

ACTS CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Read Acts 14:1-7

1. *Paul & Barnabas are now in Iconium. What happened when they spoke in the synagogue?*
2. *Who soon began to cause trouble? (vs. 2)*

Whenever and wherever the gospel is preached, it causes division. Jesus describes this controversy in Matt. 10:32-39. There are those who believe and turn to Christ and those who reject. New believers always find themselves cut-off from some of their previous associations. Look up John 15:18-21 where Jesus tells us that when the world seems to hate us we should remember that it hated Him first. It is because He chose us out of the world that the world hates us. Believers should never be surprised at opposition or even hatred directed at them. Indeed, we should expect to be treated the same way our Master was treated, because we are His representatives in an unbelieving world.

3. *In vs. 3, it mentions that Paul & Barnabas did signs and wonders in Iconium. Also from vs. 3, why did God give them this power?*

Look up 2 Cor. 12:12. The ability to do signs, wonders & miracles was a temporary gift given to prove apostolic authority. As more and more scripture was written and circulated and doctrine was taught and understood, these special abilities faded away. God does not do miracles at our insistence. He has given unbelievers witness in nature, in His word, and through the lives of believers. These are the proofs that He expects people to respond to. They are sufficient. Look up Luke 16:27-31 and consider how people have responded to the resurrection of Christ.

Later in Paul's life he no longer had the ability to do the miracles. It was already starting to fade. Notice 2 Tim 4:20 where his friend Trophimus is sick and also Phil. 2:25-27 where Epaphroditus nearly died. Surely if Paul had been able to heal them, he would have. People now have the word of God as a powerful witness to lead them to salvation. The words spoken by men who claim to be speaking for God can be confirmed by comparing their words to Scripture. If it is not clearly confirmed by Scripture we have a clear indication that it is not from God. Scripture is the only confirmation needed. Even if a "miracle" is presented as proof, the words must be supported by Scripture. There are false prophets in the world today who love to lead people astray with lies and trickery.

4. *What were the unbelievers ready to do in vs. 5?*

Do you marvel at how easily and how quickly the popular opinion changed concerning Paul and Barnabas? Consider the power of our words to sway people. Look up I Peter 3:15. We should always be ready to explain to unbelievers why we have peace and hope.

Understand what a great thing God has done in your life and be ready to share it in a gracious and winsome way.

5. *Where did they flee to escape? (vs. 6 & 7)*

Lystra was the home of Lois, Eunice & Timothy (see Acts 16:1 & 2 Tim 1:5) It is very possible that this is when Timothy becomes a believer.

Read vs. 8-20

6. *Compare vs. 8-10 with Acts 3:1-8. What similarities do you notice?*

7. *Who did the Lycaonian people think that Paul and Barnabas were? (vs.11 & 12)*

*Jupiter was the head of the gods. His Roman counterpart was Zeus.
Mercury was the messenger of the gods and a great orator; he had wings on his feet.
Legend said that Jupiter and Mercury had once visited nearby town.*

8. *How did Paul and Barnabas react when the people tried to worship them with a sacrifice? (vs. 13-18)*

Look back to chapter 12:21-24 and compare this to how Herod reacted. Paul and Barnabas were mortified by what was happening. Their lives were spent teaching people to glorify the God of creation and now people were trying to worship them!

9. *What is one indication that God has given to all mankind that He exists? (vs. 17 and also Romans 1:18-20)*

In Romans 1:18, Paul says that men suppress the truth by their wickedness. He then goes on to remind us that He has made Himself plainly known to all people. Everyone has the witness of creation. To those who accept that witness and the fact that there is a Creator, God will send more light and more understanding. Those who teach evolution today give people an alternative to believing the truth about creation. By trying to explain creation away, they are also driving people away from the truth. Our young people are discouraged from thinking about a Creator before they have even had a chance to consider all of the miraculous evidence that surrounds them. Romans 1:20 says that men are without excuse but those who teach and advance the thinking about evolution will surely face a tougher judgment.

10. *Compare vs. 18 and 19. Describe the change of attitude in the people.*

11. *After reading vs. 19 and 20, do you think that God intervened supernaturally for Paul? Explain your answer.*

Look up and consider 2 Cor. 11:21-29 and 2 Cor. 12:9 & 10. Paul lists all of the pain and suffering he had been subjected to in his life, including this stoning. But his conclusion in 2Cor. 12:9 & 10 is that god's power is perfected in our weakness and that physical weakness makes us spiritually strong. Certainly God could have protected Paul from every one of these trials and yet He didn't.

Refer to Hebrews 11:32-40. Notice especially how God viewed His suffering children. He says that the world was not worthy of them. In verse 39 it says that they were commended for their faith, but God allowed the suffering because He had something better planned for them and for us. God allows suffering, but He doesn't take it lightly. He sees, He understands, He keeps a record. He has something better planned and IT WILL COME TO PASS!

Read vs. 21-28

12. *The next city they visit is Derbe. After they preached there, they traced their steps backwards and revisited the cities they had been in. Why did they do that? (vs. 22 and 23)*

It would have been much shorter to leave for Antioch from where they were, but they took the long route home instead for the sake of their ministry to the churches. Paul believed in evangelism, but he also believed in discipleship. The continued growth of those he saw converted was always heavy on his heart. His great desire was that they would grow strong in the Lord. See I Cor. 16:13 and Ephesians 6:10.

13. *The missionaries now return to their commissioning church - Antioch. What did they do when they arrived? (vs. 26-28)*

They had established at least 4 churches on this trip. What a joyous time of reporting and sharing this must have been. Let this be a reminder to us that we need to rejoice with those who have seen people become believers. Whether it's a parent of a five year old or a veteran missionary who is sharing their good news, rejoice and give God the glory.