

## Pisidian Antioch, Part III – Acts 13:44-52

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### Introduction

Luke's focus on the gospel ministry in this city reveals an important change in the direction of that gospel.

1. Paul's first recorded message in Acts
  - a. Although Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles, this message was preached to Jews of the Diaspora (the Babylonian dispersion, God's judgment of Israel's persistent rebellion).
  - b. The main body of the sermon traced Israel from the Exodus to the Davidic monarchy (vv. 16–25). It is summarized as follows:
    - 1) God called Israel out of Egypt to be His covenant son to love and to serve Him (v. 17; Exodus 4:22; Hosea 11:1).
    - 2) Israel failed God in the wilderness, provoking Him by stubborn unbelief. This was done before Israel was officially constituted by covenant at Mount Sinai (v. 18).
    - 3) However, Yahweh remained faithful to His word, giving the land of Canaan to them as the possession promised to Abraham (vv. 19, 20).
    - 4) Yahweh also remained faithful to His word in raising up the seed of the woman who was to bring salvation to Adam's fallen race. God *found* (chose) David to be a man after His own heart through whom He would bring the promised Savior (vv. 21-25).
  - c. The second part of the sermon consists of an exhortation to the Jews not to miss the gospel of His Son (vv. 26-41).
    - 1) Jews living in Jerusalem did not recognize Jesus, even though the prophets, whom they read every Sabbath, spoke of Him (vv. 26–29). As a consequence, they condemned and crucified Him although He was innocent—fulfilling all that was spoken by the prophets.
    - 2) However, God raised Him up from the dead, commissioning His disciples to be His witnesses to the salvation promised to the fathers (vv. 30-33a).
    - 3) Yahweh, due to Israel's failure, raised up His own Son as the new Israel through whom He would give “the holy and sure blessings of David”—forgiveness of sins (Isaiah 55:1–3; vv. 33b–39).
    - 4) Paul closed his message with a warning to these Jews to “beware” of fulfilling the prophecy of Habakkuk 1:5 and Isaiah 49:6 by their unbelief in rejecting the gospel of Christ (vv. 40, 41).
  - d. The response? Some wanted to hear more; others were moved to follow the apostles, being exhorted to continue in the grace of God (vv. 42, 43).
2. The text before us records the events that took place the following Sabbath (vv. 44–52).
  - a. Nearly the whole city of Antioch assembled to hear the Word of God (v. 44). In one week's time, Paul's message of the gospel “went viral.”

- b. This eager response of the Gentiles was contrasted to the jealous reaction of the Jews, who contradicted and reviled Paul (v. 45).
  - 1) They did not oppose Paul's message because it was not true but because it threatened their power and influence.
  - 2) They masked their offensive against the gospel as zeal for God and His Law. In the name of God's truth they denied it. In the charge of blasphemy, they blasphemed. It wasn't about God's reputation; it was about their own interests. This sets the stage for Paul's and Barnabas's bold rebuke.

## **I. Israel in God's Purpose and Plan (vv. 46, 47)**

### **A. The fact of the judicial hardening of the Jews**

- 1. Scripture decreed that the gospel should first be preached to Abraham's natural offspring (v. 46a; Romans 1:16; Jeremiah 31:31).
  - a. The purpose of God—a remnant shall be saved (Isaiah 10:20–22; Romans 9:27–33). Israel was to fulfill God's purpose to bless all the nations of world. Through his faithful devotion to Yahweh, the covenant son, Israel, was to bring the knowledge of the Lord to the entire world. Israel failed to fulfill her purpose. Yet, God, faithful to His own name, determined that Israel's work would be carried out by another "Israel"—a servant who would fulfill God's calling and purpose. Therefore, the Lord determined to save a remnant through whom He would bring His Son into the world.

### **b. The privilege of Israel (Romans 3:1–9)**

- 2. The willful and stubborn refusal of the Jews (v. 46b; Acts 7:51; John 5:37–40)
  - a. Although God was sovereignly working to accomplish His will, the unbelieving Jews were culpable in their actions, judging themselves to be unworthy of eternal life.
  - b. The gospel was presented to them (v. 26); yet, in their hardness of heart and stubbornness of will, they repudiated (pushed away) the message just as they had done from the beginning of their existence.

### **B. The command of God for Paul to turn his efforts to the Gentiles (vv. 46c, 47)**

- 1. Paul was not reacting to Jewish hostility in declaring his purpose to turn to the Gentiles.
  - a. Jesus told Paul that he was to be Christ's apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 26:16–18).
  - b. This experience in the synagogue was confirming that call.
- 2. Paul turned to the Scriptures, citing Isaiah 49:6 to back up his assertion.
  - a. This passage (vv. 1–13) is one of four "Servant songs" in Isaiah. Note v. 3: "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified."
  - b. It should be observed, however, that these words were directed to the Servant, not Paul. Paul understood this. He said that the Lord commanded "*us*" (3<sup>rd</sup> person, plural), but the quote—"I have made *you*"—is second person, singular. There are only two conclusions to draw from this. Either (1) Paul was guilty of reading into the passage something that it did not teach, or (2) Paul (rightly) understood that the Lord's commission to His Servant was His commission to Paul and his comrades. Paul understood that the Serv-

ant's commission would go to the ends of the world, not through Christ, personally, but through His appointed witnesses. The global ingathering is the task of His servants obedient to the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20) through the power and enabling of the Holy Spirit given to them for this purpose (Acts 1:8).

## II. Gentile Joy –Jewish Opposition (vv. 48–52)

A. The reaction of the Gentiles to the message of Paul (v. 48, 49)

1. They began rejoicing and glorifying this word (*logos*) from the Lord.
2. All Gentiles appointed (*assigned*—clearly the doctrine of unconditional election) to eternal life, believed. This is in direct contrast to the unbelieving Jews.
3. The word spread throughout the whole region. Rejoicing believers were eagerly sharing the gospel to others in that area.

B. The response of the Jews (v. 50).

1. The success of the gospel was a sign to be opposed (Luke 2:25–35).
2. They stirred opposition from all quarters—devout women of the Jews and leading Gentiles of the city.
3. They drove Paul and Barnabas out of their district.

C. The response of Paul and Barnabas (vv. 51, 52)

1. Shaking the dust off their feet was symbolic of their conclusion that there was no hope of these Jews' being converted. It was a sign of judgment. The physical descendants of Abraham were being cast off in order that the wild olive branches might be grafted in (Mark 6:11).
2. They were not discouraged, but went on to Iconium to continue their work.
3. They left a church—disciples filled with both joy and the Spirit.

## Lessons

1. The Word of God clearly sets out the purpose of God to glorify His name by saving a people from every corner of the earth through the saving work of His Son, Jesus Christ. As Paul understood that God commanded his service through His commission of Christ, so the church must see her obligation in this. We must obey the Lord. The Great Commission is still our marching orders.
2. Are you a child of God? Are you one who has been called to the Lord to love and serve Him (Romans 12:1, 2)? Or are you interested only in securing an escape from judgment and hell? Are you just content to be saved? Are you really a Christians?