

### Paul's Sermon

Acts 13:13—43

As we follow Paul on his journey with Barnabas, it becomes clear that Israelites, in general, and the religious leaders, in particular, did not want anything to do with Paul or his preaching of Jesus Christ. Israel became an enemy of the cross (Philippians 3:18) because they rejected the opportunity to believe in Jesus Christ after His death, burial and resurrection. They not only continued to reject the opportunity to individually believe, but they also did everything in their power to impede the preaching of the Gospel of Grace. Instead of trusting in Jesus Christ for their salvation, they continued to believe that obedience to the Law was the way to please God. Unfortunately, they used their pious obedience to the Law as their means of salvation instead of trusting in Jesus Christ.

Paul's preaching actually prodded them to action. They held the Mosaic Law high above all else, but Paul preached that believers were no longer under Law (Romans 6:14). He also preached that the Law brought death, and that it was the cross that took care of the penalties associated with the Law (Romans 7:5; Colossians 2:14). They saw Paul as a detriment to their religion and destructive to the Law. It seems quite obvious that everywhere Paul preached, Jews were at work to silence him.

The Gentiles stood in contrast to the Jews. They are often shown embracing Paul's teaching and preaching and desirous of hearing more. This is pictured in Paul's encounter with the Jew, Elymas (Bar-Jesus), and the Gentile Sergius Paulus. Elymas tried to prevent Sergius from hearing, while Sergius is shown to have believed what Paul was preaching (Act 13:4—12).

#### **Antioch in Pisidia**

It is interesting to see Paul very often going to the synagogue in many of the towns he visits. There are several reasons for this. The first is that he was tasked with making sure to reach out to the Jews with the Gospel of Grace (Acts 13:46; Romans 1:16). Israel was the guardian of the word of God. God revealed Himself through Israel, and eventually, the Gentiles were to hear the word of God through Israel. When they failed to do this, God raised up Paul, formed the Church, Body of Christ, and turned to the Gentiles with the message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18—20). Now that God is no longer dealing with the nation of Israel, He is giving individual Israelites the opportunity to hear the new Gospel of Grace being preached. They most likely heard the Gospel of the Kingdom, but now Paul is making sure they hear the Gospel of Grace. The Gospel of the Kingdom is no longer being preached (that the Kingdom is at hand; Matthew 4:17), because the Kingdom is no longer obtainable. The near offer of the Kingdom has now been pushed far into the future, and will once again be preached after the Church is raptured (Matthew 24:14).

Paul also preaches at synagogues because it is there that he was able to reach both Jews and Gentiles. There were many proselytes (Gentiles who were following the Jewish religion as in Acts 13:43) who would attend the synagogue, but there were also many curious Gentiles in attendance (Acts 14:1; 18:4). If Paul's desire was to preach to the greatest number of Jews and Gentiles, it makes sense to do so at the local synagogue.

Any mention of Paul preaching at a synagogue declines quickly later into his ministry journeys. This is perhaps due to him declaring in each geographic area that he is going to the Gentiles (Acts 13, 18, 28), because the Jews continued to reject what he is teaching.

## Paul's first recorded message

While in Antioch, Pisidia, Paul was invited to speak, after the reading of the law and prophets in the synagogue. It is here that we see his first detailed sermon. It is obvious that he is primarily addressing his brethren, the Jews, but it is a sermon appropriate to all who hear him. His heart is with his people, Israel, and it is his strong desire to win them over to Christ (Romans 9:1—3). Being at a synagogue, and being invited to speak by the synagogue leaders, Paul preached what some would call a very “Jewish” message.

He opens his sermon with a bit of Jewish history, beginning with the formation of the nation of Israel and how God settled them in the Promised Land by destroying seven nations (Deuteronomy 7:1). After mentioning the judges of Israel, he speaks of Israel's first king, Saul, and then King David. He then connects the Savior, Jesus Christ, as being a descendant of King David. It was John the Baptist, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, who announced the coming of Jesus by preaching a baptism of repentance to all those in Israel (Mark 1:7; Luke 3:3; John 1:6—8).

Paul then points to those in Jerusalem, and specifically to the leaders who did not recognize Jesus Christ or that the prophets of the Old Testament were speaking of Him. Paul continues by telling them that when all the prophecy concerning Jesus was fulfilled, He was put in a tomb. However, God raised Him from the dead and He proclaimed Himself to be God through the power of the resurrection, which was proven by many eye witnesses (Psalm 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15:5—8). This was basically the same thing that Peter preached in Acts 2:22—24. It was important for Israel, and all people, to understand that Jesus Christ was the Son of God who came in the flesh and was confirmed by fulfilling many Old Testament prophecies, and by His resurrection from the dead. Paul parts from Peter's preaching by saying that believing in Jesus Christ would free them from the weakness of the Mosaic Law (Romans 8:3). Peter preached faith in Christ and proven through obedience to the Law. Paul preached faith in Christ would free people from the constraints of the Law. To see how the Law was being put aside, read the account of Peter in Acts 10:9—16. Peter was following the Law carefully, but after Paul was saved, God had to teach Peter that they no longer needed to follow the Law. This was because of a dispensational change as Israel was being set aside, and the Body of Christ was formed beginning with Paul's salvation (1 Timothy 1:16).

The people listening to Paul, both Jews and Gentiles, gladly received what Paul was preaching and wanted to hear more the following Sabbath. In general, throughout Jesus' and Paul's ministry, the people would accept what is being taught. It was the Jewish leaders who almost universally rejected their teaching, and acted to repress the spreading of the word. The Jewish leaders are usually seen stirring up the people and blocking any teaching they disagreed with.

There are a number of believers who think that the church began at Acts 28, and that the message Paul was preaching was a gospel separate from the Kingdom or Grace. They believe he was still inviting the Jews to believe so that they would see the Kingdom set up, which they teach could have been brought in as late as Acts 28. The Mystery, they believe, was revealed to Paul after Acts 28. It is interesting that Paul never preaches anything about the Millennial Kingdom. In fact, there is no evidence that he ever strayed from preaching the Person of Jesus Christ and His work on the cross. Baptism was removed as a necessary show of faith, and the Law is replaced by Grace. Paul is also consistent with his use of the term *Body of Christ* to distinguish us from the Kingdom saints (Romans 12:4; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:22—23; 2:14—16; 4:4; 5:30), and teaching about the indwelling Holy Spirit, something the Kingdom saints were never promised (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Timothy 1:14). Israel is promised the indwelling Holy Spirit at the Second Coming (Ezekiel 36:27).

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