

Acts 14

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Review of second half of Acts 13

Right after Paul and Barnabas left *Paphos* after converting the Roman pro-council they sailed for *Perga* in Asia Minor

John Mark left them and returned to Antioch and most likely Jerusalem

Paul and Barnabas started preaching the good news to the Jews in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia on a Sabbath at the invitation of the rulers of the synagogue

Paul gave the next expression of the *Kerygma*, quoting from *Ps 2, 16, Habakkuk 1 and Is 55, 49*

Review of second half of Acts 13 (Cont)

The people in the synagogue were so touched by Paul's message that they invited them to return on the following Sabbath

At that time almost the entire city came to hear them causing the Jewish leaders to become jealous and contradictory

Paul and Barnabas condemn these leaders quoting from Is 49 indicating that when the Jews rejected the messianic message the word would go to the Gentiles

This led to the Jewish leadership driving them out of the city

So, Paul and Barnabas moved on to the city of *Iconium*

Acts 14

*Acts 14:1 “Now at Iconium they entered together into a Jewish synagogue, and so spoke that a great company believed, both of **Jews** and of **Greeks**.”*

Paul always begins his preaching with the **Jews first**

Scholars are not sure what Luke means here by “**Greeks**”

It could mean that there were Greeks (Gentiles) outside the temple

Or it could mean that he was speaking to Jews, proselytes and God-fearers

Acts 14 (Cont)

*Acts 14:2-7 “But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren... speaking **boldly** for the Lord... They learned of it and fled to **Lystra** and **Derbe** cities of **Lycaonia**, and to the surrounding country; and there they preached the gospel.”*

*They move to **Lystra** and then **Derbe** in the Province of **Pisidia***

Pisidia was province of Asia Minor

In these towns were the churches that Paul will write to in his Letter to the Galatians

The evangelists are now preaching in what the Greeks considered “barbarian” territory

Acts 14 (Cont)

Usually, Luke used the term “brethren” to refer to the Jews but here it looks like he is referring to Gentile Christians, including men and women

“**Boldly**” is Luke’s favorite expression for the courageous, confident preaching of the gospel

Persecution did not stop them from preaching the gospel, but simply propelled them onward to a new audience

Acts 14 (Cont)

Acts 14:8-11 *“Now at **Lystra** there was a man sitting, who could not use his feet; he was a cripple from birth, who had never walked.... they lifted up their voices, saying in **Lycaonian**,...”*

Here is a story that is very similar to the healing of the cripple by Peter and John in **Acts 3:1-13**

Paul calls out in a loud voice with a tone of authority to increase the man's faith

Lycaonian was one of the local Greek dialects

Almost every village had its own dialect because for the most part people in antiquity stayed their entire lives within one village

Remember how those in the house of the high priest during the trial of Jesus told Peter that they knew he was a Galilean because of his dialect

Acts 14 (Cont)

Acts 14:11-14 *“the gods have come down to us in the likeness of men! Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul because he was the chief speaker, they called Hermes....when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments...”*

After Paul healed a guy of his paralysis the people thought that he must be divine, thus some sort of god!

The priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, wastes no time in preparing to offer a sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas

Paul tries to stop them from offering a sacrifice to them by **tearing his garment** which was a sign of extreme distress in response to evil tidings, blasphemy and other serious sins

Look at what Paul says next:

Acts 14 (Cont)

Acts 14:15-17 *“Men, why are you doing this? We also are men, of like nature with you, and bringing you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that’s in them... with food and gladness.”*

Here the missionaries challenge their listeners to abandon their pagan beliefs and accept the truth that there is one creator God

With the words in **Act 14:17** Paul is appealing to Gentiles to what is called **“natural Revelation”**

That is the revelation that all humanity has received

This includes the beauty of creation and the universal blessing of God

When your barns are full you realize that a power about you (God) has blessed you

We will see Paul use the natural Revelation in **Rom 1** and **Acts 17:23f**

Acts 14 (Cont)

Thus we can determine that there are two types of Revelation: ***Natural and Special***

Special Revelation is where God actually reveals Himself in a special way which is not revealed to others

The 10 Commandments

The Word of God found in the Bible

The presence of Jesus in the New Testament

This special Revelation has come to the ends of the earth after the Faith was spread throughout the world

Israel was doubly culpable because like all nations they have the natural Revelation but they also have special Revelation revealed to the Jews as well as the special Revelation of the New Testament

Acts 14 (Cont)

Acts 14:19 –21 *“But Jews came there from Antioch and Iconium; (this is the Antioch of Pisidia, and not the Antioch of Syria) and having persuaded the people, **they stone Paul** and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city; and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. When they had preached the gospel to that city...they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch”*

Right after wanting to offer sacrifices to Barnabas and Paul they reverse themselves and accuse them of trickery

One group stones Paul

*Paul’s survival of this stoning is discussed in **2 Cor 11:25** where he says that he was beaten three times with rods, stoned once, and shipwrecked three times*

After each rejection they simply move on to the next town

Acts 14 (Cont)

Acts 14:22 *“strengthening the souls of the disciples, (Christian, disciple, brethren, brother, sister are all terms used for Christian) exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying that through **many tribulations** we must enter the kingdom of God.”*

After leaving *Derbe* they return to each of the cities they came through on the way down (*Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch*) to check on and strengthen the churches they had founded

Without this follow up many new converts could easily return to their previous beliefs

Acts 14 (Cont)

Many contemporary evangelists use this passage as the source for preaching on what they call the “health and wealth gospel”

If one is faithful to God, He will bless you and you will be rich

If you are sick, poor or unhappy, it is because you do not have enough faith

This is a major theme of many televangelists

But look at what Paul says next:

Acts 14 (Cont)

Acts 14:22 *“that through many tribulations (underline this in the text - Paul just got stoned) we must enter the kingdom of God.”*

Paul is telling this to the people of *Galatia* to prepare them for the persecutions that will follow (not to create an idea that their wealth will grow through faith)

After all he has just been chased out of three cities after he was able to leave behind some new Christian communities

Some of these tribulations will leave some of his followers dead as some will be stoned in the coming days

Thus, he preaches to them about faith and all the dangers that may go along with it

This inevitability of suffering and hardship characterizes God’s plan of salvation as reported in Luke-Acts

Acts 14 (Cont)

Acts 14:23 *“And when they had appointed **elders** for them in every church, with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they believed.”*

The word **elder** here in the RSV is translated from the Greek word “*presbiteros*” which goes into Latin, then German and eventually Old English as “presbyter” which is finally shortened to “priest”

It also implies that the new church leaders were chosen from among the more mature and reliable converts

Many may have been from among the Jewish believers, whose knowledge of Scripture and adherence to biblical morality would have been a major advantage

Acts 14 (Cont)

This does not mean that the word “presbiteros” meant only a priest in the early church

Presbiteros meant “old guy”

Diakonos meant “servant”

Episkopos meant “overseer” or “manager”

These are normal Greek terms that have little to do with Christianity

But when included in ecclesial literature they refer to ecclesiastical states

A good word for elder used in this passage would be “clergy”

Acts 14 (Cont)

Paul appointed “clergy” everywhere he visited most likely with the rank of “bishop”

Initially the church had apostles, bishops and deacons and only over time the introduction of the title “priest” was introduced

Acts 14 (Cont)

Acts 14:24-28 *“then they passed through Pisidia, and came to Pamphylia. And when they had spoken the word in **Perga**, they went down to **Attalia**; and from there they sailed to **Antioch** (of Syria) where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled... and how he had **opened the door of faith to the Gentiles**. And they remained no little time with the disciples”*

Now that Paul and Barnabas have completed their appointed work, they exercise accountability for it

This becomes a major theme of what is coming next which is the opening of the faith to the Gentiles

Acts 14 (Cont)

This becomes the principle mission of Paul in this four year journey as discussed in **Acts 13 and 14** during which he:

Preached the faith

Catechized those who would listen

Baptized many Christians

Established many congregations

Transition

Next we will look at Acts 15 and the Council of Jerusalem

Acts 15

Acts 15

Acts 15:1-4 “But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved....and they declared all that ”

These guys came down from the Church in Jerusalem and began telling the Christians in the Church in *Antioch* that unless they were circumcised (kept Kosher and all of the Law of Moses) they could not be saved, go to heaven and were still damned!

Can you imagine how this impacted the Gentile Christians in Antioch?

The authorities in the Church of Antioch appointed Paul and Barnabas to go back (up) to Jerusalem to discuss this matter with the Apostles and elders in the Church of Jerusalem

Acts 15 (Cont)

On their way they passed through the Churches in *Phoenicia* and *Samaria* telling them about the acceptance of the Gentiles on their missionary journey

When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem they were welcomed by the leadership and reported all that God had done for them

Most members of the Church in Jerusalem were happy with this news

Remember when speaking of circumcision that includes all of the Law of Moses (including all aspects of what was deemed clean or unclean) this issue is very important in Paul's Epistles to the Galatians and Romans