

ACTS

Chapter 14-15

Chapter 13 starts with the first missionary journey of Paul. After the Holy Spirit confirmed the timing, Paul and Barnabas headed out. Scan over chapter 13 to familiarize yourself with the record of the journey so far. This first missionary endeavor lasted nearly 3 years with Paul and Barnabas traveling both by boat and on foot. We pick up the journey in chapter 14 and 15 as Luke records for us what God has felt it necessary for us to learn. The overarching theme of the book of Acts is learning what an authentic Christian's attitudes and actions are, likewise how an authentic church responds to life. While studying, keep these thoughts in mind and record your insights on the charts included in the study.

Read Acts Chapter 14 and record the main events of the chapter. Consult your map to trace their steps.

Read Acts 14:1-7

1. What city are Paul and Barnabas ministering in?
2. What is the response to their message? (verse 1-2)
3. The "*unbelieving Jews*" in Iconium followed their predictable pattern. They "*stirred up the Gentiles.*" But they did not stop at merely stimulating doubt, they took it a step farther. Describe what they did in verse 2. (Use other translations and dictionaries to define and describe what they did.)

What techniques of "*poisoning their minds*" would they have employed?

4. Verse 3 starts with a "*therefore.*" Based on the opposition of the Jews what is the reaction of Paul and Barnabas?

Is this what you expected?

5. Describe what Paul continued to do here. Pay attention to the adjectives used to describe how Paul preached and what he preached.

Fill in the blanks from verse 3 (NKJV)

"therefore, they stayed there a _____ time, speaking _____ the Lord, _____ was bearing _____ to the _____ of _____. Granting _____ and _____ to be done by _____ hands."

How would you define "boldly":

What does it take to speak boldly?

What does this reveal to you about Paul's relationship with God?

Don't miss who was bearing witness to Jesus. Was it Paul or Jesus bearing witness of Himself?

Notice the order of their ministry. Preaching -- then -- signs. Who did the signs?

What does Mark 16:17-18 confirm.

This verse verifies and validates the purpose of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit grants to us signs and wonders to bear witness of Jesus. All the miracles and gifts of the Spirit serve to point us to the saving work of Jesus. That God chooses man to complete His works boggles my mind. What a privilege to be used of Him.

6. God's word is here called "the word of His grace." What does this phrase mean?

Look up the word grace.

What does grace mean to you, personally?

"Paul and Barnabas preached the word of his grace, because that is the only word by which both Jews and Gentiles can be saved on an equal basis." David Guzik

God's grace transcends all of mankind, is available to all and is for all. It is what makes Christianity unique and fully accessible. Praise God for His undeserving merit.

7. Once again God's Word makes people choose. What happened in Iconium as described in verses 4 and 5?

8. Paul and Barnabas decide it is time to leave Iconium. Where do they travel to and what did they do along the way. (verses 6-7)

Read Acts 14:8-20

1. What happened to a "*certain man,*" while they were in Lystra?

How does one see another man's faith as Paul did?

2. This miracle "*stirred the people.*" What did the people of Lystra do?

Unlike Antioch and Iconium, Lystra was a rural, backwoods town. The further from Antioch you went the more unsophisticated and uneducated were the people. The men of Lystra believed in the Greek pantheon of gods and were extremely superstitious. They were also emotional and easily excited. The Roman poet Ovid told a tall tale about a couple who lived in the region around Lystra. The Greek gods Zeus and Hermes had come to earth disguised as humans. Everywhere they journeyed they were shunned, until they came to the straw hut of two peasants, Philemon and his wife, Bacius. The couple showed them great kindness and hospitality.

Afterwards, the two travelers took the couple to the top of a mountain where they saw the surrounding fields sink into a swamp. Because of the snub the gods wiped out the people of the region and rewarded the couple by transforming their hut into a beautiful temple. The couple were made caretakers of the temple and when they died they were transformed into trees and planted at its entrance.

Now the people of Lystra were into this mythology and didn't want to make the same mistake with Paul and Barnabas. Because of the miracle they assumed that once again the gods had come incognito. Since Paul did most of the talking they assumed that he was Hermes, the messenger god and that Barnabas must be Zeus.

3. Note: up until now when opposition came against Paul and Barnabas they merely continued in their work. Here we find a dramatic change. What did they do and why? (verses 14-18)

What is the significance of “tearing their clothes”?

4. What did Paul call their “gods” in contrast to our God? (verse 15)

Why this term?

In Paul's approach to evangelizing these pagans he attempted to appeal to natural revelations using their own ideas of a god. He did not come quoting the Old Testament as he did with the Jews. He sought to impact them on a level they could understand and relate to. Because of their belief in Zeus, Paul attempted to clarify who was responsible for the seasons and the rain, not Zeus, but the true God who lives in heaven. Paul was not interested in having these people add Jesus to their long list of “gods” but wanted to turn them entirely to the one true God who stands behind all of creation.

5. What happened in verse 18?

6. Meanwhile those whom Paul had angered in Antioch and Iconium arrived. What did they do? (verse 19)

So fickle a crowd! Not much has changed over the centuries. You are the hero one minute and then with the slander and gossip of another you are on the ground with rocks coming at you.

7. However..... what happened? (verse 20)

8. I find it interesting that what the disciples did around Paul is not recorded. Why did they "hang out?" (I think getting far away would have been my response.) Were they praying, crying, ministering to him, protecting, or just staring at him. We are not told exactly what the disciples did. We are told that Paul rose up and went back into the city for a day and then departed. Why go back into the city?

Read Acts 14:21-28

These verses give us the conclusion of the missionary trip.

1. Describe the purpose for the trip home from verses 21-27.

List the 7 duties of Paul and Barnabas.

2. What did Paul exhort the believers to do? (verse 22)

3. They arrive back home... what did they do there?

CHAPTER 15

It has now been 20 years since the power and filling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Gospel which started there in Jerusalem, through the Apostles, has now reached the "rest of the world" including the Gentile nations. Despite being one in the unity of Christ, the Jews still were having a hard time accepting the grace of the message. It was their belief that Christianity could only come through "faith plus Judaism." (These were later called the Judaizers.) Therefore they insisted that all Gentile believers needed to embrace circumcision as a show of "belonging." But, Jesus "plus anything" is not God's plan. This is an age-old problem that exists even today. This issue involved the salvation of those who believed and had to be resolved. But, notice, they limited their focus to issues of intrinsic value -- not the color of the carpet or the length of their hair. This chapter gives us an example of how to deal with differences within the Church.

Read through chapter 15 recording the major highlights.

1. The men who came from Judea had an insistent doctrine. What was it?

2. How did Paul and Barnabas react to this? (verse 2)

3. How did Paul take advantage of the trip from Antioch to Jerusalem? What did they do and what was the result? (verse 3)

The trip to Jerusalem, which is south of Antioch, is always referred to as “going up” because of the elevation of Jerusalem.

4. How are Paul and Barnabas received upon arriving?

5. The issue is restated in verse 5. After much discussion, Peter arises and speaks. Summarize his witness from verses 7-11. (This is the synopsis of his experiences recorded in Acts 11 -- read it, if you need refreshing.)

6. What did Peter learn from the experience in his “trance.” (Acts 10:28)

7. Explain the phrases Peter used in his encapsulation:

“purifying their hearts”:

“Do you test God”:

“Putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples”:

8. The end result (fill in the blanks):

(verse 12) "all the multitude _____ and _____ to Paul and Barnabas."

Read Acts 15:13-31

1. Who now speaks to the council?
Who is he?

2. James uses a tool which is important in any dispute. What was it?

Read Amos 9:11-12 to verify the quote.

3. What was James proposal? Record below:

Peter, Paul, and James joined forces to silence the Judaizers, yet James' goal was not to shut their mouths, but to open their eyes. Yes, the intent of the Gospel is to reconcile us to God, but its other intent is to reconcile us to our fellow man. Jews and gentiles becoming one people in Christ is also a big part of the Gospel. The compromise proposed by James would hopefully accomplish this.

The Commentary by David Guzik says, "it is important for the Gentile believers not to act in a way that would antagonize the Jewish community. The Law of Moses consisted of 613 laws, James eliminates all but four - the practices that were particularly offensive to the Jews. Later in the New Testament, once the Jews have had an opportunity to grow in grace Paul will loose the church from these remaining four. Though they are not bound under the Law of Moses, they were bound under the Law of Love."

4. What is the end result of the meeting? (verses 22-31)

5. What four men are sent back?

6. Read the letter which was sent. How are those Gentiles described:

7. How is the council described:

8. How are Paul and Barnabas described:

9. How did those in Antioch receive the letter?

10. What can we learn from this incident about settling disputes?

Read Acts 15:32-41

This is the start of Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey

1. How were Judas and Silas described and how did they minister to those in Antioch?
2. Describe the disagreement between Barnabas and Paul?
3. How was this contention described?
4. What was the end result?