

OUR *Guide* FOR USE IN *the Protestant Reformed Sunday School*

Lesson 70

Jewish Rejection of the Gospel in Antioch

The Scripture Lesson

Acts 13:13-48

Up until now Luke, the writer of Acts, has used only the name *Saul* for the apostle whom we know far better as *Paul*. That was because, up until this time, Saul had been working mainly with *Jews*. Among the Jews the apostle was known by his *Jewish* name, Saul. But Saul, who was born a Roman citizen, had a *Roman* name too. That name was Paul. On Cyprus, when he began to work among the Gentiles, Saul began to use his Gentile name. Luke, therefore, changes at this point from “Saul” to “Paul.” And we will too.

Leaving the island of Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas sailed to the coast of Asia Minor. They landed near the little city of Perga. Here it was that their helper, John Mark, decided to leave them. The country through which they were about to pass was wild and rugged, and full of robbers. Young Mark was not quite ready for that kind of life, and he decided to go back to Jerusalem.

Paul and Barnabas then set out alone from Perga for the city of Antioch. In this town there were many Jews, and some believing Gentiles. On the Sabbath day, Paul and Barnabas went to the synagogue. The ruler of the synagogue asked the missionaries if they would like to speak to the

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people. So Paul arose and began to preach.

In his sermon he reminded the Jews about God’s promise to their fathers that He would send a Savior. For centuries the Jews had longed for the fulfillment of that promise. And now, Paul told them, that promise has been fulfilled. For Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah. It was true that the Jews of Jerusalem had killed Him. But in killing Him they only fulfilled the prophecies about the Messiah, for the Savior had to die, for the sins of His people. Further, God had raised Jesus from the dead, which was again a fulfillment of prophecy.

“Through this man,” Paul said, “is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” Hundreds of sacrifices cannot pay for a single sin. Only by faith in Christ can one be saved.

The people were very interested in what Paul had to say. They asked him to return on the next Sabbath and to preach to them again. And during that week the Gentiles told all of their friends about the wonderful sermon they had heard. So, on the next Sabbath, almost the whole city came to the synagogue to hear the missionaries.

Imagine the surprise of the Jews when they saw that! They didn’t like it at all. A gospel that was open to Jew and Gentile alike they did not want. So they began to argue against Paul and

Barnabas, and to blaspheme the name of Jesus.

“Lo,” the missionaries said, “we turn to the Gentiles.” And that is what they did. They forsook the synagogue and established the church of Christ entirely apart from it. The Jews of the synagogue continued in their unbelief. They claimed to believe in God ... but they rejected His Son. Their religion therefore was *false*. The members of the church of Christ, on the other hand, believed and were saved, for they found forgiveness of sins in the blood of Jesus.

Paul Stoned at Lystra

Acts 13:48 - 14:20

In Antioch, Paul and Barnabas set up the church of Christ separate from the synagogue. But the Jews would not let them alone. They stirred up the leaders of Antioch, and at last those leaders drove the apostles out of their city.

Paul and Barnabas therefore went on to another city, the city of Iconium. There, too, the unbelieving Jews did everything they could to make trouble for them. Finally a mob of both Jews and Gentiles set out to get the missionaries, to stone them to death. But friends of Paul and Barnabas hurried to give them warning. Before the mob could find them, the missionaries escaped from Iconium and fled to the city of Lystra.

In Lystra, things were a bit different at first. Practically no Jews lived there. The people knew nothing about the Scriptures or about the promise of a Messiah. Paul and Barnabas had never before preached in a situation like that. They were very happy, then, to find that the Lord turned the hearts even of some of these pagan people so that, when they heard the preaching, they believed.

One day Paul saw in his audience a man who was lame. All his life the man had been a cripple. Paul was preaching about *Jesus*, who had done many miracles as signs of His power to save. Paul said to him, “Stand upright on thy feet.” And immediately the man jumped to his feet and, for the first time in his life, walked.

The people in Lystra, remember, were pagans who believed in many gods. When they saw that miracle, they forgot what Paul had said about

Jesus, and they began to think about their own gods. These two strangers, they thought, must be *gods* in the form of men. They figured that Barnabas must be Jupiter, the father of the gods, and Paul must be Mercury, his messenger, for Paul did most of the talking. They decided to honor them by sacrificing to them. So they hurried away to make preparations.

Soon they returned, with animals for sacrifice. When Paul and Barnabas saw that, they were horrified. They ran among the people and told them that they were not gods, but only men. They told them too that they had come to warn them to turn away from idol gods like Jupiter and Mercury, and to worship instead the God who is the Creator of all things.

Then some wicked Jews arrived in the city. They had followed Paul and Barnabas all the way from Antioch and Iconium to persecute them. These Jews turned the people of Lystra against Paul, so that, instead of sacrificing to him, they grabbed him and took up stones to stone him. When they had finished stoning him, they dragged him out of the city and left him for dead.

Some of those who believed Paul’s word came to give him a decent burial. But, as they stood by him sorrowing, he suddenly revived and stood up. To their great joy, the Lord had spared the life of the apostle, for there was still important work for him to do. And for Paul, that work will always include great suffering for Christ’s sake. Well could he testify in one of his epistles, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”

MEMORY WORK

Group A

Acts 13:46 “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.”

Group B

Acts 13:46b “But seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles”

ACTIVITIES

This paper has been prepared in the hope that it will be used by students of all ages. The activities are designed so that the oldest will be challenged, and the youngest will find some of it within reach. Parents should encourage their children to attempt only what they can handle without frustration. For some that will be much, for others little.

DO YOU AGREE?

If you do, write Yes; if you do not, write No.

- ___ 1. John Mark served as an assistant to Paul and Barnabas during the entire first missionary journey.
- ___ 2. When Paul and Barnabas began to work in Antioch of Pisidia, the Jews were at first willing to hear what they had to say.
- ___ 3. Paul was disappointed that so few people came to the worship service on the second Sabbath.
- ___ 4. Because the Jews began to argue against what Paul and Barnabas taught, the missionaries returned week after week to the synagogue, trying to persuade them of the error of their ways.
- ___ 5. The unbelieving Jews continued to persecute Paul and Barnabas even after the missionaries departed from the synagogue.
- ___ 6. When Paul and Barnabas began to preach to the Gentiles in Antioch, multitudes were converted to Christianity, and finally the Gentile converts drove the unbelieving Jews out of the city.
- ___ 7. When Paul and Barnabas preached next in Iconium, many of the Jews and Gentiles in that city believed the Word.
- ___ 8. As soon as the missionaries heard that the unbelieving Jews had stirred up a mob of people to stone them, they fled from Iconium to the city of Lystra.
- ___ 9. In Lystra Paul and Barnabas went first to the synagogue and preached Christ to the Jews.
- ___ 10. Trouble came to Paul in Lystra when the Jews stoned Paul for having healed an impotent man on the Sabbath day.
- ___ 11. There were also some believers in Lystra, and while they were standing around Paul's body, thinking he was dead, the apostle got up, and he went back with them into the city.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER READERS

1. Why did the writer of the book of Acts begin to use Saul's Roman name, Paul, when this apostle was on his first missionary journey?
2. Why did John Mark decide to leave Paul and Barnabas and return to Jerusalem?
3. Where in Antioch was Paul first able to preach the gospel?
4. Paul told the people that God's promise of a Messiah was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. Why, according to Paul, was it important that they know about Jesus and believe in Him?
5. How did it happen that there was a large crowd of people who came to hear Paul on the next Sabbath day? Why were the Jews unhappy to see all of those people?
6. What did Paul and Barnabas tell the Jews that they, the missionaries, were going to do?
7. Why did Paul and Barnabas leave Antioch?
8. What was the good fruit of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas in Iconium? How did it happen that they had to flee from this city?
9. What kind of people lived in Lystra? What did Paul do there that made the people think that the two missionaries were gods?
10. What did the people of Lystra call Barnabas? Why did they call Paul Mercury? What did the people decide to do for these two "gods"? What did Paul and Barnabas tell them?
11. Who now made trouble for the missionaries in Lystra? What happened to Paul in Lystra?

COMPLETING SENTENCES

1. Having “loosed from Paphos” Paul and Barnabas came by ship to _____ in the district of _____. Apparently they did not at this time do any work in Pamphylia. Luke notes only that it was here that John Mark _____ from them returned to _____ (Acts 13:13). Evidently this departure of Mark was not according to plan, but was occasioned rather by the young man’s fear of the work. For Paul later refused to take Mark on the second missionary journey because, at Pamphylia, he “went not with them to the _____” (Acts 15:37, 38).

2. Leaving Perga, Paul and Barnabas came to _____ in the region of _____. Because there were Jews living in this city, there was in it also a synagogue. The missionaries therefore, on the _____ day, went into the synagogue and _____ down. The service consisted of the _____ of the law and the prophets by the _____ of the synagogue. After the reading of the Scriptures there would be a sermon — if a competent rabbi happened to be on hand. Often, in the synagogues far from Jerusalem, there would be no qualified teacher present. But on this particular Sabbath there were two. The rulers therefore gladly said to Paul and Barnabas, “If ye have any word of _____ for the people, say on” (Acts 13:15).

3. Paul immediately _____ up and preached what must have been the most important sermon ever heard in that synagogue. Paul reviewed the history of the Jewish nation to remind his hearers of God’s faithfulness in giving them the land of _____, and in raising up _____ to be their king. Paul then brought them the wondrous good news that God had proven true to His word, for of David’s _____ He had according to His _____ raised unto _____ a _____, Jesus (Acts 13:16-23).

4. Paul then went on to tell them that the rulers of the Jews in Jerusalem had unwittingly, by their rejection of Jesus, _____ all that

was written of Him in the Scriptures (Acts 13:27, 29). Though the rulers of the Jews had killed the Messiah, God had _____ Him from the dead, after which He was seen for many days by those who were now His _____ unto the people (Acts 13:30, 31).

5. “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren,” urged Paul, “that through this man is _____ unto you the _____ of sins.” And Paul concludes with a warning against unbelief, by quoting from Habakkuk 1:5: “_____ therefore,” he said, “lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; behold, ye _____, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise _____, though a man _____ it unto you” (Acts 13:38-41).

6. The first reaction of the people was favorable. They _____ that these words might be _____ to them again the next _____, and many of the Jews and religious _____ followed Paul and Barnabas, who _____ them to continue in the grace of God. And the result of the missionaries’ work during the week was that the next Sabbath almost the whole _____ came together to hear the Word of God (Acts 13:42-44).

7. The Jews must have been astounded at the arrival of these crowds of Gentiles. And they didn’t like it at all. That is, they didn’t want a salvation which was open to Jew and Gentile on equal terms. Filled with _____, they spoke against the things spoken by Paul, _____ and blaspheming (Acts 13:45).

8. Thus occurred the break with the synagogue. Here, as would prove to be the case wherever Paul would go, the church was established as a separate institution. Paul and Barnabas reminded the Jews that the right of the firstborn had been theirs, but that by their unbelief they had pronounced judgment on themselves that they were _____ of everlasting life. Lo, they

said, we _____ to the _____. And they remind the Jews that this also is a fulfillment of Scripture: “For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a _____ of the _____, that thou shouldest be for _____ unto the _____ of the earth” (Acts 13:46, 47).

9. The opposition of the Jews did not cease when Paul and Barnabas left the synagogue. What continued to outrage the Jews was that many Gentiles, who might otherwise have been converted to Judaism, were attracted instead to the preaching of Paul and Barnabas. The Gentiles, we read, were glad, and _____ the Word of the Lord. And that was true not only in the city of Antioch itself, but, through the tireless efforts of the missionaries, the “word of the Lord was _____ throughout all the _____.” The Jews therefore stirred up the _____ women and the _____ men of the city, so that there was _____ against Paul and Barnabas by the magistrates, who finally _____ the missionaries out of their coasts. They left behind, however, a body of believers — for we read that the _____ (that is, the converts in Antioch) were filled with _____ and with the _____ (Acts 13:48-52).

10. Nor were the apostles disheartened. They made their way immediately to another city, _____, where they went together into the _____ of the Jews and so spake that a great _____ both of _____ and of _____ believed (Acts 14:1).

11. Opposition again arose from the unbelieving Jews, who _____ up the Gentiles, trying to make their minds _____ affected against the apostles. Paul and Barnabas continued, however, to speak _____ in the Lord, who also granted signs and _____ to be done by their hands. So powerful was the Word, confirmed by the miracles, that at length the _____ of the city was _____, part holding with the _____ and part with the

_____ (Acts 14:2-4).

12. Very likely it was at the instigation of the Jews that a mob was formed in the city to assault Paul and Barnabas and to _____ them. The missionaries, however, were made aware of it, and while the mob was still searching for them in Iconium, Paul and Barnabas were on their way to _____ and Derbe, cities of _____ where they began at once to preach the _____ (Acts 14:5-7).

13. No mention is made of a synagogue in either Lystra or Derbe. If this means that there were too few Jews there to form one, then Paul and Barnabas were laboring for the first time in completely pagan cities. The missionaries found that here, too, God worked faith in the hearts of some of their hearers. On one occasion when Paul was preaching the gospel in Lystra, there sat in his audience a certain man who was _____ in his feet, being a _____ from his mother’s _____. Paul said with a _____ voice, “Stand _____ on thy feet.” And he _____ and walked (Acts 14:7-10).

14. The superstitious Lystrans, when they saw such an astonishing miracle, thought that they were being visited by the gods, who were come down in the _____ of men. They called Barnabas _____ (the king of the gods) and Paul _____ (the messenger of Jupiter), because he was the chief _____. Anxious to do the right thing for the gods, the _____ of Jupiter brought oxen and _____ in order to do _____ with the people (Acts 14:11-13).

15. When Paul and Barnabas discovered what was going on, they _____ their clothes in horror at being the objects of idolatrous worship, and then ran among the people, insisting that they were not gods, but men of like _____ with them. Besides, they said, they had come exactly in order to warn them to turn from these _____ unto the _____ God, who

had made heaven and _____ and the sea and all things that are _____ (Acts 14:14, 15).

16. Scarce _____ they the people, who were grievously disappointed to learn that their guests were not really gods. They were therefore quick to turn against the missionaries when certain _____ from Antioch and _____ arrived, having tracked down Paul and Barnabas in order to try to destroy their work wherever they went. Persuaded by the Jews, the Lystrans, having _____ Paul, dragged him out of the _____, supposing he was _____ (Acts 14:18, 19).

17. After the mob departed, some _____ (believers in Lystra) gathered around Paul in order, no doubt, to provide for him a decent burial. But, to their surprise, he _____ up and went back with them to the _____. Early the next day Paul and Barnabas left for the city of _____ (Acts 14:20).

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Before his record of the visit to Paphos, Luke referred to the missionaries as “Barnabas and Saul,” while afterwards it is “Paul and Barnabas.” Can you see any reason why, at that point in the narrative, Luke would not only change the name from Saul to Paul, but also change the usual order of the names of the missionaries?
2. In Acts 13:13 Luke takes note of the departure of John Mark, but he gives no reason for it. Do you see how Acts 15:37 and 38 gives us a clue as to what that reason was?
3. Acts 13:16-41 gives us a summary of Paul’s sermon in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia. Can you tell from verse 23 what purpose was served by Paul’s recounting first (in verses 17-22) some of the history of the Jewish nation?
4. How did Paul show, in verses 27 and 29, that the fact that Jesus *died* should not make the Jews in this synagogue doubt that He could be the Messiah?
5. Why was it necessary for Paul, in verses 38 and

39, to explain to a *Jewish* audience that only in the Messiah is to be found forgiveness of sins?

6. Jewish opposition to the gospel did not show itself in Antioch until the following Sabbath, when “almost the whole city” came to hear the Word of God (see vv. 44, 45). Ordinarily the Jews would have been delighted to have seen so many Gentiles attracted to their synagogue. Can you explain why the coming of the Gentiles at this time moved the Jews to contradict the doctrine of Paul?

7. Read verse 46 carefully. Paul here declared that the missionaries would “turn to the Gentiles.” What was the great significance of this turning point for the Jewish synagogue?

8. Even though Paul and Barnabas were now carrying on a work that was separate from the synagogue, the Jews continued to persecute them. That was partly because they were envious of the missionaries’ success among the Gentiles. But it was also because of the basic difference between Judaism and Christianity — that is, between the doctrine of the Pharisees and the doctrine of Christ. What is that difference?

9. What proof for the doctrine of election can you find in verse 48?

10. Why was it right for Paul and Barnabas to flee from Iconium just as soon as they learned that serious trouble was brewing in the city?

11. Why would the superstitious Lystrans, who believed Paul and Barnabas to be gods in the form of men, want immediately to do sacrifice to them?

12. When Paul and Barnabas became aware of what the people were doing, they ran among them to stop them, and apparently used the occasion to preach to them a sermon, the substance of which we find in verses 15-17. Why did Paul and Barnabas not, in this place, produce arguments from the Scriptures? What did they do instead?

13. How, do you suppose, were the wicked Jews from Antioch and Iconium able so quickly to persuade the Lystrans to pick up stones to kill Paul?

14. Does Galatians 6:17, do you think, give any indication as to the nature of Paul’s recovery after having been left for dead outside of Lystra?