

Acts 13:13–43

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[0 : 0 0] Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem, but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia.

And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading from the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it.

So Paul stood up and motioning with his hands said, Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt.

And with uplifted arm he led them out of it. And for about 40 years he put up with them in the wilderness. And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance.

All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. Then they asked for a king and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin for 40 years.

[1 : 1 0] And when he had removed him, he raised up 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.

Of this man's offspring, God has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus, as he promised. Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

And as John was finishing 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.

Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him.

And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. 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.

[2 : 2 3] But God raised him from the dead. 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. And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, 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. 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. Therefore, he says also in another psalm, you will not let your holy ones see corruption.

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. But he whom God raised up did not see corruption.

Let it be known to you, therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. And by him, everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

[3 : 3 2] Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the prophet should come about. Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish, for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe even if one tells it to you.

As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning and welcome to Holy Trinity Church.

We are glad that you have come. One characteristic of the modern world is that we all desire to be part of a movement that is larger than ourselves and one that would effectuate change in the world in which we live.

To be part of a movement that would bring about change. I don't know if you realize it or not, but you just heard read for you the manuscript notes, as it were, of the message that, in some true sense, launches the Christian movement.

[5 : 02] It was a speech and one that began to shake the foundations of the religious landscape. And so today, whether you're excited about what you heard read or not, you should recognize that we are discussing here this morning a sermon.

A sermon on a sermon. A sermon that shook the world. A sermon that shook the world. A sermon that shook the world. And I would invite you to the mission it proclaims.

Let me pray. Our Heavenly Father, in the weakness of a word proclaimed, May the power of the Holy Spirit bring rational, mindful conviction of soul that would alter the landscape of our lives.

In Jesus' name, amen. Today is golf's greatest day of the year.

You may not know it, but today is the final round of the Masters, played annually at the Augusta National Golf Club in the state of Georgia.

[6 : 30] And there will be two men, a Reed and a Rory, fighting for golf glory. I mention that because I would title my talk today, The Swing Plane That Changed the World.

I don't know if you're aware of golf, but there are different ways to try to strike a golf ball. It's difficult, even for those who do it for a living.

There are two swing planes. There is an outside-in swing plane and an inside-out swing plane. Imagine with me, just for a moment, you are standing with a golf club in your hands, and you are trying to hit the ball straight to an intended target.

There is an imaginary target line. When you stand over the ball and you pull the club toward a backswing, if you pull it outside the target line, at some point when you come through the swing, you will have to make an adjustment in order to hit the ball.

And when you come outside in, bad things happen to the golf ball. It will come across the ball and slice if your club head is open.

[7 : 57] It will duck hook if your club head is closed. But either way, you will be in all kinds of trouble on the golf course. You don't want an outside-in swing plane.

You prefer to bring the ball back inside that imaginary target line, which minimizes your adjustment through to strike the ball with power and force.

And one man today will wear the green jacket for his ability to do so well over four days of competition. I'm into this. Are you into this?

Why do I open with something on a swing plane that changes the world? It seems to me that as we've been making our way through Acts, Luke, as it were, has given us two powerful hitters around which his entire narrative is embodied.

The first movement of Acts gives you Peter. And he had his own swing plane. But we are now, with this message, irretrievably moving to watch Paul, who, what I would argue, has an inside-out swing plane.

[9 : 30] Think of it this way. Peter gave the first sermon recorded in Acts chapter 2. And he later gave a message that won the first outsider to the gospel, namely Cornelius.

In other words, he went outside, but then Luke and the rest of the New Testament will indicate that for the rest of his life, he ends up having to adjust himself, and he ends up playing inside.

He ends up really not dealing with the outsiders of the world, those who are outside the promises of God, those who are without hope, who had no word given to them, the Gentiles.

He gives himself almost entirely to a Jewish world. Paul, meanwhile, starts from the inside. And through this message propels a movement with power and force and a target that ends at the ends of the earth.

Two quick hints in this speech, this talk that was narrated this morning, verses 13 to 43, that he begins on the inside.

[10:50] First, look at the way it's laid out. Verse 16, Paul stood up, motioning with his hand, and said, now notice you're on the inside, men of Israel, and you who fear God.

In other words, he is addressing Jews and Gentiles, not just who are interested in Judaism, but who have converted to Judaism.

They have adopted the law of Moses as the means by which they enter into a relationship with God. They would have been baptized completely in water. They are Israel and those who fear God.

But notice how the message will move. That marker of insider language controls the development of his talk. Look over at verse 26.

Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God. Again, all insider language. And then his final movement in his speech will again reiterate that he's swinging on the inside.

[11:57] Verse 38, Let it be known to you, therefore, brothers. There's the movement of his swing. Jews and those who have converted to Judaism.

Jews and those who fear God. The brothers who have looked to Moses as the means by which you enter into a relationship with God. So the audience of the message is an indication of the plane of his swing.

But not only the audience, the location. Look back at the beginning, the little narrative in verse 13, where they are. They have found themselves from Perga and now, verse 14, to Antioch in Pisidia.

And on the Sabbath day, they went into the synagogue and sat down. Antioch in Pisidia. An interesting location. Now you are up into the terrain, the province of Galatia.

You are at the year 25 BCE in the city that Augustus plants the Roman flag for all of the region.

[13:17] as geologists and archaeologists of the 18th, 19th, and 20th century have been clear to show us, Antioch in Pisidia is what they called Little Rome.

In contrast to Big Rome. That when you're in Antioch, you're in Rome. They had actually taken down all of the Alexandrian and Greek monuments.

They had rebuilt everything on a Roman culture. They had brought military personnel in. When you are in a location here, you are where? You are on the center of the outside world.

In other words, he's addressing people of Judaism by way of audience. But by way of location, we're at the ends of the earth.

We're in Little Rome. We're with the apostle through this word that launches the movement that we call Christianity to the ends of the earth.

[14:24] Now with those things in place then, it would be interesting for us to see what message creates that movement.

how does Christianity go from a sect buried within Judaism to what you and I find it today? Let me put it differently.

Are there rational reasons for you to become a Christian here this morning given the way in which the gospel has actually become a worldwide phenomena?

I think there is. Take a look at his back swing. Take a look at Paul's back swing verses 16 through 25.

What is the content of the message that created the movement of Jesus? Simply put, it's the message that in the Old Testament you have an account of God working the problem.

[15:30] That's a phrase in American culture. America's Americans are known as people who we work the problem. Some countries they don't work the problem and therefore they don't have the ideas of ingenuity and they don't actually create the next thing.

But in America we work the problem and the Old Testament to my understanding is simply the account of God working the problem. If you've never read the Old Testament that's what it is.

It's a movement from our sin to the bringing of his Savior. And the entire account from Genesis through Malachi is getting a first-hand look at how God works the problem.

And that is the way in which the message develops. Look verse 17. The God of this people Israel chose our fathers. There he starts all the way back with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And then he moves them into the land of Egypt. And then with uplifted arm taking them out. And notice the indications in the text about how God is intent in working in and through human history with markers of time.

[16:39] Verse 18. After about 40 years. Or later, verse 20. This took about 450 years, including the conquest of the promised land. Or the length of Saul's reign being 40 years.

You will not find this kind of thing in the Quran. You will not find this kind of thing in other world religions. That God is actually working the problem, not outside of time, but in time. And not divorced from human flesh, but in and through a particular people, in this case Israel. In other words, he would bring all of humanity from its sin to salvation through the movement of God working the problem in the life of the hard and happy history of Israel. Israel. And so he moves in a sense, very naturally from the patriarchs to Moses, and then from there to David who is king.

Notice that's the centerpiece of the first movement of his message. Verse 22. When he had removed him, he raised up David. That is, he lifted him up. He appointed him to be their king.

[17:48] Of whom he testified, I have found in David the son of Jesse. And notice verse 23, how easily Paul speaks of God's movement in history from the patriarchs to Moses to David.

Verse 23. Of this man's offspring, God has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus, as he promised. And he bears the stamp of the ministry of the Baptist.

That's it. That's the Old Testament in a simple, clear, straightforward way as you'll ever read it if you've never read it for yourself. God is working the problem.

How? By choosing a person through whom he will create a people by which he will fulfill a promise to bring a savior into the world.

You will move from Moses who lays down a pattern for the temporary removal of sin, forgiveness, to David who actually puts in the person in place who is the savior deliverer to Jesus.

[18:55] That's as simple as Paul would make it. I know that there are many here who feel, well, you're never going to come on to the Christian message unless you start all the way back at Genesis and read all the way through Malachi.

And so you give yourself to this discourse and by about Leviticus, you quit. Well, in the message that moved the world, it was that simple. The Old Testament is simply this, God working the problem.

What is the problem? From sin to salvation. How did he work the problem? He put Moses here and a people through which we'd see a pattern of forgiveness. He put David here by which we would see a person who would deliver the people.

He put Jesus here as the fulfillment of all those things he had been working out for so long a time. It's that easy. The Old Testament, the way we put it to our kids for the last 20 years is simply like this.

The Old Testament is what? A Savior is coming. That's it. What's the New Testament? The Savior has come. That's what Paul is arguing here.

[19:58] He takes his club back, he moves his weight right through history and he's grounded. God has been working the problem to bring Jesus into the world.

The Savior is coming. The Savior has come. a promise is given. The promise is fulfilled. God is working the problem.

The movement here, verse 26 and following, the apostles now indicate that the problem has been sufficiently worked. That's the message of the New Testament.

Not that God is working the problem, but that the problem in Jesus has been worked. Look at the way it moves. He picks up his audience again, verse 26.

Sons of the family of Abraham and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. And then he begins to speak of all of what happened to Jesus, both unknowingly, unwittingly, by those who crucified him, but then intentionally, by design, how God was fulfilling promises through him.

[21:13] Did you recognize that in the reading? Take a look at verse 27. That they did not recognize him, but notice what they didn't understand. They did not understand the utterances of the prophets.

Or verse 29. And when they had carried out all that was written of him. Or take a look at verse 32. And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, he has fulfilled to their children by raising Jesus.

Notice, three times in the apostles' understanding of the Old Testament is that in Jesus, God has sufficiently worked the problem.

Three times over. That there were things written down there in Israel's history that had been fulfilled in Jesus. There were things unknown there that were intended to point to Jesus.

Three times over. What Jesus did was fulfill all the storyline that God had embedded into the history of his people.

[22 : 29] I think he did it so that you wouldn't miss it. What's the reasonable basis for becoming a Christian today? I would simply ask you this.

To what else would you explain the pattern of a lamb and a sacrificial system in the Old Testament that would actually effectuate itself in one sacrifice offered for all?

Let me put it to you this way. Why do you think Seth, the third son of Eve, wasn't the savior? Why does God take all these centuries to work the problem?

Why not just get on with it? Adam and Eve sinned, Cain kills Abel, let's get Jesus. You don't get Jesus and you know why?

Because if you got Jesus at that point and you put him on a tree, all you could say is that Jesus died on a tree.

[23 : 32] You would have no understanding that it was for our sins and according to the scriptures. In other words, God knows that you need a long run up to get the interpretation correct.

You need events in the history of a people that foreshadow the event of your salvation. You need people who represent both by a prophetic office, a priestly office, a kingly office, what a true king will actually be in one person.

You need objects like a tabernacle or a temple to understand what it looks like when God comes incarnate in Jesus and dwells among us.

In other words, the rational basis for the Christian faith is that by the time you get to Jesus, how can you miss it? How can you miss it?

The Old Testament provides the account of God working the problem. The New Testament provides the apostolic indication that the problem has been worked.

[24 : 49] And that's the way he lays it out. Now notice how he does that uniquely by way of an argument and I want to force your eyes down the text to 33 and beyond. Because he now indicates not only a three-fold repetition of what was promised has been fulfilled, but he gives you three Old Testament texts that for him prove his point.

The first one's there in verse 33. You are my son. Today I've begotten you. He's referencing Psalm 2.

Where God declares through the writer, I'm going to put a king in the world. I'm going to put him on Mount Zion and he's going to be my son.

Those very words, you are my son, today I've begotten you, were thrown out of the heavens and onto Jesus. When? At his baptism.

In other words, at the baptism of Jesus, he had been raised up, there it is verse 33, he had raised up Jesus at his baptism to indicate to you God's son is now in the world, the king is here and he's on his way.

[26 : 10] But not only did he raise him up as the savior leader predicted in Psalm 2, he went further than that. Verse 34, and as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, now you're moving from baptism to resurrection.

It wasn't just that Jesus was God's son through his baptism and did mighty works in the world, he is the appointed ruler because he raised him from the dead, never to see the word corruption.

And then he gives another text, which is from Isaiah 55, I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David. If you go back and read the prophetic discourse of Isaiah 55, you'll simply find that there the prophet is indicating that the covenant God made with David about kingship was an eternal covenant.

The promise God gave to David was an everlasting covenant, which then means that the king that will be like David must be forever and ever.

He must be a forever king. How can you be a forever king if your body is subject to corruption? How can you be the anointed one if you actually die and are gone into the ground and don't live forever more?

[27 : 25] And what the apostles are saying is that in Jesus, you not only have the son of God declared by God at the baptism of Jesus, you know he's the end game because God raised him from the dead.

And he didn't do that for David. That's the third text. Therefore, also in another psalm, you will not let your holy one seek corruption. He's appealing here to Psalm 16.

In Psalm 16, which is the psalm of David about himself, he promises that God, you would not let your king, your anointed, undergo decay.

And what the apostles are arguing is, you know, it reads as though David's writing about David. But now that we got Jesus, I want to make something clear.

David wasn't writing about David. He was prophetically engaged in linguistic discourse that was preparing for someone who would fulfill all those promises made to David.

[28 : 32] Because only Jesus didn't see corruption. That's what he's arguing. Look at verse 36. For David, after he served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep.

In other words, he died. And he was laid with his fathers. And guess what? He saw corruption. But he, that is Jesus, whom God raised up, did not see corruption.

This is the apostles' argument argument that would move the world to Christian conversion.

Is that the Old Testament prophetic texts have an organic, Holy Spirit intended conclusion in Jesus. So that when Jesus comes after the resurrection to the people on the road to the Emmaus, he says, all that was written in the law, the prophets, and Moses, it actually is moving toward me.

[29 : 34] Do you guys not see that? Are you still blind concerning that? Jesus himself is indicating that the Hebrew scriptures are God's divine revelation and word and message that indicated he would work the problem until the problem had been worked in his own son.

To me, it's one of the most compelling reasons for you to become a Christian. Now, I know in the academic circles, James Barr would have us look at the Old Testament scriptures and would be suspect on whether or not they can organically, naturally, be related to anything beyond their own time and actually have an intended meaning in Jesus.

I'm aware of that. I'm also aware of Brevard Childs who says, well, they can have an intended meaning to Jesus, but only because the church tells us so.

That we got an Old Testament voice and a New Testament voice and they're very different voices, but since the church puts these things together, then you can do it too. Now, I'm here to tell you that I am not an advocate for either Barr in all of his fullness or Childs in all of his Christ centered reading.

What I believe is simply this, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the unifying interpretive center of the scriptures according to the scriptures.

[31 : 14] Barr wouldn't think they're the unifying interpretive center of the scriptures. Childs won't think they're the unifying temper of the scriptures according to the scriptures, but rather according to the church. But the apostles are telling you.

Paul is preaching a message that says Jesus resurrection is the unifying interpretive center of the whole thing. And when that message got out, people now had to wrestle with, do I hold it or not? Will I believe it or won't I? Will I give my life to the one in whom all those scriptures point and in whom forgiveness is found and in whom freedom is gained?

Or will I find my way to God another way? Indeed, the account of the Old Testament record 16 to 25, the argument of the apostles preaching 26 to 37 gives way to the implication and application verses 38 and following.

Let it be known to you therefore brothers, I mean he's winding up his sermon, that through this man, that is Jesus. Forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. And by him everyone who believes is freed from everything by which you could not be freed from the law of Moses.

[32 : 35] Beware therefore, lest what is said in the prophets should come about. Look you scoffers, be astounded and perished for I'm doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe even if one tells it to you.

Let me put it to you as cleanly as I can in those verses. There are three things given by way of the message he proclaimed that changed the world. One, forgiveness now comes through Jesus. It doesn't come in any other way. Let me put the simple question this way. Where do you go with your guilt? What are you doing with your guilt?

How are you relieving yourself of your guilt? And I don't just mean guilt between one another. guilt between your internal conscience that is aware that you don't fully live your life in accordance with your creator's desires.

Where do you go with that? Forgiveness of sins comes to you through the name of Jesus.

[33 : 53] Nothing more you got to do. You don't have to do anything. It's all done for you. The problem has been worked. So why are you still working your problems? Becoming a Christian is surrendering to the notion of substitutionary atonement.

Becoming a Christian is believing for the first time in your life that what was credited to me, namely death, on account of my sins, has been embraced by Jesus that I might have his life.

For indeed, he lives forevermore. Forgiveness of sins. Secondly, freedom from law. Notice verse 39. By him, everyone who believes is freed from everything that you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

You don't have to get up, walk out of here today, and get all cleaned up in order to get before God. You don't have to keep the law.

The law has been kept for you. And if you're smart enough, you'd realize, I can't keep the law. So I certainly want the work of Christ applied to me.

[35 : 13] Forgiveness, freedom. Look at verse 40. Man, what a conclusion to a message. Every preacher ought to take this, because you know, we always think we got to comfort everyone in a sermon.

I mean, isn't that what they asked him to preach when he came in? Verse 15 of our text. Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement, literally, you got something comforting to say, let me hear it.

And he lays it all out, but notice that he doesn't end with comfort, he ends with this, be where?

In other words, forgiveness comes from Jesus, freedom comes from Jesus, but be forewarned. Be forewarned. Paul says, I preach to you something that will change your life.

But don't you be like Israel of old, in the days of Habakkuk, who didn't believe God was doing something in their day? Because it ended up resulting in the judgment upon their own life.

Basically, he says, look back, look back at Israel that rejected the notion that God was at work in the muck and through the muck.

[36 : 29] You reject that, be forewarned, because in Jesus, he's done a work that you don't want to miss out on. Can I just say that to you today? As your pastor, I don't want you to miss out on being in good with God.

I don't want you to miss out on it. I don't want you to leave here today and think, you know, I don't think the whole message that created the movement, the whole speech that shifted the religious landscape, the whole notion that Jesus is actually the fulfillment of what God is doing in history. If you reject that, you're going to miss out on salvation. Three results, and maybe you'll find your way in one of these today.

42. As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. In other words, the message that created the Christian movement had an effect, and the first effect was it generated earnest interest among people.

Earnest interest. I invite you to come back. If you're not sold today, come back. Because the message that was preached created earnest interest.

[37 : 57] Secondly, it created genuine followers. Verse 43. After the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas.

Now when it says followed there, it doesn't just mean where are you going to eat? I want to go eat. What restaurant are you at? Maybe I'll sit at a table near you. No, what he's saying is that there were Jews and devout converts to Judaism, that now left Judaism to follow Paul.

They are early converts and notice of the inside out variety. And then finally, that third thing, with those, Paul said, let me urge you, continue in the grace of God.

keep going forward in grace, not your good works. Keep going forward in what God has done for you and Jesus, not what you're going to do for Jesus.

Keep going forward knowing that all the promises are fulfilled in him and there's nothing else to do other than to trust and depend upon him. well, we'll have to wait the next week, won't we, to see what happens the next time he gets up to speak.

[39 : 30] But, without leaning into it too hard, whatever happened here on the inside is going to propel this thing with power and force to an intended target that is the ends of the earth.

Our Heavenly Father, this summary that Luke provides, the manuscript notes as it were to Paul's first recorded message are worthy of our attention.

And I pray for us here today that they would capture us in faith and that they would hold us to faith. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen.