

Acts Chapter 14 Continued

Acts 14:17 "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

“Left not himself without witness”: God’s providence and His creative power testify to man’s reason of His existence (Rom. 1:18-20), as does man’s own conscience, which contains His moral law (Rom. 2:13-15).

Even though all men have not received the special revelation of God’s written Word, all have received God’s general revelation which is witnessed through the creation and man’s own nature, making man without excuse if he rejects this (Rom. 1:18-20; 2:14-15). Romans 1 states that the context of general revelation is that God is holy and all-powerful. Acts 14:17 further states that He is good.

We see that Paul and Barnabas here, are telling these people about the only true God, the Creator of the world. Paul tells them that even nature itself testifies of this one true God.

This lengthy description here and in the previous lesson is explaining to them the magnitude of the true God. Paul is explaining how foolish it is to worship Mercury and Jupiter, that the one to worship is the Creator of all things. This God that Paul is telling them about is concerned about His creation and provides for their needs. Paul explains the true God through nature.

Acts 14:18 "And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them."

They were able to stop the people from sacrificing to them, but it was not easy. These people were not easily convinced of this God they had never heard of before.

Acts 14:19 "And there came thither [certain] Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew [him] out of the city, supposing he had been dead."

“Having stoned Paul ... supposing he had been dead”: Paul did not die from the stoning as some claim, who link it to his third-heaven experience (in 2 Cor. 12). “Supposing” usually means “to suppose something that is not true.” The main New Testament use of this word argues at the crowd’s supposition was incorrect and that Paul was not dead.

Another argument in favor of this position is that if Paul was resurrected, why didn’t Luke mention it? Also, the dates of Paul’s third-heaven experience and the time of the stoning do not reconcile.

Luke does not clearly indicate whether the stoning killed Paul. Maybe Paul himself really did not know. Though this incident is commonly correlated with Paul’s testimony of being caught up

into the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:1-5), the time of the events does not fit. The stoning of Acts 14 occurred about A.D. 48.

Paul says that his experience of (2 Corinthians 12), occurred 14 years before he wrote the book, that is, about A.D. 41. Nevertheless, one can glean from (2 Corinthians 12), that Paul on this occasion did not realize whether he was dead or alive. If he were dead, he did not miss his body; if he were alive, his body did not hinder him.

This again, is not the same Antioch where the believers were first called Christians. This is the same group who gave Paul trouble at Iconium. It appears here that they stoned Paul so badly, that they took him for dead and drug him out of the city.

This to me, is almost unbelievable, when just a few hours earlier they had thought him to be a god. This shows how quickly people forget the miracles, and the same people can easily believe something bad about Paul.

Acts 14:20 "Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe."

“Derbe” (see note on verse 6).

We see the loyalty of the disciples even in the face of death. Even though Paul has been left for dead, they gather around him. The strength of this many believers has to be what caused him to rise up. We did not read how Barnabas escaped, but it appears he was not stoned with Paul. It appears, just as Paul had fled to Lystra and Derbe before from Iconium, he flees to Derbe here.

Acts 14:21 "And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and [to] Iconium, and Antioch,"

The preaching of the gospel in Derbe brought them renewed courage, and Paul and Barnabas went right back to where they had all the trouble. They were undaunted by the stonings. They were determined to bring the good news of the gospel to this entire area, even if it endangered their lives.

Acts 14:22 "Confirming the souls of the disciples, [and] exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

“Kingdom of God” (see note on 1:3).

We see here, their reason for returning to this hostile region is to check on those who received the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. These new disciples (followers of Christ), will be persecuted just as Paul was, and Paul has come to tell them that the way will not be easy.

Even though the tribulation is great; (like Paul's stoning), they must stand firm in the Lord to inherit the kingdom of God. This message is not only for them, but is for us as well. We can't

give in to the enemy when trials come. In this life, we will have tribulation (trials), but be of good cheer, Jesus has overcome the world and we can too, through Him.

Acts 14:23 "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."

“Ordained them elders” (see note on 11:30).

At the end of this missionary tour Paul returned to the young churches and “ordained ... elders”, to carry on the work. The word ordain (Greek *cheirotoneo*), originally meant “to elect” by the raising of the hand, but later developed the meaning “to appoint.” Either meaning is possible here, but several factors make the former preferable.

- (1) This exact word is used only one other time in Scripture (2 Cor. 8:19), and there it has the sense of congregational selection.
- (2) The selection of the Seven in chapter 6 was the act of the congregation, not an appointment by the leaders.
- (3) If Luke had desired to express the idea of appointment, several other words could have served more precisely.

The first trip Paul had made into this area; he was like an evangelist. He preached and many were saved, but this trip he is back to establish a church for them. This body of believers would have to hang together to be able to survive.

The need for a church unit (one reason), is that the members can draw strength from each other. This ordaining of elders was so the local church could function with a leader. The prayer and fasting was so God could choose, through them, the right leader, and that leader could be duly recommended to God.

Acts 14:24 "And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia."

“Pisidia”: A mountainous and rugged region that offered no opportunities for evangelism.

This Pisidia was a mountainous district in Asia Minor, north of Pamphylia. It was a really rough area filled with robbers. These men were at odds with Rome. Pamphylia means of every race. This was the first country in this area for Paul to visit.

Acts 14:25 "And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:"

Perga is the capital of Pamphylia. The main worship in this area, before Paul's visit, was the worship of Diana. This was a hard town to minister in, because of the deep-seated worship of this false god (see note on 13:13).

Acts 14:26 "And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled."

Thus ended Paul's first missionary journey.

“Antioch” (see note on 13:13).

Paul considered his work now finished in that he had strengthened the believers, organized the church with leadership, and committed them into God's hands. These churches are not under the authority of Jerusalem, Antioch, or even Paul himself. They are under the authority of Christ alone, and Paul will treat them accordingly.

We see in all of this missionary journey, a presence of God's will at all times. It is as if they (Paul and Barnabas), are led by the will of God to minister in certain places. They fulfilled their part. They went where God sent them, regardless of the consequences. They equipped themselves by fasting and prayer. They were acting as agents of God.

Notice the word (fulfilled). We see by this that they completed the job that God gave them to do. They had pleased God.

Acts 14:27 "And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."

They were all excited telling all of their Jewish helpers how God was the God of the Gentiles, as well as the Jews. God had opened the door to His church to all people.

God the Holy Spirit, had gone on ahead of Paul and Barnabas and prepared the hearts of those who were to believe and receive the Lord as Savior. God had shown this Pharisee (Paul), that Christianity was for the Gentile, as well as the Jew.

Acts 14:28 "And there they abode long time with the disciples."

“Long time”: About one year.

This was like a time of rest. They were with the disciples who believed as they did. There were no unbelieving Jews to harass them here. This was a much-needed time of rest.

Acts Chapter 14 Continued Questions

1. In verse 17, what does Paul say should be a witness to them of God?
2. Who had these people sacrificed to?
3. Where did the Jews come from that stirred up trouble?
4. What did the people do to Paul?

5. Why did they take him to the edge of the city?
6. When the disciples stood around Paul, what happened?
7. Where did they go (Paul and Barnabas)?
8. Verse 21 tells us what they did in this area before they left, what was it?
9. What three places did Paul go to, when he left Derbe?
10. What did confirming the souls of the disciples mean?
11. How must we enter into the kingdom of God?
12. Why should we rejoice in tribulation?
13. What was Paul doing when he ordained elders in every church?
14. What did Paul and Barnabas do before they commended someone as leader of a particular church?
15. Where was Pisidia located?
16. What does Pamphylia mean?
17. Where did they go after preaching the word in Perga?
18. What is Perga?
19. Who was the object of worship here before Paul came?
20. Where did they sail to, when they left Attalia?
21. Name several special things we see in this missionary journey that should be part of our missionary journey, as well.
22. Paul told all of the Christians gathered here how God had opened the door of faith to whom?
23. Verse 28 tells of a time of what?