

to him, that everyone who puts his trust in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:43, CJB/CJSB), which also bears importance on Yeshua’s nature, and whether a supernatural but ultimately created entity could offer permanent atonement for human transgression. Certainly with these claims being made of the Messiah, more investigation into His nature and origins is required.

It is likely that during Peter’s encounter with Cornelius and his party, particularly among those who were God-fearers associated with the Jewish Synagogue to some degree, that there was some discussion which occurred regarding various prophetic passages from the Tanach. It has been suggested, at least, that prophecies spoken of by Peter included: Isaiah 33:24; 53:4-6, 11; Jeremiah 31:31; Daniel 9:24.²⁴⁴

Acts 13:13-42

“Paul Declares Yeshua the Messiah”

“Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem. But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, ‘Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it.’ Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, ‘Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He led them out from it. For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness. When He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance—all of which took about four hundred and fifty years. After these things He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. 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. After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, “I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will” [1 Samuel 13:14]. From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Yeshua, after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And while John was completing his course, he kept saying, “What do you suppose that I am? I am not *He*. But behold, one is coming after me the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.” Brethren, sons of Abraham’s family, and those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled *these* by condemning *Him*. And though they found no ground for *putting Him to death*, they asked Pilate that He be executed. When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead; and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people. And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this *promise* to our children in that He raised up Yeshua, as it is also written in the second Psalm, “YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU” [Psalm 2:7]. *As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: “I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY and SURE blessings OF DAVID’* [Isaiah 55:3, LXX]. Therefore He also says in another *Psalm*, “YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY” [Psalm 16:10, LXX]. For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay. Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be

²⁴⁴ Marshall, *Acts*, 193.

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freed through the Law of Moses. Therefore take heed, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon you: "BEHOLD, YOU SCOFFERS, AND MARVEL, AND PERISH; FOR I AM ACCOMPLISHING A WORK IN YOUR DAYS, A WORK WHICH YOU WILL NEVER BELIEVE, THOUGH SOMEONE SHOULD DESCRIBE IT TO YOU" [Habakkuk 1:5, LXX]. As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath."

What can be recognized from the declaration of the good news or gospel, by Paul and Barnabas, at the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch?²⁴⁵ On a particular *Shabbat*, after the reading of the Torah and the Prophets, they are invited by the synagogue leaders to offer a word of exhortation or encouragement (Acts 13:15), seemingly being recognized as important, outside guests. Surely the message offered to the Jews and God-fearers assembled (Acts 15:16), was one which was going to change many lives.

In the record provided by Luke, in what is Paul's first lengthy exposition of the good news, Paul begins by making light of God's election of Israel, and His faithfulness to His chosen people during the period of the Exodus, the wilderness sojourn, and the Conquest (Acts 13:17-19). God provided judges for Israel until the time of the Prophet Samuel (Acts 13:20), and then gave the people King Saul (Acts 13:21). Of particular importance is the figure of King David, noted to be one who was willing to perform God's intentions and purposes (Acts 13:22; cf. 1 Samuel 13:14). In having mentioned David, Paul establishes Davidic descent for Yeshua as one of his "posterity" (Acts 13:23, RSV) or "offspring" (ESV), a fulfillment of the promise that David would have offspring after him to rule forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 89:29, 36; 132:11, 17; cf. Isaiah 11:1-13).

Probably wanting to touch upon some unique features of Yeshua's arrival onto the scene of history, Paul addresses how "Before his coming John had preached a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel" (Acts 13:24, RSV), mentioning the work and calling of John the Immerser (something seen in all four Gospels: Mark 1:7; Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:20, 27). That the ministry of John the Immerser/Baptist was anticipated prior to the arrival of Yeshua was something prophesied. Paul's audience would have probably been familiar with this expectation. Isaiah 40:3-4 specifies what John's mission was:

"A voice is calling, 'Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; and let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley.'"

Paul tells those on this *Shabbat*, "As John was completing his work, he said: 'Who do you think I am? I am not that one. No, but he is coming after me, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie'" (Acts 13:25 NIV). John the Immerser was not the prophesied Redeemer. But he certainly had to fulfill an important role *prior* to Yeshua's arrival on the scene. John was one who was rejected and martyred no different than the Hebrew Prophets (cf. Matthew 11:13-14). Yeshua, however, is the Messiah designated by His Father to be the Savior of humanity: "My brothers, who come of Abraham's stock, and others among you who worship God, we are the people to whom this message of salvation has been sent" (Acts 13:26, REB).

In establishing the Messiahship of Yeshua to this mainly Diaspora Jewish audience, interspersed with various God-fearers, a few different dynamics were present than would be present in a Judean Jewish synagogue. These people may not have been under the same kinds of influences as those living immediately adjacent to the places where Yeshua ministered. Perhaps this is why Paul then tells them, "The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not

²⁴⁵ This entry has been partially adapted from Appendix A in the author's commentary *Galatians for the Practical Messianic*, "Acts 13:13-14:28: Paul's Visit to Southern Galatia."

recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath" (Acts 13:27, NIV). This is certainly not to say that some of the people who demanded Yeshua's execution were not stirred or manipulated unknowingly, but that the Diaspora Jews in Pisidian Antioch, and their non-Jewish component, were largely removed from these events. Paul is able to say that the religious leaders in Jerusalem, who were those ultimately responsible for the Messiah's death, actually fulfilled prophecy by rejecting Him. Two passages that Paul may have had in mind, include Psalm 118:22²⁴⁶ and Isaiah 53:3²⁴⁷. Paul is specific not just in the message of salvation being universal to all people, but also in placing the blame for the Messiah's unjust execution to the religious and political leaders in Jerusalem:

"Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham and those among you who are God-fearers, it is to us the message of this salvation has been sent. For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers— not recognizing Him or the sayings of the Prophets that are read every Sabbath—fulfilled these words by condemning Him. Though they found no charge worthy of a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have Him executed. When they had carried out all that had been written about Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb" (Acts 13:26-29, TLV).

Yeshua's death is not the end, for sure, as Paul describes to those in the synagogue that God the Father raised Him from the dead (Acts 13:30), and that He appeared to many people following His resurrection (Acts 13:31; cf. 1:3). Paul's main intention in this synagogue message, to people he had not encountered before and has no personal relationship with, was to establish common ground with them and with their collective understanding of the Tanach prophecies of the Messiah to come. As he stated to those in Pisidian Antioch, "And we bring you the good news that...God promised to our ancestors" (Acts 13:32, NRSV).

Paul substantiates his conviction that Yeshua is the fulfillment of the promise that God made to Israel by telling his audience, "this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm" (Acts 13:33, ESV). It is important to note here that the verb employed for "raised," *anistēmi* (ἀνίστημι), meaning "**to cause to stand or be erect, raise, erect, raise up**" (BDAG),²⁴⁸ is different than what appears earlier for "raised" in Acts 13:30. Previously employed in Acts 13:30 was the verb *egeirō* (ἐγείρω), "**to cause someone to wake from sleep, wake, rouse**" (BDAG),²⁴⁹ obviously in reference to Yeshua's resurrection.²⁴⁹ Acts 13:33, however, speaks of the raising up of David's offspring, and is not so much a reference to Yeshua's resurrection as much as it is to His exaltation. Paul's language may also be affected by Judges 3:9, which says "When the sons of Israel cried to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother."

The prophecy that Paul uses to speak of Yeshua's being "raised up," in Acts 13:33, is Psalm 2:7. The elongated text reads as follows:

"But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain. I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, '**You are My Son, today I have begotten You.** Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware" (Psalm 2:6-9).

²⁴⁶ "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner *stone*" (Psalm 118:22).

²⁴⁷ "He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him" (Isaiah 53:3).

²⁴⁸ BDAG, 83.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 271.

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This is a text that is applied elsewhere in the Apostolic Scriptures to Yeshua the Messiah (Mark 9:7; Luke 1:32; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5).²⁵⁰ Psalm 2 has an important parallel in 2 Samuel 7, in Nathan's prophecy to King David about One coming after him who would have a throne established forever. While it is initially spoken about concerning Solomon, it was considered to have major Messianic significance. The prophecy specifically says,

"When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took *it* away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:12-16).²⁵¹

The expectation that the Messiah was going to be a son of David, is, of course, realized in other prophecies in the Tanach (Isaiah 9:6; Zechariah 9:9). Some have tried to claim that Psalm 2 was not a prophecy about Yeshua, but only about David and his son Solomon, and that the emerging Christian Church of the late First Century only "invented it" to apply to Christ. But, this prophecy was considered to be messianic in nature by the Judaisms of the First Century. The most notable extra-Biblical application of 2 Samuel 7 in a Messianic context appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls, in the Qumran community's text *Midrash on the Last Days*:

"Moreover the LORD declares to you that He will make you a house,' and that 'I will raise up your offspring after you, and establish the throne of his kingdom [for]ever. I will be a father to him, and he will be My son' (2 Sam. 7:11c, 12b, 13b-14a). This passage refers to the Shoot of David, who is to arise with the Interpreter of the Law, and who will [arise] in Zi[on] in the La[st] Days, as it is written, 'And I shall raise up the booth of David that is fallen' (Amos 9:11). This passage describes the fallen Branch of David, [w]hom He shall raise up to deliver Israel" (4Q174 3.10-12).²⁵²

Paul examines how in Yeshua the Messiah, the certain blessings promised to King David are fully realized. He says, "The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words" (Acts 13:34, NIV), and Paul proceeds to provide some substantiation from the Tanach for these conclusions. He first quotes from parts of Isaiah 55:3: "Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *according to* the faithful mercies shown to David." This is a promise of David's permanent dominion, one that is now transferred to his key Descendant, the Messiah (cf. 2 Samuel 7:16).

Paul follows this in Acts 13:35 with a quote from Psalm 16:10, "For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay." Paul likely quotes from the Greek LXX, which some consider to read slightly different than the Hebrew MT: "because you will not abandon my soul to Hades or give your devout to see corruption" (NETS). While rendered as "Holy One" in the NASU, the Hebrew *chasid* (חַסִּיד) is open to a divergent array of

²⁵⁰ Psalm 2 is also applied supremely to the Messiah to come in *Psalms of Solomon* 17:26, which attests "He will gather a holy people whom he will lead in righteousness; and he will judge the tribes of the people that have been made holy by the Lord their God" (R.B. Wright, "Psalms of Solomon," trans., in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 2 [New York: Doubleday, 1985], 667.)

²⁵¹ This same basic admonition is repeated in 1 Chronicles 17:13: "I will be his father and he shall be My son; and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you."

²⁵² Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook, trans., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), pp 227-228.

meanings, including: “one who is faithful, devout” (*CHALOT*).²⁵³ The LXX renders this as *ton hosion sou* (τὸν ὅσιόν σου), “Your Holy One,” also employed by Paul in Acts 13:35. There is a possible usage of the Rabbinic technique *gezera shavah* to link the word “holy” (Grk. *hosios*, ὅσιος) in Acts 13:34, 35 to demonstrate the set-apart nature and mission of Yeshua.

Paul’s words concerning David in Acts 13:36 are, “For David, after serving his own generation in God’s plan, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and decayed” (HCSB). David fulfilled the mission and purpose that God had designated for him. F. Scott Spencer indicates, “David, to be sure, ‘served the purpose of God in his own generation’, but after that, he died and decayed; by contrast, God has raised up David’s descendant, the Holy One Jesus, ‘no more to return to corruption’, as even David himself had predicted in Psalm 16.”²⁵⁴ And so, in Acts 13:37 Paul states the obvious: “But he, whom God raised again [*egeirō*], saw no corruption” (KJV). The body of Yeshua did not remain dead long enough for it to begin a process of significant decomposition prior to His resurrection. Yet, King David’s body did undergo decomposition.²⁵⁵

Certainly, many of those in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch found the claims being made by the Apostle Paul to be very intriguing. In his message, as a visitor from outside their local community, Paul had brought news of a person who had been executed in Jerusalem, was raised from the dead, and was to be regarded as the promised Messiah and descendant of David as prophesied and anticipated in the Tanach Scriptures. A survey of what Paul has stated within Acts 13:13-37 so far, is obviously an abbreviated series of high points, introducing a widely Diaspora Jewish audience to Yeshua of Nazareth. There are statements appearing in Paul’s message, such as “the message of the Prophets read every *Shabbat*” (Acts 13:27, CJB/CJSB) and “we are bringing you the Good News that what God promised to the fathers” (Acts 13:32, CJB/CJSB), which are inviting of further, additional readings and investigations of Yeshua of Nazareth from the Tanach Scriptures. On this, both those who adhere to a low Christology of Yeshua being a supernatural but created agent of God, or a high Christology of Yeshua being integrated into the Divine Identity, should be agreed.

How would Paul’s statement in Acts 13:38 be taken, by those in the synagogue audience who would be definitely willing to consider Yeshua of Nazareth as having been unjustly put to death, like many of the Prophets of Israel, and raised from the dead—and for whom some further investigation, contemplation, and speculation would be warranted in terms of Messianic prophecies? Paul said, “Therefore let it be known to you, brothers and sisters, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you” (Acts 13:38, PME). This is not just a type of forgiveness or atonement which would have been temporarily available via the ongoing animal sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood, but a permanent forgiveness of sins.

Forgiveness from sin is something that is emphasized in several other places in the Book of Acts (2:38; 10:43), something that God Himself can only provide (Mark 2:5-12). Paul seems to be directing his listeners in the direction of having them recognize Yeshua as a Divine Savior. As David G. Peterson astutely points out, “The provision of such forgiveness *through Jesus* is a consequence of his exalted, eschatological status (cf. Dn. 7:9-10, 13-14; Lk. 5:20-24; 24:46-47).”²⁵⁶ It may be, as is indicated in Daniel 12:1, that an entity such as “Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise,” and that various supernatural entities of

²⁵³ *CHALOT*, 111.

²⁵⁴ F. Scott Spencer, *Journeying Through Acts: A Literary-Cultural Reading* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 155.

²⁵⁵ Notably, Psalm 16:10 was also used by the Apostle Peter, in his riveting sermon at *Shavuot*/Pentecost (Acts 2:25-32), to also present a case for the Messiahship of Yeshua and proclaim the good news.

²⁵⁶ Peterson, *Acts*, 393.

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light, members of the Heavenly host, are sent out by God to offer some degree of protection or intervention for individual people and whole communities. **But what is promised in Yeshua is a permanent forgiveness from sins.** Would this be legitimately possible if Yeshua were ultimately a created being? Yeshua offers a level of forgiveness that goes beyond the temporary forgiveness available within the Torah's sacrificial system (Acts 13:39).

Paul's message to those in Pisidian Antioch was not just some "update" about events that had occurred in the Jewish world. He urges his audience, "Beware, therefore, lest there come upon you what is said in the prophets" (Acts 13:40, RSV). Paul does not wish a previous prophetic world to be enacted upon those of his generation for their rejection of the gospel. His quotation from Habakkuk 1:5 in Acts 13:41 is from the Greek LXX, which has some notable textual differences from the Hebrew MT²⁵⁷: "Behold, you despisers, and look, and wonder marvelously, and vanish: for I work a work in your days which you will by no means believe, though a man declare it to you" (Apostle's Bible).

It is true from reading through this message delivered by Paul to those in Pisidian Antioch, that he does not come out and demand of his listeners that they recognize that "Yeshua is God." But that hardly means that Paul—especially given the testimony of his letters—did not believe that Yeshua was not God. Paul gave a sufficient enough of a message to those at the synagogue, about both what had happened to Yeshua in being executed and raised from the dead *and the forgiveness available in Yeshua* that it is recorded, "As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging them to speak these things to them the next Shabbat" (Acts 13:42, TLV). When reading about Yeshua the Messiah from the Biblical text, no one vignette or message is going to give us a full picture about who He is, requiring us to continue to investigate, probe, reflect, and consider.

Acts 14:8-20

"Paul and Barnabas Are Worshipped as Hermes and Zeus"

"At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked. This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze on him and had seen that he had faith to be made well, said with a loud voice, 'Stand upright on your feet.' And he leaped up and *began* to walk. When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, 'The gods have become like men and have come down to us.' And they *began* calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose *temple* was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out and saying, 'Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM [Exodus 20:11; Psalm 146:6]. In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.' *Even* saying these things, with difficulty they restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them. But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe."

²⁵⁷ "Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because *I am* doing something in your days—you would not believe if you were told" (Habakkuk 1:5, NASU).