

Learn to Read Acts Effectively

Distance Learning Programme

Session 7

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Session 7 - The message goes to Cyprus and Galatia Acts 13 and 14

Introduction

In chapter 10 of Acts we saw that God convinced Peter that the message of salvation was for all - not just Jews. In chapter 11 we saw the message spread from Jerusalem as far as Antioch. In this session we shall see the preaching spread much further from Jerusalem as we follow Paul on his first missionary journey. Map 4 on page 2 of the *Additional Notes* booklet will enable you to follow where the gospel was preached.

You will find it useful to read Acts 13 and 14 before you continue.

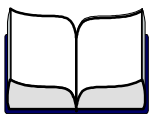
Summary

The church spreads through the Roman Empire

Paul's first missionary journey

Barnabas and Saul chosen	13 v 1 to 4
Preaching in Cyprus	13 v 5 to 12
At Antioch in Pisidia	13 v 13 to 52
At Iconium	14 v 1 to 7
At Lystra	14 v 8 to 20
Encouragement to the new believers	14 v 21 to 28

Acts 13 v 1 to 4 - Barnabas and Saul chosen

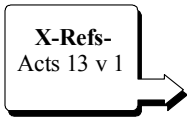


Read Acts 13 v 1 to 4

Acts 13 v 1 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

We are here introduced to some of the leaders of the church in Antioch.

The cross-references enable us to find out a little more about Barnabas:

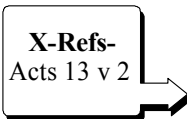


Acts 4 v 36 and 37; 11 v 22 to 26 and 30; Galatians 2 v 9 to 13.

Barnabas:

- Was a Levite, so he would probably have a good knowledge of the Old Testament
- Was ready to use his own possessions for the good of the body of believers
- Was the man that the Jerusalem church sent to Antioch and who encouraged them in the work of preaching
- Was a "good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith"
- Was entrusted with carrying relief for the poor
- Showed that he was human by being influenced by Peter when the latter wrongly changed his attitude on the arrival of Jews from Jerusalem

Verse 2 tells us that Barnabas and Saul were chosen by the Holy Spirit for the preaching work they were called to do. We are not told how this message was communicated. The cross-references remind us that the spirit was guiding the preaching work:



Acts 10 v 19; 16 v 6 and 7; 1 Corinthians 12 v 11.

Verses 3 and 4 record the departure of Barnabas and Saul from Antioch to Seleucia, and from there by boat to Cyprus. We also have another record of laying on of hands - this time the leaders of the church at Antioch were associating themselves with the preaching work.

Acts 13 v 5 to 12 - Preaching in Cyprus



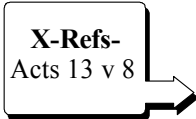
Read Acts 13 v 5 to 12

Verses 5 to 7 give details of how Barnabas and Saul came into contact with Sergius Paulus, the Roman ruler of the island, who wanted to hear more about the Word of God.

Acts 13 v 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

Elymas tried to oppose the preaching of Barnabas and Saul and discourage Sergius Paulus from hearing the gospel.

The references take us to other incidents where there was opposition to God's purpose:



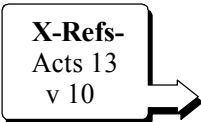
Jeremiah 28 v 1 and 10 to 17; 2 Timothy 4 v 14 and 15.

- Jeremiah was opposed by the false prophet Hananiah
- Alexander the coppersmith opposed Paul

Verse 9 tells us that Saul became known as Paul. He is referred to as Paul throughout the rest of Acts and the New Testament.

Acts 13 v 10 and [Paul] said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?"

The references show us why people oppose God, and they also give us warnings:



Ecclesiastes 9 v 3; Matthew 15 v 19; Acts 20 v 30.

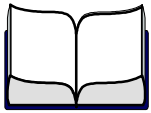
- If our hearts are "full of evil" we will eventually "go to the dead"
- Jesus told us that evil thoughts and inclinations come from our own hearts
- Paul warned that opposition would grow up from inside the community of believers

In verses 11 and 12 we see that Paul showed in a dramatic way that the attitude of Elymas was unacceptable by causing him to become blind. This was also an evidence that Paul had God's authority. The result was that Sergius Paulus was convinced of both Paul's authority and his message. This is one more example of the power of the Holy Spirit being used to establish the credentials of the preacher.

Acts 13 v 13 to 52 - At Antioch in Pisidia

Verses 13 to 15 tell us that Paul's party left Paphos on Cyprus and came via Perga to Antioch in Pisidia, where they went to the synagogue and were asked if they had any message for the people there. It is interesting to note that they still continued preaching primarily to Jews, despite the fact that they had been told that non-Jews were now included in God's purpose. We can all tend to suffer from national prejudices, and so we should hesitate to criticise Paul and his party - we would no doubt have done the same in similar circumstances.

Verses 16 to 22 record the first part of Paul's speech in the synagogue at Antioch. Paul reminded his hearers of their history up to the time of King David. If you compare Paul's account with Stephen's speech in chapter 7, you will see that Paul's account is abbreviated.



Read Acts 13 v 23 to 41

Verses 23 to 41 are similar in content to the speeches we looked at in chapters 2, 3 and 10.

In the table on page 12 we have summarised Paul's message in this chapter along with Peter's message in Acts 2, 3 and 10. You will notice several important themes in the speeches:

- It was part of God's purpose that Jesus should be crucified and rise again
- People from all nations can be involved in God's plan
- We can have our sins forgiven through Jesus if we repent and are baptised

We have listed Old Testament references from Paul's speech on page 10.

Acts 13 v 39 "and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses."

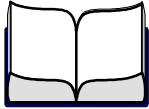
Paul was telling his hearers that through Christ they could be justified, or made right with God, which they could not be by the law of Moses. He also introduced one of the great principles of God's plan of salvation - how our faith justifies us, or makes us right with God.

Have a look at the references and you will learn more about this idea.
Compare what you learn with the notes on page 11.

X-Refs-
Acts 13
v 39



Habakkuk 2 v 4; Romans 4 v 20 and 21; 5 v 1 and 9; 8 v 1 and 3.



Read Acts 13 v 42 to 52

We see in verses 42 to 45 that the non-Jews wanted to hear the message Paul had to give, but the Jews still opposed Paul. Verse 45 tells us that the Jews were envious when they saw the crowds who came to hear Paul preach.

Acts 13 v 46 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles."

This would seem to be Paul's last appeal to the Jews in the area. He had tried to show them God's plan to give them eternal life through Jesus, but, as they continued to reject his message, he would take it to the non-Jews who wanted to hear.

*Acts 13 v 47 "For so the Lord has commanded us:
'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles,
That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.' "*

The cross-references show that Paul was using thoughts from the Old Testament:

X-Refs-
Acts 13
v 47

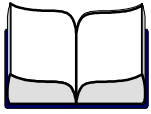


Isaiah 42 v 1 and 6; 49 v 6.

The Jews should have realised that God had plans for all nations, not just themselves.

The remaining part of this section shows that the Jews continued to oppose Paul and Barnabas in their preaching and had them expelled from the area.

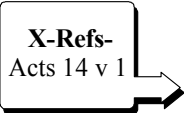
Acts 14 v 1 to 7 - At Iconium



Read Acts 14 v 1 to 7

Acts 14 v 1 Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed.

We can see that in Iconium there were both Jewish and non-Jewish believers. We are beginning to see the distinction disappear. The cross-references pick up on the theme that God is not concerned with national differences, and that His salvation is open to all:

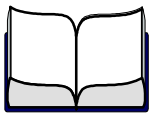


Romans 1 v 16; 10 v 12; 1 Corinthians 1 v 22 to 24;
Galatians 3 v 26 to 28.

Acts 14 v 2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren.

As the preaching became more and more successful, so the opposition grew. This opposition was present all through the ministry of Jesus and continued as the early church developed. Verses 3 to 7 relate the story of the continuing preaching despite the opposition.

Acts 14 v 8 to 20 - At Lystra



Read Acts 14 v 8 to 20

In verses 8 to 10, Paul healed a man who had never walked. This was a similar incident to that in Acts 3 v 1 to 8. Both men had been lame from birth, so both would have been well known. Both would be lasting witnesses that something extraordinary had occurred to back up the message the apostles were giving.

Acts 14 v 11 Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"

The effect on the people in Lystra was probably the result of the idolatrous society in which they lived. Their first thought was to attribute the healing to their many gods. They also believed that Paul and Barnabas were two of their gods in human form, and were about to offer sacrifices to them.

Paul and Barnabas immediately tried to restrain this idolatrous thinking:

Acts 14 v 15 ... "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them"

Paul echoed Peter's words in Acts 3 v 12 when he assured the people that the healing had not happened as a result of his own ability. Paul appealed to them to turn from their powerless idols and serve the "living God". The references from this phrase "living God" all show that the God of Israel is a God of activity and power:



Deuteronomy 5 v 26; Joshua 3 v 10; 1 Samuel 17 v 26 and 36;
2 Kings 19 v 4 and 16; 1 Thessalonians 1 v 9 and 10.

- The Israelites were aware of God's power in the voice on the mountain which was burning with fire when they received the Ten Commandments
- The living God of Israel enabled them to cross the River Jordan and ensured that they overcame their enemies
- David was confident that the living God was able to help him defeat Goliath
- Sennacherib, king of Assyria, reproached the living God and was defeated (2 Kings 19 v 35 and 36)
- We can serve and trust the same living God who has the power to raise the dead.

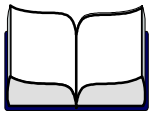
Paul then went on to say that this "living God" was the same God who made all things and who maintains all the laws of nature that enable us to have food. We considered some of the references to God as Creator when we looked at Acts 4 v 24 (Session 3, page 6).

Acts 14 v 19 Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium ... stoned Paul ...

Jews from neighbouring cities came and caused trouble in Lystra. This was just one of the many hardships that Paul had to endure during his preaching work. The cross-reference reminds us of this and many other hardships that he endured:

X-Ref-
Acts 14
v 19 → 2 Corinthians 11 v 24 to 28.

This passage makes us realise just how much Paul suffered to enable the gospel message to spread through Europe and eventually to us, and therefore how much we should value it. Despite being left for dead, he stood up, and the next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

Acts 14 v 21 to 28 - Encouragement to the new believers

Read Acts 14 v 21 to 28

Paul and Barnabas successfully preached in Derbe and made many disciples. They then went back to encourage and strengthen the people they had recently preached to in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch.

Acts 14 v 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

This verse summarises some vital aspects of the believer's life.

Have a look at the cross-references, which echo these vital aspects, and see what you can learn.
Compare your findings with the notes on page 11.

X-Refs-
Acts 14
v 22 → John 8 v 31 and 32; Romans 8 v 17; Colossians 1 v 23.

Acts 14 v 23 So when they had appointed elders in every church ...

We are here told a little more about the organisation of the early church - they had elders.

The cross-references tell us more about the duties of elders:

X-Refs-
Acts 14
v 23 → 1 Timothy 5 v 17 to 19; 1 Peter 5 v 1 to 4.

Elders were:

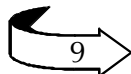
- to rule well to be worthy of double honour
- to labour in word and doctrine
- to treat the believers as their “flock” and care for them

The elders were to look after the community of believers in all aspects of life.

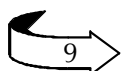
The remaining verses tell us about the journey of Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch in Syria, including their break for preaching in Perga. They then reported back to the church in Antioch about their preaching work with the Gentiles.

The letter to the Galatians

Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Derbe and Lystra were all towns in the area known as Galatia. So the letter to the Galatians was written to the churches that we have been considering in this session. As we have seen, Paul had major problems caused by Jews who wished to impose the law of Moses on all believers. In his letter, Paul pointed out that God’s plan through Jesus Christ is better than the law of Moses. Paul told the Galatians that salvation is through the one true gospel based on God’s promises to Abraham, which are inherited through faith in Jesus Christ. He explained that all people - both Jews and Gentiles - can be involved in God’s plan. The letter is also of great interest to us because it shows how we can be involved in the promises that God made to

 Abraham. In the *Additional Notes* we concentrate mainly on the key verses regarding our involvement in God’s promises.

In the next session we shall see the church continuing to expand despite having to cope with more problems.

 The letter to the Galatians

Old Testament references in Paul's speech in Acts 13

Like Stephen before him, Paul shows in this address his thorough knowledge of the Old Testament history of his nation and also the words of the Psalms and the Prophets.

Acts 13 verse	Subject	References
17	God chose our fathers	Deuteronomy 7 v 6 and 7; Exodus 6 v 6: Psalm 105 v 6
18	40 years in wilderness	Exodus 16 v 35; Psalm 95 v 9 and 10
19	Canaanites destroyed	Deuteronomy 7 v 1; Joshua 14 v 1 and 2; Psalm 78 v 55
20	Judges	Judges 2 v 16
21	Saul given as king	1 Samuel 8 v 5; 9 v 15 and 16
22	Saul rejected, David chosen	1 Samuel 15 v 23; Hosea 13 v 11; 1 Samuel 13 v 14: 16 v 13
23	David's seed	2 Samuel 7 v 12
33	Jesus God's Son	Psalm 2 v 7
34	Sure mercies of David	Isaiah 55 v 3
35	Jesus' death and resurrection	Psalm 16 v 10
36	Death of David	1 Kings 2 v 10

Summary of Session 7

We have seen:

- Paul preaching to the non-Jews the same message that Peter had given earlier
- How our faith makes us right with God
- That opposition to God's message can come from both inside and outside the community of believers

We have been reminded again of what the first-century believers taught. We can see from the table on page 12 that Paul was preaching the same basic message that Peter taught earlier. The following are important themes:

- It was part of God's purpose that Jesus should be crucified and rise again
- People from all nations can be involved in God's plan
- We can have our sins forgiven through Jesus if we repent and are baptised

We have again been personally challenged:



- We must
 - * always try to obey Jesus' words, which are "the truth"
 - * be prepared to suffer for our beliefs
 - * not move away from the gospel message which the apostles taught

Questions

1. What makes us rebel against God?
2. How can we be made right with God?
3. What should be the basis of our beliefs?

Self-study notes

How our belief in God's plan makes us right with God (page 5)

- Those who are just (or right with God) live by faith (Habakkuk 2 v 4)
- Having faith in God means that we are convinced that God will always do what He has promised (Romans 4 v 20 and 21)
- We have peace with God when we believe His Word (Romans 5 v 1)
- The blood of Jesus is also involved in our being made right with God (Romans 5 v 9)
- Those who are "in Christ" will not be condemned (Romans 8 v 1)
- Jesus saves us because he overcame sin in his own flesh (Romans 8 v 3)

We can see that there are many principles involved in our being made right in God's eyes. Have a look at the other cross-references in the *Cross-references* booklet to see some more.

Vital aspects of the believer's life (page 8)

- We must continue to follow Jesus' words, which are "the truth" (John 8 v 31 and 32)
- We must be prepared to suffer for our beliefs (Romans 8 v 17)
- We must not move away from the gospel message preached by the apostles (Colossians 1 v 23)

Summary of the messages in Acts 2, 3, 10 and 13

Peter's Message to the Jews	Acts 2 & 3	Peter's Message to Cornelius	Acts 10	Paul's Message	Acts 13
Jesus was a man having our nature	2 v 22 and 30			Jesus was a descendant of David	v 23
The miracles Jesus did were evidence that he was sent by God	2 v 22	The disciples witnessed that Jesus performed miracles	v 38 and 39		
It was part of God's plan that Jesus should die as a sacrifice for our sins	2 v 23; 3 v 14, 15 and 18	Jesus was killed	v 39	The rulers fulfilled what the prophets said when they condemned Jesus to death	v 27 to 29
God raised him to life again	2 v 24, 31 and 32; 3 v 15	God raised him on the third day - he was seen by the disciples	v 40 and 41	God raised him to life again	v 30 to 37
The Holy Spirit was given as a witness	2 v 33 and 38	The disciples witnessed that Jesus had the Holy Spirit	v 38 and 39		
God promised David a special descendant	2 v 30			God promised a saviour for Israel from David's descendants	v 23
God promised Abraham a special descendant who would bring blessings on all nations	3 v 25	Anyone who fears God is accepted by Him	v 34 and 35	Anyone who believes in Jesus can now be justified - or made right with God	v 39
The special descendant was the Lord Jesus Christ	2 v 30 and 36; 3 v 26	Jesus Christ is Lord	v36	The special descendant was Jesus Christ	v 23
We can now have our sins forgiven through Jesus	2 v 38; 3 v 19 and 26	The prophets foretold forgiveness of our sins through Jesus	v 43	We can now have our sins forgiven through Jesus	v 38
To be part of God's plan we must repent	2 v 38; 3 v 19	God accepts those who work righteousness	v 35	John first preached the baptism of repentance	v 24
We must then be baptised	2 v 38	Baptism commanded	v 47 and 48		
God has glorified Jesus and we must have faith in the name of Jesus the Prince of life	3 v 13 to 16	God sent His message of peace to us through the work of Jesus Christ	v 36 and 37	Those who believe in Jesus are justified (made right) in respect of things which the law of Moses could not do	v 39
All the present problems will be solved when God has "refreshed" the earth	3 v 19	God's message to Israel included peace	v 36		
Jesus will return to the earth and establish his endless kingdom	3 v 20 and 21				
		Jesus will be judge of all	v 42		