

## 45. Paul Was Given the Opportunity to Speak in Antioch of Pisidia

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to minister by taking them with us as we serve the Lord. We saw the example of Paul and Barnabas as they took Mark with them to share the message of the death and resurrection of Christ on the island of Cyprus. We also saw how Paul and Barnabas continued to carry out the work to which the Lord had called them even after Mark returned to Jerusalem. Today, we are going to learn how the Lord provided the opportunity for Paul to speak in the Jewish synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia. This Antioch was located in the mountains of what today would be the southern area of the country of Turkey.

There were Jews scattered throughout many of the cities of the Roman Empire. In order to survive as a people, even though they were scattered among the nations, the Jews had decided that any time there were ten or more Jewish men in a city, they must build a synagogue. Throughout the week, the synagogue was used as a place where the Jewish children were taught to read the Old Testament. Then, on the Jewish Sabbath, the synagogue was the place where the Jews gathered to read the Old Testament and worship God. Each Sabbath, seven to nine men would read passages from the Old Testament as a part of their worship of God. As a result, the first Sabbath Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch of Pisidia they went to the Jewish synagogue to worship God.

Acts 13:14-15 says, “But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, ‘Men *and* brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.’” The rulers of the synagogue were the elders who gave leadership to each synagogue. The ruler of the synagogue was the lead elder in a synagogue. These rulers had the men that had previously been appointed for that Sabbath read their various passages from the Law and the Prophets (what we call the Old Testament). Then, after the seven to nine men had read, the rulers of the synagogue said to Paul and Barnabas, since they were Jews who were visiting their synagogue, “Men *and* brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.” After the reading of the various parts of the Law and the Prophets, it was normal to have men explain some passage to those gathered. If there were visiting Jews, they were often given the opportunity to explain an Old Testament passage to those gathered in the synagogue that day.

Acts 13:16-19 says, “Then Paul stood up, and motioning with *his* hand said, ‘Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it. Now for a time of about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness. And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment.’” Paul responded to their invitation and got up to speak.

Paul began his message by recognizing the two groups that were in the synagogue that day. The first group was those who were Jews by birth and Paul referred to them as the men of Israel. The second group was called you who fear God. “Those who fear God” is the title that the Jews gave

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to the Gentiles that attended the synagogue to hear the reading of the Old Testament so that they could learn about God. They were also known as proselytes. We read more about this second group in verses 42 and 43, “So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.” Throughout the rest of the book of Acts, we will see that this second group, the God-fearing Gentiles, responded and wanted to learn more about Christ in each of the synagogues that Paul visited as he traveled to different cities.

Paul began this message by talking about the people of Israel when they were in the land of Egypt. He reminded the Jews that God had chosen their fathers. God had chosen Abraham when his family worshipped idols. Joshua 24:2-3 says, “And Joshua said to all the people, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel: “Your fathers, *including* Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.”’” Then, he reminded the Jews that God had exalted His people when they were in Egypt. Numbers 33:3-4 says, “They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians. For the Egyptians were burying all *their* firstborn, whom the LORD had killed among them. Also on their gods the LORD had executed judgments.” The Lord was the One who brought them out of Egypt.

Paul reminded the Jews that God had put up with them while they were in the wilderness. God had provided for them in the wilderness even when they had rebelled against God. Deuteronomy 29:5 says, “And I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet.” After bringing the people of Israel through the wilderness, God had given them victory over the nations in the land. Joshua 24:11-13 says, ““Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the men of Jericho fought against you—*also* the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I delivered them into your hand. I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, *also* the two kings of the Amorites, *but* not with your sword or with your bow. I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.”” Paul said that God had given them a land with all of the food that they needed.

Paul went on to say in Acts 13:20-22, ““After that He gave *them* judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, “I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a man after My *own* heart, who will do all My will.””” Here, we see that Paul gave a quick review of the land of Israel under the judges and the first two kings.

Paul said that Israel had judges for about 450 years. Then, Israel asked for a king and God gave them Saul. However, Saul was not obedient. 1 Samuel 13:13-14 says, “And Samuel said to Saul,

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‘You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you. For now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him *to be* commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.’” Saul was removed as king, because he was not a man after the heart of God who desired to please God.

Then, God raised up David to be their king. God spoke to David when he wanted to build a house for God and said in 2 Samuel 7:15-16, “‘But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.’” God had found David a man after his own heart. When David sinned, he confessed his sin to the Lord and asked for forgiveness. God said that David had carried out His will. As a result, God gave Him a promise.

Paul reminded the Jews of that promise in Acts 13:23-25 where we read, “‘From this man’s seed, according to *the* promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus—after John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was finishing his course, he said, ‘Who do you think I am? I am not *He*. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.’”” Here, we see that Paul told the Jews in the synagogue that day that God had kept his promise to David. In fact, God had raised up a Savior for Israel. That Savior was Jesus. Since all Jews wanted to visit Jerusalem at least once in their lifetime for the Passover, it is possible that there may have been a few Jews from Antioch of Pisidia in Jerusalem at the time that Christ was crucified.

Paul said Jesus came after John the Baptist had predicted His coming. Some of the Jews had probably heard about the preaching of John the Baptist as he came before Christ to prepare the way for Christ. The message of John the Baptist had been widely heard among the Jews. The message of John was summarized in Matthew 3:2-3 where we read, “‘...and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight.’”” Here, we see that Paul began with the Old Testament to give a background for introducing the death and resurrection of Christ. In the same way, we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to use the Old Testament to introduce Christ. With Jews or Gentiles familiar with the Old Testament, we may start from different places in the Old Testament. For individuals who have no background, we may encourage our children to start with Genesis. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to introduce Christ to others.