

Acts 13:14-52

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Review from last week

We began **Acts 13** with the call of Barnabas and Paul by the Holy Spirit for their first missionary journey

Upon arrival at in Cyprus they went to a Jewish synagogue on the Sabbath and preached the *kerygma*

Over a few weeks they crossed the island stopping at several towns where they repeated that same process

Eventually they arrived at *Paphos* where they were challenged by the magician Bar-Jesus who tried to prevent them from converting the Roman proconsul

Review from last week (Cont)

Luke begins to refer to Saul using his Roman name Paul who condemns Bar-Jesus

Finally Paul, now in a leadership role, converts the proconsul and they prepare to move on the Asia –Minor

Upon arrival in Asia-Minor John Mark leaves the mission and returns to Jerusalem

Paul and Barnabas travel overland to *Antioch in Pisidia*

Acts 13 (Cont)

Acts 13:14 *“And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.”*

Once again they waited until the Sabbath because that was the only day the people were in the synagogue

Usually after they have completed their prayers the leaders of the synagogue would invite this visitor to speak, at which point he would present the gospel to them

Paul will use this method of operation in every city and in every situation

Acts 13 (Cont)

Acts 13:15-16 *“After the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them saying, ‘brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it. So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hands said: ‘Men of Israel, and you that fear God, listen.’”*

It is hard to understand exactly what Paul means here by “Men...that fear God”

Scholars are not sure what this means

Most likely Paul is in a synagogue with Jews, Proselytes and perhaps even some God-fearers, although most would not have been allowed inside the synagogue as they were considered unclean

Then Paul presents what can be seen as the next segment of the *Kerygma* (**Acts 13:16-41**)

Acts 13 (Cont)

Acts 13:17-19 *“The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arms he led them out of it.... And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan....*

Remember that in **Acts 6** we saw the selection of the seven deacons

Seven is a reference to the Gentile world based on **Du 7** as there were seven nations that were in the land (the Promised Land) that Israel entered

In the Old Testament 7 was usually a reference to a covenant

In the New Testament it is usually associated with a Gentile ruler

Some see the number 7 as a sign of perfection

Acts 13 (Cont)

Acts 13:20 *“And after that he gave them judges until **Samuel the prophet.**”*

Many today **do not** know the stories of Samuel, but he is a critical figure of the Old Testament

See First and Second Samuel which covers the period following the Judges through the kingdom of David

Whenever people talk about the Old Testament and “Salvation History” Samuel is always mentioned predominantly

Acts 13 (Cont)

Acts 13:21-26 *“then they asked for a King; and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for 40 years... Brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you that fear God.”*

Again, we are not sure what Paul means when he says “you that fear God”

He might be talking about Proselytes or God-fearers

Here he begins the second part of his sermon with another direct address to his listeners

Paul points out the failure of the Jewish leaders to recognize Jesus as the Messiah

Acts 13 (Cont)

Acts 13:27 *“for those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these like condemning him.”*

At this point Paul is in a synagogue on the Sabbath and they have just heard a reading from the Law and the Prophets

Acts 13 (Cont)

Acts 13:28-30 *“Though they could charge him with nothing deserving death, yet they asked Pilate to have him killed.... But God raised him from the dead;”*

Remember from earlier version of the *Kerygma* – “The Sanhedrin did these things and God did these things”

Notice that the **central issue here is about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and not simply his crucifixion**

This is the source of a significant **theological difference** of opinions that arose around in the 11th century

Theology on the Resurrection

In the West, beginning with St Anselm (1033-1109 AD), the Church focused inordinately on **the crucifixion**

Looking at the Biblical text you will find that the *telos* (from the Greek τέλος for "end", "purpose", or "goal") is the **resurrection** and **not the crucifixion**

If it were the other way around (a focus on the crucifixion), we would still be dead in our sins

It is the **resurrection** that brings about the conquering of death

The triumph over death comes about by the death and resurrection of Jesus

Theology on the Resurrection (Cont)

That is what we understand happens in Baptism where one receives “baptismal resurrection grace and life”

Although the emphasis on the crucifixion may be attributed in part to St Anselm, much can also be attributed to the teachings that arose after Calvin and Luther where there was an inordinate focus on the “**propitiatory**” (From the OT “Mercy Seat” and means “atoning,” “reconciling”)

This theory is that even after the death of Jesus one was still condemned and deserved death and punishment for eternity, but Jesus takes this punishment for you

This is a relatively new theology (from the past couple of hundred years especially since the Protestant Reformation)

Theology on the Resurrection (Cont)

Have you ever seen the T shirt which depicts a hand with a big nail in it followed by the saying “**his pain, your gain**”?

This elicits the weird theology that the crucifixion is all about Jesus being punished in our place for our sins

God did not kill Jesus (that would have been child abuse)

But Jesus died because the Jews and Pilate killed him

We see in the New Testament the idea that the Jews killed Jesus but God raised him from the dead

God presented his son to Israel but they rejected and killed him and **then God raised him from the dead**

Theology on the Resurrection (Cont)

God did not kill his son to take out his anger and vengeance upon his son who became a finite person like you and me because we could not take this punishment

Pope Benedict XVI has an excellent chapter on this in his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy*

Acts 13 (Cont)

Acts 13:31-35 *“and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem,...’Thou wilt not let thy Holy Spirit see corruption.”*

Notice Luke uses several Old Testament quotes from:

Psalm 2:7

Isaiah 55:3

Psalm 16:9

Habakkuk 1:5

Since Paul only met Jesus after the resurrection, he does not claim to be one of the original eye witnesses

When Paul or Peter is preaching to the Jews they use texts that would be helpful to explain what Jesus has done

The early church had laid out a systematic development of the apologetics for us

Acts 13 (Cont)

Acts 13:36-38 *“For David, after he had served the Council of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid with his fathers,...that through this man **forgiveness of sins** is proclaimed to you,”*

We can see that **Psalm 2** is **not only speaking of David but also of a prophecy about the life of Jesus**, the son of David

We saw this before in Peter’s speech in **Acts 4:25-26** where he quotes from this same text (**Psalm 2:1-2**)

As we will see many of Paul’s letters will speak of “justification”, Luke usually prefers to speak of “forgiveness of sins” as he does in this instance

Acts 13 (Cont)

Acts 13:39 *“and by him everyone that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed of the law of Moses.”*

Remember that these conversations were happening in a synagogue where every week the Law and the prophets were read

Acts 13 (Cont)

Acts 13:40-42 *“Beware, therefore, lest there come upon you what is said in the prophets:.. As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told to them the next Sabbath.”*

Paul, in response to their request will come back to the synagogue on the next Sabbath because that is where he will find the Jews (This does not mean as the 7th Day Advents believe, that Paul was a “Sabbath keeper”)

*The 7th Day Adventist stress the importance of the Sabbath as it was the day on which God rested after the creation and thus we must rest every 7th day
Yet God does all sorts of things that we should not do and even Genesis does not state that we must rest on the Sabbath*

Acts 13 (Cont)

They will also point out that in the 10 Commandments it says that we must remember the Sabbath (as if we would forget it)

They will also point out that Jesus was even Lord of the Sabbath and thus was a “Sabbath keeper”

Then they will show that Paul was also a “Sabbath keeper” as it says that he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath

But that is not what this is all about

Paul goes to the Synagogue on the Sabbath because that is where the Jews he is trying to convert meet

A synagogue was not a church where people come to worship

The closest we have today of a synagogue is a Christian Science reading room where one can go to look at books about Christian Science

Acts 13 (Cont)

At that point the only place a Jew could go to worship God (Yahweh) was the temple in Jerusalem where one could offer a sacrifice

A good Jew would go to the synagogue on the Sabbath to hear someone read from the Law and the Prophets and if he had any education he might provide an interpretation of the text

Some of these Aramaic explanations are called a “Targum” which was a translation of the Hebrew text into Aramaic with a little bit of commentary

Many Jews of that day could no longer understand or read the Hebrew text

The service would conclude with the singing of a Psalm followed by the dismissal of the people

Acts 13 (Cont)

So what is going on here in **Acts 13** is that Paul is going to the synagogue on the Sabbath because that is the only day he can preach to a larger number of Jews when they are not working

So after the reading, he preaches the gospel to them and if things go well, he returns the following Sabbath to continue this discourse

He did not do this just “to keep the Sabbath!”

Acts 13 (Cont)

Acts 13:43-46 *“And when the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, ... Since you thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.”*

Since almost the whole city shows up it would seem that many of these folks were Gentiles

For some reason many Christians believe that the Jews killed Jesus and then the faith was passed on to the Gentiles

But that is not what happened historically

Jesus and all the disciples were Jews as were the 5000 who joined the Church at Pentecost

What is happening in this passage is that Paul and the Apostles do exactly what Jesus did when he was preaching the good news

Acts 13 (Cont)

Sebastian believes that this is why Martin Luther got off track when he was reading the Epistle to the Romans

We must understand the issues that were impacting the Church in Rome to understand what Paul was saying

Acts 13 (Cont)

Acts 13:47-52 *“For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,....And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*

Once again Paul quotes from Isaiah the prophet (Is 49:6)

The answer rests in Acts which gives the history of the early Church where we see Paul (in this passage) turning to and preaching to the Gentiles in their local marketplace before he is chased out of town

Before he leaves he establishes a new Christian congregation that was initially made up of Jews

Every one of his congregations started out with Jews from the local synagogue

Acts 13 (Cont)

So like Jesus he leaves two types of Jews, those who reject Jesus' message and most likely continue to control the synagogue and those Jewish-Christians who are kicked out of the synagogue and form their own little church

This is why the early Church liturgy was based on the synagogue liturgy which has become the first half of our liturgy today

So when the early Christians got together they began the same way as in the synagogue but then they added the Lord's supper as the second half of the Christian liturgy

Paul and Barnabas “*shook off the dust from their feet against them*” (**Mt 10:14; Mk 6:11; Lk 9:5. 10:11**) and then moved on to *Iconium*

Acts 13 (Cont)

Next we will look at Acts 14