

THIS MAN
Acts 13:14-42

Intro: Today is Easter Sunday, the one Sunday in the year that the world has chosen to remember the resurrection of Christ. It is the Sunday that many people go to church who do not go at any other time--unless it is at Christmas. But even so, people are not going to church even on Easter Sunday in the numbers that they did just a few years ago.

Actually the Christian church supposedly remembers the resurrection of Christ every Sunday because Jesus Christ was raised from the dead on the first day of the week. That is the reason we do not meet on the Jewish Sabbath--the seventh day of the week.

The death and resurrection of Christ are the central doctrines of the Scriptures. Anyone who reads the Bible can tell that. And it becomes clear to the reader of Scripture that Christ's resurrection was bodily, physical. He really died, and He really rose again from the dead. The same body that was placed in the tomb was the body that came out of the tomb--although when He was raised His body was a glorified body, which meant, among other things, that it could never again be subjected to physical death. Paul wrote in Romans 6:9,

Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead
dieth no more;
death hath no more dominion over him.

The Scriptures leave no place for some kind of a spiritual resurrection, or simply the idea that He lived on in the hearts and memories of His followers--like anyone would who is dear to us. They declare over and over again the genuine, physical resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That fact alone should make the world sit up and take notice. There is nothing in all of human history that can compare with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the event which we remember today, and every Lord's Day.

But let me say another thing about Jesus Christ--and this, too, is another teaching of Scripture which people generally do not recognize. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ was not just an ordinary human being. He was a real, a true human being, but He was also God. He was both God and man. He did not begin to exist, like you and I did, at His birth. He has always existed, not as man, but as the Son of God. He became a man when He was born of the virgin Mary, conceived not by Joseph, but by the Holy Spirit. Thus we speak of Jesus Christ as the Son of God incarnate, which means, the Son of God in the flesh--a real man, and yet the Son of God in every sense of the word. The chief difference between Christ and the rest of us is that

He was born without sin! The Apostle John, who knew our Lord so well, said in 1 John 3:5, speaking of Christ, ". . . and in him is no sin." He also said in that same NT letter, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" (1 John 2:22).

But then the question arises, Why should such a Person as Jesus Christ have to die, and especially in the horrible way that He did die?

But even before that we perhaps need to ask another question. It is this: Why did Jesus, the Son of God, come into the world as a human being so that He could die?

The answer to that is also very clear in the Bible. Again let me quote from the Apostle John in 1 John 4:14:

And we have seen and do testify
that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Jesus Christ came to provide salvation for sinners from the eternal judgment of God. He came to save sinners from hell, from the consequences of their sins. He came even to deliver sinners from the power of their sins. He came to do all of that, and in doing that, to satisfy the righteous of a holy God! This is what God required. Our sins are so terrible in the sight of God that no one but God's own perfect Son could offer a sacrifice that would be acceptable. He could die for sinners because He was not a sinner Himself.

Why, then, was He resurrected?

There are a number of answers to that question given in Scripture, but the answer we need to be concerned about this morning is that He was raised from the dead as evidence that He had satisfactorily accomplished the work of salvation from sin which the Father had sent Him to do.

This was the message of the first century Church. And this ought to be the message of the twentieth century Church. We are not a religious society like other religions. We do not seek to raise the moral level of humanity, to correct social ills. Those may come about as a result of the ministry of the Church. No, the Church is to proclaim the saving grace of Christ, the Son of God Who died for the sins of all who will eventually be saved, and Who now lives at the right hand of the Father to intercede for His own people, and as living evidence that salvation is available for all who will come to Christ.

All of this is what Paul was preaching in Antioch of Pisidia, according to the Scripture which was read to us earlier from Acts 13. Paul was preaching to Jews and to some Gentiles in the synagogue. Jesus was born into the family of David. See v. 23. His birth, death, and resurrection were according to

the promise of God, stated in many places in the OT. See vv. 23, 32, 33. These promises could not have referred to David because David died and his body lay in corruption. But not so with the Lord Jesus Christ! The resurrection itself was proof of the Deity of our Lord, according to Psa. 2. See v. 33 again.

Go through the book of Acts in which we have many samples of the preaching of the Apostles, and you will find that they were all essentially like this.

But is this all that we need to know?

No, it is not? Let me call your attention for the rest of our time today to verses 38 and 39.

There are two things in these verses which I want to point out to you:

1) The mission of the Apostles.

2) The message of the Apostles.

And when I say "of the Apostles" I am including those preachers and those churches who worked together with them.

First of all,

I. THE MISSION OF THE APOSTLES (Acts 13:38).

The Apostles came preaching. And that has been the mission of the Church from that day until this.

And it was intended that certain knowledge should be conveyed to people, and that they should learn.

You see, you do not come to church to be entertained. The church page in the Sunday newspaper seems to get more ridiculous every year. It seems like churches are in competition with each other as to who can put on the biggest and best musical production, or the most interesting film. It is no wonder that the church page and the entertainment page in the newspaper are put next to each other. The early church did not try to attract people with music; the early church sought to instruct people through preaching. Notice that as you read the NT. Preaching today is looked down upon, and so people usually go away from church not knowing any more than then did when they came--at least not knowing any more about God or Christ.

But let me go on to my second point:

II. THE MESSAGE OF THE APOSTLES (Acts 13:38, 39).

Notice carefully the details given in these two verses. They point out what the message of Paul was.

A. It was a message about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Note the two expressions, one in v. 38, and the other in v. 39:

- 1) "Through this man" (v. 38).
- 2) "And by him" (v. 39).

Paul and Barnabas were not there to tell them about Abraham or Moses or David. They were there to tell them about Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They were there to talk about His death, and to talk about His resurrection. They were there to explain why Jesus Christ came, why it was He who had to come, and what He did when He did come.

The second part of the message is

B. It was a message about salvation.

Paul spoke about "the forgiveness of sins." He spoke about being "justified" before God. This is SALVATION!

And notice that he spoke about the forgiveness of all sins, about being "justified from all things."

How wonderful it is to see that no sin is excluded!

The third part:

C. It was a message of faith, not of works.

The Jews and the Gentiles to whom the Paul was speaking thought that they could be saved by trying to keep the Mosaic Law, the ten commandments, etc., but they could not! Why would Jesus Christ have come if that other had been a possibility? The ten commandments, nor the so-called golden rule, nor any other set of rules and regulations can save a single sinner. Only Jesus Christ can save.

But let me point out something very wonderful about what Paul said with regard to Christ and salvation. In v. 38 Paul said that salvation is "through" Christ, that is, through what He did by His death and resurrection. We are saved by the work of Christ, not by our own works. That ought to be clear. But in v. 39 Paul used a different preposition when he said, "by him all that believe . . ." There he meant that our very faith comes through Christ. He enables us to believe. We believe "by" Christ, and we are saved "through" Christ. We are saved when our trust is in the work of Jesus Christ for sinners, and that is the only way we can be

If you are trusting in anyone or anything but Christ, you are just as much without salvation as the person who has never entered a church door, or who has never even heard about Jesus Christ.

Make sure that you are trusting Christ, and only Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins.

Finally,

D. It was the same message for Jews and Gentiles.

Note that fourth word in v. 39: "all."

It is not enough for people to be religious. It is not true that we are all going to the same place, but just by different ways. There is only one way to heaven, only one way to be saved, only one way to have your sins forgiven--AND THAT IS THROUGH THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

Make whatever distinction you want to make among human beings, nobody is going to be saved except through Christ. He is not just a Saviour; He is THE Saviour!

Concl: Have you learned anything that you did not know before? Have you had the wrong idea about salvation? Then I trust that you have seen that this is the truth of God. The question is not, What shall I do to be saved? The question is, Have I trusted Jesus Christ as my Saviour, knowing that He is the only One Who can save me?

May the Lord Himself use His Word in each of our hearts today that His purposes in salvation might be fully accomplished.