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Acts 14

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Acts 14.

Topics.

- Paul and Barnabas speak in a Jewish synagogue in Iconium.
- Paul heals a man who had been crippled from birth.
- The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!
- In past generations God allowed all nations to walk in their own ways.
- Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and stoned Paul.
- Through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God.
- They appointed elders for them in every church.
- The global church.

The previous chapter: in the previous chapter Paul gave a brilliant exhort in the synagogue of Antioch and many Jews begged him to speak again. The next Sabbath almost all the city came out to hear the word of the Lord, but the Jews that had authority were jealous of the crowds Paul and Barnabas were drawing so they drove them out of the city. The chapter ended with Paul and Barnabas going to Iconium and turning from proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel to the Jews and focusing on the Gentiles.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

ACTS 14:1-7

Paul and Barnabas speak in a Jewish Synagogue in Iconium.

- **Acts 14:1-7:** Now at Iconium they (Paul and Barnabas) entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. ²But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. ³So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. ⁴But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles. ⁵When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, ⁶they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country, ⁷and there they continued to preach the gospel.

Iconium: was a city of Asia Minor in south central Turkey. This is Paul and Barnabas first Journey to Iconium it is most likely Paul also visited it on his second and third journeys (Acts 16:6) (Acts 18:23).

The words, "A great number of both Jews and Greeks in the Jewish synagogue believed," shows Gentiles were able to attend the Jewish synagogues at Iconium. Paul and Barnabas remained a long time in this city proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel and healing many (i.e., doing signs and wonders) and both Jews and Gentiles believed the word of the Lord. The Jewish rulers were steeped in Judaism and no-doubt the city of Iconium was also filled with many strong and well-established pagan faith and temples of worship as were the surrounding cities (Acts 14:11-13). Both the Jewish authorities and the Gentile rulers could

obviously see that they were losing their members to this new found faith that Paul and Barnabas were proclaiming thus the reason the rulers aggressively set about to poison and infect the minds of the crowds and stir them to such a frenzy that they were prepared to stone Paul and Barnabas. The situation eventually became so life threatening that Paul and Barnabas left and travelled to cities of the surrounding country preaching the Gospel.

A practical lesson: There is a lesson to be learned by this action of Paul and Barnabas and that is; if witnessing puts one's life in the way of danger or harm wisdom says don't stop witnessing, but do move away from the danger.

ACTS 14:8-13

Paul Heals a Man who had Been Crippled from Birth.

- **Acts 14:8-13:** Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. ⁹He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, ¹⁰said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking. ¹¹And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" ¹²Barnabas they called Zeus (Jupiter in KJV) and Paul, Hermes (Mercurius in KJV) because he was the chief speaker. ¹³And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.

The words, "Seeing that he had faith to be made well," Means he believed the word of the Lord that Paul was proclaiming, but this cannot be used as a formula for all miraculous healings as many were simply acts of compassion by Jesus and the apostles in which the faith of the person being healed was not even involved.

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The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men! The Lycaonian statement, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men," at least shows, that they recognised that the miraculous power flowing through Paul and Barnabas was coming from a source outside of themselves. Naturally because they believed in gods other than the God of Israel, they credited the power to their gods, but in a certain sense they were far more spiritual than were the religious rulers of the Jewish nation since the purpose of the miracles were to authenticate that Jesus and the apostles were sent by God. Jesus did many stunning miracles before the Jewish authorities yet they never once credit his power to God but rather condemned and murdered him. At least the Lycaonian people recognise Paul and Barnabas as having a power from a source beyond themselves and rather than murder them for it attempt to exalt them to the max.

ACTS 14:14-18

Barnabas and Paul Tear their Garments and Rush into the Crowd.

- **Acts 14:14-18:** But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, ¹⁵"Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. ¹⁶In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. ¹⁷Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." ¹⁸Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

When Paul and Barnabas heard Lycaonian people wanted to call them Hermes and Zeus (v12) and offer them sacrifices they were horrified, but rather than condemn them for such gross error and for believing in false gods they use it as an opportunity to introduce the people to the true God by telling them they are coming with Good News of the living God and that they should turn from their vain gods.

NOTICE: the apostles' words, "We also are men, of like nature with you," (v15) shows that even though Paul and Barnabas had the power of the Holy Spirit flowing through them in a stunning and miraculous way it did not mean they were without human passions and weakness.

In past generations God allowed all nations to walk in their own ways: under the Old Covenant the LORD'S primary focus was on the nation of Israel, God was not concerned with who the Gentile nations were worshipping, but rather His attention was on who the people of Israel were worshipping thus the words, "In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways" (v16), but now God is shifting his focus from Israel to the Gentile nations and calling out from amongst them a people fit for His Kingdom. God is now establishing an entirely new nation in Christ made up of both Jews and Gentiles alike. It does not matter whether one is born a descendant of Abraham or of a woman worshipping pagan gods everyone can enter into this new creation through faith in God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ. For further information see the title:

- The Commonwealth of Israel (at the end of this chapter).

ACTS 14:19-28

Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and stoned Paul.

The crowds enticed by the Jews Stone Paul and left him for dead.

- **Acts 14:19-28:** But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. ²⁰But 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. ²¹When they had preached the gospel to that city (Derbe) and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²²strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. ²³And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. ²⁴Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. ²⁵And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia, ²⁶and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. ²⁷And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸And they remained no little time with the disciples.

Paul and Barnabas had previously proclaimed Christ in Antioch and in Iconium (Acts 13) and been driven out of both cities by jealous Jewish religious rulers because of the enormous crowds they were attracting. No-doubt the Jews in Lystra had called upon the Jews from both cities to come and help them put a final end to the ministry of Paul and Barnabas. Jews arrive from both cities and entice the crowds to stone the two apostles. Paul is so badly wounded the crowds drag his body out of the city thinking he was dead (probably to the cities refuse tip).

Paul rose up and entered the city: when the disciples gathered around Paul he rose up, this could mean that Paul was not as badly wounded as the people thought, or that the disciples prayed for him (a natural response) and God healed him, or the Lord intervened in his life as he did on the Damascus road and raised him up either way Paul stands up and rests overnight hidden in the city of Lystra and the next day goes with Barnabas to the city of Derbe and may believe the word of the Lord.

Paul returns to Lystra, Iconium and to Antioch: how fabulous is this, Paul and Barnabas had been violently driven out of Lystra, Iconium and to Antioch yet because they are concerned for those who believed the word of the Lord they return to each city, obviously they would not have proclaimed the gospel in public as they did the first time, their primary mission this time is to support and encourage those who believed on their first Journey.

Through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God: today in some religious circles there is a Gospel in the world that proclaims if those embracing its teachings have enough faith they can bring into their lives the things that they need to prosper and not only keep them free from trouble, but also in good health, the underlying message is that with enough faith a person can live a charmed life, but this is not the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ or his apostles who state, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (v22).

They appointed elders for them in every church: Paul and Barnabas travel throughout Lystra, Iconium and Antioch appointing elders in every Church (v23) meaning they recognised who amongst the people had a spirit of integrity, a humble heart, and an understanding of the word of the Lord coupled with a willingness to serve not only Christ, but those they were given the leadership over. Remember the word, church here does not apply to church buildings as we think of them today, throughout the New Testament there are no cathedrals or opulent church buildings, almost all meetings were held in people's homes while some prayer meetings were simply alongside a river.

THE GLOBAL AND WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

There is in the secular global world today a mindset that the church is a Sunday meeting in a religious building but the church should never be limited to the established religious institutions, denominations or church buildings though they may form a part of the body of Christ they are not the only part. There are many individual Christians in all countries of the world who meet in coffee bars, social outings and mostly their own homes (as the early church did) to give thanks to Christ and share their discoveries of God's word and their spiritual experiences with Him. Many of these people are helping others and simply manifesting the reality of their faith to the people that come into their lives. God is not limited to any one pattern or organisation; He is far too creative for that.

Jesus church is global and is manifested in a vast variety of ways across the face of the earth. In many third world countries church is held outside under a tree (for shade) with its members sitting on the dusty ground often with dogs, chooks and other animals roaming around. It is also important to be aware that the word church does not embrace everyone simply because they confess to be Christians (Matt 7:21-23). When the Bible uses the term church it primarily refers to those who belong to Christ and those who do the will of his Father. The will of God in this context is summed up in Jesus words:

- Love your neighbour as yourself (Matt 22:37-39) (Mark 12:29-31).

In the New Testament this is called the, Royal Law (James 2:8) and means do-good to others. Those (especially those who belong to Christ) who deliberately harm people physically, financially, sexually, verbally, emotionally or spiritually and those who use others for their own selfish gain and greed are referred to by Christ himself as workers of iniquity. The Bible teaches that some will be cast out of God's Kingdom which means not everyone who confesses to know Christ is part of his church there are those in his present Kingdom who he calls wicked servants. They use God's grace, Jesus good name and his Gospel for their own selfish gain and line their own greedy pockets with the wealth and riches of this world by making merchandise of those who do belong to Christ.

Nevertheless, Jesus knows those who are his and those who are not and will not only reject anyone who uses his message of grace, mercy, compassion and love for their own selfish gain, but when he returns will deny them entry into his eternal Kingdom. (Matt 8:12) (Matt 22:13) (Matt 25:30).

Jesus said:

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:14) (John 10:26-27).

For further information concerning the church, see the title:

- The Definition of a Church, in Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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