

Turning the World Right-side Up: Study 11, Acts 14

Acts Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they

cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Main Theme: Some Will Fight God Forever. No matter who comes to them with the good news, they will not listen.

Chapter 14: The Circle Widens Again Part 2

Section 1: Acts 14:1-7 The Gospel Pattern

14 At Iconium¹ Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. ²But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. ³So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders. ⁴The people of the city were divided;

¹ *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 589

some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. ⁵There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. ⁶But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian² cities of Lystra³ and Derbe⁴ and to the surrounding country, ⁷where they continued to preach the gospel.

Having been chased out of Antioch, the missionaries proceed to Iconium.

Here we see the gospel pattern:

1. Present the gospel to those closest to the truth. God provides proof in signs and wonders.
2. Some believe.
3. Unbelievers stir up trouble.
4. The opposition intensifies leading to violence.
5. People are divided about the Way

When Paul considered this missionary endeavor, he would have seen it as a great victory. After all, half the city had sided with him and the gospel. This meant that half the city had been saved and were now in the Kingdom. The angels were rejoicing right along with Paul and Barnabas.

² *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 781

³ *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 782

⁴ *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 348

Section 2: Acts 14:8-20 The Darkness is Too Deep

⁸In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. ⁹He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed ¹⁰and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

¹¹When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" ¹²Barnabas they called Zeus⁵, and Paul they called Hermes⁶ because he was the chief speaker. ¹³The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

¹⁴But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: ¹⁵"Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. ¹⁶In the past, he let all nations go their own way. ¹⁷Yet he has not

left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." ¹⁸Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.

¹⁹Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. ²⁰But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

Where else have we seen a lame man healed in Acts? In chapter three God heals a lame man through Peter. The author, Luke, will show parallels like this between Paul and Peter. Paul was every bit the Apostle as Peter was (2 Corinthians 12:12). This man had never walked in his life. Can you imagine not only the creation of his muscles but also the rewiring of his brain so that he could control these muscles?

The people of Lystra, see the healing through their polytheistic grid. They are shouting in the Lycaonian language, so Paul and Barnabas do not understand what they are saying nor what it means. How easily the mind falls into familiar patterns and tries to find labels for things in order to comprehend them. Greeks believed that the gods had visited men on many occasions. Their myths and stories were full of such encounters. When God heals the paralytic through Paul, the people are sure that Zeus and Hermes were in their midst.

Paul tries to explain that he and Barnabas were simply men like they were. He calls them to leave these worthless ideas and turn to the

⁵ *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 1340

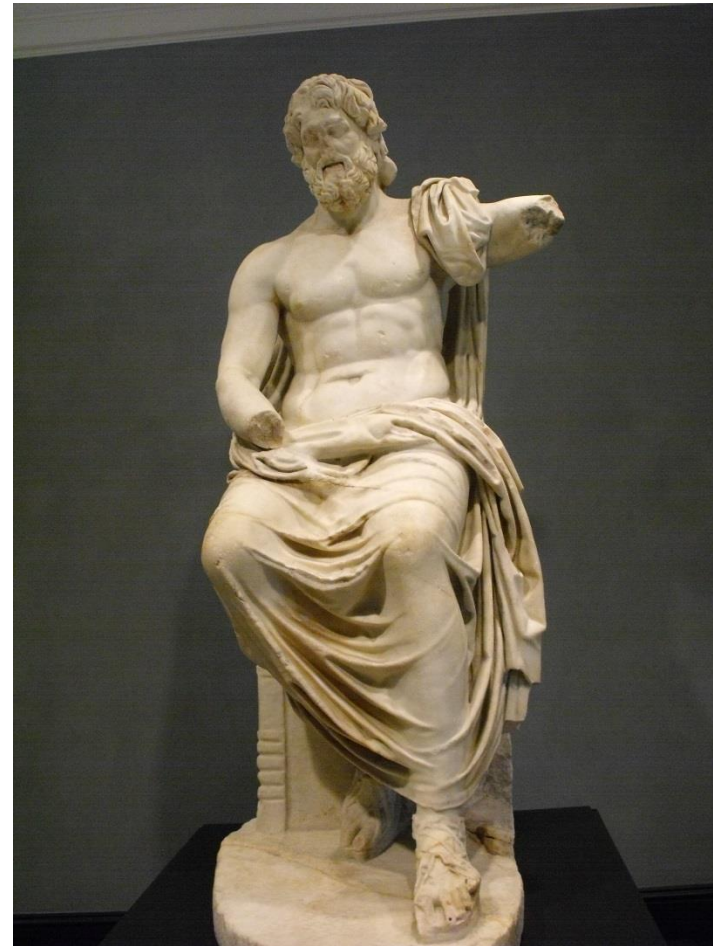
⁶ *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 559

almighty God who gave them rain and crops. He is the creator and he alone is worthy of their worship and devotion. Paul explains that God has now come to welcome them into a relationship with Him. But even with this, these pagans kept trying to sacrifice to them. It is possible that many of them did not understand Paul's words. They definitely would not understand his teaching.

The Jews followed Paul and stirred up the crowd against them. They ultimately stoned the Apostle, dragged him from the city, and left him for dead. There are some who believe that this is when Paul was carried to the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2-4).

The believers gather around Paul. They were probably praying and asking God to restore Paul. Paul not only recovers, but he stands up and walks back into the city. The next day he leaves with Barnabas for Derbe.

What would make a person willing to do this job? Paul is threatened, beaten, and left for dead? This is normal for him. Paul was called by the Spirit, by God, to do this mission. God who owns him body and soul, present and future, is sending him. Paul knows that, if he dies, it will be a gain to him. He will be in the presence of God with Jesus for all eternity. Paul suffered greatly for the cause of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 11:16-33).



Statue of Zeus, Getty Villa, picture by Mike Apodaca

Section 3: Acts 14:21-28 Shoring Up the Faithful



http://assets.bakerpublishinggroup.com/processed/esource-assets/files/270/original/09-01A_PaulsFirstJourneyv_FIN.jpg?1375196465

²¹ They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, ²² strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. ²³ Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. ²⁴ After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, ²⁵ and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

²⁶ From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. ²⁷ On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸ And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

The missionaries preached in Derbe and many became disciples. The word disciple⁷ means that they were learning how to walk like Jesus, patterning their lives after Him.

Paul and Barnabas go right back into the cities where they were threatened and where the people live who stoned Paul. What could make them take such a risky move? These missionaries knew that the baby church needed leadership. They pray and fast then appointed Elders to lead and support the church. These were men of faith. The Apostles make a full circuit, revisiting all those who had responded with faith in Christ.

Paul explains that we must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God. What a light way to speak of being stoned and left for dead. There are some who always include this possibility when they share the gospel. They tell those considering the faith to count the cost before making the commitment. The history of Christianity has many examples of believers being persecuted, and even killed, for their faith. We must not be naïve and think this could not happen to us in our lifetime. When we commit to Christ, we are open to anything God decides to give us. We will remain faithful.

⁷ *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 356

What the Text Says

Section 1: Acts 14:1-7

This section shows us the pattern of God's Kingdom entering into Satan's domain. The progression is 1) Present the gospel to those closest to the truth (usually the Jews). God may provide signs and wonders to back up the message, 2) Some respond with belief and are saved, 3) Unbelievers stir up trouble for the evangelists, 4) The opposition intensifies—even to the point of violence, 5) People are divided about the Way.

Section 2: Acts 14:8-20

In Lystra the people are so steeped in their polytheistic religion and their many gods that when Paul heals the paralytic who had been lame from birth, the people mistake Barnabas for Zeus and Paul for Hermes. They even move to offer sacrifices to them. Paul tries to explain to the pagans that he and Barnabas are human beings like them and that the God over creation is greater than the creation.

Jews from Antioch and Iconia follow Paul and Barnabas and stir up the crowd against them. They stone Paul and drag his body outside the city, thinking him dead. The believers surround him, no doubt in prayer. Paul rises and goes back into the city.

Section 3: Acts 14:21-28

Paul and Barnabas revisit all the new groups of believers and appoint Elders in the churches to lead them. Afterwards Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch and report to the church all that God had done through them.

Connecting to the Scripture

So much of our energy, time, and attention is spent focused on our daily lives, we rarely know what is really important. We become preoccupied with our friendships, our possessions, our schedules, our families, our jobs, etc.

The really important thing, the only thing that will matter in the end, the only eternal thing, is the Kingdom of God.

Since the coming of Christ, humanity is divided into two human races, those in Adam and those in Christ. Jesus is the source of a new humanity and those born of Him have a new present and a new future. In this new present we are completely forgiven and accepted by God. We are separated from the sin and guilt of our past, present, and future. We have a new relationship with the Father through the Holy Spirit. We are the new temples of God, filled with His Spirit. We also have a new mission—to do everything for God and His glory. We belong to Him and we need to be ready to be called into service at a moment's notice. We make every decision under His lordship.

We also have a new future. We will be completely restored to our original purpose. We will be in perfect relationship with God for all eternity. We will have new bodies and will be completely free of sin and its influence.

When we put our focus on these things, we will function as did Paul and Barnabas. We will be ready for every opportunity that God provides to share His good news. We will encourage everyone we meet to leave their life in Adam and to become new in Christ.

Questions to Ask During the Study

Section 1: Read Acts 14:1-7

1. What is familiar about what happened to Paul and Barnabas in Iconium?
2. What can we expect when we share the good news with others?

Section 2: Read Acts 14:8-20

1. What does this section tell us about the preconceptions of those we share the good news with?
2. What are some of the preconceptions of those in your oikos? What beliefs do they have about life or about themselves that might make it very difficult for them to hear and understand what God is offering them in Christ?

Section 3: Read Acts 14:21-28

1. Luke says that the missionaries won disciples. What do you think he meant by this?
2. What do you think would have happened in these new churches had Paul and Barnabas not appointed leaders and encouraged them to stay faithful? What would happen in our church without leaders?
3. Paul and Barnabas commit, or entrust, these leaders to God. Why do you think they did this? What can we learn from this?
4. Paul says we must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God. What did he mean by this? What hardships might we encounter?