

# SPEECHES IN ACTS

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Should The Book Really Be Called

*The Words Of The Apostles?*

Class Four – Paul To Both Jews and Gentiles

# SPEECHES OF PAUL

- We turn now to consider the speeches of Paul – there are seven recorded by Luke:
  - One at the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia (13:16-41)
  - Two open-air speeches to pagan Gentiles (14:8-20 & 17:22-34)
  - Two personal biographies (22:1-29 & 26:1-32)
  - Two brief addresses to Gentiles in power over him (16:25-34 & 24:10-25)

# SPEECHES OF PAUL

- We won't be able to cover all of these, but instead will concentrate on the preaching efforts – to Jews and Gentiles
- But do notice the continued “doubling” which Luke employs – except for the single preaching effort to the Jews in Antioch
- What are we to make of this “outlier?” – hold that thought!

# PAUL'S SYNAGOGUE ADDRESSES

- Luke records 11 times that Paul preached in a synagogue (not counting the similar address to the Roman Jews in his lodging)
- For most of these, we have no record of the message itself – for example:

When they arrived at Salamis, they **proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews**. And they had John also to assist them. Acts 13:5 (NRSV)

# PAUL'S SYNAGOGUE ADDRESSES

- This is typical of how Luke records these preaching activities – why is that?
- The most-likely explanation is that Paul's preaching method in these instances followed a similar pattern – Luke says as much:

And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three sabbath days argued with them from the scriptures, Acts 17:2 (NRSV)

# PAUL'S SYNAGOGUE ADDRESSES

- Paul followed a predicable pattern at this time – when he arrived at a town, he first presented his message to the local synagogue
- In the last of these 11 accounts, Luke writes the Paul preached  
    “He entered the synagogue and for three months spoke out boldly, and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God. Acts 19:8 (NRSV)
- By now, Luke assumes his reader(s) know what is meant by “the kingdom of God”
- Luke therefore only needed to give one such speech in detail – and we have it in Acts 13

# LUKE'S "WITNESSING" STRATEGY

"... Only on the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be sustained." *Deuteronomy 19:15 (NRSV)*

"... "Any charge must be sustained by the evidence of two or three witnesses." *2 Corinthians 13:1 (NRSV)*

- We have mentioned previously how Luke often includes testimony or evidence from more than a single source
- It is hard not to see a deliberate invocation of both the Old Testament Mosaic Law and the New Testament's validation by Paul
- Remember we mentioned that Peter's fifth speech seemed to be an outlier? – I don't think it was

# RELATIONSHIP OF PAUL TO PETER

- We all know about the disagreement between Peter & Paul
- I'm not going to focus on that, but rather the similarities of their preaching
- Remember we had characterized Peter's speech at the home of Cornelius as an outlier, since wasn't "paired" with anything?
- Here in Antioch of Pisidia is its mate
- It's almost like they are working from a set of "talking points"
- Some commentators have posited that much of the first century preaching (and written records) share a few common sources from which they were taken



# PETER'S "STUMP SPEECH"

- We looked at the basic outline of Peter's preaching in an earlier class:
  - Introduction
  - Jesus crucified
  - God has raised up Jesus
  - Jesus exalted to a position of power.
  - Repent, forgiveness of sin, and receive the promises
- We'll now look at the significant similarities (and appropriate differences) with Paul's speech
  - Some slight re-ordering to make the alignment of their ideas

# INTRODUCTION

- Note that Peter's audience were Gentiles (albeit devout), while Paul's were fully Jewish
  - More focus for Paul on Old Testament
  - More focus for Peter on witnesses
- Each has an introduction tailored to the audience, but with a common structure
  - Historical preamble
  - Jesus sent by God as a savior to Israel
  - Connection to John the Baptist
  - The word of God has come to Israel

# INTRODUCTION

- Both speeches show how the audience connects to the good news of the kingdom
  - For the Jews – their history from the Exodus to David
  - For the Gentiles – the promises through “fear” and “works”
- Both stress the point that Jesus was sent to Israel
- Both refer to the baptism of John
  - Both audiences must have known of John and his message
  - Paul also alludes to the expectation of Messiah by the Jews
- Both connect the message to being heirs of Israel (in faith) to salvation

# CAESAREA VS. ANTIOCH

## Acts 10:34-43 Peter at Caesarea

*Invited to speak by devout Gentiles*

34 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. 35 "But in every nation whoever fears him and works righteousness is accepted by him.

36 "The word which **God sent to the children of Israel**, preaching peace through **Jesus Christ**; He is Lord of all; [38a **God anointed Jesus of Nazareth** with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and **healing** all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.]

37 "that word you know, which was **proclaimed** throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after **the baptism which John preached**:

[36a "**The word which God sent to the children of Israel**]

## Acts 13:16-41 Paul at Antioch in Pisidia

*Invited to speak by Jews*

16 Then 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 exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm he brought them out of it. 18 "Now for a time of about forty years he put up with their ways in the wilderness. 19 "And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he distributed their land to them by allotment. 20 "After that he gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. 21 "And afterward they asked for a king; so 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 for them David as king, to whom also he gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, who will do all my will.'

23 "From this man's seed, according to the promise, **God raised up for Israel a Saviour; Jesus**;

24 "after **John** had first **preached**, before his coming, **the baptism of repentance** to all the people of Israel. 25 "And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I am not he. But behold, there comes one after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.'

26 "Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, **to you the word of this salvation has been sent.**

# JESUS CRUCIFIED

- Both accounts specify precisely that it was the Jerusalem Jews who murdered Jesus
- Both specify that He was hung on a tree
  - As one accursed by God
  - The Gentiles must have known of this – they were knowledgeable and devout
- Both call on witnesses to this event
  - Peter was an eyewitness
  - Paul calls upon the prophets as witnesses – connecting to his historical account

# JESUS CRUCIFIED

## Acts 10:34-43 Peter at Caesarea

39 "And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of **the Jews and in Jerusalem**, whom **they killed by hanging on a tree**.

## Acts 13:16-41 Paul at Antioch in Pisidia

27 "For **those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers**, because they did not know him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning him. 28 "And though they found no cause for death in him, **they asked Pilate that he should be put to death**. 29 "Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning him, they took him down from **the tree** and laid him in a tomb.

# GOD HAS RAISED UP JESUS

- Both speeches clearly state the God raised Jesus
- Both again refer to witnesses – this time to eyewitnesses to the risen Christ
- Both make the point that these witnesses were disciples

# GOD HAS RAISED UP JESUS

## Acts 10:34-43 Peter at Caesarea

40 "Him **God raised up** on the third day, and **showed him openly**, 41 "not to all the people, but **to witnesses chosen before by God**, even to us who ate and drank with him after he arose from the dead.

## Acts 13:16-41 Paul at Antioch in Pisidia

30 "But **God raised him from the dead**. 31 "**He was seen for many days** by those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, **who are his witnesses to the people**.



# JESUS EXALTED TO A POSITION OF POWER

- Both speeches stress the message of the risen Christ which must be declared
- Both emphasize that it was the work of God and part of His plan
  - Peter mentions Jesus as judge
  - Paul mentions Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promise
- Both call upon the prophets as witnesses
  - Peter does this in a general way
  - Paul does this by continuing his historical account (note that he uses the same logic as Peter did at Pentecost: David is still dead, but Jesus is not)

# JESUS EXALTED TO A POSITION OF POWER

## Acts 10:34-43 Peter at Caesarea

42 "And **he commanded us to preach to the people**, and to testify

that it is he who was **ordained by God** to be Judge of the living and the dead.

43 "To him all the prophets witness that,

## Acts 13:16-41 Paul at Antioch in Pisidia

32 "And **we declare to you glad tidings**; that promise which was made to the fathers.

33 "**God has fulfilled this** for us their children, in that he has raised up Jesus.

**As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are my Son, Today I have begotten you.'** 34 "And that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.' 35 "Therefore **he also says in another Psalm: 'You will not allow your Holy One to see corruption.'** 36 "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; 37 "but he whom God raised up saw no corruption.

# “REPENT ...”

- Both speeches close with an appeal to believe so that their sins will be forgiven
  - Peter: - “through his name ...”
  - Paul: - “through this man ...”
- Paul adds more historical and theological perspective for his Jewish audience
  - Jesus is superior to Moses
  - It is a new phase of the history of God and man
  - The Law has ceased from its function of pointing forward

# “REPENT ...”

- Paul ends his speech with a warning from Habakkuk 1:5
  - God will intervene in judgement on His people for their apostacy
  - They will not believe it is happening to them, even though it was foretold, and repeated directly to them
- Paul has shown them that there is a direct line – from Abraham to David  
To Jesus

# “REPENT ...”

## Acts 10:34-43 Peter at Caesarea

43b **through his name, whoever believes in him will receive remission of sins.**"

*Gentiles believed*

## Acts 13:16-41 Paul at Antioch in Pisidia

38 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that **through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins**; 39 "and **by him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses**. 40 "Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: 41 "Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you."

*Jews rejected (but Gentiles believed)*

# SO WHAT?

- So what of this close parallel between Peter & Paul
  - Other than a catchy name for a candy company
  - Or two-thirds of a folk music trio
- Peter and Paul are the two great figures of the Book of Acts
- By pairing them together, Luke is showing the unity of the Gospel message
- From Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, to the ends of the earth
- Two preachers, one at the beginning and one at the end of Acts, preached the same message, using the same structure and terms

# PAUL TO PAGAN GENTILES

- Paul is often called “the Apostle to the Gentiles” – and rightly so:

Then he said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'" *Acts 22:21 (NRSV)*

- Yet the Book of Acts records many times when Paul preached to Jewish audiences – 12 times in total as we have seen, even if we only have one full example

# PAUL TO PAGAN GENTILES

- But we only have two instances of his preaching to “true” Gentiles (those who have little or no prior contact with the Old Testament)
  - Lystra – Acts 14:8 – 20
  - Athens – Acts 17:16 – 34
- Want to spend some time looking at these – as likely examples of other instances



# PAUL AT LYSTRA AND ATHENS

## Acts 14:8-20 Lystra

8 And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. 9 This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, 10 said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked. 11 Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" 12 And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. 13 Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes.

## Acts 17:16-34 Athens

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. 17 Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? 20 "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean." 21 For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

# PAUL TELLS THEM OF THEIR ERROR

- Both audiences interpreted Paul within the context of their own religions
  - To the Lystrans, a miracle showed the he was one of their gods
  - To the Athenians, he was a proclaimer of another god, one they hadn't known
- Paul's main concern here was to differentiate God from their gods
- To show that God was completely and totally outside of their religious framework

# PAUL TELLS THEM OF THEIR ERROR

- Paul uses their idolatry as a launching point for his proclaiming the Truth:

## Acts 14:8-20 Lystra

15b and **preach to you** that you should turn from these useless things to **the living God**,

## Acts 17:18-34 Athens

23b Therefore, **the One** whom you worship without knowing, **him I proclaim to you**:

# PAGANS CONTEXT FOR THE MESSAGE

- The context of both speeches describe idolatry run amok – excessive to the point of ridiculousness
  - The Lystrans were willing to believe Paul and Barnabas were gods themselves
  - The Athenians were desperate to make sure they didn't “miss” knowing about any gods

# PAGANS CONTEXT FOR THE MESSAGE

- Shocking to Paul – even given his Roman citizenship

When the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, **they tore their clothes** and rushed out into the crowd, shouting, *Acts 14:14 (NRSV)*

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, **he was deeply distressed** to see that the city was full of idols. *Acts 17:16 (NRSV)*

# PAUL SHOWS THEIR ILLOGICAL THINKING

- Paul points out the rational and logical flaws in their religious systems and contrasts them with the living God
- The Lystrans have failed to see two ordinary human beings as such
- The Athenians' own system shows their ignorance of whom they worship

# PAUL TO PAGAN GENTILES

## Acts 14:8-20 Lystra

14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out 15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you,

## Acts 17:18-34 Athens

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 "for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To The Unknown God.

# THE ONE TRUE GOD – LORD OF ALL THINGS

- Paul's arguments are almost identical – the creation itself bears witness to a God who is greater than his creation
- He doesn't mention it, but this is what the Old Testament teaches:

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built! *1 Kings 8:27 (NRSV)*

Thus says the LORD: Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is my resting place? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things are mine, says the LORD ... *Isaiah 66:1-2 (NRSV)*



# THE ONE TRUE GOD – LORD OF ALL THINGS

- There is not a pantheon of gods, each responsible for one aspect of creation
- There is One God who created everything and is responsible for it all

**Acts 14:8-20 Lystra**

15c **who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them,**

**Acts 17:18-34 Athens**

24 "God, **who made the world and everything in it**, since He is Lord of **heaven and earth**, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 "Nor is He worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and **all things**.

# AGAIN THE APPEAL TO WITNESSES

- Paul's first witness was the creative work of God
- His second witness is God's providential care
  - At Lystra, he mentions the change of seasons and the rains from heaven
  - At Athens, he mentions the "pre-appointed times" – that is, seasons
- At Athens, he quotes their own philosophers to show the inherent contradictions
  - They claim to be children of gods
  - But the worship stone and metal images, inferior to themselves

# APPEAL TO WITNESSES

## Acts 14:8-20 Lystra

17 "Nevertheless he did not leave himself without **witness**, in that **he did good**, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, **filling our hearts with food and gladness.**"

## Acts 17:18-34 Athens

26 "And he has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has **determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings**, 27 "**so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for him and find him**, though he is not far from each one of us; 28 "for in him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.' 29 "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.

# GOD IS PATIENT, BUT ...

- He wasn't telling them that God was unconcerned about their past sins
- God's "overlooking" speaks to his patience, not to his "indifference"

## Acts 14:8-20 Lystra

[16 "who in bygone generations **allowed** all nations to **walk in their own ways.** ]

## Acts 17:18-34 Athens

30 "Truly, these times of **ignorance** God **overlooked,**

- Christ's coming ushered in a new phase of God's plan, for Gentiles as well as Jews
- Although they came from different directions, the message is now the same for both

# A DAY IS COMING

- The call to repent is the same as it was to the Jews – but the Gentiles need to turn aside from their idolatry, as the Jews did from theirs!

## Acts 14:8-20 Lystra

[turn from these **useless** things to the living God v.15]

## Acts 17:18-34 Athens

but now commands all men everywhere to **repent**,

31 "because he has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead."

- The time to repent and change is now

# THE RESULTS OF THEIR EFFORTS

- It seems that neither message received an overwhelming response (a bit of an understatement concerning Lystra!)
- But there is no hint given by Luke that Paul regretted what he said or how he said it
- Perhaps by giving a pair of very similar addresses, Luke is showing that these were representative speeches to such audiences
- Perhaps the response was typical for the time from a pagan audience

# A FAR CRY FROM THOUSANDS

## Acts 14:8-20 Lystra

18 And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them. 19 Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. 20 However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

## Acts 17:18-34 Athens

32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter." 33 So Paul departed from among them. 34 However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.



# PREACHING RESULTS IN ACTS

- We have seen that the preaching record in Acts shows a definite progression – Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth
- It seems like there is another progression as well – one not so positive
- From 3,000 at Pentecost to a handful at Athens

# PREACHING RESULTS IN ACTS

- Clearly the Gospel message did spread far and wide – but we don't hear a lot of details about the later response to the Gospel in the Book of Acts
- But the Acts record is very mixed – lots of successes, even with the Jews at the beginning
- Much less success, with either Jews or Gentiles, as the story progresses

# SUMMARY

- Paul gives multiple speeches (7) – three pairs and one which pairs with Peter
- Focused on preaching efforts by Paul to both Jews and Gentiles
- Same message and structure used by Peter and Paul for Jewish audiences
- Pagans confronted with the illogic of their beliefs
- God is different than pagan gods – One God
- Effects of preaching diminish in Acts, but not overall

# SPEECHES IN ACTS

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