

The Book of Acts
Chapter 14

Acts 14:22-23

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.

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.

I. Review

1. I mentioned in our last lesson that chapter 13 and chapter 14 were part 1 and part 2 of their first missionary journey.
2. This trip occurred between 45-47 AD, only 12 years after Jesus' death and resurrection.
3. There were many ministers rising in the church in Antioch, and Barnabas and Saul took the lead.
4. It was a praying and fasting church, and the Spirit directed the church to appoint Barnabas and Saul to go out and preach the gospel to other areas, as missionaries.
5. They took Barnabas' nephew, John Mark (son of Mary) with them. Mary's house has been the site where the church was praying when Peter was arrested and jailed and sentenced to death for preaching Jesus.
6. These apostles left Antioch by ship and headed to Barnabas' old home town on the island of Cyprus. **[map]** The church in Antioch had been started by some people from Cyprus so that was a good starting place for their missionary journey.
7. They preached in the synagogue in Salamis, moved on to Paphos and taught the Roman Proconsul in charge who became a believer. But a Jewish sorcerer rose up to oppose the apostles, and Saul boldly declared he would be blind for a season.
8. From that point on, Saul is called Paul and he apparently became the leader of the ministry team.
9. From there, they sailed to the mainland of Asia Minor to the city of Perga. **[map]** And for some unknown reason, John Mark departed and returned home. **[map2]**
10. Paul and Barnabas journeyed north to another city also named Antioch, referred to Pisidian Antioch, as opposed to Syrian Antioch they had come from.

11. They preached the gospel of Jesus Christ (death, burial and resurrection for forgiveness) in the synagogue in Antioch.
12. The message was so popular with the people in the region that it caused jealousy with the Jewish leaders who stirred up some city leaders and had Paul and Barnabas cast out of the city of Antioch.
13. That is where we begin today.

II. THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY (Continued)

A. Paul and Barnabas in Iconium (Verses 1-7)

1. When Jesus had sent His twelve disciples on a preaching tour through Galilee, He promised them persecution would arise for His name's sake: *Matt 10:23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.*
2. Jesus instructed them that when they were persecuted in one city, they should flee to another, and Paul followed this rule of the Lord during all his missionary travels.
3. When he and Barnabas were forced to leave Antioch in Pisidia, they went on to **Iconium**, and preached there in the synagogue of the Jews. **[map]**
4. Iconium, in the province of Lycaonia, was about sixty miles east of Antioch. They had a very successful revival in Iconium, where a multitude of people of both Jews and Greeks were converted.
Acts 14:1, 3
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.
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.
5. There was bold preaching, believers being added, and signs and wonders being done, over a long span of time.
6. Bold preaching and miracles became a pattern that began on this missionary journey, continued in his later travels:
1 Cor 2:4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:
7. But here, as elsewhere, the pattern of revival/persecution continued. The Jews who rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ began to persecute them.

Acts 14:2, 4-5

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

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

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, [the fled]

8. We will read that it was not only Gentiles and Jews here in Iconium, but we will read later in verse 19, that some of the Jews who had chased them from Pisidian Antioch, followed them and stirred up trouble for them.
9. The Jews had no authority to prevent the missionaries from preaching in a Roman city, eventually they succeeded in poisoning the minds of the Gentiles to plot to kill them.
10. A mob of both Jews and Gentiles planned to assault them by stoning. Paul and Barnabas learned of this, and fled to Lystra before they were able to carry out their intention:

Acts 14:6-7

*6 They were ware of it, and fled unto **Lystra** and **Derbe**, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:*

11. **[map]** Lystra, southwest of Iconium, was the next town on the road to Derbe. And obviously they preached in the region round about:

7 And there they preached the gospel.

- B. Paul and Barnabas in Lystra (Verses 8-20)
 1. Lystra was about eighteen miles south and a little west of Iconium.
 2. Lystra was a Roman colony city, and there is no evidence that there was a Jewish synagogue there. It seems that when Paul and Barnabas arrived, not having a synagogue to use as a place to meet people and preach, they instead preached in a public place, probably the market place.
 3. The story in Lystra begins as Paul was drawn to minister to a person in need. The man was in the crowd of people at this public place and heard Paul speak:

Acts 14:8-10

*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:***

4. Does this remind you of another story early in the ministry of Peter and John? In Jerusalem, in front of the temple gate called Beautiful. (Acts 3:1-11)

5. And it gets even more like that story as we read on:
*9 The same **heard Paul speak**: who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,
 10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.*
6. Paul paid special attention to this man, and steadfastly beheld him, meaning he stared intently at him while speaking.
7. And in looking at the man, he perceived, or discerned, that he had faith to be healed.
8. He called to him in a loud voice and commanded him to stand up on his feet. Obviously, the man was obedient and made the effort to stand. When he found that he could stand, he walked and leaped.
9. Upon seeing this miracle, this caught the attention of the crowd of people, and were amazed and excited when they saw this man, whom they knew had never been able to walk, now walking and leaping.
10. They thought Paul and Barnabas were gods. They decided that Barnabas was Jupiter, their supreme god; and Paul, who was the chief speaker, was Mercurius, the god of eloquence.

C. Jupiter and Mercury in mythology

1. The Archeology Study Bible relates a story from Roman and Greek mythology (p. 1627) that goes like this.
2. One day Jupiter (Zeus) and his son Mercury (Hermes) disguised themselves as mortals and visited a thousand homes in Phrygia. Each denied them hospitality until a poor couple, Baucis and her husband, Philemon, opened their humble home to the gods. After feeding the guests with their best food, the gods warned them of a coming flood that would destroy their wicked neighbors. And after the flood, only their home remained, which transformed into a magnificent temple.
3. Based on the response of the people, that story was likely well-known to these people of Lystra.

Acts 14:11-13

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.

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

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.

4. It is worth point out that the people recognized Paul as Mercurius, the chief speaker.
5. Remember, in the beginning of their ministry, Barnabas had been the leader of the team, but Paul became the more prominent preacher of the two.
6. The priest of Jupiter, which served in the temple of Jupiter just outside the city, was ready to offer worship and sacrifices to them, hoping to please the gods.
7. When Paul and Barnabas realized what these idolaters were doing, they ran in among them and were barely able to stop them from their intentions.

Acts 14:14-15

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

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:

8. If you remember from chapter 12 when Herod had given his oration to the people of Caesarea, they praised him as a god. And he received that worship and God struck him down.
9. Paul and Barnabas refused such honor and said we are “men of like passions with you,” meaning, “we are mere mortals just like you.”
10. By ripping their clothes, they demonstrated their human emotion of grief at the people’s act of worship.
11. Paul responded by summing several scriptures: they should turn from vain idols to serve God who was Creator of all things in heaven, earth, and sea, and who provided rains and fruitful seasons, and food and gladness.
12. He was just barely able to convince them to stop the sacrifice:
Acts 14:18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.
13. Perhaps Paul and Barnabas’ rejection of their worship led the crowd to a turn of heart, and to forget the notable miracle they had just witnessed.

D. Paul Stoned at Lystra (Verses 19, 20)

1. If you remember, Paul and Barnabas had escaped the last city, Iconium, after a mob had planned to stone them.

2. But as we mentioned, a group of unbelieving Jews had followed them from their first preaching point in Antioch, and obviously picked up some like-minded individuals from Iconium who had sought to kill them.
 3. And in one short verse, much happens. The attitude of the mob was quickly transformed from worshiping Paul and Barnabas, to what was perhaps the most tragic and ironic situation Paul had faced in his ministry:
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.
 4. Do you remember the event when Saul of Tarsus was introduced in scripture? It was when Stephen was stoned to death for preaching Jesus.
 5. And now, the same thing apparently happened to Paul.
 6. Stephen had been drug out of the city and stoned.
 7. Here Paul was stoned in the city and then drug out. That likely means feld that they were dragging out a dead body, like taking out the trash.
 8. Image the damage done to his body after being pelted by rocks, and then by being drug out of the city and left for dead.
 9. It is only my opinion, but when Paul later writes in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 and tells of a time when he was caught up into the third heaven, to paradise, and he could not tell if it was in the body or out of the body, that possibly occurred when Paul died this day.
 10. But it wasn't his time to die! He had much ministry left.
 11. Paul had more than just enemies in Lystra. There were also many new converts there. And fortunately, they didn't abandon him but stood around him:
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.
 12. It does not record it here, but I believe the disciples did more than just stand around. What would you have done? Prayed!
 13. And after being stoned to death, he rose up and walked back into the city!
 14. He and Barnabas remained in Lystra overnight, and the next day they departed to the next city of **Derbe**. **[Map]**
- E. Paul and Barnabas in Derbe (Verse 21)
1. Luke recorded of Derbe only that Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel to that city and taught many.
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,

2. It is notable they returned to Lystra at all. He rose up from being stoned and went to preach in the next city. But such is the heart of a missionary.
3. We should notice something else here by studying the map. **[map]**
4. Notice the close distance between **Derbe** and **Tarsus**, Paul's home town, roughly 70-80 miles. That would have been a relatively short distance for Paul to have traveled if he had been minded to "throw in the towel."
5. And then the trip from Tarsus to their home church in **Antioch**, would have been a fairly short trip.
6. But instead of running home to comfort, or taking the easy route back, they ran right back into battle.

III. Conclusion: Returning Home (Verses 21-28)

1. From Derbe, Paul and Barnabas began to retrace their steps, stopping in each place where they had left disciples.
2. Notice they returned—again—to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.
*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**,*
3. These three cities had been places of opposition, but they were also places where they had established new churches. And those new churches needed encouragement for their faith as well as appointed leadership in these congregations:
Acts 14:22-23
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.
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.
4. They ordained elders in every city to lead the new congregations.
5. When Paul later wrote his letter to the Galatians, it was these very elders and congregations to whom he was writing, as this region is referred to generally as Galatia.
6. They ordained the most capable from among each group as elders, or pastors, to lead them, and spent time fasting and praying over them.
7. From Antioch they returned to Perga. This time they now preached there.
Acts 14:24-25
*24 And after they had passed throughout **Pisidia**, they came to **Pamphylia**.*

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

8. **[map]** From Perga, they went to Attalia, which was a seaport of Pamphylia, a few miles southwest of Perga.
9. They did not return by way of Cyprus, because it was likely late fall, and winter storms would be moving through the area soon.
10. So from Attalia, they sailed between the island of Cyprus and the southern coast of Asia Minor directly to the Syrian seaport of Seleucia, and from there they returned to Antioch in Syria, to report to their home church:
Acts 14:26-28

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

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.

28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

11. They had completed the work to which the elders in Antioch had ordained them to, so upon their return, they called the whole church together to give a full report of all that they had been enabled to accomplish.
12. And they remained to minister in Antioch for a “long time.”
13. This first missionary journey covered a period of about two years and covered approximately 935 miles by land and sea. Their return home occurred in the fall of 47 AD.