

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study guide is to facilitate the study of Acts 13:13-41 as a supplement to the sermon. It is based on my (Michael's) study and meditation on the passage. This handout can be used for personal study or community group conversation. (I hope you join a group!)

ACTS 13:13-41 ESV

13 Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem, 14 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. 15 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 encouragement for the people, say it." 16 So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: "Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. 17 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. 18 And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. 19 And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. 20 All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. 21 Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. 22 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.' 23 Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. 24 Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 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.' 26 "Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. 27 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. 28 And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. 29 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. 30 But God raised him from the dead, 31 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. 32 And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, 33 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.' 34 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.' 35 Therefore he says also in another psalm, "'You will not let your Holy One see corruption.' 36 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, 37 but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. 38 Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, 39 and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. 40 Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about: 41 "'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.'"

STRUCTURE

- I. Paul and Barnabas lose John Mark to unfaithfulness en route to Antioch Pisidia (13-14a)
- II. Paul and Barnabas hear the Law and Prophets read in the synagogue (14b-15)
- III. Paul preaches about how God fulfilled the Law and Prophets in Jesus (16-37)
 - a. Fulfilled in Israel's covenants (16-25)
 - i. Abrahamic covenant: God chose Abraham's descendants (16-17a)
 - ii. Mosaic covenant: God led Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land (17b-20a)
 - iii. Davidic covenant:
 1. Israel rejected God's judges and chose Saul as king (20b-21)
 2. God rejected Saul and gave David as king (22)
 - iv. Jesus fulfilled God's covenants to Israel and David:
 1. Jesus the fulfiller (23)

2. John the forerunner (24-25)
- b. Fulfilled in Israel's rejection of Christ in Jerusalem (26-37)
 - i. The story of Israel rejecting Christ and fulfilling the Prophets (26-32)
 - ii. Exposition of Old Testament promises fulfilled (33-37)
- c. Fulfilled in Israel's rejection of Christ in Paul's preaching (38-41)
 - i. Justification for all who believe in the One who fulfilled the Law (38-39)
 - ii. Judgment for all who will not believe and reject the Prophets (40-41)

GENERAL COMMENTARY:

The central *apologetic* purpose of this section is to show that Paul preaches the same gospel as Peter. He did not arise as an innovator who made the Jewish message more palatable for Gentiles by axing the Law and Prophets. As we saw earlier in Acts, it was Peter, not Paul, whom God used to include Gentiles and eradicate obligatory Jewish food laws (Acts 10-11). Paul says nothing about Jewish customs in this sermon, focusing instead on Jewish Scriptures.

On that note, the central *teaching* purpose of this section is to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures. According to the custom of the synagogue, Paul and Barnabas listened to readings from the Law (the Torah reading) and the Prophets (the Haftara reading). This tees Paul to preach from the Law and Prophets, showing how Jesus fulfills both. Jesus did not just pay for sins and rise from the dead; He accomplished both in fulfillment of Jewish Scriptures. The gospel has Jewish roots but global fruit.

Paul's sermon could be broken down into three parts (three-point sermons are biblical 😊). First, he shows how Jesus fulfilled Israel's covenants, with references to the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants. He focuses most on David because Jesus is the Son of David they've all been waiting for. As members of the Jewish Diaspora, they would have longed deeply for a Messianic conqueror, the Davidic King, to kick Rome's butt and end their exile.

This leads to the second part of his sermon, which tells the story of HOW Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets. Surprisingly, He fulfilled the Jewish Scriptures *through* Jewish resistance to God. The prior section had hinted at Jewish resistance: God "put up with them in the wilderness" (13:18); they "asked for" a king to be like the pagan nations, and God "removed" him (13:21-22). God graciously cared for His people throughout, not because Israel was good, but because God is good. He keeps His promises. The rejection of Christ came as no surprise because they had regularly rejected God. God's covenant-keeping always accompanied Israel's covenant-breaking. The latter did not disrupt the former. Far from it. God used Israel's covenant unfaithfulness to magnify His covenant faithfulness. Paul displays how Israel's rejection fulfilled promises made about King David's Messianic descendant, Jesus.

The third and final section of the sermon shifts toward demanding a response by highlighting two divergent paths. The first path, the path of faith, leads to justification and forgiveness of sins. The Law of Moses could never provide these; on the contrary, it provided the need for them. The Law declared us guilty, not righteous, but it also pointed forward to the One who fulfilled the Law and declares us righteous—through faith in His atoning blood.

Those who do not choose the path of faith reap the rewards of their sins. Rather than being "freed" from the demands of the Law, they are held accountable for it. Forgiveness comes to all who receive Christ; judgment comes to all who reject Him. If we reject Christ, verses about judgment are fulfilled in us. If we receive Christ, verses about blessing are fulfilled in us.

The central theme of fulfillment throughout Paul's sermon shows us that the coming of Jesus is not just about God's kindness; it is about God's faithfulness. In infinite kindness, Jesus paid for our sins on the Cross, but in covenant faithfulness, He did this to fulfill the Law and Prophets.

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

13 Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem, 14 but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia.

—They headed north from the isle of Cyprus in the Mediterranean to Perga, located in the region of Pamphylia, in modern-day Turkey. This journey would have stretched about 150 miles.

—"And John left them and returned to Jerusalem": we will explore this theme when it reappears in 15:38.

Paul viewed John Mark as unfaithful for bugging out mid-journey. Luke's telling of the story, in parallel with

themes of faithfulness and finishing God's assignment, conveys his agreement with Paul. Mark was unfaithful—on this occasion. However, God used him. Later, he would prove “helpful” to Paul (2 Tim. 4:11), redeeming his former unfaithfulness. He is also helpful to all of us, having recorded the events of Jesus’ life in the Gospel of Mark.

—We should never promote people in ministry who have not proved themselves faithful in smaller ministries first. Luke repeats this theme over and over.

—At the same time, those who prove unfaithful on one occasion should not be black-balled forever. Discernment walks the line between properly vetting future leaders and forgiving/restoring those who once failed.

—“from Perga... to Antioch in Pisidia”:

- Perga was located in Pamphylia, but Pisidian Antioch was north, in Galatia. To reach it, they traveled by land.
- “Antioch in Pisidia” (or Pisidian Antioch) was not the same as Antioch in Syria, where the mission launched from (13:1-4). Both “Antiochs” served an important role in church history. Antioch in Pisidia gave rise to Paul’s epistle, Galatians; Antioch in Syria gave rise to the entire missionary journey.

And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. 15 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 encouragement for the people, say it.”

—“And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue”:

- In keeping with the missionary strategy of “first to the Jew, then to the Gentiles,” Paul and Barnabas begin in the synagogue. I explained this strategy in the Study Guide covering Acts 12-25-13:5. In short, God fulfilled His promise to Abraham by giving Israel first dibs on the gospel. His intent was not that the nations be blessed INSTEAD of Israel but that the nations be blessed THROUGH Israel (Gen. 12:1-3). As Jewish apostles reached the Jews first, the good news would fan out to Gentiles from there.
- Luke’s insistence that Paul began with Jews provided an apologetic for the Jewish church, which sometimes turned a suspicious eye toward Paul. Paul seemed an innovator, but his missionary strategy and sermon show that he grounded his gospel in the Jewish Scriptures. His sermon substantially resembled Peter’s; the apostolic message had not been compromised.

—“After reading from the Law and the Prophets”: a normal synagogue service would have included the historic “Shema” (“Hear, O Israel, the LORD your God is One...”). It also would have included readings from various parts of the Old Testament and an expositional sermon.

—The “rulers of the synagogue” invited Paul and Barnabas to exhort the people. The narrative reads as though the invitation was spontaneous, but it’s possible that they prearranged it. Paul’s credentials as a Pharisee, schooled under Gamaliel, probably played a role in the invitation.

—God uses our credentials and history to open doors. Paul benefitted from both his background as a Pharisee and his Roman citizenship (see Acts 16:37-38; 22:25-29; 23:27). Likewise, Moses’s background made him a perfect mediator between Jews and Egyptians. A Hebrew by birth, God raised him in Pharaoh’s household.

—When we think about how God will use us in the future, we should look to the past. What experiences, good and bad, have shaped me? What background features give me credibility with one tribe or another?

16 So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: “Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. 17 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. 18 And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. 19 And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. 20 All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. 21 Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. 22 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.’ 23 Of this man’s offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.

—“So Paul stood up”: both Paul and Barnabas were invited to speak, but Luke only reports Paul’s sermon. His leadership of the apostolic duo has been cemented.

—"motioning with his hand": this appears to be an ancient cue that a speech is coming. Peter (12:17), Paul (13:16; 21:40), and a man named Alexander (19:33) all do it.

—"Men of Israel and you who fear God": his audience includes both Jews and Gentiles who adhere to the Jewish religion. His sermon will focus on God's dealings with Israel, culminating in Jesus.

—"listen": after the synagogue cited the Shema ("Hear, O Israel"), Paul speaks on behalf of the God of Israel, beckoning them to "hear, O Israel"—to "listen."

—God "**chose** our fathers... **made** the people great... **led** them out [of Egyptian exile]... **put up with** them in the wilderness... **destroying** seven nations... **gave them** their land... **gave them** judges... **gave them** Saul... **removed** him... **raised up** David... **brought** to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he **promised**":

- The emboldened words highlight God's activity. Jesus did not airdrop on the Roman empire two thousand years ago; He fulfilled the promises God made to the fathers. These promises worked their way gradually to the surface despite Israel's consistent disobedience.
- While the highlighted verbs capture God's proactivity in fulfilling His promise, the undercurrent of Israel's unfaithfulness can be seen in the following:
 - "for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness": He "endured their conduct" (NIV); He "bore with them" (RSV). The verb suggests that God had to patiently suffer with their behaviors. They whined about the manna, they tested God by demanding water, they pined for Egypt, they disbelieved the promises. Hardening their hearts, the exodus generation failed to enter the land. In these ways, God "put up with" them.
 - "they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul... [whom God later] removed" (13:21-22). Saul means "asked for." A head taller than every other Israelite, King Saul stood out among his peers. Israel "asked for" him because they wanted to be like the other nations. God interpreted it as a rejection of His kingship. He had ruled them through "judges until Samuel the prophet" (13:20), but they wanted to be like the pagans. Here is the sequence in its original context:
 - *Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. **Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.**" But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them." (1 Sam. 8:4-9).*
 - Saul's kingship illustrated Israel's deeper rejection of God's kingship. This rejection would reach its climax in the rejection of King Jesus.
 - If Saul represented Israel's rejection of God's kingship, David represented God's accommodation of the desire for a king. The contrast between them stands out in this passage. Israel "asked for" Saul, but God "raised up" David. In other words, Israel rejected God, but God blessed Israel in fulfillment of His promises.
- Why does Paul focus on these elements of Israel's story and not others?
 - He alludes to the Abrahamic covenant ("God chose our fathers") but essentially passes over it, placing most of his focus on the exile/exodus and the kingship.
 - First, by alluding to the lives of Abraham, Moses, and David, the passage emphasizes the theme of fulfillment. God fulfills His promises in Christ.
 - Second, by alluding to the exile/exodus, he bridges the exodus generation and the diaspora Jews of Antioch Pisidia. As in the days of Moses, Paul's audience lived in exile. If they would only accept Jesus, He would liberate them from exile—not by placing them back in Palestine during their lifetimes but by restoring them to God, who would one day restore not just the land of Palestine but "the world" (Rom. 4:13) to them and all of Abraham's spiritual offspring. I believe this promise is fully realized in the new heavens/earth (Rev. 21-22).

- Third, by highlighting the sequence of judges/Saul/David, the apostle contrasts Israel's rebellious mimicry of the nations with God's gracious gift in David.
- "all this took about 450 years": Israel was enslaved for about 400 years (Acts 7:6), then they wandered for about 40 years, followed by perhaps 10 years of conquest.
- "I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will":
- The first part of this statement from Yahweh appears in 1 Samuel 13. There, Samuel commands Saul to wait seven days for him to return and offer sacrifices, but Saul gets impatient. Samuel tarries, so Saul makes the sacrifice himself, hoping to secure the God's favor against the Philistines. Here is the exchange: *"Samuel said, 'What have you done?' And Saul said, 'When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the LORD.' So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering.' And Samuel said to Saul, 'You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. **The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart**, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.'"* (1 Sam. 13:11-14).
 - What makes David a man after God's own heart, considering David also disobeyed the LORD in massive ways?
 - Israel demanded a king **"for us... according** to all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5). God sought **"for himself a man according** to his own heart" (13:14). These are literal translations of 8:5 and 13:14, provided by Dr. Layton Talbert.¹ The mirrored prepositions create an informative contrast: Israel sought for herself a king according to the nations, but God sought for Himself a king according to His heart. In other words, Saul was chosen by Israel, but David was chosen by God.
 - God did not have a problem with monarchy (Gen. 49:10; Deut. 17:14-20; Jdg. 17:6; 18:1; etc.). He had a problem with Israel choosing her own king in her own way and in her own time—because, well, everyone else was doing it.
 - Saul represents the disastrous consequences of trying to be like everyone else rather than trusting God's plan and choice.
 - This translational understanding helps significantly, although it might disappoint those of us who have elevated David on a pedestal. David holds a special place in history, but he was massively flawed, just like Saul. The difference between David and Saul was not primarily that David had a great heart. David had some great traits—and originally, so did Saul (1 Sam. 15:17)—but they also both had blood on their hands. The difference, then, was not primarily on the human but on the divine side. The difference is that God chose David, not Saul.
 - David was a man after God's own heart in that God chose him. As it always is with election, God did not choose David because David was good. David was not good. He failed magnificently. God, not David, is the hero of the story.
 - Supporting this interpretation is Dr. Carmen Imes's linguistic research into "after God's own heart." Based on parallel Akkadian idiomatic usage, she claims that "A man after X's own heart" likely meant "A man chosen by X."
 - Where does the last part—"who will do all my will"—come from?
 - Dr. Patrick Schreiner says it's an allusion to Isa. 44:28, a prophecy about Cyrus: "who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and **he shall fulfill all my purpose**'; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'"
 - Schreiner comments: "This [allusion to Isa. 44:28] paints David, and David's son after him, as their new exodus leader and the temple rebuilder. Jesus is currently doing this same act through his witnesses."

¹ Talbert wrote a helpful article on this, which you can find at <https://seminary.bju.edu/theology-in-3d/was-david-a-man-after-gods-heart/>

- It's hard to say whether Luke intended this allusion or not. Either way, "he will do all my will" emphasizes that David will fulfill God's intention for his life because he is God's chosen man for the job. The fulfillment of God's will in David's life does not hinge on David's greatness but on God's.

—"of this man's offspring": this alludes to the promise made to David in 2 Samuel 7 that one of his descendants would forever sit on the throne of David. Jesus fulfills the Davidic covenant.

—"God has brought to Israel a Savior, just as he promised":

- "God has brought": God is responsible for the saving ministry of Jesus. He was in no way obligated to save us. As all the action verbs in this section convey, God gets the credit.
- The theme of fulfillment appears again. Jesus came first to save Israel, fulfilling what "he promised" to Israel and David.
- How would Israel have interpreted the word "Savior" in context?
 - In the twenty-first century, we interpret it as "the One who saves us from hell and lets us into heaven." But that's not how they would have interpreted it (although Jesus thankfully does that!).
 - In context, they would have interpreted it nationalistically: that a Davidic king had risen to the throne, kicked Rome's butt, recaptured the Promised Land, and that they would soon return home to enjoy prosperity under David's Son.
 - Jesus did rise to the throne, but His throne is in heaven, at the Father's right hand. Jesus did kick Rome's butt, seizing Caesar's claim of kingship and occupying a higher place as "ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5). Jesus did recapture the Promised Land, although we don't realize this promise until the new heavens and new earth when all believers—Jew and Gentile alike—inherit both Palestine *and* the earth to boot.
 - In short, what Jews expected nationalistically in time, God fulfills in His multi-ethnic church for eternity.
 - Later in the message, Paul will emphasize "spiritual" themes like the ones we typically associate with "Savior" or "salvation": namely "forgiveness" (v. 38), faith (v. 39: "believes"), and justification (v. 39: "freed"; same Greek word as "justified" in Paul's letters).
- We would do well to marry Israel's "earthly" understanding of salvation with our modern "spiritual" understanding. God intends the word "salvation" to be holistic. It is physical as well as spiritual. First and foremost, God restores our relationship to Him, which is spiritual. However, He also promises us an eternal future where heaven and earth become one, and we live in resurrected bodies with our physically risen Lord.

24 Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 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.'

—Why does Paul mention John? It brings the history of the prophets right up to their current situation. John preached repentance "to all the people of Israel" as a forerunner to Christ. If they didn't receive John's message, they would not receive Christ's (see Luke 7:30: "but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.")

—By mentioning John's ministry, he would prick the conscience of those who rejected it, and he would arouse the hope of those who received it but hadn't yet heard the gospel.

26 "Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. 27 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. 28 And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. 29 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.

—"Brothers": not in the Christian sense yet, but in the Jewish sense. They share his heritage.

—He began with "Men of Israel and you who fear God" (13:16), and now he continues with "sons of Abraham, and those among you who fear God" (13:26). Why does he repeat himself? He is shifting gears. This is Paul's equivalent of Matt Chandler's, "Are you trackin with me?"

—Having begun with the Jewish history—the era of promise—he shifts toward the present era of fulfillment in Jesus.

—“the message of this salvation”: the salvation mentioned above, where the Davidic King assumes His throne, restores us to God, and fulfills the promises of return from exile.

—“For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers”:

- The Jews, the Jewish ruler Herod, the Romans, and the Gentile ruler Pontius Pilate.
- Scripture seems to repeat this theme of “the people and their rulers.” Dating back to Psalm 2, it is both “the kings of the earth” and the “nations” they lead, which rage against God. God gives special notice to both categories. Politicians and their populations tend to move in unison with their acceptance/rejection of God.

—“did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets”:

- These two operate in conjunction: recognizing Jesus and understanding the Scriptures. I am reminded of Luke 24, where the risen Christ appears to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, but they didn’t recognize Him until after He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (and in the breaking of bread). The same thing happens in the next scene, where the risen Jesus rebukes the disciples for not believing the Scriptures about Him. Also, in Luke 16, the rich man in Hades is told that if his living relatives don’t believe Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if someone rises from the dead. The theme throughout Luke-Acts is that faith is rooted in truth—the truth of Scripture.
- Paul’s sermon moved from Abraham to Moses to the judges and to the kings, but he did not quote any of the prophets. Now they come to the fore.
- Earlier, the synagogue read from the Law and the Prophets (13:15). Now, Paul reminds them of that weekly experience to show how God testified consistently of the Christ.

—“fulfilled them by condemning him”:

- Paul continues in this theme of fulfillment, which began earlier by alluding to the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants. Now, Paul shows how Jesus fulfilled the Prophets.
- Their condemnation of Jesus did not disrupt God’s plan. It fulfilled God’s plan. God includes human rebellion in His Master Plan. He oversees sin in the grand story of salvation, yet without sinning Himself.

—“though they found in Him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed”: Jesus died as an innocent man. The Jews and Pilate displayed their own guilt—not His—by executing Him.

—“when they had carried out all that was written of him”: the theme of fulfillment appears again.

—“they took him down from a tree and laid him in a tomb”: “they” in this verse refers to Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. “they” in the previous verse speaks of those who crucified Him.

30 But God raised him from the dead, 31 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. 32 And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, 33 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.” 34 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.” 35 Therefore he says also in another psalm, “You will not let your Holy One see corruption.” 36 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, 37 but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.

—“But God raised him from the dead”: His resurrection vindicates Him as a righteous sufferer (cf. 13:28). It also points forward to more fulfilled prophecies (vv. 33-35).

—“and for many days he appeared to... witnesses”: His vindication did not occur in a dark cave; it broke out from one. It spread to multiple “witnesses” over multiple “days.” This is different from other religions. We don’t just have to take Joseph Smith or Muhammed at their word. Many people over many days saw this with their eyes.

—“And we bring you the good news that what was promised to the fathers”: the good news was promised to Abraham, Moses, and David. It was rooted in the Jewish story. Their hopes for restoration to God, return from exile, and a conquering messianic king had been realized.

—“he has fulfilled... by raising Jesus”: the resurrection of Jesus became the means of God fulfilling His promises to the fathers. How so? The prophecies Paul focuses on are the Davidic ones. God promised David a descendant to sit on the throne forever. How could that happen if David’s descendant... died? The

prophecies explain how: God would raise One up who conquered death—and never dies again! David's eternal throne belongs to David's eternal Son.

—"as also it is written in the Second Psalm, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you."":

- This verse of Psalm 2 gives us *intratrinitarian communication* from the Father to the Son.
- The Son's right to rule is based on the Father's decree. This decree references the covenant with David, where the king would be a son to God and God would be a father to the king (2 Sam. 7:14). From David onward, every king would have been considered a "son of God." In a unique way, the king was to represent God to the people.
- No Davidic king lived up to the ideals of the covenant—until Jesus. His throne alone would last forever, for He alone lives forever. Jesus would literally be "raised up" (7:12) not just from among men (like other kings), but from among the dead.
- The timing of fulfillment of Psalm 2:7 is a matter of debate. Was Jesus begotten in eternity past or at the "coronation" associated with His resurrection/ascension?
 - Acts 13:33 clearly links the resurrection of Jesus with the Father begetting Him. This agrees with Hebrews 1:5. Paul's point is that the Davidic covenant was fulfilled in Christ's coronation, associated with His resurrection. Just like earthly kings were "begotten" into a father-son relationship with Yahweh, Jesus was "begotten" after being raised from the dead as the Davidic king of the world.
 - Despite Jesus's "begottenness" in time, this does not suggest that He was not also begotten before time—in eternity. In other words, both "timings" can be true. Jesus was begotten in eternity past (what we call "eternal generation of the Son"), and that "begottenness" manifested in time, in a fresh way, through His resurrection. His "begottenness" in time manifested His "begottenness in eternity."
 - A great verse for "eternal generation" is 1 John 5:18: "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but **he who was born of God protects him**, and the evil one does not touch him." Who is the one "born of God" who has the power to "protect" His people? The eternally begotten Jesus Christ. Jesus was born of God in eternity past. He has no beginning and no end. He proceeds from the Father, just as all sons proceed from their fathers. However, unlike earthly sons, Jesus proceeded from His Father without beginning. In the words of the Nicene Creed, He is "God of God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one being with the Father..."
 - Dr. Barrett remarks: *"Paul does not rip begotten language out of eternity in order to refer to the resurrection of Christ. Rather, it is because this is the Son, the eternal Son, begotten by the Father before all ages, that Paul can then apply begotten language to the resurrection of Christ as well. At the resurrection, God is announcing to the world not only what His Son has accomplished but who is Son is from eternity.... In summary, the New Testament authors may apply Psalm 2 to the enthronement of the new Davidic king (Jesus) due to his achievement of salvation. But they also recognize, based on the intratrinitarian conversation in Psalm 2, that this Davidic king who has been appointed from eternity to accomplish our salvation (Heb. 1:2; Ps. 2:8) is none other than the Son who proceeds from the Father before all time."*

—"I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David":

- Paul offers this as a second proof text that Jesus rose from the dead—"no more to return to corruption"—to assume the eternal Davidic throne.
- The quote comes from Isaiah 55:3. For context, here are verses 3-5 in the ESV: *"Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you."*
- The verses do not mention resurrection, so what is the connection? The connection is the promise made to David and the "everlasting covenant." He will proceed in the coming verses to explain how

David's body decayed in the grave, precluding him from presiding over an "everlasting covenant." The Son of David's resurrection qualifies Him to administer a covenant that lasts forever.

- The "holy and sure blessings of David" are the promises made to David: that one of his descendants would be "raised up" to reign eternally, perfectly representing God by his father-son relationship.
- Notably, Isaiah 55:5 clarifies that this everlasting covenant through David's Son will open the door for Gentiles to worship the God of Israel. Paul is right to view this as being fulfilled in his time.

—"You will not let your Holy One see corruption":

- I commented extensively on this quote in my Study Guide about Psalm 16 and also my Study Guide on Acts 2, which also quotes Psalm 16:10 to support the resurrection.
- Here's what I said about these verses in my commentary on Psalm 16 (the part that alludes to Acts 2): Remember, Peter says that part of David's revelation about Christ came from the "oath" of God in 2 Sam. 7:12-13. That oath stated not only that God would "raise up" an offspring to reign "forever," but also, that David himself would "lie down" with his fathers. David's lying down is contrasted with the Messiah's being raised up. Thus, when David wrote Psalm 16:10, he did not mean, "I literally won't die." He meant that his descendant, the "holy one," would not "see corruption." Further, he meant that this would somehow relate to David himself experiencing pleasures at God's right hand forevermore.
- The other half of Psalm 16:10 says "For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol." Sheol is the "place of the dead," translated "Hades" by the New Testament. Crash course on the afterlife. This is my understanding, and it is a common understanding of the church for 1500 years (with most still believing this way). In the Old Testament, "Sheol" referred to more than the grave; it was the place departed spirits went. Sheol appears to be separated into three categories: the place of the righteous dead ("Abraham's bosom"—Luke 16; "paradise"—Luke 23), the place of the wicked dead, and the place for rebel angels ("Tartarus"—1 Pet. 3). When Jesus died on the Cross, He experienced death like all humans: by going to Sheol, the place of departed spirits. He did not go there to suffer, for He had already paid for our sins on the Cross. He went there in triumph. He talked smack to the angelic beings trapped in Tartarus ("I just beat you guys on the Cross!"), and He liberated the righteous dead, bringing them into heaven. The wicked dead remain in Hades, awaiting final judgment, when God will cast them into a lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).²

—"after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation":

- David did "all my will" (v. 22) by serving "the purpose of God in his own generation" (v. 36). After this, unlike Jesus, his body decayed; it suffered "corruption" in the grave. Not so with Jesus.
- All we can do is serve God's purpose in our generation. We live within one generation, but Jesus continues "to do and teach" (1:1) through His Spirit empowered church. Saints who perish enter heaven and await resurrected bodies, but Jesus already has His resurrected body, He reigns from the Father's right hand, and He reigns through us—healing the sick, serving others, preaching the gospel, and blessing the world.

38 Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, 39 and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. 40 Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about: 41 "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."

—"Let it be known to you therefore...": Paul shifts from proclaiming the good news of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension to teaching what it means.

—"forgiveness of sins... freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses": the Greek word for "freed" is normally translated "justified." The word means "declared righteous." It's a courtroom word. In the courtroom of God, we are "justified"—how? Through faith. It is to "everyone who believes" that this gift of forgiveness comes. As in Romans 4, Paul links forgiveness and justification. We are declared righteous in God's courtroom; we are forgiven of crimes against the King of heaven; this comes to us by faith alone.

² See Matt Emerson's "Christ Descent to the Dead" at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/christs-descent-dead/>

— At the Cross, Christ took on our sin so we could take on His righteousness. The “law of Moses” could not justify. Rather than declaring us righteous, it declared us guilty. Jesus can declare us righteous, however, because He paid for our sin, rose above it, and imputed His righteousness to us. Therefore, when God declares the sinner righteous, it is not fiction. It is truth. In declaring us righteous, He declares reality, for His righteousness is ours, just as our sin became His.

—“Beware”: preaching the gospel should not just warm peoples’ hearts; it should equally warn them. To reject Jesus is to reject eternal life.

—“lest what is said in the Prophets should come about”: Paul returns again to the theme of fulfillment by referencing the Prophets. His entire gospel is rooted in the Old Testament. O, how important it is that we know the Scripture! And not just the New Testament! If Paul’s audience rejects the gospel, they will fulfill what the prophet Haggai once said.

—“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”:

- This verse comes from Haggai 1:5. Judah had become comfortably corrupt. Judgment loomed, yet she deemed it impossible. The prophet warned, “I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own” (1:6). The Chaldeans (aka, Babylonians) would exile Judah as a judgment for her wickedness. Haggai announces this, warning them to take heed.
- This prophecy was fulfilled long before Paul’s birth, when the Babylonians exiled Judah in 586 BC. Nevertheless, Paul proclaims that the warning applies to his listeners. How can this be?
- Just as God judged the Jewish people centuries earlier through the Babylonians, He would soon judge them again for scoffing in unbelief. The closest parallel would be the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70AD, this time by the Romans instead of the Babylonians.
- Whether they lived far away or in the heart of Jerusalem, every Jew would have felt the weightiness of the temple’s destruction. It would have felt like the end of the world.
- It’s also possible that the “judgment” Paul warned about focused on the temporary hardening of Jewish hearts that will last until the end of the age (Rom. 11). After first-century Jews got “first dibs” on the gospel, a hardening ensued. Paul’s audience would suffer the judgment of a hardened heart if they rejected the gospel.
- I think these go together: the judgment of a hardened heart and the judgment of the temple’s destruction. God gave the Jews first dibs on the gospel, but after their rejection of it, He destroyed their temple and hardened (most of) their hearts.
- Some would want to say that Paul was warning about final judgment, which sends people to hell. I don’t think that’s his immediate focus, though. He says that this judgment would happen “in your days.” God doesn’t send people to hell until the final judgment at the end of the age. In their days, He judged Israel through destruction of the temple and a hardened heart.
- The One who fulfilled Scripture through Jerusalem’s rejection of Christ (at Calvary) would next fulfill Scripture through Diaspora Jews who rejected Christ (at Paul’s preaching). Those who reject the gospel do not surprise God; they fulfill Scripture.