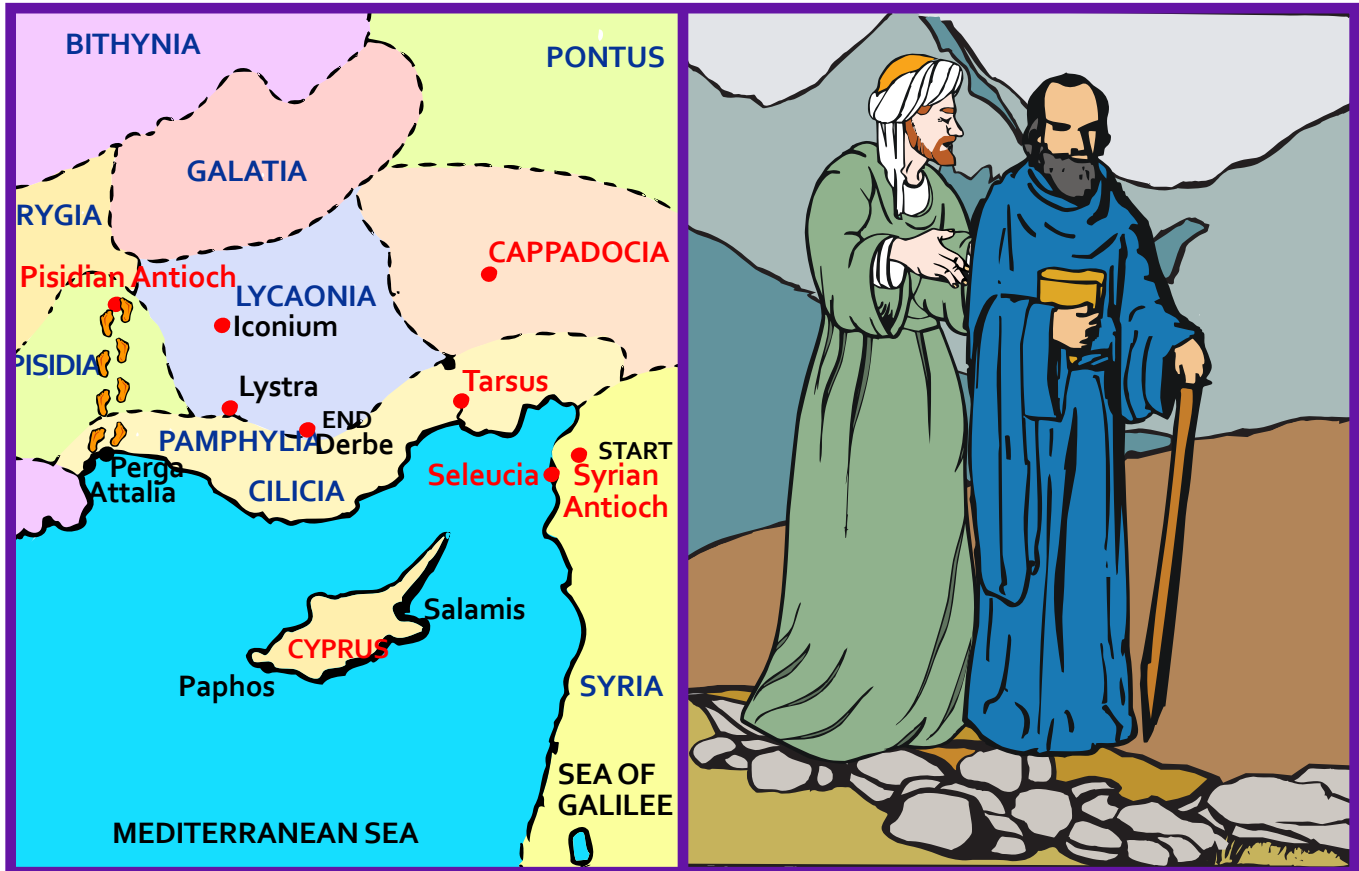


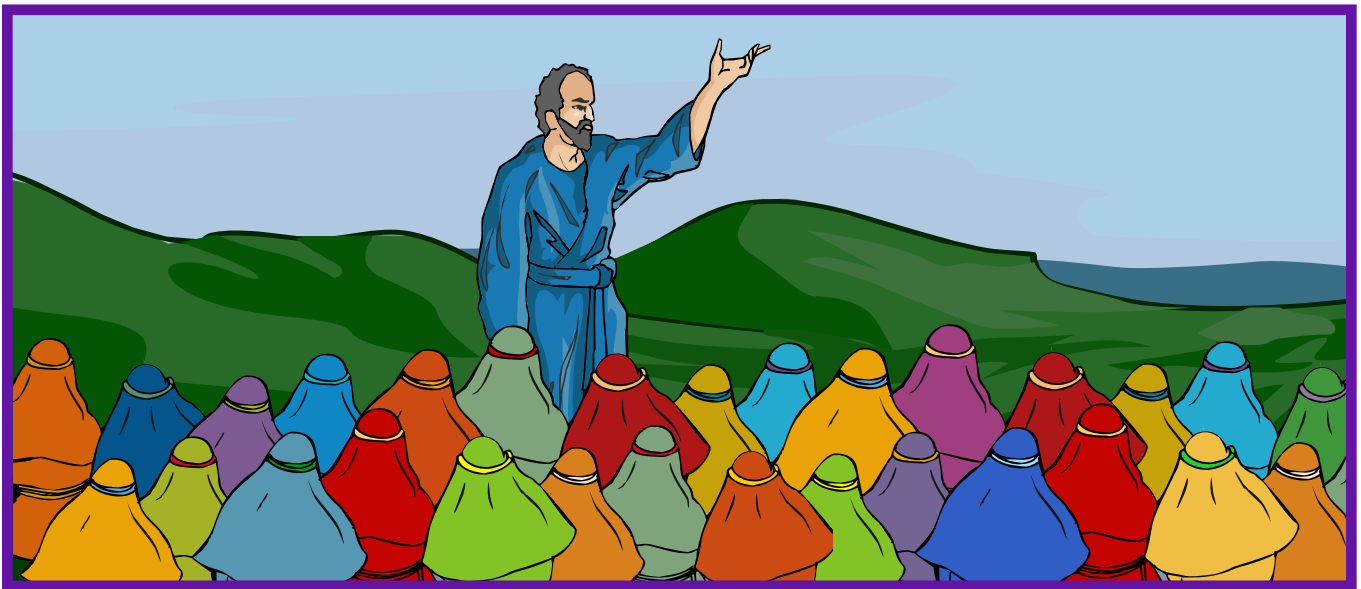
Tour of the Holy Lands - Pisidian Antioch



It's another beautiful summer day and we're back on the bus to a new neighborhood. Let's check our maps and find our first stop: Pisidian Antioch. (We'll call it Antioch for short.) Antioch is one of four towns that Paul and Barnabas will visit in this region. We're traveling in a big, luxurious bus, but the two missionaries have to walk on a dangerous road from the Mediterranean coast, where robbers hide behind trees and rocks, waiting to attack innocent travelers. On top of that, the road to Antioch is uphill all the way. In fact, the town is 4,000 feet above sea level. When Paul and Barnabas arrive, it is the Sabbath, so they find a synagogue and attend a service with the local Jews.



Now that we've arrived in Antioch, let's go sit in that old Roman theater over there, and think back to the day when Paul and Barnabas arrived here. The Jews stare at the visitors. These important men had traveled all the way from Jerusalem to visit their synagogue. The people say, "Brothers, do you have anything to tell us?"



Paul stands, takes a deep breath, and waves his hand. He will preach a sermon that he will repeat in other synagogues.

"Listen, men of Israel and you who fear God." ("God-fearers" were Gentiles who had discovered the real God and attended the synagogue.)

He tells them, "God chose our people, led them out of Egypt with great miracles, gave them laws to live by, led them 40 years, gave them food and water, made them into a nation, overcame their enemies, led them into the Promised Land, and gave them judges and a king - King Saul."

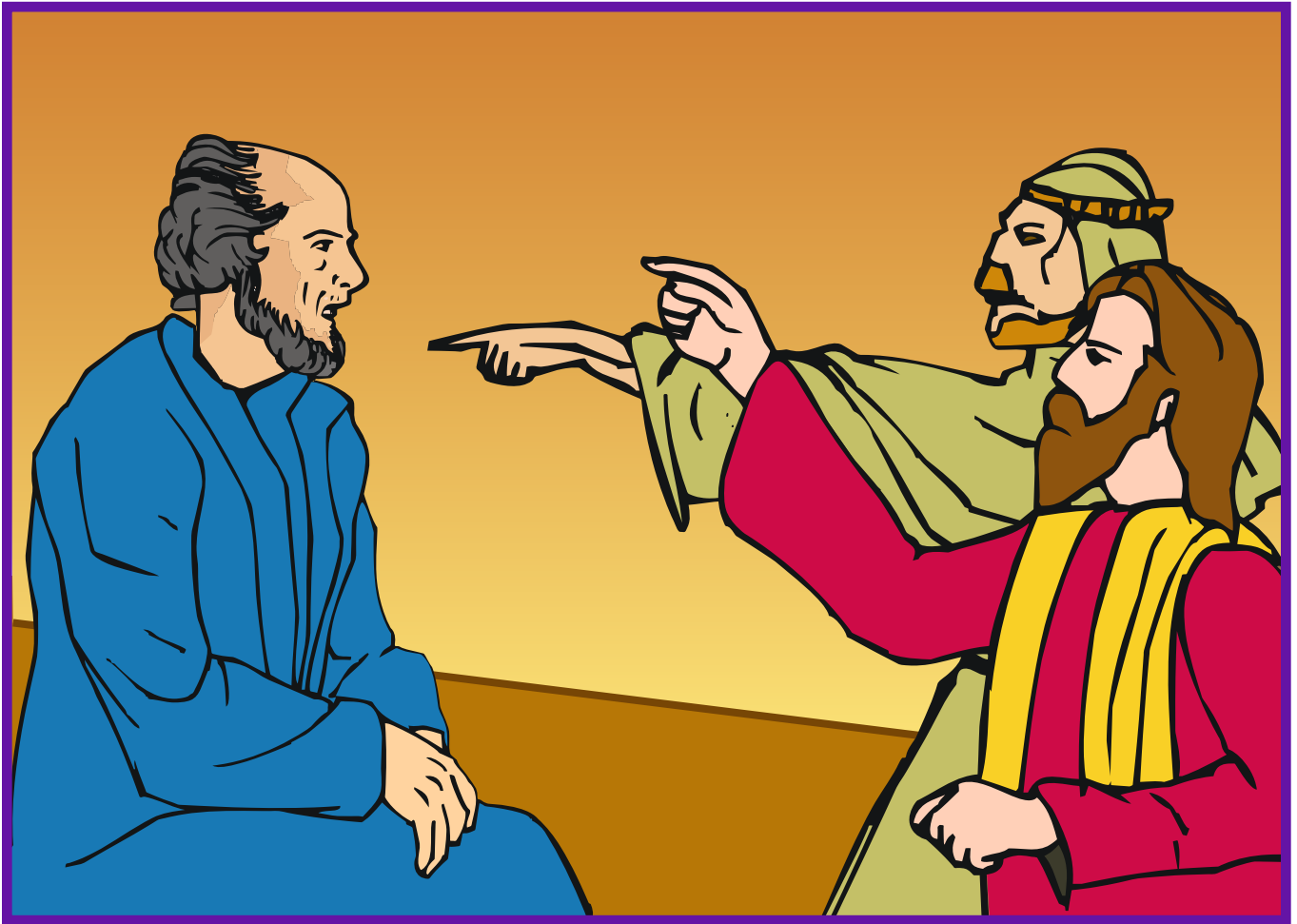




"Then God removed King Saul and gave them King David. Now, we have been expecting another king like David. But, when Jesus came a short time ago, the Jews in Jerusalem did not recognize him as king. In fact, they had him crucified as an outlaw. They thought his body would remain in the tomb, but God raised him up. As proof of his resurrection, Jesus showed himself to many people in different places, and they are ready to swear today that they saw him. Because Jesus rose from the dead, he fulfilled prophecy, which said that he was the Promised Messiah, the son of David."



Some of the Jews refused to listen any longer, and left the synagogue. But, others were excited. They, along with some Gentiles, followed Paul and Barnabas down the street, and begged them to speak again the following week. Word spread, and the next Sabbath, almost the whole city crowded into the synagogue to hear more from the missionaries.



But, those angry Jews also showed up. And when they saw their synagogue filled with Gentiles, they were envious and furious. How could two wandering strangers be more successful than they were at attracting Gentiles to their synagogue? Furthermore, how could they treat Gentiles as Jews? Gentiles were learning this new teaching before learning to be Jews. So the Jews began to interrupt Paul, and argue with him. It got very loud. Paul said he was following God's orders. He offered the truth to the Jews that the Messiah had come, and when they didn't want it, he offered it to the Gentiles. That's what God wanted him to do.



The Gentiles could hardly believe what was happening. Christianity was offering them eternal life. There were plenty of them to start a church in that city. Paul and Barnabas stayed a long time to help them.

But the Jews still didn't like the idea that this teaching was available to everyone – rich and poor, educated and uneducated, male and female, important and not-so-important, it didn't matter. The Jews asked for help from the Gentile women of the synagogue, who liked things just the way they were. They complained to their husbands, who were leaders of the city. These same men decided not to allow Paul to preach anymore, and threw the two of them out of the city.

CHURCH OF ST. PAUL



Remember when we couldn't find the synagogue earlier today? Look over here, and listen to what happened to it. Paul preached here in the year 46. 280 years later, a Christian church, called the Church of St. Paul, was built on the same spot where the synagogue once stood. All that's left of this Christian church of Pisidian Antioch is what you see here. The curved area is where church members were baptized.



A good Jew, who shakes the dust off his feet, shows that he doesn't want to take any pagan dust with him on his sandals. When the missionaries shook the dust off their feet, they were indicating that many of the Jews they left behind were like pagans. Otherwise they would have accepted Jesus as the Christ.

Take a look at the faces of Paul and Barnabas as they leave Pisidian Antioch. They aren't angry or sad. They are smiling because of the fine, new church they are leaving behind.

And, as we head back to the bus at the end of another full day, we're smiling too!