

Bi134 Acts

Lesson Bi134-25 The Gospel Is Proclaimed in Pisidian Antioch

Have you ever been invited to preach to a group of people and then had a difficult time deciding what you were going to preach about? The apostles never struggled with this problem, because they always knew what they were going to say. They were going to tell the people about Jesus and how they could find life by following him. This fact is demonstrated in our story today, the story of Paul and Barnabas' ministry in the Galatian city of Antioch Pisidia.

Travelling 177 kilometers (110 miles) north from Perga, Paul and Barnabas passed through Pamphylia. They finally arrived at Antioch, a major city of the province of Pisidia. The next Sabbath the two apostles decided to visit a local synagogue. There, the leader of the synagogue read from the Law and the Prophets. Then he asked Paul if he would like to speak. Paul seized the opportunity to preach the gospel.

He began his message by reviewing the many ways God had blessed Israel. The most important way, however, was that he had sent to them the message of salvation. He had done this by sending Jesus, the descendant of David and Savior of the world. Tragically, the people of Jerusalem and their rulers rejected Jesus and asked Pilate to execute him. God, however, vindicated him by raising him from the dead. This shouldn't have surprised them since it was all foretold by the Hebrew prophets. Now, through this same Jesus, they could have forgiveness of sins. And through faith in him, they could be justified before God. This was something that the law of Moses could never do. Therefore, they must not reject Jesus. If they did, God would judge them, as the prophets had solemnly warned.

After the meeting, a group gathered around Paul and Barnabas and pleaded with them to come back and tell them more. Many Jews and God-fearing Gentiles followed Paul and Barnabas. So the apostles urged them to continue in God's grace.

When the next Sabbath arrived, almost the entire city came out to hear the word of the Lord. This caused some Jews to become jealous, so they began to publically challenge what Paul was saying. Paul and Barnabas then turned to the Gentiles. As they did, they noted how Isaiah had spoken of them when he said, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles." When the Gentiles heard this, they rejoiced and glorified the Lord.

After these events, the word of the Lord spread through the whole region. The Jews fought back by stirring up some high-ranking city officials, who in turn, whipped up persecution against Paul and Barnabas. They eventually expelled them from the region. The apostles shook the dust from their feet as a sign against them and headed for Iconium. The new disciples they left in Antioch were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

We must keep in mind that the Antioch in this story is different from the Antioch discussed in lessons 21 and 23. The previous Antioch was in Syria, this one is in Pisidia, a subdivision of the province of Galatia. The previous Antioch was where Paul and Barnabas

began their missionary journey. This Antioch is one of the cities the apostles visited during the journey. It was in this Antioch that Luke records Paul's first message in Acts.

Throughout the book we will encounter such recorded messages. In fact, in Acts Luke recounts 15 sermons spoken by the apostles and other preachers. One was spoken by Stephen, one by James, six by Peter, and seven by Paul. In other places, Luke briefly summarizes the subject of their ministries. For instance, Luke summarizes Philip's ministry in Samaria by saying, "Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there" (Acts 8:5).

Luke reveals the content of the apostles' preaching for a reason. In Acts 1:8, Jesus told his disciples that they would be his Spirit-empowered witnesses to the ends of their earth. By recording the content of their sermons, Luke was showing his readers what they, too, should emphasize in their preaching. He was further giving us a clear example of how we should preach today.

The subject of the apostle's preaching in Acts is sometimes called the apostolic *kerygma*. *Kerygma* is the Greek word for proclamation. As in every other case in Acts, Paul's sermon in Antioch focuses on Jesus. He tells the people who Jesus is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him. Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of God. He died for our sins on the cross and was raised from the dead on the third day. Now, we must all repent of our sins and put our faith in Christ alone for salvation. If we will do this, we will be saved, but if we reject Christ, we will be judged by God.

Some commentators have pointed out how verses 38 and 39 are a summary of the letter that Paul would later write to these same people. It is known as the Book of Galatians. These verses in Acts read, "Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses." (You should memorize these verses.) Later, in Galatians, Paul would write, "A man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified" (Gal 2:16).

We learn a very important lesson from this story. We learn that, wherever we go, we must faithfully proclaim Jesus Christ. As we do, the cross must remain our central message. We must clearly preach and teach people about Christ's saving work on the cross. We emphasize his glorious resurrection from the dead. We must tell them that through faith in him they can receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Further, we must let them know that Christ has ascended to the right hand of God. From there he has poured out the Holy Spirit to fill us with his joy. It is the Spirit that empowers us to reach others with the message of the cross.

This lesson is **important** because it demonstrates our task and privilege of proclaiming the true gospel of Christ wherever we go.

The **main truth** we learn from this lesson is that the true gospel is the message of Christ's death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead. Proclamation of the gospel also

includes an explanation of the meaning of these events. And it includes a call for people to repent of their sins and put their faith in Christ.

Let's **review** some important truths we have learned from this lesson.

1. What did Paul and Barnabas do once they arrived in Antioch Pisidia?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered, "They went into the synagogue and proclaimed the gospel," you answered correctly.
2. What is meant by the term "apostolic *kerygma*"?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered that the apostolic *kerygma* is the content of the message that the apostles proclaimed in the book of Acts, you are right.
3. What is our responsibility concerning the gospel of Christ?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered that we must proclaim the gospel wherever we go, you answered correctly.
4. Quote from memory Acts 13:38-39.
A. [PAUSE] You answered correctly if you said, "Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses."

Your **assignment** is to listen to this lesson two or three times until you can tell some friends the story of Paul and Barnabas' ministry in Antioch Pisidia. Then prepare a sermon based on the contents of the apostolic *kerygma* and share it with a group of people.