

Acts Chapter 14

Acts 14:1 "And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed."

“Iconium”: A cultural melting pot of native Phrygians, Greeks, Jews, and Roman colonists, located 80 miles southeast of Pisidian Antioch.

We see here the synagogue being opened to the Greeks, as well as the Jews. It seemed that Paul was under great anointing of God at this time, and many were brought into the numbers of the Christians. Paul is preaching the Word. Many who are receiving this Word are saved.

Remember, these disciples had been filled again with the Spirit and with joy about the time they came to Iconium.

In (Romans 10), we read:

Romans 10:14 "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"

It is necessary to have a preacher. By the foolishness of preaching, men are won to God.

Acts 14:2 "But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren."

These Jews were jealous, because the body of believers in Christ was growing far more rapidly than the synagogue. These Jews put a question into the minds of the Gentiles who were not familiar with the Scriptures.

This is still going on today. Satan never changes. He planted a question in Eve's mind, and that has been his plan from the beginning. Faith and doubt are opposites. If you have doubt, you do not have faith. You can see how it would be easy to sway the thinking of a new convert, and that is just what this is saying above.

Acts 14:3 "Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands."

“Granted signs and wonders” (see notes on 2:19). Acts of such divine power confirmed that Paul and Barnabas spoke for God.

Paul did not quickly leave this area, but stayed and kept proclaiming the pure word of God. God allowed them to do wonderful miracles. The signs and wonders should have convinced the

people who was right. Many times, people are blinded so by unbelief that they ignore the miracles.

Acts 14:4 "But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles."

“Apostles” (see notes on Rom 1:1; Eph. 4:11). Barnabas was not an apostle in the same sense as Paul and the 12 since he was not an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ nor had he been called by Him. It is best to translate “apostles” here as “messengers” (2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25), while Barnabas and others were “messengers of the churches” (2 Cor. 8:23).

Others beyond the Twelve are called “apostles,” as is Barnabas here and (in verse 14). Though these apostles should not be regarded as of the same stature as the Twelve, they had witnessed the resurrected Christ and received some special call (1:21-22; 1 Cor. 9:1). Other such apostles include James the Lord’s brother (Gal. 1:19), and some unnamed (in 1 Corinthians 15:7).

Not everyone will receive the Truth of God, and Iconium is no different. Some believed, and some did not believe. It seemed that those who did not believe used every pressure available to them to try to keep the others from believing.

Many times, even homes are divided into two armed camps, because some of the members believe in Jesus Christ as Savior, and some do not. This is what happened here. Their differences in belief separated the people.

Acts 14:5 "And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use [them] despitefully, and to stone them,"

“Stone them”: This proves that their Jewish opponents were the instigators, since stoning was a Jewish form of execution, usually for blasphemy.

It appears here that Paul, Barnabas, and the other disciples had to run for their lives to keep from being killed. There is a time to stand as they had done (long time they abode here and preached), but there is also a time to use good judgment and leave, and they did that as well. When they realized they could do no more good at this time, they left.

Acts 14:6 "They were aware of [it], and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:"

“Cities of Lystra ... Lycaonia ... Derbe”: Lycaonia was a district in the Roman province of Galatia. Lystra was about 18 miles from Lycaonia, and was the home of Lois, Eunice and Timothy (16:1; 2 Tim. 1:5).

Luke mentions no synagogue in connection with Lystra, and since Paul began his ministry there by preaching to a crowd, it likely had a small Jewish population. Derbe was about 40 miles southeast of Lystra.

Not many ministers will stand against great opposition and bring the gospel, but sometimes that is what God requires. Lycaonia was a small Roman province of Asia Minor.

Acts 14:7 "And there they preached the gospel."

The whole reason they are making this trip is to preach the gospel unto all the world.

Matthew 28:19 gives Jesus' great commission to all who would be His ministers, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Paul, Barnabas, and the other disciples were carrying out this great commission. It is not our job to win them to Christ. We preach the Word, God gives the increase.

Acts 14:8 "And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:"

We see a man in a very destitute condition. He came into the world a cripple and has been one ever since. This is just the type of thing God can show His power through.

Acts 14:9 "The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,"

In Romans 10:17 "So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

This man heard Paul preach and that preaching built up his faith enough that he might receive his healing. This man's faith paid off. He leaped and walked.

Acts 14:10 "Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked."

Over and over, Jesus said to those he was healing, (your faith has made you whole).

Verses 11-12: Passing strangers were commonly regarded as gods among the Greeks (and later the Romans), due to the mingling of the gods with mortals in their myths. "Jupiter" and "Mercurius", were the Roman names for Zeus and Hermes.

The Roman poet Ovid records a local myth involving the coming of these two gods disguised as mortals. They were turned away by all except an old couple. According to the myth a flood came and in judgment destroyed all but the old couple. These superstitious people seem to fear a similar fate.

Verses 11-13: The strange reaction by the people of Lystra to the healing had its roots in local folklore. According to tradition, the gods Zeus and Hermes visited Lystra incognito, asking for

food and lodging. All turned them away except for a peasant named Philemon and his wife, Baucus. The gods took vengeance by drowning everyone in a fold.

But they turned the lowly cottage of Philemon and Baucus into a temple, where they were to serve as priest and priestess. Not wanting to repeat their ancestors' mistake, the people of Lystra believed Barnabas to be Zeus and Paul to be Hermes.

Acts 14:11 "And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men."

“Speech of Lycaonia”: Paul and Barnabas were unable to understand the intentions of the people.

These Lycaonians worshipped false gods, and they associated these miracles as being done by these false gods. They knew the miracle was real, and they knew that a miracle such as this was beyond what a natural man could do. They assumed that this miracle originated with Paul. They did not realize that he was just carrying out a miracle from God.

Acts 14:12 "And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker."

This false god Mercurius had to do with eloquent speaking. This is why they assumed Paul was Mercurius. Jupiter and Mercury in Greek is the same as Zeus and Hermes.

Acts 14:13 "Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people."

“Priest of Jupiter”: It was his job to lead the people in worship of the two men they believed to be gods.

This priest was bringing these sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas. They believed that Paul and Barnabas were these false gods they worshipped, and they always sacrificed to these false gods, so they wanted to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas.

Acts 14:14 "[Which] when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard [of], they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,"

“Rent their clothes”: A Jewish expression of horror and revulsion at blasphemy (see note on Matt. 26:65).

Verses 15-17: (See note on 17:23-24). Because the crowd at Lystra was pagan and had no knowledge of the Old Testament, Paul adjusted his message to fit the audience. Instead of proclaiming the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he appealed to the universal and rational knowledge of the One who created the world (17:22-26; Jonah 1:9).

Acts 14:15 "And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:"

“Vanities”: An appropriate description of idolatry and all false religions.

This frightened Paul and Barnabas, who knew the dangers of allowing anyone to deify them. God alone is to be worshipped. This is a lesson many today need to look at carefully. The men and women of God, who God uses to heal someone, are not to be thought of too highly (exalted and lifted up). The power to heal is not their own. The power is God's.

We are just His message carriers. The created should never be worshipped, whether it is people or sun, moon, or stars, or whether it is things like cars, homes, etc. We should worship only the Creator.

God has made mankind a free-will agent. He will allow us to choose to worship anything we desire. The only catch is, if we worship anyone or anything other than the one True God, we will not inherit eternal life.

Acts 14:16 "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways."

“Suffered all nations”: The path that they all have walked is described (in Rom. 1:18-32).

Paul and Barnabas are not like Lucifer who wanted to be God. They quickly straighten these people out and tell them they are not gods. They also add that the Creator of this whole universe is the one to worship. Until Jesus came, most everyone walked in his own ways. Jesus brought a better way.

Acts Chapter 14 Questions

1. In Iconium, where and to whom did Paul and Barnabas speak?
2. What could we say about Paul caused so many to be saved?
3. Who did the unbelieving Jews stir up?
4. What was the problem with these Jews?
5. If you have doubt, you do not have _____.
6. What gave testimony of His grace?
7. What happened that helped the unbelievers to believe?
8. How was the city divided?

9. In verse 5, what did the townspeople do to Paul?
10. Where did Paul and Barnabas go?
11. What did Paul and Barnabas do when they got to a new city?
12. Where can we find the great commission Jesus gave His followers?
13. What was the commission?
14. It is not the job of the minister to save the people, what is their job?
15. How long had the man at Lystra been crippled?
16. What had Paul perceived in this man?
17. What did Paul say to the man?
18. What happened?
19. How does faith come?
20. What did Jesus say many times when He healed someone?
21. What did the people of Lycaonia say, when they saw that Paul and Barnabas healed the lame man?
22. Who did they think Paul and Barnabas were?
23. What did Mercury have to do with?
24. What names are the same as Jupiter and Mercury in another language?
25. What did the priest of Jupiter do?
26. When Paul and Barnabas heard what the priest did, what did they do?
27. Who did Paul and Barnabas tell the people they were?
28. How did Paul and Barnabas describe the true God?
29. In verse 16, what tells us that God gave us a free will?