

Antioch too and Lystra: Stories Made New

Thomas Robinson, Cities of Hope 4, June 12, 2016

Acts 13:21-43 Paul speaks in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch.

[After scriptures are read, Paul is asked to speak] ... ²¹ “Then they asked for a king, and God gave them **Saul** the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. ²² And when he had rejected him, he **raised David to be their king**, of whom he testified and said, ‘*I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.*’ [Psalm 89:20; 1 Samuel 13:14]

From David, God gave Jesus to Israel as Savior, anticipated by John the Baptist

²³ Of this man’s seed, **God**, as he promised, has brought to Israel a **Savior, Jesus**. ²⁴ Before his coming, **John** had proclaimed a **baptism of repentance** to all the **people of Israel**. ²⁵ And as John fulfilled his course, he said, “*What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but behold, after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.*” [Cf. Luke 3:15-16]

Jewish and Roman Rulers in Jerusalem fulfilled Scripture by condemning Jesus

²⁶ Brothers, children of **the family of Abraham**, and those among you **who fear God**, to us has been sent the **message of this salvation**. ²⁷ For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they **did not recognize him** nor understand the **voices of the prophets**, which are read every Sabbath, **fulfilled them by condemning him**. ²⁸ And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked **Pilate** to have him executed. ²⁹ And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from **the tree** and laid him in a tomb.

God reversed their verdict by raising Jesus, fulfilling His Promises about David

³⁰ But **God raised him from the dead**, ³¹ and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. ³² And we bring you the good news that **what God promised to the fathers**, ³³ this he has **fulfilled to us** their children by **raising Jesus**, as also it is written in the second Psalm,

“You are my Son, today I have begotten you.” [Psa 2:7]

³⁴ And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way,

“I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.” [Isa 55:3]

³⁵ Therefore he says also in another psalm,

“You will not let your Holy One see corruption.” [Psa 16:10]

³⁶ For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, ³⁷ but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.

Jesus is God’s New Event: Fulfilling and Surpassing both Torah and Messianic Promise

³⁸ Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man **forgiveness of sins** is proclaimed to you, ³⁹ and through him **everyone who believes** is set right from everything from which you could not be set right by the law of Moses. ⁴⁰ Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about:

⁴¹ *“Look, you scoffers, be astounded and disappear;
for I am doing a work in your days,*

a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you.” [Hab 1:5]

⁴² As they went out, the **people begged** that these things might be told them the **next Sabbath**. ⁴³ And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, **many Jews and devout proselytes** followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in **the grace of God**.



14:¹¹ And when the crowds saw what Paul had done [a healing], they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" ¹² Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³ And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.

Paul and Barnabas barely stop a sacrifice and call people to the Living Creator God

¹⁴ But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, ¹⁵ "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a **living God**, who **made the heaven and the earth** and the sea and all that is in them.

¹⁶ In past generations he allowed **all the nations** to walk in **their own ways**. ¹⁷ Yet he did **not leave himself without witness**, for **he did good** by **giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.**"

¹⁸ Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

Isaiah 55:3-5

³ "Come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my holy and faithful things of David. ⁴ Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. ⁵ Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you."

New Territory, Changing Audiences, Continual Danger

Paul and Barnabas left Antioch of Syria, worked in Cyprus, crossed to Asia Minor, traveled north through mountains of Pisidia into Phrygia to Antioch, a Roman garrison, then to Iconium and Lystra in Lycaonia, a Roman garrison. Layers of old culture, Greek, Roman. Jewish communities. Travel was very dangerous. The ethnic conflicts in cities were sensitive. Jews were vulnerable.

The message of Paul and Barnabas set off conflicts in all three cities. Jewish teaching already had impact in these cities: "God-fearing" Gentiles and Proselyte converts. A major identity shift.

Paul comes saying that in Jesus, faith in Israel's one God, forgiveness and life are now open to all ethnic groups. No new religion, but a realization that Israel's faith through the Messiah was for all.

In the Lystra conflict after a healing, they stoned Paul to death, though he barely survived. Ethnic identities, the struggle for rights, were strong and long-standing. New vision of identity was hard.

Birds of Different Feathers – Two Ways of Seeing Something New

Luke shows a long, familiar speech in Antioch and a short one in Lystra's strange situation. Both are radical. Each speaks to a group living in treasured boundaries and shows them God outside.

In the Synagogue, Paul affirms Israel's election in Abraham, its messianic promises in David. But where are these promises going? Jesus is David's seed as Anointed King, beyond the prophet John. But Jerusalem rulers, like many before, didn't recognize God's promised savior and killed him. God raised him, opening his promises of forgiveness, even to Gentiles excluded by Torah.

People in Lystra try to put the Apostles' sign into a framework they know. Paul insists they must see more. Pagan gods were part of creation like people. They need to know the living Creator. But that God has always been with them and showed his love by caring for their lives, as Jesus said.

Each speech takes the listeners where they are and shows how what God has done opens their world, their story, to a larger vision, greater hopes, rooted in the vast love of God manifested in Jesus. But in each case, the familiar story is hard to overcome. Can we live in a gracious new story?