



Study Guide: Acts – Chapter 14

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This study guide provides an educational overview of Acts Chapter 14 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

Acts Chapter 14 continues the narrative of Paul and Barnabas's first missionary journey, highlighting both the expansion of the early church and the opposition it faced. This chapter contributes to the book's flow by illustrating the challenges and triumphs of spreading the gospel in hostile environments. Readers should watch for the interplay between divine power and human response, the perseverance of the apostles amid persecution, and the establishment of new Christian communities.

Context

Acts 14 follows the initial preaching efforts in Iconium and sets the stage for further missionary activity in Lystra and Derbe. The immediate literary context is the continuation of Paul and Barnabas's efforts to spread the gospel beyond Jewish audiences to Gentiles. The historical frame is the early first century Roman Empire, where diverse cultures and religions intersect. Key figures include Paul and Barnabas as central missionaries, local populations responding variably, and hostile opponents who challenge the new faith. The setting moves through cities in the region of Lycaonia, reflecting the geographical spread of Christianity.

Outline

The chapter opens with Paul and Barnabas preaching in Iconium, where they experience both success and division among the people. Following threats, they flee to Lystra, where a miraculous healing leads to a dramatic response from the crowd, mistaking them for gods. Paul and Barnabas correct this misunderstanding and continue to preach about the living God. Opposition intensifies as Paul is stoned and left for dead, yet he survives and continues to minister. The chapter concludes with their journey to Derbe, the establishment of new disciples, and a return trip to strengthen the churches they planted.



Verse-by-Verse Study

Verses 1-3: Paul and Barnabas enter Iconium and preach boldly in the synagogue, resulting in a significant number of both Jews and Gentiles believing. However, opposition arises, leading to a divided city and threats against the apostles, prompting their departure for safety.

Verses 4-7: Despite the threats, Paul and Barnabas remain in Iconium, performing signs and wonders that confirm their message. The division among the people intensifies, and a plot to mistreat and stone them emerges, forcing the apostles to flee to Lystra and Derbe.

Verses 8-10: In Lystra, Paul heals a man crippled from birth, a miracle that captivates the crowd. This healing serves as a powerful testimony to the divine authority working through Paul, attracting widespread attention.

Verses 11-13: The amazed crowd mistakes Paul and Barnabas for gods, calling Barnabas Zeus and Paul Hermes. The apostles respond by vehemently rejecting this idolatry, directing the people's attention to the one true God who created all things.

Verses 14-18: Paul explains God's nature and providence, emphasizing that God has not left humanity without witness. He references the rain and fruitful seasons as evidence of God's goodness, appealing to the people's understanding of divine blessing.

Verses 19-20: The narrative turns dark as opponents from Antioch and Iconium arrive, persuading the crowd to turn against Paul. He is stoned and dragged out of the city, presumed dead, but he miraculously survives and continues his mission.

Verses 21-23: Paul and Barnabas travel to Derbe, preach the gospel, and make many disciples. They then retrace their steps, strengthening and encouraging the new believers, appointing elders, and committing them to God's care through prayer and fasting.

Verses 24-28: The chapter concludes with Paul and Barnabas returning to Antioch in Syria, reporting on their missionary journey and the success of their work. They remain there for a considerable time, teaching and strengthening the church.

Key Themes

One key theme is the tension between divine power and human misunderstanding. The miraculous healing in Lystra reveals God's power, yet the crowd's idolatrous response



shows the challenge of redirecting pagan perceptions toward the true God. Another theme is perseverance amid persecution, as Paul endures stoning and rejection but remains steadfast. The chapter also highlights the importance of church planting and discipleship, with the apostles intentionally strengthening new believers and appointing leaders. Lastly, the sovereignty of God in guiding the mission is evident throughout, underscoring that despite opposition, the gospel advances according to divine purpose.

Cross-References

Paul's healing of the crippled man in Lystra recalls Jesus' healing miracles, such as in Luke 13:11-13, emphasizing continuity in divine power. The crowd's reaction parallels the episode in Exodus 32, where the Israelites worship a golden calf, highlighting the persistent challenge of idolatry. The apostles' appointment of elders aligns with instructions in Titus 1:5, showing early church order. Paul's endurance of suffering echoes 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, where he recounts hardships for the gospel. Finally, the emphasis on God's providence in verses 17-18 connects with Romans 1:20, which speaks of God's invisible qualities being evident in creation.

Application

Modern disciples can learn from Paul and Barnabas's example of courage and persistence in the face of opposition. Their willingness to preach boldly, even when threatened, challenges believers to trust God's protection and guidance. The episode in Lystra invites reflection on how to respond when good deeds are misunderstood or misrepresented, encouraging humility and clear communication about God's nature. The intentional strengthening of new believers reminds the church today of the importance of discipleship and leadership development. Finally, recognizing God's providential care in all circumstances can foster faith and hope amid uncertainty and difficulty.

Summary

Acts 14 narrates the dynamic expansion of the early church through Paul and Barnabas's missionary efforts, marked by miraculous signs, enthusiastic responses, and severe opposition. The chapter reveals the challenges of proclaiming the gospel in a pagan context, the apostles' steadfastness amid persecution, and their commitment to nurturing new communities of faith. Through divine empowerment and human perseverance, the gospel advances, setting a pattern for mission and discipleship that continues to inspire believers today.

