



Chapter 14: First Missionary Journey, Part 2

“An Open Door of Faith to the Gentiles”

Acts 13–14: Paul & Barnabas’ First Missionary Journey, ca. 47-48 AD

Last time, in Acts 13:

- Glimpsed a very multiethnic and multicultural church at Antioch
- Paul and Barnabas sent out by the Holy Spirit on the first missionary journey
- Preached the word in Cyprus (where Barnabas is from)
- Confronted Bar-Jesus (Elymas) the magician who was struck blind
- The proconsul believed, being “astonished at the teaching of the Lord”
- John Mark returns to Jerusalem
- Paul and Barnabas visit a synagogue on the Sabbath in Antioch in Pisidia
- Paul invited to speak to the synagogue
- Paul’s message focuses on Jesus as the fulfilment of Messianic prophecies of David
- The people invite them to return the following Sabbath



Paul's Message of Salvation

"Brothers, ...to us has been sent the message of salvation." (vs. 13:26)

What did Paul, speaking to these 1st-Century Jews in their synagogue, mean by "*salvation*"?

- In the OT, *salvation* meant deliverance from enemies, illness, difficulties, etc.:

"And Moses said to the people, Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again." (Exo. 14:13)

"The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence." (2 Sam. 22:2-3)

- In the scriptures, *salvation* took on a spiritual meaning: enjoying God's blessings and protection, and God himself is the *Savior*!
- In Judaism, *salvation* was rarely about the individual's afterlife destination but about communal and individual well-being in this life
- This is why King David wrote in Psalm 51:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit." (Psa. 51:10-12)

- David is not talking about his future in Heaven or safety from Hell. He is talking about the joy of a right relationship with God!
- But by the 1st Century, Judaism began to assume that *salvation*—enjoying God's blessings and protection—came by being connected to Israel
- Thus, communal and individual well-being came basically by being a good Jew: going to the synagogue, studying the Torah, keeping the laws, being hospitable to strangers, helping those in need

Paul & Barnabas at Pisidian Antioch, Part 2 (verses 13:44-52)

"Almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord" (vs. 44-45)

- "The word of the Lord" is a phrase that implied a prophetic message
- The Jewish leaders were jealous of the attention and, probably, of the prophetic power

“Since you thrust [the word of God] aside, we are turning to the Gentiles” (vs. 46-47)

- Paul and Barnabas call out the unbelieving Jewish leaders for their refusal to believe
- Recall the Parable of the Banquet (Matt. 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24)
- It was necessary to bring the word of God to the Jews first, but now Paul and Barnabas are turning the message of the Messiah toward the Gentiles
- Paul alludes to Isa. 42:6 and 49:6 – *“I will make you as a light to the Gentiles... that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”*

“As many as had been appointed for eternal life believed” (vs. 48-49)

- The believing Gentiles were filled with joy
- Unbelievers judged themselves unworthy of eternal life (vs. 46), but those who were appointed to eternal life believed (vs. 48)

“But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium” (vs. 50-51)

- Unbelieving Jews stirred up the city leaders and those with social standing
- They drove Paul and Barnabas out of the city
- Shaking the dust off their feet: a symbolic gesture taught by Jesus himself:
“And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.” (Luke 9:5)

“And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” (vs. 52)

Paul & Barnabas at Iconium (verses 14:1-7)

“The same thing happened in Iconium” (vs. 1-2)

“The Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders...” (vs. 3)

- The Lord himself bears witness to the truth of the message
- The signs and wonders are the Holy Spirit’s witness to the Gospel!

“An attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews... to stone them” (vs. 5-7)

- This time it wasn’t enough to drive them out of the city
- They plotted to stone Paul and Barnabas, who fled
- Yet they continued to proclaim the good news

Paul & Barnabas at Lystra (verses 8-20)

“Stand upright on your feet” (vs. 8-10)

- The Holy Spirit heals a man crippled from birth. This would have been an unmistakable miracle for those watching
- Echoes Peter’s miracle at the ‘Beautiful Gate’ (Acts 3:1-10) and, of course, those of Jesus (e.g. John 5:1-9)

“The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men! (vs. 11-13)

- Lystra was off the main Roman roads, and its isolation allowed for local customs and character to be preserved
- Local legend told of a time when Zeus and Hermes visited the area and the people failed to acknowledge them, and so judgement followed

“Turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth...” (vs. 14-18)

- In contrast to Herod Antipas in Ch. 12, Paul and Barnabas are grieved that the people treat them as ‘gods’
- Paul appeals to these pagan polytheists in a completely different manner than Jews:
 - He uses the creation, and the notion of a creator, as a reference point to highlight God’s sovereignty and goodness
 - Paul will use a similar approach to a pagan crowd in Athens in Acts 17

“Having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul” (vs. 19-20)

- Angry Jews seem to have followed Paul and Barnabas from Antioch and Iconium
- Paul was stoned and left for dead (cf. 2 Cor. 11:25)
- He got up and went back into the city! And traveled with Barnabas the next day!

Paul & Barnabas Return to Antioch (in Syria) (verses 21-28)

“Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (vs. 21-23)

- After making many disciples at Derbe, Paul and Barnabas pass back through the cities in which they had made disciples (including Lystra, where Paul had been stoned)
- They appoint elders in the churches in these cities “with prayer and fasting”
- Note: Antioch (in Pisidia), Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe were all in the geographical region known as Galatia

“They declared... how [God] had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles” (vs 24-28)

Next: *Acts Chapter 15*