

THE BRIDGE OF LIFE

“Fellow children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent.” (Acts 13:26, NIV)

HICKORY STICKS. If ever you need to paint a picture in your mind of golf’s bygone days, those old wood-shafted clubs will occupy the center of your masterpiece.

In our time, it’s hard to believe that anyone would still use those early devices of the game. But they do. Quite a few hickory stick golf associations have active calendars for regular competition. In fact, if you’ve signed up to play the Canadian Open Hickory Championship next week at Sherwood Park in Alberta, you’ll also be treated to a golf car museum. The sweet syrup of history will be flowing quite thickly!

When it comes to opening the Bible, any number of readers are like most of us golfers, though. Why would anyone spend time in the Old Testament? Psalms and Proverbs, okay. But the rest of it? What value does it have for our time?

A local Links Fellowship and I tackled these questions this week in the midst of our studies in Acts. If you are familiar with Acts, you probably have noticed that the normal pattern of ministry for Paul and his companions was to start in the local synagogue and then take their message—the Good News of Christ—into the marketplace and homes of any others who would listen with interest. What we don’t often recognize is that Paul’s teaching in the synagogue would always have started in the Old Testament (or the Tanakh). Jewish ears knew and revered these Scriptures, so Paul opened them with specific intent to build a connection between Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets to the Messiah to whom they all pointed.

Such was the case in the apostle’s first recorded sermon in Acts 13. Paul started with reference to the Jews’ time in Egypt and the wilderness before their deliverance in Canaan (today’s Israel). But Paul didn’t stop there. He carried his accounts through to John the Baptist and then Jesus, who was the eternal king in the line of David’s throne. Jesus was the bridge of life, set between the Old Testament and what would become the Gospels and letters we call the New Testament.

We do not need to hesitate in digging in anywhere in Scripture. The Old Testament points to the Promised One, Jesus; and the New Testament reveals the fulfillment of that great promise. The message of salvation, sent to us, leaps off nearly every page.

Opening questions Would you rather drive a Model T or play a round with hickory clubs? What most interests you about the history of the game? • Are you one who hesitates to read the Old Testament?

READING Acts 13:13-48

The audience (verses 13-16)

Who was included in Paul’s audience? Why were there Gentiles at the synagogue?

The message (verses 17-41)

Which of Paul’s Old Testament references are familiar to you? Which have new meaning for you in this context?

In what way do the prophecies predating Jesus by hundreds of years carry special significance?

The reaction (verses 42-48)

How did different people respond to the apostles’ teaching? How are you responding to it in your heart and mind now?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2017 Links Players International.