

The Central Event of History Identified and Fulfilled

Acts 13:24-37

February 26, 2017

Greg L. Price

What would the world's history (and your history) be without the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ? It would simply be preparing us all for the eternal judgment of a holy God. There would be no hope of salvation. There would be no looking with certainty to the glory of heaven. History would only be preparing us for the hopeless expectation of God's everlasting condemnation in hell. But glory be to God, for Jesus has come and has redeemed all those chosen in Christ Jesus before the world began. Jesus has risen from the grave and granted that same resurrection life to all who will trust alone in Christ alone for their forgiveness and righteousness. The Christian view of history is one of confidence and hope because of the coming of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the zenith of history. The Old Testament saints looked forward to Christ as the crowning event of history. The New Testament saints look back to Christ as the crowning event of history—from Christ's first coming to Christ's second Coming, we live in the age of Christ or the Messianic Age. All history from a Christian and biblical worldview is either before Christ (B.C.) or in the age of Christ (A.D., anno *Domini*, "in the year of the Lord").

The first part of Paul's sermon in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia laid out God's ordained history in the Old Testament, which prepared the way leading up to Jesus Christ, the Savior. **The second part of Paul's sermon** declares what Jesus actually accomplished as Savior for all who will put their trust in Him alone for their eternal salvation. It's easy for Paul to simply make the claim that the God of Israel was moving history along each step of the way toward the central event of history—the coming of Jesus Christ as God's Savior and Messiah. But the proof that God was doing exactly that is found in what Jesus Christ truly accomplished in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. That is then the burden of the next portion of Paul's sermon—to move from Old Testament history to New Testament fulfillment and realization.

The main points from our text this Lord's Day are: (1) The Testimony of Christ's Forerunner Proves Jesus Is the Prophesied Savior and Messiah (Acts 13:24-25); (2) The Testimony of Christ Himself Proves Jesus Is the Prophesied Savior and Messiah (Acts 13:26-37).

I. The Testimony of Christ's Forerunner Proves Jesus Is the Prophesied Savior and Messiah (Acts 13:24-25).

A. Last Lord's Day we left Paul in the synagogue there in Antioch of Pisidia where he was preaching that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah, the promised seed of David, who would reign upon the throne of David forever.

B. But now Paul further narrows the field that only Jesus could be the son of David who was to come by giving the testimony of John the Baptist in Acts 13:24-25.

1. John the Baptist had been very popular with the people of Israel—in fact to such a degree that the Jewish leaders would not speak against him for fear that it would bring upon them the anger of the greater part of the Jewish people. Thus, when Paul brings forward the testimony of John the Baptist, he is not bringing forward someone who was unknown to Jews or disrespected by them at that time, even to Jews in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia (after all, John had ministered in Israel only about 20 years earlier

from the time that Paul preached this very sermon). If John the Baptist was totally unknown to the Jews in this synagogue, it makes little sense for Paul to bring him forth as a key witness to the identity of Jesus as the promised seed of David.

2. The testimony of John was crucial not only because of the respect John had among the Jews, but also because he claimed to be the forerunner of the Messiah. The coming of the Messiah could not be put many years after John, if John was (as he claimed to be) the herald announcing that the coming of the Messiah was at hand (or near). There are two points emphasized here by Paul about John the Baptist.

a. First, John preached the need of repentance and administered baptism as a sign and seal of that repentance in preparation for the coming of the Messiah (Acts 13:24). John appealed in his preaching to the fulfillment of prophecy (Isaiah 40:3) that he was the one sent to prepare the way of the Lord (John 1:23). The message of John's ministry was pivotal to the coming of the Messiah. Just as the nations would prepare themselves to meet their earthly king, so Israel must now prepare itself by way of repentance of sin and turning to the Lord to meet the Messiah. Paul was putting those listening to him on the horns of a dilemma. "You can't respect John the Baptist and honor him as a prophet, and yet believe the Messiah did not immediately follow him as John said. Either John was a false prophet and he should be despised or he was a true prophet and he introduced the Messiah."

(1) Dear ones, the grace of repentance in the life of all who profess faith in Jesus Christ is evidence of faith in Jesus Christ. Where there is no sorrow over sin committed against God in violating His holy commandments is a warning as to whether Jesus is Lord of your life. Many want Jesus to be Savior in order to escape the fires of hell, but few will walk the narrow path of grief and shame over sin.

(2) Repentance and sorrow over sin is not an end in itself, but is the means to enjoying the comfort of God's promise ("Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" Matthew 5:4). You are not justified by mourning, but by faith alone. But without mourning over sin while eyeing the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, there will be no sanctification in hating sin and in loving righteousness.

b. Secondly, John made clear when asked that he himself was not the Messiah, but the Messiah was to come immediately after him and John was not worthy to even remove His sandals from His feet, as a servant would do for his master (Acts 13:25). Once again, John's statement here cited by Paul in his sermon demonstrates the overlap of John's ministry as forerunner and the appearing of the Messiah, for if John was not worthy to remove the Messiah's sandals, the Messiah himself must have been present before John was slain by Herod. This was in fact the case as John the Baptist testified (John 1:26-27,29-30).

(1) John was not seeking a name for himself. He was simply "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord'" (Matthew 3:3). John was not seeking an exalted position in this world—he was not even worthy to remove the sandals of the Lord (**John 3:30**). And yet there was no prophet before Christ that was greater than John (Matthew 11:11). Why? Because he was the forerunner of Christ and because he lowered himself before God and man in humility. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5).

(2) This is perhaps one of the greatest hindrances to God using us as ministers or as Christians—our pride in seeking a name for ourselves or our pride in exalting ourselves in the eyes of others (like the disciples of Christ), rather than humbling ourselves as mere servants who are not even worthy to be His servants (like John the Baptist, like Paul in Ephesians 3:8). Our boasting to ourselves or before others is an indication that we do not have the attitude of John (who was not even worthy to be a servant of Christ), but rather the attitude of the disciples (who were not only worthy to be a servant of Christ but to be greatest in Christ's kingdom).

(3) Pride is one of the abominations that God hates and despises (Proverbs 6:16-19). We who believe in the doctrines of grace should understand and exemplify the humility of our Savior, who came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many. Is there something

wrong with your growth in Christ because you see more corruption, more worldliness, and more disobedience in your life than you did last year? No! That is what a growing Christian will experience as he/she gets closer to the Light. This is the work of Christ in humbling and showing you your continual need of the Lord Jesus who is more willing to fill you with His Spirit than you are to be filled. And one more thing: the fruit of humility is a thankful heart (not a complaining heart). Those who are growing in the humility of Christ are enabled to see more and more of the blessing of God that they do not deserve, but which the Lord abundantly and graciously pours forth upon them.

II. The Testimony of Christ Himself Proves Jesus Is the Prophesied Savior and Messiah (Acts 13:26-37).

A. First, the Testimony of Christ's Death Proves Jesus Is the Prophesied Messiah and Savior (Acts 13:26-29).

1. Now as Paul moves in his sermon from the testimony of Christ's forerunner, John the Baptist, he comes to the most important testimony: the testimony of Jesus Christ Himself. There are two aspects of the testimony of Jesus Christ that Paul highlights in demonstrating that He was the Messiah and Savior sent by God: Christ's death and Christ's resurrection.

2. No doubt, one of the lingering objections that would have been in the minds of those Jews and Gentile God-fearers who believed in the God of Israel was this: If Jesus was the Messiah and Savior that the God of Israel had sent as David's seed to save His people, how is it that the Jewish leaders in Israel and the greater part of Israel did not confess Jesus to be both Messiah and Savior? How did the majority miss this, and but a few, a minority recognize Jesus to be the prophesied son of David?

a. First, Paul says they knew Him not (Acts 13:27). They did not want to know Him. The Jewish leaders only saw Him as a threat to their power over the people (pride blinded them and will blind us to the truth), and the people blindly followed their leaders into the ditch. When we lie to ourselves about our own self-righteousness rather than daily reminding ourselves that we are only accepted before God because of Christ's perfect righteousness, we become targets of self-deception (when we live in a lie and not in the light). This is the self-deception that had overtaken the Jewish leaders and the majority of the Jews at that time, so that they did not know or recognize Christ as the Messiah.

b. Second, Paul says they knew not "the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day" (Acts 13:27). O, dear ones, this ought to shake us from all false hope that simply listening to the Word of God read and preached is our ticket into heaven (or merely mastering theology is all that we need). That you should do, but Paul says that the prophets of the Old Testament were read every Sabbath in the synagogues, and yet because their minds were darkened and because they did not have a hungering and thirsting to grow in their knowledge of the Messiah promised in the Old Testament, they did not recognize Him when He came. Dear ones, how we must do more than simply show up for worship to hear the Word read and preached. If we do not approach God trusting in Christ, depending upon the Holy Spirit to give us light and understanding, to give us love for Christ and His truth (both the gospel and the commandments), and to grant to us the doing (and not the mere hearing) of God's will, our eyes will be calloused and our ears hardened to the truth. Let not formalism and going through the mere motions of worship continue without repentance in your life. It leads to self-deception, falling away, and ultimately destruction.

3. Then Paul points to the next objection that would likely arise in the minds of the Jews to whom he was preaching: Jesus was put to death by Pilate and was condemned as a criminal—that's a problem.

a. However, Paul points out that the Jews who had a significant role in the condemnation of Christ actually fulfilled the predetermined will of God in doing so ("they have fulfilled them in condemning him" Acts 13:27; Acts 2:22-23—God's control over the most heinous sin ever committed). Far

from being a reason not to receive Jesus as the Messiah, Paul declares that the rejection of Jesus and unjust condemnation of Jesus by the Jewish people and the Romans was a singular fulfillment of prophecy and really another reason to recognize Him as the Messiah promised about 690 years before in Isaiah 53.

- (1) Jesus the Messiah was despised and rejected by the Jews (Isaiah 53:3; John 1:11-12).
- (2) Jesus the Messiah was unjustly arrested, falsely accused, and judged to be “smitten by God” (Isaiah 53:4,8; Acts 13:28).
- (3) Jesus the Messiah was put to death (Isaiah 53:8; Acts 13:29). The Jews did not expect this, nor did the disciples (Peter).
- (4) Jesus the Messiah was buried in the sepulcher of the rich (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60; Acts 13:29). This is noteworthy because a common criminal would be buried in a grave yard with other common criminals and not in the sepulcher of the rich.
- (5) Jesus is the very same Messiah and Savior who was prophesied that He alone would carry away all the sins of those who trust Him alone for their righteousness before God (Isaiah 53:6,11).

B. Second, the Testimony of Christ’s Resurrection Proves Jesus Is the Prophesied Savior and Messiah (Acts 13:30-37).

1. The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is the testimony of all testimony that He is the Messiah and Savior who alone can save from sin and grant everlasting life.
 - a. Paul says that the Jews and the Romans put Christ to death, but once again they were simply fulfilling the plan of God, for the Messiah had to be put to death by them in order to demonstrate His power over death and in order to prove that God had accepted His work on the cross as a perfect and sufficient payment for the sin of all who would trust Him; for if Jesus had not paid for even one sin of all of God’s elect, He would have remained in the grave. But He arose and many witnesses were yet alive to confirm they saw Him after His resurrection (Acts 13:30-31; 1 Corinthians 15:5-7—500 witnesses at once—this was not a mass hypnotic trance, or a mass delusion).
 - b. All of God’s promises to save you, His people, rested on Christ’s bodily resurrection—all the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20). The defeat of all the enemies of God rested on Christ’s bodily resurrection.
 - (1) Satan did everything he could to keep Christ in the grave—a huge stone rolled in front of the entrance, the stone was sealed by the Roman Governor that if tampered with, it would mean certain death, and a number of the best trained soldiers in the world were set outside to guard the tomb from any of Christ’s disciples taking the body and claiming He was raised.
 - (2) Everything Christ taught, all that He said about Himself being the eternal Son of God, and every miracle He performed, He rested upon His bodily resurrection from the grave. If He was not raised from the dead, He was a liar and false prophet. If He was raised from the dead, He is the Messiah, Savior, and Lord of glory. Remember the Jews never disputed His actual death—they claimed Christ’s body was stolen—how did that happen with the tomb protected as it was?
2. Paul declares that God has fulfilled His promise made unto the fathers in raising Christ from the dead (Acts 13:32-33). The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ proves He is the eternal Son of God: “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (Psalm 2:7). Once again as we turn back to Isaiah 53:10, we see another prophecy concerning the Messiah.
3. There is one other prophecy from the Old Testament that was fulfilled by Jesus upon which Paul shines the light of the Word of God: Psalm 16:10. This must refer to the greater son of David, the Messiah, for David’s body did see corruption in the grave (Acts 13:35-36). However, the body of Jesus Christ did not see corruption in the grave because He was the Son of God and was raised bodily the third day (Acts

13:37).

4. Paul has now in a most careful way led his audience to see how the God of Israel that had called them in Abraham, saved and rescued them out of Egypt, provided for them in the wilderness, protected them with judges, given them a king after His own heart, David, and had promised that the Messiah would be of David's seed. This same God of Israel sent Jesus, the seed of David, to be Messiah and Savior. John the Baptist testified that Jesus was the Messiah, and he was the forerunner and herald of Jesus the Messiah. Most importantly, Jesus testified that He was the Messiah and Savior sent by God through His death and resurrection (both of which were prophesied hundreds of years earlier). Those are the facts upon which rests your salvation and mine—your sanctification and mine—your glorification and mine—and all the promises of God to you. Nothing is more certain in all of history than the central event of all history—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (not even your birth, your life, or your marriage).

5. When you are overwhelmed by temptation and sin, it is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that is your strength and salvation. When you are attacked and unjustly treated, it is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that is your wall of defense. When you are perplexed and in doubt, dear Christian, there is an absolute truth to which you can cast your eye of faith and hope that brings the peace of God that passes all understanding—it is the absolute certainty of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Christians, our lives must be daily oriented around the fact that God so loved us that He sent Jesus to live for us, to die for us, and to be raised for us. That is making the central event of history a reality in your life.

Copyright 2017 Greg L. Price.