



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 14

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Introduction

In This Chapter We Will :

- Trace the route of St. Paul and St. Barnabas on their missionary journey
- Study the increasing persecution endured by the apostle Paul
- Study how they appoint elders in every church



At Iconium (14:1-7)

- In this place, and in Antioch and Lystra, St. Timothy became acquainted with St. Paul and his manner of life, 2 Timothy 3:10-11
- In almost every principal place a colony of Jews and a synagogue were found
- Here, among their own nation, and in accordance with the customs of the synagogue, they spoke, and first declared the gospel
- The result seemed uniformly to reach some Jews, and a number of the devout Gentiles who attended the synagogues to learn more of God



At Iconium (14:1-7)

- Thus was formed the nucleus of the church
- At Iconium, a great multitude both of the Jews and the Greeks believed
- There was division
- Those who stubbornly rejected the gospel were filled with hatred and opposed in every possible way
- As they could do nothing without the aid of the Gentiles in that Gentile city, the Jews sought to prejudice them



At Iconium (14:1-7)

- Notwithstanding, for a long time, St. Paul and St. Barnabas, continued to preach there with great success
- The city becomes divided
- The enemies of the truth form parties, and organize opposition
- Part did not believe and rejected the apostles
- The others, who had not hardened their hearts against the truth, felt the force of it; and could easily discern the miracles to be the work of God, and therefore held with the apostles



At Iconium (14:1-7)

- A desperate attempt was made by their rulers and Jews to abuse and stone them
- The attempt was avoided by the apostles receiving information and escaping from the city
- Lystra and Derbe were Lycaonian cities, not far from Iconium
- Wherever they went, they were always employed in their Master's work



Idolatry at Lystra (14:8-18)

- In Lystra St. Paul heals a man crippled from birth
- This man never had walked - the miracle, therefore, would be more remarkable, as the man would be well known
- The account of the healing of this cripple is related, not as an unusual occurrence, but because it led to the attempt to defy St. Paul and St. Barnabas
- It must be kept in mind that the people of Lystra believed in many gods; their legends taught them that the gods had often come down in the form of men and interfered in human affairs



Idolatry at Lystra (14:8-18)

- Hence, it is not strange that when they witnessed this miracle, unlike anything ever seen before in their city, they exclaimed, “the gods are come down to us in the likeness of men”
- Jupiter is the chief of the gods in the Greek and Roman Pantheon
- St. Barnabas was no doubt a more stately man than St. Paul, who says that his own bodily presence was weak and speech contemptible (2 Cor 10:10)
- Mercury was the interpreter of the gods



Idolatry at Lystra (14:8-18)

- St. Paul, eloquent, persuasive, active, was thought to represent the part of Mercury
- There was a temple of Jupiter before the gates of the city, with the usual priest, and carried away by their idea, they prepared to offer sacrifices to the gods whom they supposed to have visited them
- The sacrifices before being offered were crowned with garlands
- Floral crowns were also worn by the priest offering sacrifice



Idolatry at Lystra (14:8-18)

- Tearing their clothes as a sign of great grief, and even of indignation and horror
- St. Barnabas and St. Paul proclaim themselves to be men who preach the one true living God
- They called them to the worship of the Living God, the Creator of all things
- He had left the nations to their own conceits until it should be demonstrated that man by searching cannot find out God
- The efforts of human wisdom were a failure



Idolatry at Lystra (14:8-18)

- Though he gave the Gentiles no revelation of his will, yet he continued to govern them by his gracious providence; doing them good in general
- Nature with many voices testified of him Rom 1:18-21
- It was with great difficulty that they persuaded them from sacrificing to them

Stoning, Escape to Derbe (14:19-20)



- These Jews were, no doubt, the same who had raised up persecution against St. Paul and St. Barnabas, at Iconium and Antioch
- They followed the apostles with implacable malice; and what they could not do themselves they endeavored to do by others
- They seized and stoned the great apostle until they supposed he was dead
- From one extreme they were easily led to the other
- If they were not gods, they were bad men
- Presumed dead, St. Paul is dragged outside the city

Stoning, Escape to Derbe (14:19-20)



- Miraculously restored, not only to life, but to perfect soundness so that he was able to walk into the city, that his persecutors might see the mighty power of God in his restoration, and the faith of the young converts be confirmed in the truth and goodness of God
- It is remarkable that he should have returned again into the same city
- But probably it was only among the new converts that he showed himself

Strengthening the Converts (14:21-28)



- The Jews supposed that he was dead; and it does not appear that he again exposed himself to their rage
- He departed to preach in another place
- The next day St. Paul and St. Barnabas depart to Derbe where they preach the gospel and make many disciples before beginning their return trip through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch
- They counted not their lives dear to them, and returned to do their Masters work in the very places in which they had been so grievously persecuted, and where one of them had been apparently stoned to death!

Strengthening the Converts (14:21-28)



- It was needful to revisit their fields of labor to organize the churches
- It is well to remember that one of the converts was Timothy (Ac16:1)
- They taught them that they must expect trials and persecutions
- They warn them: "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."
- All have to bear the cross, Ro 5:3 2Co 4:17 Heb 12:5-11

Strengthening the Converts (14:21-28)



- The apostles committed the churches which they had planted to proper and special pastors, who they appointed not rashly, but with prayers and fasting preceding their choice:
- From Ac 6:6 we would infer that they were chosen by the church under the advice of the apostles
- They committed the infant church to the guardianship of the Lord in whom they believed
- Passing through Pisidia, they come to Pamphylia
- After preaching in Perga, they go down to Attalia
- Attalia is a seaport not far from Perga

Strengthening the Converts (14:21-28)



- From there they sail to Antioch of Syria, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work accomplished on their journey
- The Syrian Antioch, the first Gentile church, the mother church of Gentile missions, the church that sent them forth several years before (Acts 13:1,3)
- They very properly made a report to the church that had sent them forth
- It was a very cheering report

Strengthening the Converts (14:21-28)



- The gospel had been planted in the great island of Cyprus, received by the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, and extended through Pamphylia, Pisidia and Lycaonia, strong churches having been planted in their principal cities
- They stay a long time in Antioch with the disciples



Conclusion

- What two major effects did the preaching of the gospel have?
- What happened to end their time at Iconium?
- What encouraged St. Paul to pray for the crippled man?
- How did the people in the crowd react to the healing?
- What did the priest of Zeus do?



Conclusion

- Why did St. Paul and St. Barnabas have a hard time settling the crowd?
- What three things did St. Paul and St. Barnabas do when they returned again to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch?
- St. Paul and St. Barnabas worked their way back to (Syrian) Antioch by way of Pisidia, Pamphylia, Perga, and Attalia. What did they do on this part of the journey?
- What one word or name helps you remember this chapter?