

Out on the Mission Field, Part IV- Lystra

Text: Acts 14:8-18

Introduction:

[Review of last week's material, and conclude below]

"And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region" (vs. 5-6).

Question #10: Compare verse 3 to this verse. What kind of wisdom and discernment can we take, from these two different actions on the part of Paul and Barnabas?

"And they were preaching the Gospel there" (vs. 7).

Question #11: Discuss the pattern here, which we find in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. How might this encourage us onward, no matter what we face, in our Gospel labors? What should we expect from a positive and a negative standpoint? What keeps us going? [Consider Phil. 1:21]

I. Lystra

"And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, 'Stand up straight on your feet!' And he leaped and walked. Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, 'The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!' And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, 'Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and

gladness.' And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them" (vs. 8-18).

Question #1: What are some immediate observations that we can make, concerning the audience, which Paul is addressing, here in Lystra?

[Apparently, there is no synagogue present. These people have very little, if any, exposure to the God of the Jews. They are utterly pagan, worshiping the Greek, myth gods]

Question #2: How does all of this reflect, in the way, in which, the Apostle addresses them? What can we observe about his approach?

[He does not presume that they have an understanding of the Jewish Scriptures. He quotes no OT prophets, which at this point, would have been weightless to them. He speaks of God, on the basis of general observations that can be made, even among the most pagan nations of the world. He speaks of the "Living" God, who created heaven and earth, provides food and shelter and all enjoyable things...all to which, they can relate. Consider Psalm 19, and how, in some cases, this can present us with a foundation for proclaiming the Gospel, event to the most "Bible Illiterate" people; Romans 1?]

Question #3: How does God give them an ear among this audience?

Question #4: What observations can we make about verses 8-10, concerning Paul and the lame man? What Gospel picture can we see illustrated here?

Question #5: How do the people respond to the miraculous affirmation, which God attaches to the preaching of the Apostle Paul? What caution might this give us, as we find God, exalting our Gospel labors, in any given situation? What is the enemy's method of attack here? (vs. 11-13)

Question #6: Compare this text to Acts 3:1-12. What can we take from Peter's and Paul's (and Barnabas's) reaction to the responses of their respective audiences? (vs. 14-17)

Question #7: How did Paul and Barnabas refer to the idols and religious practices of the people of Lystra? How did they contrast them to the living and true God? Is there a call to repentance given here? How might we apply these things to our own Gospel labors (among the cults; among Orthodox Jews; among Roman Catholics...etc? (vs. 15-17)

Question #8: How did everything turn out, in this situation? Did Paul and Barnabas fail? (vs. 18)