

IN PISIDIAN ANTIOCH
(A Light for the Gentiles)

Acts 13:14-52

Key Verse: 13:47

Paul preached his first recorded missionary sermon in Pisidian Antioch. He and Barnabas went there after successfully leading the Proconsul of Cyprus to confess Christ. They had traveled through Perga and gone directly to Antioch. There was a large Jewish community in Antioch. Paul and Barnabas went to the Synagogue on the Sabbath. Paul's approach on each mission field was "first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles." The Jews were the custodians of the redemptive history of God. They were the ones through whom the promises of the Messiah had come. After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue rulers invited them to speak some words of encouragement. Barnabas and Paul were visitors who had come from a long way away and they were recognized as leaders among the Jews in Jerusalem. Paul was the spokesman. He stood up and spoke. He directed his words to "Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God." He led a Bible study.

First, 450 years. His Bible study began with God's choosing of Israel. He spoke of God who made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt; God who led them out of Egypt with mighty power; God who endured their conduct for 40 years in the desert, and God who overthrew the seven nations in Canaan and gave the land of Canaan to the people as their inheritance. This took about 450 years. God was working out his own purposes in the descendants of Abraham, the man he chose.

Second, from the Judges to David. Paul continued his Bible study. He reminded them of the time of the judges and of Samuel, the prophet and king-maker. Saul ruled 40 years and the time of the monarchy began. (Paul was of the tribe of Saul, so he had no adverse comments to make about him.) But Saul was removed and David was made king. God said

of David, “I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.” It is from David’s descendants that God brought to Israel a Savior as he promised. The Savior is Jesus.

Third, Jesus the Savior. From the descendants of David God brought to Israel Jesus the Savior, as he promised. Jesus was introduced by the forerunner, John the Baptist. John made it very clear that he was not the Christ. He proclaimed one who would come after him whose sandals he was not worthy to untie. John preached repentance to all the people of Israel, and he baptized those who repented. This prepared people’s hearts for the Savior who came to forgive sin and fill with the Holy Spirit.

This message of salvation came to Paul and to the people his time. It was for Jews and for God-fearing Gentiles. Unfortunately, the Jews of Jerusalem did not recognize Jesus. They condemned him to death. They asked Pilate to execute him. It looked like a tragedy, but actually, they were fulfilling the words of the prophets. The Romans and Jewish leaders carried out all that was written about the Messiah and then they took him down from the cross and laid him in the tomb. But the tomb could not hold him. God raised him from the dead. There were many witnesses to his resurrection. His resurrection puts God’s stamp of authenticity on Jesus’ sacrifice for the sins of the world. Not only was the risen Jesus seen by many witnesses but also his resurrection fulfilled the words of Scripture. David wrote in the Psalms, “You will not let your Holy One see decay.” It looked as if David was writing about himself, but this could not be because David died and was buried and his body decayed. So it is clear that he was talking about Jesus, whom God raised from the dead.

The good news is that through this Jesus forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to all of us. These Jews who sought freedom from sin through the law, only to find that the law condemned them could now find forgiveness through the shed blood of Jesus.

Some accepted the good news and were filled with God’s grace. Some scoffed. Paul then

warned the scoffers that they would scoff and perish, as the Scriptures said. As he left the synagogue, the people asked him to speak more about these things the next Sabbath. When he did so, the whole city gathered to hear. The Jews were filled with jealousy and began to speak abusively about Paul and his message. Paul and Barnabas answered, “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.” They accepted God’s command, “I have made you a light for the gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.” The Gentiles were very happy to hear this. The word of the Lord spread. Paul and Barnabas had to leave because of the persecution. The disciples who remained were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

One Word: Jesus a light to the Gentiles.