

Acts Part 1 Study Guide

Lesson 13: Paul's First Journey (2) – Acts 14

1. At Iconium – Acts 14:1-6

- A. Describe the work of Paul and Barnabas in Iconium.

- B. Describe the positive reaction to the gospel in Iconium.

- C. What negative reaction occurred? How did Paul and Barnabas handle it?

2. At Lystra – Acts 14:6-20

- A. The healing of the lame man – 14:8-13. This event was so impressive that the townsfolk believed the gods of Greek and Roman mythology had come. In their euphoria, they prepare sacrifices for Paul and Barnabas.

- B. The two preachers are mortified by the Lystrans' misguided zeal and only with great difficulty halt the proceedings – 14:14-18. Paul takes the opportunity to preach to them about the proper object of worship – God. Note how differently a Gentile audience with no knowledge of Scripture is appealed to than a Jewish one.

- C. Outline Paul's brief address to the Lystrans:
 - I. 14:15 (three points):
 - a.

 - b.

 - c.

 - II. 14:16 (one point):

 - III. 14:17 (two points)
 - a.

 - b.

- D. The Jewish persecution – 14:19-20. When the Jews of Antioch and Iconium heard of Paul and Barnabas' success in Derbe and Lystra, they made it their aim to rid the entire region of their influence – permanently.

1. It is shocking to see how swiftly the inhabitants of Lystra turn on Paul.
2. But those whose values, worldview and deepest religious beliefs are founded upon the shifting sands of human philosophy, fiction and myth should be expected to be likewise fickle and unstable.
3. Commentators differ as to whether Paul actually died and was raised, but there appears to be no definitive language one way or the other. Nevertheless, it was an act of viciousness and brutality, though probably done with a clear conscience (as Paul later testifies of himself in his persecutions) as they fancied themselves to be defending Judaism. Paul recovers and travels with Barnabas to Derbe.

3. The Return Trip – Acts 14:21-28

A. Luke now returns to a subject previously mentioned in passing: the presence of elders in a local church (cf. Ac 11:30). As Paul and Barnabas begin their return trip to Syrian Antioch, they revisit the churches that have been started and appoint elders.

1. There would be great danger in leaving such new Christians in a highly volatile environment without leadership and oversight. On the other hand, one wonders how spiritually mature men could be found among such infantile churches. In the absence of a divine explanation we may only conjecture.
2. First, note that Paul and Barnabas appear to be in these cities longer than the simple narrative suggests. For example, what might be the time frame of Acts 14:21? Or 14:7? Or 14:3?
3. Secondly, while it is improbable that Gentiles steeped in fables and myths could mature spiritually in a short time, it is likely that a Jew would experience accelerated growth resulting from his knowledge of the Old Testament. There might be several other factors that would differentiate our own cultural framework – which makes it difficult to envision appointing elders so quickly – from that of the first century.

B. More preaching and teaching is done during their return travel, and having gathered the brethren in Antioch they reported on the events that have transpired – 14:27. What stories they had to tell!

Conclusion: We marvel in this first section of Acts of the growth of the kingdom amid such severe trials. The gospel has met with religious persecution (Jews), civil persecution (Herod Agrippa 1), defamation (Elymas), physical violence (imprisonment, beatings, murder), abandonment (Mark), prejudice (the Jews' skepticism of Cornelius), famine, internal strife – even the punishment of God, Himself (Ananias and Sapphira). But Paul, Barnabas, Peter, Philip, Stephen and others demonstrate the resilience and strength of spiritually convicted men. The servants of God through faith, purity and love are able to withstand and overcome the carnal weapons of man. What inspiration to us all to strive more diligently, to live with more focus, to prioritize our lives according to spiritual realities as we study the history of the early church.

Questions:

1. How would you answer someone who said there could be apostles today because Barnabas, not one of the twelve, is called an apostle in Acts 14:4, 14?
2. What pattern do you see in the following verses: Acts 14:3; 8:5-6; 4:29-30; 2:42-43?
3. What future assistant of Paul was from the region of Derbe and Lystra?
4. Comment on the zealousness of opposition to the gospel demonstrated by the Jews of Antioch and Iconium.
5. What did Paul understand about the price to be paid in participating in the kingdom of God?
6. What event, principle or person impresses you in this first half of Acts?