

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: December 3, 2017
Lesson Title: "The Gospel Message"
Lesson Passage: Acts 13:26-39

ABOUT THIS LESSON

The Lesson Passage is a portion of a message delivered by the Apostle Paul in a Jewish synagogue located in Antioch of Pisidia. The message began with a brief survey of Israel's history, from their stay in the land of Egypt through the reign of King David (Acts 13:16-22). Then he used his reference to David as an introduction to the coming of Jesus, the Savior, and his forerunner, John the Baptist (Acts 13:23-25). Our Lesson Passage picks up at v. 26, where Paul reflects on the life and ministry of Jesus, his death and resurrection and his offer of forgiveness of sins.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Explain why Paul usually preached in synagogues during his missionary journeys. (2) Outline the major points in Paul's message.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Use a map of Paul's Missionary Journeys to identify the location of Antioch of Pisidia, where Paul delivered the message recorded in our Lesson Passage. Then ask: Imagine that you are going to a strange city in Asia to preach the gospel, where would you start? In a railway station? An airport? On a street corner? In a shopping center? Or in a church of some kind? Then note that Paul and Barnabas usually headed for the local synagogue, where the people's Jewish faith might serve as a beginning point for explaining the Christian gospel.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Describe the setting in which Paul delivered his message in the Antioch synagogue: (1) When Paul went to the synagogues to share the gospel, he was following the practice of Jesus himself (*for example, refer to Luke 4:16-27*). (2) By the first century, the Jews had been scattered throughout the Roman world. In Gentile cities, like Antioch, the Jewish communities had their own magistrates, known as Rulers or Elders, who managed both secular and religious affairs. They also had special officials, "Rulers of the Synagogue," who were responsible for making arrangements for synagogue services. And they could ask any Israelite of good standing to pray, read or teach. (3) In the Jewish quarter, where Barnabas and Paul had found lodging, it would have soon become known that these newcomers were rabbis (teachers). So, after the readings from the Torah and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent the attendant to invite them to speak to the worshipers gathered there (13:15). Since Paul was the most learned and eloquent of the two (in Acts 14:13 he is referred to as their "chief speaker"), he rose,

made his way to the platform and, calling for attention, began to speak (Acts. 13:16).

2. Refer to the beginning of Paul's message in Acts 13:17: (1) "Men of Israel" was a reference to the Jews who attended the synagogue. (2) And "you that fear God" referred to people who were not ethnic Jews, and probably did not fully embrace the requirements of the Jewish law (e.g., circumcision), but who revered the Jewish God. (3) Paul referred affectionately to his Jewish listeners by addressing them as "Brethren, sons of Abraham" (v. 26), but gave equal recognition to the Gentiles who were present by referring to "those who fear God." And he identified himself with both groups when he said, "To us is this word of salvation sent forth" (v. 26).

3. Point out that in this Jewish setting, Paul preached a Jewish sermon: (1) He began with a survey of Jewish history, used proof texts from the Jewish scriptures and appealed to a Jewish mentality. (Compare the introduction of this Jewish sermon [Acts 13:17] with the beginning of his message to Greeks in Athens [Acts 17:22-23]). (2) Observe that, though Paul always adapted his sermon to his audience, his gospel message (summarized in Acts 13:32,38) was always essentially the same. APPLICATION: Today, we live in a vastly different historical era. Languages and cultural contexts vary widely, but Christian preaching should always include the basic elements of Paul's gospel message.

4. Summarize the contents of Paul's message: **THE INTRODUCTION (Acts 13:17-25):** (1) Paul begins with a review of Old Testament history-- God's choice of Israel and their deliverance from Egypt (v. 17), their preservation in the wilderness for forty years, during which time God patiently "suffered their manners" (their childish waywardness) (v. 18) and the gift of Canaan to Israel as an inheritance, a gift that involved the rejection of other nations (v. 19). (2) Then he recalls the period of the Judges, which ended with the career of Samuel the prophet (v. 20). (3) This historical review includes Saul the royal failure (v. 21), king David "a man after God's own heart" (v. 22) and John the herald of Jesus the Savior (vv. 24-25). **THE GOSPEL (Acts 13:26-37):** (1) In v. 26, Paul refers to his Jewish listeners as "Brethren, sons of Abraham," and refers to the Gentiles who are present as "those who fear God." And he identifies himself with both groups when he says, "To us is this word of salvation sent forth." (2) His message had been rejected in Jerusalem, where they had failed to understand the prophecies they heard every Sabbath in their synagogues; and they crucified Israel's Savior (vv. 27-29). (3) But he was vindicated when God raised him from the dead, and this was witnessed by many (vv. 30-31). **THE INVITATION (Acts 13:38-39):** The apostles have come to convey God's offer of justification through faith in Christ, who can offer what the law of Moses could not offer, peace with God through forgiveness of sins. Christ's power to do this is guaranteed by his resurrection.

CLOSING THE LESSON

The heart of the gospel message is not advice for being good; it is the assurance that God was good enough to save us from destruction.