

Chris Flanagan / General

Acts Backgrounds

## Outline

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## Iconium

### **Acts 14:1-2 NASB 2020**

In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a way that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brothers.

- Iconium was predominately gentile but had a small Jewish community.
- Essentially, it is a repeat of what happened in Pisidian Antioch - at first, they are received, but, presumably, as gentiles believe in large numbers, the status quo is disrupted, leading to a backlash.

### **Acts 14:3-4 NASB 2020**

Therefore they spent a long time *there* speaking boldly *with reliance* upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be performed by their hands. But the people of the city were divided; and some sided with the Jews, while others, with the apostles.

- Apostles, i.e., Paul and Barnabas. Note the theme of two people leading a ministry.
  - We might say, “It is not good for ministers to be alone.”
  - Life application commentary: “By ministering together with another committed believer, we are less likely to yield to temptation, get discouraged, or stop serving God. We can make up for one another’s

weaknesses as well as combine our gifts. With whom are you teaming up to make a difference? Who is your ministry partner?"

### **Acts 14:5-7 NASB 2020**

And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to treat them abusively and to stone them, they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region; and there they continued to preach the gospel.

- The city rulers (probably) would not have condoned stoning, but in the interests of keeping order, they very well could have roughed up the visitors and sent them packing.
- Lystra is 18 miles south of Iconium, and Derbe is 55 miles SW of Iconium.
- The non-believers form a mob.
- Given what we know about Paul, it seems unlikely he fled from a position of fear. Jesus had earlier told his apostles that when a village would not accept their message, they were not to cast pearls before swine. They were to shake the dust off their feet (as they did in [Acts 13](#)) and move on to the next village.

## Lystra

### **Acts 14:8-10 NASB 2020**

In Lystra a man was sitting whose feet were incapacitated. *He had been* disabled from his mother's womb, and had never walked. This man was listening to Paul as he spoke. *Paul* looked at him intently and saw that he had faith to be made well, and he said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet!" And *the man* leaped up and *began* to walk.

- Scholars believe Lystra was not like the other cities Paul visited. It was more of an outpost town and less sophisticated and educated.
  - They spoke Lyconian first and Greek second, which may have led to the confusion in the next passage.

- Despite all this, none other than Timothy lived here - we'll get to his story in [Acts 16](#).
- Just as with Bar-Jesus, Paul stared at him, but this time, Paul saw that he had faith to be healed.
- The Paul/Peter parallels continue as Peter also healed a man whose feet were lame in [Acts 3:1-7](#).
- Note the man is not named.

## Mistaken for gods

### **Acts 14:11-12 NASB 2020**

When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have become like men and have come down to us!" And they *began* calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, since he was the chief speaker.

- Zeus was the head of the Greek pantheon.
  - They assumed the silent one was the one in charge, or perhaps Barnabas had a larger frame
  - Zeus is also known as Jupiter in the Roman system.
- Hermes was the winged messenger, also known as Mercury.

### **Acts 14:13 NASB 2020**

Moreover, the priest of Zeus, whose *temple* was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.

- Never accept praise given for the wrong reasons.

### **Acts 14:14-15 NASB 2020**

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard *about it*, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men, of the same nature as you, preaching the gospel to you, to turn from these useless things to a living God, who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND EVERYTHING THAT IS IN THEM.

- [Exodus 20:11](#) “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and everything that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; for that reason the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”
- [Psalm 146:6](#) “Who made heaven and earth, The sea and everything that is in them; Who keeps faith forever;”
- tearing clothes was a sign of severe distress
  - After the defeat at Ai.....[Joshua 7:6](#) “Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the ground on his face before the ark of the Lord until the evening, both he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads.”
- Note that this is now a mixed Gentile/Jewish audience Paul’s lone OT reference is very generic.
  - Our God and not Zeus is the true Creator (a fact Paul would not need to explain to a solely Jewish crowd).
  - The God of the Bible is living, not mythological
  - He will take the same approach in Athens in [Acts 17](#).
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**Acts 14:16–18 NASB 2020**

In past generations He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.” And *even by saying these things, only with difficulty* did they restrain the crowds from offering sacrifices to them.

- Permitted - people were allowed to follow their own desires about religion. Paul says in [Romans 1](#), that even though they did not hear any specific instruction about the God of Israel, they were still without excuse.
  - Natural theology - knowledge of God can be derived from creation, such as the rain cycle which produces food.
- He no longer allows nations to find their own way. With the coming of the kingdom, nations/gentiles are specifically called to follow the God of Israel and Jesus the Messiah.

# Persecution

## **Acts 14:19 NASB 2020**

But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, thinking that he was dead.

[2 Timothy 3:11](#) “persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!”

- These dudes traveled over 100 miles on foot just to try to thwart the missions work.
- If Paul had officially died and been raised back to life, Luke, the doctor, probably would have noted this.
- He apparently had an interesting vision while unconscious:
- [2 Corinthians 12:2](#) “I know a man in Christ, who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven.”

# Return to Syrian Antioch

## **Acts 14:20–21 NASB 2020**

But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe. And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made a good number of disciples, they returned to Lystra, to Iconium, and to Antioch,

- He reenters the city to prove he cannot be intimidated. The next day, he leaves on his own terms.
- Fearless Paul retraces his steps.
- Nearly all of these churches were in the Roman province of Galatia and were the recipients of the correspondence we know as “Galatians”

## **Acts 14:22 NASB 2020**

strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, “*It is through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God.*”

- This is the key verse of the chapter.
- Negative things, hurt, pain come with the territory of serving God in a broken world; God’s ministers are called to persevere through the trials and focus on positive ways God works through the trials.
- “Standing Strong” is a major theme in Paul’s letters - “*Paul discusses the afflictions that believers undergo and the striving and training for proclaiming the Gospel, even in the midst of opposition.*”

[Ac 14:22](#) || [Ac 20:26-27](#) || [Ac 21:13](#) || [Ro 1:13-15](#) || [Ro 8:33-39](#) ||

[Ro 15:30-31](#) || [1 Co 15:32](#) || [2 Co 1:8-11](#) || [2 Co 4:8-11](#) || [2 Co 4:15-18](#) || [Php 1:18-26](#) ||  
[1 Ti 4:6-10](#) | [2 Ti 2:1-7](#) || [2 Ti 3:10-17](#) || [2 Ti 4:16-18](#)

[2 Timothy 2:1-3](#) “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful people who will be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”

Author Tim Keller notes “The greater the effectiveness of a ministry, the greater the resistance and opposition.”

#### **Acts 14:23-26 NASB 2020**

When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had believed. They passed through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia. When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been entrusted to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished.

- Despite the risks, Paul returned to visit the believers in each of the cities where they had ministered.

- This is a potential gap with “mission trips” in our day. “Whenever we do evangelism, we should have a clear strategy for follow-through care for new believers.” Most of the time, we come in, minister, and leave, assuming someone else will take the next step in discipline new believers. How many times might people who make an initial profession of faith wither or get picked off by the enemy because there is no follow-through?
- Paul addressed this risk. Local leaders were needed to care for the community.
  - We have to remember that Luke is glossing over an extended period of time. Paul and Barnabas would have developed relationships with potential elders before elevating them to these positions of trust.
  - Paul elaborates on these church offices in [1 Timothy 3](#) and Titus.
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**Acts 14:27–28 NASB 2020**

When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they *began* to report all the things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they spent a long time with the disciples.

- This concludes the first missionary journey.
- Note the mindset. How many would have returned focusing on the negative things?
  - John Mark punked out on us, then we were robbed by bandits, then I got really sick, then I was chased out of Pisidian Antioch, then beaten and stoned in Lystra, people rejected us wherever we went...
  - Not so Paul and Barnabas. They reported on the good things, changed lives, and opened doors.
- We, as humans, are designed for stories. This is why movies are far more popular and engaging than lectures. A testimony is nothing more than your story about what God has done or is doing in your life. Let’s tell more stories like this.

From Summarized Bible:

Those who speak boldly in the Lord need not think it strange if the preaching of the Gospel occasions divisions nor be offended by the insults heaped upon them by embittered and convicted spirits. They shall be made strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and God shall confirm their testimony in granting wonders to be done by their hands.

Brooks, Keith. *Summarized Bible: Complete Summary of the New Testament*. Logos Bible Software, 2009, p. 38.