows that, when we get the opportunity to share the Gospel, we should take it with both hands.

Paul's message (vv.16-41) consisted of three parts: a sketch of OT history (vv.16b-25), God's ultimate provision in Jesus Christ (vv.26-37), and an invitation (vv.38-41). With its historical sketch, the message is reminiscent of Stephen's in Acts Chapter 7. Both speeches emphasise God's raising up leaders for Israel, but with a major, though complementary, difference: Stephen pointed to Israel's rejection of its God-sent leaders, while Paul stressed God's grace in providing the leaders.

¹⁶ Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: "Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me!

Acts 13:16

Most of these men would have been born locally and their ancestors would have lived there for many generations, but as devout Jews they would still have considered themselves as Men of Israel, i.e. descendants of Jacob, who was later called Israel: <<Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome" >> (Genesis 32:28).

You Gentiles who worship God is a reference to the God-fearers in the synagogue. A God-fearer is a Gentile who worshiped Israel's God and was in some way attached to a synagogue but who had not submitted to Jewish conversion rites, especially circumcision.

Acts 13:17-21

Paul gives a brief summary of Israel's history from the exodus to King Saul, emphasising God's merciful provision for his people.

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. ^{20a} All this took about 450 years.

^{20b} "After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet.

Acts 13:17-20

God endured their conduct forty years in the desert. Different manuscripts have either the Greek *etropophoresen*, which means endured or suffered, or the Greek *etrophophoresen*, which means educated. Both could be correct as God did suffer them in the desert due to their hardheartedness, obstinacy and ingratitude, yet he also taught them, and us, so much - such as his grace, mercy, love and patience. We also see the effect of Moses' intercessory prayer for them, something that is still so relevant for us today: <<and in the desert. There you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place>> (Deuteronomy 1:31), <<The LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast desert. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything>> (Deuteronomy 2:7), <<Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands>> (Deuteronomy 8:2), and: <<They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to

return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them>> (Nehemiah 9:17).

We have tried God's patience thousands of times but not yet tired it.

Some commentators see the reference to about 450 years as covering the period from Israel's time in Egypt (400 years), through the wilderness (40 years), and the conquest of Canaan under Joshua (about 10 years), to the time of the Judges. This brief summary of Israel's history thus shows the step-by-step unfolding of God's providential plan, first realised in King David but later fulfilled in the promised Son of David, the promised Saviour, Jesus (v.23).

Others claim the 450 years as the Exodus, time under Moses and Joshua, through the period of the Judges, Samuel, Saul and David, to the time when he finally took Jerusalem, expelling the final stronghold of one of the seven nations, the Jebusites, God had instructed them to remove from the land, which they never fully achieved due to their disobedience. Time under Judges was 339 years excluding Samuel who is seen as ruling as a prophet.

The first option fits better with the sequence of Paul's recounting of events but the difference in these two views makes little difference, if any, to the point Paul is making.

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.'

Acts 13:21-22

He made David their king. David was raised up on high by the God most High: <<These are the last words of David: "The oracle of David son of Jesse, the oracle of the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, Israel's singer of songs>> (2 Samuel 23:1), and his throne was established: <<I have found David my servant; with my sacred oil I have anointed him>> (Psalm 89:20), and: <<The Lord swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke: "One of your own descendants I will place on your throne>> (Psalm 132:11). It was established for a future eternal ruler: <<The days are coming," declares the Lord, when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land>> (Jeremiah 23:5).

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 think I am? I am not that one. No, but he is coming after me, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'

Acts 13:23-25

John is John the Baptist, who had given the people and leaders every indication that the time for the Christ was upon them so that the arrival of Jesus should not have surprised them. John made it clear that he was not the Christ, in fact he was not even worthy to untie his sandal straps, but he did two things to prepare them:

1. He established the way by offering repentance of sin for all and warning them of the coming wrath for those who declined: <<John said to the crowds coming out to be baptised by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?>> (Luke 3:7).
2. He made it clear that the Christ's coming was imminent and that when he came, he would baptise with the Holy Spirit: <<I would not have known him, except that the one

who sent me to baptise with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptise with the Holy Spirit' >> (John 1:33).

Despite these predictions by John and the subsequent miraculous work and teachings of Jesus that revealed him to be at least of God, but was in fact the Christ, the people, especially the leaders, failed to realise who Jesus was.

Although they found no fault in him, they persecuted him and finally killed him exactly as the prophets had revealed hundreds of years before. These were the same prophets that were read every Sabbath yet clearly they were not understood, even by those who were teaching from them.

It shows how important it is for us to know and understand the bible, both from an historic perspective and especially how it is relevant and applicable for us today: as individuals, as a church, as a community and as a nation.

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 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 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 travelled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.

[Acts 13:26-31](#)

[Brothers, children of Abraham](#) are the Jews and [you God-fearing Gentiles](#) are those who have either become proselytes or worship the God of Israel but have not undergone the rites to become proselytes.

[For many days he was seen](#) suggests that there were more resurrection appearances of Jesus than are recorded in the Gospels: <<Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book>> (John 20:30), and: <<Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written>> (John 21:25).

Thank God for the Kindle!

³² “We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers 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 The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words:

“‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.’

³⁵ So it is stated elsewhere:

“‘You will not let your Holy One see decay.’

³⁶ “For when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed.

[Acts 13:32-36](#)

Verse 33b is from Psalm 2:7, v.34b from Isaiah 55:3, and v.35b from Psalm 16:10.

[We tell you good news](#) is what Gospel means.

After he [had served God’s purpose in his own generation](#) reveals a confidence in God’s sovereign direction of history: David’s kingdom was not meant to be final or ultimate but served a specific purpose for its time, as it anticipated a greater Messiah to come. Though he was not sinless, David was, for the most part, faithful to God, and thus he fulfilled God’s purpose for his life. Faithfulness should be the goal of every Christian in every generation.

David [was buried; his body decayed](#). Peter makes reference to David’s death at Pentecost: <<Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day>> ([Acts 2:29](#)), but goes on to state that David prophesied about his descendant who would not see decay (v.37): <<Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact>> ([Acts 2:31-32](#)).

³⁷ But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

³⁸ “Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹ Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

[Acts 13:37-39](#)

[Did not see decay. Jesus was laid in a tomb](#): <<Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there>> ([John 19:42](#)), [expecting him to see decay](#): <<if I say to corruption, ‘You are my father,’ and to the worm, ‘My mother’ or ‘My sister’>> ([Job 17:14](#)), [as they did with Lazarus](#): <<“Take away the stone,” he said. “But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days”>> ([John 11:39](#)). [But Lazarus was raised from the dead, still wearing his grave clothes, as he would need them when he died again](#): <<Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face>> ([John 11:43b-44a](#)). [Jesus was raised from the dead and left his grave clothes behind](#): <<Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus’ head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen>> ([John 20:6-7](#)). [Jesus would have no need for his grave clothes as he would never die again](#): <<For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him>> ([Romans 6:9](#)).

The Greek word *dikaioō*, translated [justified](#), also means ‘to declare innocent, to justify or to free’. Jews sought to deal with their sin through living [by the law of Moses](#). But the law cannot free a person from sin, not only because all people fail to keep it, but also because it was never designed to bring about effective atonement for sins: <<All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, “The righteous will live by faith.” The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, “The man who does these things will live by them.” Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might

come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit>> ([Galatians 3:10-14](#)), and: <<The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming – not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am – it is written about me in the scroll – I have come to do your will, O God.’” First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them” (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy>> ([Hebrews 10:1-14](#)); **only the one who believes in Christ and his saving sacrifice is free from sin and acceptable to God.**

At his baptism, Jesus was made a prophet: <<The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee” >> ([Matthew 21:11](#)); **at his death he was made a priest, speaking of the holy of holies:** <<where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek>> ([Hebrews 6:20](#)); **and at his ascension he was made the king:** <<They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus>> ([Acts 17:7](#)). **Paul writes:** <<and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord>> ([Romans 1:4](#)).

Logos, the Word - he was the eternal thought of the eternal mind.

Summary of Paul on Jesus:

1. He was the direct descendant of King David as prophesied in scripture.
2. He was killed according to scripture by his enemies and laid in a tomb forever, so they thought, but God returned his spirit, which he had given up on the Cross and resurrected him to life.
3. There were many credible witnesses to his resurrection, although Paul does not mention his own encounter.
4. If the Jews listening had accepted Jesus as the Christ then they would have received all the promises that were given to them as God’s people and heirs of them: <<I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you>> ([Genesis 12:3](#)), <<In other words, it is not the natural children who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring>> ([Romans 9:8](#)), and: <<the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises>> ([Romans 9:4](#)).

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.’”

Acts 13:40-41

Verse 41 is from Habakkuk 1:5. Here, the prophet speaks of what will become of Judah and Jerusalem. Because of their failure to turn to God, he would raise up Nebuchadnezzar against them to take them to Babylon for captivity. Here, Paul uses the analogy to say to those who dismiss the Gospel that they face a more desperate future than did their forefathers: <<If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire>> (Revelation 20:15).

Acts 13:42-52

Although the response at the synagogue was favourable, with Paul being asked to preach again, the Jews turned against him the next Sabbath when a large group of Gentiles showed up. Paul responded by turning to the Gentiles, a pattern he would continue in every city he visited: beginning with the Jews, then turning to the Gentiles when opposition forced him away from the synagogue.

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.

Acts 13:42-43

Converts. The Greek word *prosēlytos* is sometimes translated proselyte.

⁴⁴ On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.

Acts 13:44

Since the population of Antioch was mainly Gentile, almost the whole city indicates that the majority who showed up were Gentiles.

To hear the word of the Lord. They had heard it the week before but wanted to hear it again, which Paul does not object to: <<Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you>> (Philippians 3:1). We should never tire of hearing God’s word and sometimes we need things repeating to fully grasp what is being said to us.

⁴⁵ When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying.

⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For this is what the Lord has commanded us:

“‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’”

Acts 13:45-47

Filled with jealousy. We saw this with the High Priest and the Sadducees in Jerusalem when the apostles were attracting large crowds: <<Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail>> (Acts 5:17-18).

Jealousy is one of the worst of human emotions. Solomon writes: <<Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?>> (Proverbs 27:4), but he also points out that: <<Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun>> (Ecclesiastes 9:6). However, a righteous and holy God can be and is jealous of those who abuse his name or oppose him, as stated in the first commandment: <<"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me>> (Exodus 20:4-5), and: <<The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies>> (Nahum 1:2).

Citing Isaiah 49:6, Paul stated he was now turning to the Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas can be seen as doing the work of the Servant because of their connection to Jesus, and they had to speak the word with the Jews first since they were God's chosen people and had priority in salvation history. The role of the Jews in salvation history is a major issue in Paul's epistle to the Romans.

Do not consider yourselves worthy. Their stubborn resistance showed Paul that it would not be worthwhile for him to spend any more time trying to reason with them.

We now turn to the Gentiles. The Jews were not being marginalised in favour of the Gentiles; it was simply a case of using the resources to their best effect: <<I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah – how he appealed to God against Israel: "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"? And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace>> (Romans 11:1-5).

⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

Acts 13:48

Honoured the word of the Lord means they honoured God himself.

All who were appointed for eternal life believed. Throughout Acts, Luke affirms the sovereignty of God over all of life while, at the same time, affirming the significance of human activity, as evidenced by the remarkable human effort and sacrifice involved in proclaiming the Gospel. Thus Luke, without contradiction, maintains a dual emphasis on divine election, i.e. appointed, and on human response, i.e. believed. The emphasis here in is on the way in which divine sovereignty, i.e. appointment, results in the belief of the Gentiles, demonstrating that their belief was due to God's grace alone. This is a similar concept to where humans do things that are predestined by God's foreknowledge and purpose and yet people remain culpable for their own actions, e.g. at Pentecost, Peter charged his Jewish witnesses with the responsibility of Jesus' death: <<This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross>> (Acts 2:23).

Appointed for eternal life does also indicate some form of predestination: <<And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified>> (Romans 8:28-30), <<For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves>> (Ephesians 1:4-6), and: <<In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory>> (Ephesians 1:11-14). However, this does not mean that there is no hope for those who are not 'chosen' beforehand, because we have freewill to choose to accept or reject the Gospel. However, Jesus is the Alpha and Omega. He knows everyone's heart and he knows who will accept it and who will reject it. We don't, so we must continue to share the good news of Jesus with everyone we can.

Interestingly, there appears to have been no miracles used to accompany the message to this group in Pisidian Antioch. If the hearts of those appointed for salvation were already open then there evidently was no need for the signs to accompany the message.

⁴⁹ The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. ⁵⁰ But the Jews incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. ⁵¹ So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.

Acts 13:49-51

The word of the Lord spread. The command of Jesus in Acts 1:8 was being fulfilled faithfully as we have seen on several previous occasions.

Incited women of high standing and leading men. At other times it is a mob that is roused to protest against them but here the Jews go for leading people who would have significant influence over the whole community, thus making it difficult for some ordinary citizens to come to faith no doubt.

Expelled them from their region. We have seen this fearful reaction before from Gentiles: <<Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left>> (Luke 8:37). But here, it is men of God that are rejecting the Gospel, jealous of the success of the apostles and fearful of their own reputations and social standing, no doubt.

So they shook the dust from their feet. Traditionally, this was a sign used by Jews after leaving a Gentile region and indicated their understanding that even Gentile soil was unclean for them. For the Christian missionaries it is a sign of God's judgment on those who were rejecting the Gospel truth. This was an instruction from Jesus: <<If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town>> (Matthew 10:14).

Iconium was 90 miles or 145 km by road to the southeast of Pisidian Antioch.

⁵² And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 13:52

Despite the rejection of some in the population they left not in sadness but filled with joy for their work had been, in the main, successful. They were bold due to the Holy Spirit filling them again as we saw with Peter in Acts 4:8, Stephen in Acts 7:55 and Paul in Acts 13:9.

Being filled with joy should be both the inward and outward mark of a follower of Jesus.