

- A Study in Acts -

Chapter Fourteen – First Journey of Paul Continued

ACTS 14:1-13:

In our previous lessons, we began the first journey of Paul. It began in **Antioch** of Syria and from there; Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark went down to **Seleucia**. From Seleucia, they caught a ship to **Cyprus** and landed at **Salamis**. They would share the Gospel of Jesus as Christ in the synagogues of the Jews.

As Barnabas and Saul came to **Paphos**, they crossed paths with the proconsul and a sorcerer who had been acting as his advisor. As the proconsul wanted to hear from Barnabas and Saul, the sorcerer withstood them.

Saul, who will now be called from this point forward, Paul openly denounced the sorcerer and struck him blind by the power of the Lord. This would give cause for the proconsul to believe the words concerning the teaching of the Lord.

Paul and Barnabas left Cyprus and came to **Perga** in **Pamphylia** where John Mark would leave them and return to Jerusalem for unknown reasons. From Perga they would travel north inland to **Antioch** in **Pisidia**, where they would go into the synagogue of the Jews on the Sabbath. As the invitation is given to speak, Paul is going to preach the Gospel, and this becomes Paul's first recorded sermon. At the conclusion of his sermon, the Gentiles requested to hear these words as well. When the city had come out to hear, the Jews became filled with envy. Many of the Jews rejected the Gospel of Jesus as Christ and became antagonistic; however, many Gentiles would become followers of Christ. The Jews stirred up the leaders of the city and forced Paul and Barnabas to flee to **Iconium**.

Text #1:

Acts 14:1-3 “Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. ² But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. ³ Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.”

Iconium: This city is about 60 to 70 miles slightly southeast of Antioch of Pisidia. It was one of the chief cities in this area of Asia Minor situated on the edge of a vast level plain, with mountains to the west, and major trade routes passing through the city.

As was Paul's custom, the first place they would begin to share the Gospel of Jesus as the Christ would be the synagogue of the Jews. Here they would find similar success as Antioch as well as similar rejection as Antioch.

A necessary recognition of two distinctly different but tied together terms takes place here. The first is found in **Verse 1**, whereby both Jews and Gentiles **“Believed”**. The second takes place in **Verse 2**, whereby these who believed are now designated as **“Brethren”**.

There can be little doubt based on the natural progression that we have noted since the Gospel of Jesus as the Christ began to be preached, that all those who believed were added to the Called Out (church), as were being saved (**Acts 2:47; 5:14**). This universally describes the process of conversion as anything but passive, which in turn then defines belief as anything but mental ascent.

“Believes and is baptized” – Mark 16:16.

“Repentance and remission of sins” Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38.

Because of the undermining of the Jews here, Paul and Barnabas stayed a long time (undetermined, but significant enough to accomplish their purpose), and continued to speak the word of His grace (A reference to the Gospel of Christ shared both for conversion as well as doctrine – **Acts 20:24, 32**). This was accompanied by the working of miracles, which attested to their words being from God (witness by the Lord). This once again demonstrates that miracles were never random, but always were performed with purpose and order (**Mark 16:20**).

Text #2:

Acts 14:4-7 “But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. ⁵ And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, ⁶ they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region. ⁷ And they were preaching the gospel there.”

This second stage in the events of Iconium is a carbon copy of the events post Paul’s preaching in Antioch. The Jews, who were unable to withstand the preaching of the Gospel of Christ and the miracles that accompanied them resorted to customary attempts to destroy any obstacles. It would not succeed to the extent they had hoped, but it did drive Paul and Barnabas to Lystra.

Summary of Iconium: Paul and Barnabas preached in the synagogue of the Jews and there were those who believed from the ranks of Jew and Gentile (proselytes, as they were in the synagogue). The unbelieving Jews tried to poison the minds of Gentiles against the brethren, which would cause Paul and Barnabas to stay longer. Finally, the Jews stirred up the people to the point that they would attempt to abuse and stone them; this would cause them to leave.

Text #3:

Acts 14:8-9 “And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother’s womb, who had never walked. ⁹ This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed,”

Lystra: Lystra was a city that had its origins as a Roman colony, and was located a short distance southwest from Iconium. Even though it was established as a Roman colony, there were abundant Greeks. Because of the number of Greeks, there would also be a large number of those who worshipped the Greek gods; and this will factor into the events in this city.

This city is culturally different than Iconium and even Antioch. We will notice right away that there is no mention of a synagogue or a strong presence of Jews. As it would take a specified number of male Jews to constitute a synagogue, we can appreciate that the reason for neither to be mentioned is that there are very few Jews here.

We will learn that Timothy will be from here and will be among some of these first converts in this city. His mother was a Jew, but his father was a Gentile (**Acts 16:1-2**).

Unlike the cities with synagogues, the Jews in these cities without could usually be found together during the times they would have come to a synagogue in a central place in the area (see **Acts 16:13**).

Since there was not a synagogue, Paul will resort to a different method in order to draw the attention of the people in order to preach to them.

Cripple: This case is similar to that in **Chapter 3**, where Peter and John came across the lame man at the gate of the temple. One significant difference is that based on his hearing Paul speak, had faith that Paul could heal him. The man Peter healed had to be lifted up; this man is trusting in Paul's ability to heal.

Text #4:

Acts 14:10-13 “said with a loud voice, “Stand up straight on your feet!” And he leaped and walked. ¹¹ Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian *language*, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” ¹² And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³ Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes.”

Leaped and Walked: As we mentioned earlier, this man had faith that Paul could heal him, which is demonstrated here as he leaped and walked as commanded by Paul. We should also again notice that there would have to be more to the miracle than returning strength to this man's feet, as he would also receive motor skills unknown to him until now.

People Saw: One of the unique properties of the miracles performed by the Lord or His Apostles was that they were never performed on any conjectured unknown person; but on those whom everyone knew.

Since these people all knew this individual who has been healed by Paul and being idolaters, they assumed Paul and Barnabas to be the gods they paid homage too (Zeus and Hermes, Latinized into Jupiter, and Mercury in the Vulgate translation).

There were thought to be statues to these gods at the city gates, and thus the attempt to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas at this location. It is important to notice that even in the pagan worship of idols; there is an overwhelming desire to pursue favor from established deities. It will be the same in effort with those who would believe in the one true God and Jesus the Christ after they have had their conscience educated to the truth (**Acts 16:5**).

In our next lesson, we will look at the response of Paul and Barnabas to this effort to pay homage to them and the properties of Paul's preaching for the first time to those who have no knowledge of the one true God.