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PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY
(Continued)

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
NUMBER 52
ACTS 13:23-30

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ACTS 13:23-30 "Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus: When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose. Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead"

Tonight we continue the study of Paul's message in the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia. There were two kinds of people present in that synagogue-- there were people who were Jews by race, and gathered there every Saturday to hear the law of Moses; then there were Gentiles who had been converted to Judaism.

ACTS 13:23 "Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:" The phrase "Of this man's seed" refers to Jesus Christ, and Paul used this phrase to point out to those Jews the connection between Jesus and the Davidic Covenant. This covenant is given in Psalm 89:20-37 and 2 Samuel 8:8-16. As you know, one of the titles given to Jesus is "Son of David". There are some people so anti-semitic that they go so far as to try to prove that Jesus was a Gentile and not a Jew, but the facts are against them. Indeed Jesus was a Jew by human birth. Satan tried in every possible way to prevent Jesus from being born as the Seed of David, but he failed. Then once Jesus was born, Satan tried in every possible way to obliterate this truth. But God never welshes on a promise or obligation, and the Lord told David he would have a Son to sit on his throne forever. Paul here is referring to that fact.

"Hath God according to his promise" is a very important phrase. This is referring to God the Father. According is "kata" and means according to the norm or standard of this never-changing promise he "Raised" up a Saviour unto Israel. Now in his deity Jesus couldn't die, for God cannot die. Jesus had to become human in order to die. So the word Jesus here is referring to the human side of Christ. Jesus is the name of his humanity.

ACTS 13:24-25 "When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose." Here we have a little commentary on John the Baptist. John the Baptist was a fantastic believer who was thoroughly oriented to the grace of God. John lived relaxed, and he relied on the grace of God every day. Please notice here what John preached. It was "Baptism characterized by repentance". This refers to a mental attitude change which is needed in order for one to believe. Believe means to have faith. The other side of the coin is repent and comes from the Greek word "metanaeo" and means to think, to change in thought pattern. You see, Christ was on earth at that time and men had to repent about Christ as to who he was so they would have the right kind of mental attitude and could believe in him.

Please remember that repent does not have any emotional content in it, but it means to change your mental attitude about something.

Here Paul said "John fulfilled his course". This means that John did the will of God, did the thing God had ordained and outlined for him to do. Speaking of his own life in 2 Timothy 4:7 Paul said, "I have finished my course". Indeed every man has a life plan given him by God. "Fulfilling his course" is the imperfect linear action and means John the Baptist kept on fulfilling the plan of God all through his life. So get this beautiful doctrine in your mind--God has a plan for your life--a course for your life. FIND IT AND FOLLOW IT!

John said Whom think ye that I am? You see, John was very famous in his own day. He was the most exciting and attractive man on the horizon of that day. But he said, "I am not he". John said very clearly that he was not the Messiah. Of course, Paul wasn't around at that time. Where did he get this information? Well, Paul spent those silent years in Arabia and he evidently learned it from the Lord at that time. You see, John the Baptist didn't have any wild illusions about who he was. He knew who he was and he knew he was not the Messiah. John was not an egotist and he didn't overestimate his own importance. He knew to live relaxed and be happy, he had to realize who he was. The religious crowd hated John the Baptist and they criticized him, but he didn't fall apart under pressure. John had a great crowd following him and he was exceedingly popular. He was such an exciting preacher he emptied the cities and even the high religious officials came down from Jerusalem to stand in the sand of the Jordan valley and hear him preach. But none of these things excited John the Baptist. John was not being over-humble. John stood in the strength of the Lord and indeed was one of the most amazing people of all the centuries. Only one in a million could have stood up under such pressure, but John did. Now the principle here is this--it is possible for us to face the extremes of life and still have inner stability. He was one of the greatest grace men of all time.

We are now going to leave John the Baptist and Paul is going to preach to those in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia about the Incarnation of Christ. He is going to outline exactly how Christ became the Saviour.

ACTS 13:26 "Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent." Paul is now going to give a brief outline of Christ's first advent.

Men here refers to Gentiles who are seeking God. They realize that heathenism is is not their answer.

Brethren refers to racial Jews. Paul is making it clear that he is a Jew.

"Whosoever among you feareth God" refers to both Jews and Gentiles who have gone on positive signals and are willing to believe. The word "feareth" is a present, middle participle and means that the coming into the synagogue means that they had gone on positive signals and were interested in knowing how to believe. Middle voice means that the subject acts upon itself. The participle means that this is a truth which has always been true in the whole human race. When Men go on positive signals then God assumes the responsibility of getting the message to them. No matter where a man is in the earth, if he goes on positive signals toward God, then God will in some way get the message to him. So you ask, "What about the people who have never heard the Gospel?" Listen, God can't be unfair and if any man is willing to believe then God assumes the responsibility to sending him the message. (Just go back to those ten essence qualities of God and remember that God is righteous and God is just and he cannot allow a man to be damned if that man is willing to believe.

This word "Sent" is an aorist, passive, indicative and is what we call a triple compound. It is ek--apo--stello. It means to send something from the ultimate source of a perfect message. It is not possible for one to earn salvation and this is what

the passive voice means. Man doesn't earn it but God provides it. So when a person goes on positive signals and is willing to believe, God sends the message to him. Passages that illustrate this truth are John 17:7, Acts 17:27 and Jeremiah 29:13.

When positive signals are raised, the missionary movement moves there. Christianity has moved all over the earth according to this principle. Please don't miss this point of doctrine. God cannot be unfair to any member of the human race.

As Paul looked around on his audience he realized that he had an audience mainly of Gentiles and he would need to be very clear in dealing with this Jewish history which didn't mean anything to these Gentiles.

ACTS 13:27 "For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him." This verse now explains the negative volition of the Jews. Paul has been watching the Jews present in the synagogue there in Antioch and he knows he is going to get some static from them. Many of those Jews right there are not going to accept Christ. So Paul used the Jews at Jerusalem as an illustration to show how the Jews as a people did not believe Christ when he came to earth the first time. In essence Paul is saying this--do not follow the example and pattern of those Jews in Jerusalem who did not accept Christ. Paul says, "They knew him not" and this is a picture of negative volition. They had thrown up resistance and thus rejected the grace of God. But you see, they had had every opportunity to know Christ.

All the Old Testament prophets wrote of Christ. But they just didn't see Jesus back there. He was revealed in shadows, as suggested in Hebrews 10:1. Christ was revealed quite plainly in the Levitical offerings. You see, in the Old Testament we have the blueprints of the Kingdom, and they should have been able to construct the building from the blueprints. It was plain, as we often say, it was as plain as the nose on your face, but they failed to see it. The Old Testament even talks of Christ's rejection, yet the Jews failed to see their own photograph in those very things.

ACTS 13:28 "And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain." This now is maximum negative volition. The word "Desired they Pilate" should read, "They demanded of Pilate that he be slain". Demanded is an aorist, middle, indicative and means in that point of time they demanded that Christ be crucified, but they would not be benefited by it.

ACTS 13:29 "And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre." This verse makes us think of Isaiah 53. All that was written of him would certainly mean this passage--
ISAIAH 53:1-6 "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Now they had studied this prophesy and their own rejection of him. Yet when he came they rejected him and didn't realize that they had helped fulfill the very prophesy they had heard read in their synagogues.

ACTS 13:30 "But God raised him from the dead:" There is a tremendous change of pace here. God has a plan and it goes right on in spite of their negative volition. Get this great principle--MAXIMUM NEGATIVE VOLITION CAN IN NO WAY ALTER THE PLAN OF GOD FOR REDEMPTION. Man is powerless to upset the plan of God. (This is the overruling will of God we studied some time ago.) God moves on in spite of everything. The language says, "THE GOD" raised him from the dead. The resurrection is a great demonstration of the fact that in spite of the Devil, in spite of the negative volition of man, God's plan moves right straight on.

It was literal, real resurrection. Jesus would never die again. No matter how great the opposition of Satan, God's plan goes right on.

There is a relationship between resurrection and rebound. Rebound is the plan of God for us by which we can confess our sins, rise up and move right on just as though that sin had never been committed. Nothing is too great to upset God's plan.