

# REJECTERS AND RECEIVERS

Acts 13.13-52

John Donne wrote a famous line of poetry, “Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone”. While written many years ago, it describes the modern sentiment well. We live in a fractured age. Our relationships are tense. We look for meaning when everything seems up for grabs.

Scripture offers a corrective by showing us the story of the world. Scripture is the story that explains all other stories. With our Creator God, there are “givens”, irreducible realities to which we are invited to conform.

## **The story of the world is fulfilled in Jesus (vv. 16-37)**

Paul gives an overview of Scripture for his listeners. He highlights Israel’s election, their wilderness wanderings, their receiving of the Law, the conquest of Canaan, the period of judges, and the establishment of the monarchy. God initiates with His people.

Paul mentions Abraham (v. 26), Moses (v. 39), Samuel (v. 20), Saul (v. 21), and David (v. 22).

The striking move for Paul’s audience is when he says that Jesus of Nazareth is the fulfillment of this history (Acts 13.23). God the Father forecasted the ministry of His Son hundreds of years in advance (Acts 13.29f.).

Paul’s sermon reaches its climax with the death and resurrection of Jesus, all foretold in God’s Word (with citations from Psalm 2.7; Isaiah 55.3; Psalm 16.10; Habakkuk 1.5; and Isaiah 49.6).

Even the most revered leaders die, but Jesus lives (Acts 13.35-37).

Since God controls all history, nothing lies outside His control.

This also means that there are not multiple possible endings to the story. An endless amount of options entails incoherence.

Rather, what we have is the “good news”, in the heralding of God’s gracious salvation to all people (Acts 13.26, 32).

## **This claim about Jesus demands a response (vv. 38-41)**

Many people reject Jesus. Early Jewish communities could not accept a crucified Messiah (Acts 13.27, 46, 50). Scripture is clear in describing many who refuse God’s terms.

The rejection of Jesus by some Jews does not prevent Paul from proclaiming the message of salvation to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch or those in future cities. It needs to be said that this is not about race. Given God's election of Israel, there existed an asymmetrical relationship between the Jews and Gentiles (Romans 1.16; 2.9-10, 9.1-5).

People miss the message of Jesus because it forces us to humble ourselves before God. We must declare our dependence and see ourselves in need of the crucified Savior. People do not recognize Jesus because He comes as a seemingly weak, unattractive sufferer.

Others put their faith in Jesus (Acts 13.42-43). They receive the message of "forgiveness" and the message of "freedom" (Acts 13.38-39). They become excited to hear more about the good news.

**Key Point:** Those who walk with Jesus receive the Spirit of joy no matter the level of rejection (Acts 13.48, 52).

### **Small Group Application Questions:**

Focus on Acts 13.30-37. Why did God raise Jesus from the dead? Why does Paul cite Scripture in reference to the resurrection? What did the resurrection accomplish (Acts 13.38-39; Cf. Romans 4.24-25)?

Why was the Law of Moses enslaving (Acts 13.39)? What is different about the gospel (Acts 13.38)?

How do Paul and Barnabas respond to opposition?

Discuss the anger of the non-believers (Acts 13.45, 50) against the joy of the believers (Acts 13.48, 52). Why is this the case? Does it help explain the world today?