**Acts 14:1-18 04/21/24**

**“A Tale of Two Cities”**

**Map** – Explain what is happening. Explain “Two Cities” Reference

Iconium vs. Lystra – Two examples of erroneous ways people respond to Christ

Before we look at today’s passage, let’s revisit last week.

**SLIDE 2**

Recap/Summarize what happened in Acts 13:44-53

(Paul at Pisidian Antioch the week after his first recorded sermon)

*“On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.****45****But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.****46****Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.****47****For so the Lord has commanded us:*

*‘I have set you as a light to the Gentiles,  
That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.’ ”*

***48****Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.*

***49****And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.****50****But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.****51****But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium.****52****And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*

\* The Jews are angry before Paul even starts – They are envious

\* Paul confronts them directly – “This good news has been offered to you first, but you have rejected it! Therefore, you have judged yourselves! (God does not need to judge us, we stand in judgment as a result of our rejection of Him).

\* Paul shocks them by telling them he is turning to the Gentiles.

\* The Gentiles glorify the word of the Lord (This is the message that salvation through the sacrificial death, burial and resurrection of Jesus is offered to all)

\* As many as were appointed to eternal life believed (Explain)

\* The word of the Lord was spread throughout the region (This will ALWAYS create tension).

\* Persecution (Satanic opposition) came upon them, but they moved on with joyful hearts.

**SLIDE 3**

**Points of Emphasis/Application from Acts 13:44-53**

**1. The Gospel Message of Jesus Christ will always create tension.**

Matthew 10:21-22 “Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. 22 And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.”

**2. There will always be those who respond to the gospel.**

Romans 8:29-30 “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

**3. You can rely on the Holy Spirit.**

John 14:16-17 “I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”

**4. There is great joy in persecution – There is a special blessing for those who are persecuted.**

Matthew 5:11-12 “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Turn to...

**Acts 14:1-18 “A Tale of Two Cities”**

**Introduction:**

Scripture Passage – Read along with me.

*“Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed.****2****But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren.****3****Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.*

***4****But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles.****5****And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them,****6****they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region.****7****And they were preaching the gospel there.*

***8****And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother’s womb, who had never walked.****9****This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed,****10****said with a loud voice, “Stand up straight on your feet!” And he leaped and walked.****11****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!”****12****And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.****13****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.”*

***14****But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out****15****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,****16****who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways.****17****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.”****18****And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them.”*

**Commentary:**

Having come to Iconium, Paul speaks at the synagogue first (strategy = big city + familiar place)

Many believe, and many oppose.

Remember, Satan speaks through people.

Paul and Barnabas stay, speaking boldly IN THE LORD. The Lord bore witness (through the Spirit) to His word using signs and wonders. Again, signs and wonders ALWAYS serve the same purpose – to bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The city was divided. Christ came to divide. His purpose is to reconcile people to Him. Most will reject the truth, and this causes deep division.

A plot to kill Paul and Barnabas is hatched, and they escaped to Lystra and Derbe. Their time had not yet come – there was still work to do (Preaching).

Paul (through the witnessing Spirit) heals a crippled man in Lystra, and the people instantly begin worshiping him and Barnabas , as though they are gods.

At first Paul and Barnabas arre unaware this was happening, since the people were speaking the Lycaonian language, but when they realize sacrifices are to be made to them, they put a stop to it.

They appealed to the people in the name of the living God.

Explain why – Meeting people where they are. These were Pagans.

Pagans vs. Living God believers.

Everyone brings a worldview or unique perspective to an interaction.

**Differences between cities:**

Iconium – a heavy Jewish presence (monotheistic, waiting for Messiah, familiar with scripture and history)

Lystra – Totally Pagan (many gods, continuity of being, mystical, quick to attribute anything out of the ordinary to any kind of mystical perversion0

Both cities rejected the truth in their own fashion:

Iconium: We know the truth already. We don’t need this. Anger (who are you to tell US?)

Lystra: Wow! You guys are awesome. We will worship you, even though we see you are men. We are drawn to the mysticism of what you did.

**SLIDE 4**

There are only two possible reactions to the gospel message.

1. Belief – Acts 13:48 – “*Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”*

This belief is not derived from superior intellect or some kind of inner moral compass. There is nothing about it that we can take credit for. We are not “better people” because we have believed. The Holy Spirit has borne witness to the Truth. We can, however, react in a second way.

2. Rejection – Rejection of the gospel of Jesus Christ manifests itself in many ways. All of these possible reasons for rejecting the gospel are explained by the Apostle Paul’s revelation that tells us:

Romans 1:18-23 – **“***For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,****19****because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.****20****For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,****21****because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.****22****Professing to be wise, they became fools,****23****and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”*

Anger: We may think we know it all and that we don’t need what’s being offered. Many have rejected the reality of God completely, or at least they tell themselves God doesn’t exist.

Perversion/Mysticism: The things of God can be attributed to mankind, aliens, or “the universe.” Anything but Jesus Christ. This is Pagan. “Many ways to heaven.”

Human Secularism = Humanism = Satanism “I am supreme.” I am the captain of my own ship. This is MY life to do with as I wish.

When you talk about Jesus, you may get a variety of responses, from rage to indifference.

We should never be surprised when sinners act like sinners.

We should be humbled and overwhelmed by the fact that God overtook us “While we were yet sinners.”

Finally, Note that Paul begins at the beginning with this crowd (who the true, living God is, the truth about our origins, and the GENERAL grace He has poured out on us all) .

Paul deflects the attention from himself to the ONE LIVING GOD.

**Application Points: 1 Do and 3 Don’ts**

**1. Continually seek discernment from the Holy Spirit**

(within and without) Hebrews 4:13 – “*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*”

**2. Do not elevate yourself Jesus**

Colossians 1:16-17

*“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.****17****And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”*

**3. Do not allow others to elevate you above Jesus**

Romans 12:3 – ***“****For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”*

**4. Do not elevate ANYONE over the Lord Jesus Christ**

John 8:58 – *“Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”*

Bottom Line: How am I responding to Jesus? What view of Jesus and God does my belief system/attitude/speech indicate?