

Acts 13:13-52 // The Promised Saviour of the World

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[0 : 00] the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them saying, Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak. Standing up, Pope motioned with his hand and said, Fellow Israelites and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me.

The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors. He made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt. With mighty power, he led them out of that country.

For about 40 years, he endured their conduct in the wilderness, and he overthrew seven nations in Canaan, giving their land to his people as their inheritance.

All this took about 450 years. After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet.

Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul, son of Kish, of a tribe of Benjamin.

Who ruled for 40 years. After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him. I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart.

[1 : 15] He will do everything I want him to do. From this man's descendants, God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised. Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all people of Israel.

As John was completing his work, he said, Who do you suppose I am? I am not the one you are looking for, but there is one coming after me, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.

Fellow children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. The people of Jerusalem and the rulers did not recognize Jesus.

Yet in condemning him, they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath.

Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and lay him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead, and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem.

[2 : 28] They are now his witnesses to our people. We tell you the good news. What God promised our ancestors, he has fulfilled for us. Their children by raising up Jesus.

As it is written in the second Psalm, You are my son. Today I have become your father. God raised him from the dead, so that he will never be subject to decay.

As God has said, I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David. So it is also stated elsewhere, You will not let your holy one see decay.

Now, when David had served God's purpose, and his own generation, he fell asleep. He was buried with his ancestors, and his body decayed. But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

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.

[3 : 35] A justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses. Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you. Look, you scoffers, wander and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you.

As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

On the next Sabbath, almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy.

They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him. Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly, We have to speak the word of God to you first.

Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us.

[4 : 51] I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth. When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored and honored the word of the Lord.

And all who were appointed for eternal life believed. The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing woman of high standing and the leading men of the city.

They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them from the region. So they shook the dust of their feet as a warning to them and went to Achanan.

And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks so much, Alessandra, for reading.

It would be a great help if you'd keep your Bibles open to Acts chapter 13. And let's pray again and ask God for help as we come to think about his word to us.

[5 : 54] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we pray that your grace would be powerfully at work in us all this evening. Would you prepare our hearts to respond to your word with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, Darren mentioned Roots Plus. In Roots, which is our student ministry and young workers ministry that meets midweek, we have been doing this year a Bible overview.

So if you've been part of Roots, you'll know that we've been saying the Bible is one big story. Not lots of disconnected stories, but one single true story that is cosmic and eternal in breadth and scale.

So we've been doing a Bible overview this year in Roots. And a Bible overview is a bit like getting to the top of a mountain, getting to the top of Ben Lomond or the Cobbler or something like that. You have this amazing view. You get to see the whole landscape taken, the whole breathtaking panorama. And at the heart of the one true story in the Bible, we're told how God acts through Jesus Christ to bring salvation to the human race.

[7 : 18] That's our deepest need. We need saved from God's wrath. And we're going to see the power of the gospel message in meeting that need through Paul's Bible overview this evening.

So if you're here this evening and you're just sort of exploring the Christian faith and checking it out sort of thing, you'll want to pay attention to the content of Paul's message and think about how you might respond to it.

But if you're here and you are a Christian already, then you might want to think about this. Here's two guys, Paul and Barnabas. They go into a city and start talking about Jesus.

And they win new converts to the gospel movement throughout the entire region. So what on earth's going on? How on earth is their message so effective?

So we want to be thinking about that. Just a quick recap. Acts chapter 1 verse 8 sets the agenda for Acts up on the screen. The risen Lord Jesus said, You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.

[8 : 32] And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in old Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. And so Acts tells the story of how the gospel goes out from Jerusalem through Samaria, Israel and Samaria in chapters 1 to 12.

And we've got to the bit now for the first time in history where anyone has been sent out into the world beyond, taking the Christian message to the ends of the earth.

And we saw last week that it's Paul and Barnabas being sent out by the Holy Spirit, by the church. And it's extraordinary when you think about it.

Paul, formerly called Saul, was actually the greatest persecutor of the church. He wanted to destroy the church before it even got started.

The risen Lord Jesus decides to stop him. But he doesn't just neutralize him, stop him in his tracks sort of things. Jesus had a better strategy with Paul.

[9 : 41] Jesus decided to commission Paul as his apostle, to commission him as the greatest proclaimer of the Christian message in all history.

So we're picking up this story. We've got a map to get our bearings, the eastern Mediterranean there. They start off in Syrian Antioch. And then they travel to Cyprus, making their way from Salamis to Paphos.

That was last week. And then verse 13, from Paphos they sail to Perga in modern-day Turkey. From Perga they venture north to Antioch of Pisidia.

And so when they get there, Paul makes a beeline to the synagogue. He makes a beeline there because that's where he's going to get an audience. And there he's invited to share a word of exhortation.

He's invited to be the guest preacher basically. And Paul's big message is a summary of the whole Bible. God's unstoppable salvation plans fulfilled in and through Jesus.

[10:48] Salvation is through the Lord Jesus. So we've got three headings this evening. You'll find them in the handout if you find that helpful. Firstly, the Savior foreshadowed and foretold.

God fulfills his promises by sending Jesus into the world. The Savior foreshadowed and foretold. Secondly, the Savior rejected but raised forever.

And then thirdly, the Savior who sparks riot and revival. And so first then, the Savior foreshadowed and foretold.

So don't worry if you've missed out on roots. That doesn't apply to you. This evening, we get to listen to the greatest spokesperson of a Christian faith ever, the Apostle Paul.

We're given Paul's summary of the Bible message and how we're brought into this story, how it meets our greatest needs. This is Paul's Bible overview.

[11:48] So verse 16, standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said, fellow Israelites and you Gentiles who worship God, listen up. And so now Paul begins his very own Bible megaview.

The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors. He made the people of Israel prosper during their stay in Egypt. So that's his summary of Genesis.

With mighty power, he led them out of that country. What's that the summary of? Exodus. For about 40 years, verse 18, he endured their conduct in the wilderness.

Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. He doesn't hang about, does he? And he overthrew seven nations in Canaan, giving their land to his people as their inheritance. All this took about 450 years.

So that's the book of Joshua. We covered that last summer. Then Judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. And that's where we are in our morning services. And then verse 21, they ask for a king and God gives them Saul.

[12:54] He gives them a king, basically a kind of king that they would choose for themselves.

Then after a 40-year reign of Saul, he made David their king. So now he gives them the kind of king that God would choose for them.

Someone after God's own heart. Someone who will be obedient to him. Then he skips down through the generations to get to his punchline in verse 23.

From David's descendants, God has brought to Israel the Savior, Jesus, as he promised. The point here is, Jesus doesn't just show up out of nowhere.

He doesn't just turn up out of the blue. He's not a rabbit out of a hat. No warning, here he is, sort of thing. The point is, he comes as the fulfilling climax of all that's come before.

In Jesus, our stitch together, all the different threads of the narrative, all along have all been leading towards him. So if you've been doing our roots overview this past time, you'll remember God is going to send us a serpent crusher.

[14:07] He's going to put right all that humanity messed up. He's going to be a child of Abraham. He's going to be a substitute who takes our place, an atoning sacrifice to make things right with God, and a suffering servant.

Actually, he's going to be better than all these things. When I was working in architecture, often we'd build a balsa wood model of the building to show what the final building was going to be like, or some aspect of it.

The architectural model was not the final thing, but it resembled, in one way or another, what it would be like to help people to understand what the real thing would be.

You could say the architectural model foreshadows the building to come. It's the same with Moses and Isaac and Abraham and David. In some ways, they model and foreshadow Jesus Christ to help God's people recognize him when he comes.

Before we get on to the second section, here's a question for you. Who is the protagonist in our passage? Who is the main actor?

[15:19] Who is the main actor? Verse 17. God chose the people. God made them prosper. Verse 19. God overthrew the nations.

God gave them the land. God raised up Samuel. God gave them the judges and the kings. Every single time, God is the main actor. History is his story.

God's story. His plans to save his world through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, next, Paul cranks it up a gear. He shows that God doesn't just fulfill his promises, but fulfills them by the very actions of those who would oppose him.

He fills the prophecies even through opposition to Jesus. So the Savior rejected but raised. God fulfills the prophecies even through opposition to Jesus.

So this is verse 26. Fellow children of Abraham and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him, they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. [16:37] What a statement. The English novelist Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, by the way, I have to confess I've never actually read it, so I have seen the BBC adaptation if that counts for anything.

But in *Pride and Prejudice*, one of the characters, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, is a formidable woman, not to be trifled with in her own words.

Sharp-tongued, strong-opinioned, a real battle-axe. However, Lady Catherine is also the instrument through which Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet are brought together as a result of her efforts to keep them apart.

Something kind of similar is going on here in what Paul's describing in verse 27. The gospel is so subversive it turns everything upside down.

God doesn't just fulfill his purposes in spite of the opposition, but fulfills them even through those opposing him, even through those who unwittingly fulfill his grand salvation plans as Jesus hangs on the cross for our salvation.

[17:58] So it really is unstoppable, isn't it? God's plans can't be thwarted if they're fulfilled, even by those who are opposing and rejecting him.

Well, that's not all. Though they found, verse 28, no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. Now this is really interesting, verse 29.

When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. All that was written of him. So if you go back to the Gospels and read the eyewitness accounts of Jesus' death, it's like there's a checklist almost of Old Testament prophecies that's being ticked off, that's being ticked off unwittingly by those who are opposed to Jesus.

Just a few examples from John's Gospel since we were there just before Easter. The Roman soldiers cast lots for Jesus' clothes. The Gospel writer John reminds us that this fulfills Psalm 22, written a thousand years previously.

His side was pierced with a spear, but none of his bones were broken. And these things happen, John tells us, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

[19:18] Now these are just a very few examples of tip of the iceberg, but even though they didn't know they were doing it, it's like Jesus' opponents were following a script until they'd carried out all that had been written about him by the prophets, verse 29.

So it's clear. We get that Jesus' death on the cross is not some tragic accident. God had purposed it and planned it all along scripted events written about hundreds and hundreds, in some cases thousands of years prior.

God fulfills his promises, not just through Jesus, but even through those who reject Jesus. And he does so by raising Christ Jesus to reign forever, verse 30.

But God raised them from the dead, and for many days he was seen by his disciples. They are now his witnesses. We tell you the good news.

What God promised our ancestors, he has fulfilled for us by raising up Jesus. This is good news, verse 32.

[20:35] And crucially, it's in fulfillment of all God's promises and prophecies about Jesus. And so Paul actually gives us three more scripts.

The first one is from Psalm 2. You are my son. Today I have become your father. In raising Jesus from the dead, God fulfills his promise that his anointed king will rule over the world, will govern all nations.

So Jesus is the Psalm 2 king. The other two prophecies point to Jesus being the fulfillment of the promised forever king in the line of David.

Once again, the point is that in raising Jesus from the dead, it is not some random act, but specific fulfillment of these specific prophecies.

Because, verse 37, the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay. Therefore, Jesus will reign forever as the king of kings.

[21 : 40] The point is Jesus will never die. His reign, therefore, is unstoppable. Nothing will move him from his throne. And this, according to verse 32, is good news for the whole world.

The final part challenges us to believe, with the caveat that whatever our response to Jesus, whatever our response to Jesus, God will work his sovereign purposes out.

And this is our savior who divides opinions. We're going to see this as our savior who sparks riot and revival. So it's good news for the world, and it's good news, verse 38, for everyone here this evening.

Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus, the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Note that Paul doesn't go into what sin is.

He doesn't explain what sin is here. He assumes that our consciences will tell us that it will be a terrible thing to stand before a holy God in judgment.

[22 : 55] So it's good news that since the risen Lord Jesus is ruler over the world, he can now grant forgiveness. He has authority to grant forgiveness to us, verse 39.

Through Jesus, everyone who believes, that is everyone who trusts in the Lord Jesus alone for their salvation. Everyone who believes is set free from every sin.

So this is brilliant news. We can come before a holy God and knowing complete forgiveness of sin and guilt and shame.

Paul closes his sermon with this warning. Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you. He's saying, given that Jesus has done everything necessary to win salvation, the only way to miss out is to be a scoffer.

It's to be someone who refuses salvation. Now, someone I know, not at St. Silas, has a phobia of cats.

[24 : 05] Not just a dislike, a real phobia of cats. They hate cats. And it's a textbook phobia, an extreme irrational fear of cats.

The Cat Cafe at Woodlands Road is probably their worst nightmare. Literally, if you've got a cat and this person comes to visit you, you'll have to lock up the cat before they'll come anywhere near you. And if a cat comes in and trespasses in their garden, you'd better call it RSPCA. Well, not quite, but don't be surprised if a pump-action water cannon is brought out and put to use.

Now, a phobia of cats has several, multiple effective treatments available. But this particular person will never present for treatment.

And I can't imagine they ever will. Cats are not the problem. Sorry, cats are the problem, not them. They're quite happy with their phobia.

[25 : 06] Thank you very much. Classic textbook phobia, I understand. Well, actually, to reject God's salvation, to reject Jesus' offer of salvation, the only effective treatment for the sin problem, it's not just perverse and self-destructive, it's also seriously defiant.

If we refuse this lifeline, there's no other lifeline available to us. So Paul says, please don't make this mistake.

There's no question about whether God's salvation plans will succeed. The only question is, will we get in on it?

Don't be among the scoffers. And so the effect of Paul's preaching is electrifying, verse 42. As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them back to speak the next week.

And it goes absolutely nuts, doesn't it? It's a massive turnout to hear the gospel. And the next Sabbath, almost the whole city gathered to hear the words of the Lord.

[26 : 23] It's gone ballistic. Can you imagine? Can you imagine if that happened in Glasgow? The whole city. Where would we even meet? Two missionaries arrive in a city.

And their simple announcement of the good news, their statement about the Lord Jesus, attracts the majority of the population of the whole city. It's extraordinary. And it sparks riot and revival.

Jewish opposition, Gentile reception. The Jews, motivated by jealousy, verse 45, opposed the gospel. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him.

And then in verse 50, it really kicks off. They incited the God-fearing women of high standing and leading men of the city, stirring up persecution against Paul and Barnabas.

And we need to know that. We need to know that whenever the gospel goes someplace new, there's always going to be resistance. So we're not to be surprised about that. If we're witnessing about the Lord Jesus to those around us, don't be surprised if it's not plain sailing.

[27 : 38] Don't be surprised if you get some pushback. And don't be surprised if our church plant in the East End meets some resistance. We need to trust that God is working out his sovereign plans.

What's Paul's response to this resistance? Paul's response to keep on speaking boldly about Jesus.

This is verse 46. We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.

And then you might as well stir up a hornet's necks because he applies Isaiah chapter 49 verse 6 to himself and Barnabas, a role that God had originally given to Israel.

For this is what the Lord has commanded us, us being Paul and Barnabas. I have made you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.

[28 : 48] Rather than feeling convicted and repenting, this infuriates the Jewish leaders. But of course, it makes the Gentiles happy.

And this is an amazing verse, verse 48. When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord. And all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

And the word of the Lord spread throughout the entire region. So this is the reason Paul and Barnabas can keep on sharing the gospel message that divides.

They rest in God's sovereignty. All who were appointed for eternal life believed. When they share the gospel, they were filled with faith in the Holy Spirit.

They speak boldly, they give it everything they've got, but then they trust God with the results. They know that God loves to save. God is merciful.

[29 : 56] But he doesn't save everyone. I think that's wonderfully freeing, isn't it? Reminds us that it's not ultimately up to us.

So do we want to see our city, our friends, our neighbors renewed and revived? Do we want to see the word of the Lord spread throughout this land?

Let's keep on speaking boldly about Jesus and then simply trusting God with the results. Amen. And let's pray to that end.

Father, we thank you so much for the simple, profound message of the gospel that we have our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ and assurance of the forgiveness of sins.

We long for our city to hear and respond to that message of salvation. In your mercy, Lord God, would you pour out your spirit to renew and revive our city?

[31 : 07] Would you empower us by the Holy Spirit that we may be joy-filled messengers of the gospel in Glasgow and to the ends of the earth?

In Jesus' name, Amen.