

Postmodern Pagans

Acts 14.8-28

ACTS OF THE EXALTED JESUS IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT  
THROUGH HIS APOSTOLIC CHURCH

1.8 - BOTH a COMMAND and PROPHECY > HE Did IT! Through CHURCH

**ACTS – Whole Church taking Whole Gospel to the Whole World!**

WHAT is YOUR PLACE in the WHOLE Church's WORK of GLOBAL Mission?

Theology of Missions > Hellenistic Jew named Stephen

Trailblazer of Missions > Philip, brings Samaritans and Ethiopians

Trophy of Missions > Cornelius, Roman Centurion, Gentile Believer

Theologian of Missions > Paul: Pharisee, Persecutor, Preacher, Apostle

Treasures for Mission > Church in Antioch GAVE their BEST to GO OUT

Travels in Mission > Antioch Church sends Paul and Barnabas OUT

Today's TEXT – END of 1<sup>st</sup> M Trip – Antioch, Cyprus, Turkey (Asia), Antioch

PAGANS in Remote 1<sup>st</sup> C Village: LYSTRA // 21<sup>st</sup> C POSTMODERNS

1. Misunderstandings in Preaching – *Word and Deed*

The apostles did not go into these cities to do miracles, and then preach. Rather it was the other way around: They went to preach; then sometimes there were healings.

James Boice

Already seen – NT Miracles SPONTANEOUS, NEVER SCHEDULED

WHATEVER Circumstances > Paul FOCUSED on PREACHING CHRIST

STRATEGY in Most Cities – BEGIN in SYNAGOGUE > No Synagogue??

v. 19 Then some *Jews came from Antioch* and Iconium and won the crowd over.

Throughout Acts > GOSPEL Causes TROUBLE and MISUNDERSTANDING  
 ABSOLUTE CLAIM > ONLY Jesus SAVES > ALL other Ways are WRONG!  
 Parallel to Acts 3 / Lame from BIRTH, Looks DIRECTLY at Apostle, Healed  
 REACTION of PAGAN, SUPERSTITIOUS, CROWD is VERY DIFFERENT

### a. Language

v. 11 the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language...

MOST LIKELY PAUL DID NOT SPEAK THIS LANGUAGE

THOUGHT THEY WERE EXCITED ABOUT POWER OF TRUE GOD

REACTION – for a Few Minutes thought ‘Oh, we must have come on Feast Day!

Thought were PRAISING God – NOT PROCLAIMING they WERE GODS

6,500 LANGUAGES IN WORLD - About 1,000 Whole BIBLE / 2000 Portions

For these to HEAR God’s VOICE – Languages Learned – Scripture Translated

ALL of US STORIES to TELL about the CONFUSION/COMEDY of Languages

1983 Learning LUGBARA in N.W. Uganda – Mentors English Couple – 47 years

Worked on LANGUAGE 25 YEARS - TRANSLATED BIBLE - LUGBARA

"FU the chickens" > One tone "take care of" / other tone "kill"

CAME HOME TO FIND CHICKENS IN THE FREEZER

Even with same LANGUAGE > Understanding BARRIER w/ NON-CHRISTIANS

SIN - REDEMPTION - BORN AGAIN - JESUS – Every Religion has IDEA

Not Everyone can SPEAK CHRISTIANEZE – Most PEOPLE do NOT WANT To!

May our WORDS about Jesus be CLEAR – WINSOME – and INTERESTING!

b. World-View - way a person Perceives Reality / Looks at Life

v. 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker.

Jews: GOD HOLY, TRANSCENDENT vs. Gk. gods Came down to fool people  
GREEK RELIGION - ZEUS, chief god / HERMES - messenger god

Barnabas = ZEUS – OLDER? More DIGNIFIED? / HERMES = Speaker/PAUL

The crowd's superstitious even fanatical behavior is hard to comprehend, but some local background throws light on it. About fifty years previously the Latin poet Ovid had narrated in his Matamorphses an ancient local legend. The supreme god Jupiter (Zeus to the Greeks) and his son Mercury (Hermes) once visited the hill country of Phrygia, disguised as mortal men. In their incognito they sought hospitality but were rebuffed, a thousand times. At last, however, they were offered lodging in a tiny cottage, thatched with straw and reeds from the marsh. Here lived an elderly peasant couple called Philemon and Baucis, who entertained them out of their poverty. Later the gods rewarded them, but destroyed by flood the homes which would not take them in. It is reasonable to suppose both that the Lystran people knew this story about their neighborhood and that, if the gods were to revisit their district, they were anxious not to suffer the same fate as the inhospitable Phrygians.

John Stott

Might THINK we are CONNECTING but Really are CONFUSING Someone

What we HOPE is PROFESSION of CHRIST

May REALLY BE act of POLITENESS act of their CULTURE

c. Religious Structure - RELIGIOUS HIERARCHY - "priest of Zeus"

v. 13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

Zeus was the most widely worshipped God in Galatia...(and) was often linked with the other gods. In the territory of Lystra there are carvings and inscriptions which show Zeus accompanied by Hermes.  
G. Walter Hansen

Who Holds the REAL POWER?? FORMAL - ELECTED OFFICIALS  
INFORMAL - ONE WHO KNOWS THE MOST GOSSIP - MOST FEARED  
KOREAN VILLAGE - MANY EVANGELISTIC VISITS - NO SUCCESS  
MET ELECTED OFFICIALS - RELIGIOUS LEADERS - GOT NO WHERE  
LEARNED VILLAGE OPINION LEADER WAS OLD CRIPPLED WOMAN  
HER CONVERSION - OPENED UP ENTIRE VILLAGE TO CHRIST

#### d. Cultural Symbols

v. 14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes  
JEWISH SIGN OF GRIEF AND ANGUISH - ruined a good garment!!

SYMBOLS OF THE CHURCH - GOOD BUT NEED EXPLANATION  
GREATEST BARRIER to GOSPEL - not language, worldview, religion, culture

#### e. Human Heart

vs. 18,19 Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them. Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.

JEWS now SHOW UP in LYSTRA – JOIN Some LOCAL JEWS Already There?

One MINUTE GODS to be WORSHIPPED - NEXT CRIMINALS to be SLAIN

"heart of the problem is problem of heart"

Hendrik Krabbendam

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?  
Jeremiah 17:9

PEOPLE ARE AMAZINGLY FICKLE - OPINIONS CHANGE LIKE WIND

Captain James Cook – First WHITE to Hawaii (Union Jack in HAWAIIAN Flag ) –

1<sup>st</sup> VISIT 1778–Worshipped as a god / 2<sup>nd</sup> Visit 1779 Killed as Imposter!

FAITHFULNESS to JESUS Not WIN YOU any POPULARITY CONTESTS

GOD Working in LYSTRA – Timothy’s Home Town – Saved, Sent on 2<sup>nd</sup> Journey

GOD Works thru WORD and SPIRIT to GIVE NEW HEARTS to REPENTANT

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. Ezekiel 36:26

## 2. Message to Pagans – *Known to Unknown*

EARLY Sermons in Acts – BELIEVERS in YAHWEH – Here PAGAN Gentiles

Sermons to Jews: Based on COVENANT / to Gentiles: Based on CREATION

ABSTRACT- Paul’s ONLY RECORDED Message to ILLITERATE PAGANS

a. God the Creator - God’s CREATION gives WORDLESS WITNESS to God

v. 15 ...turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.

BEGIN at BEGINNING - CREATION, PROVIDENCE - KNOWN to Unknown

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Psalm 19.1

Paul and Barnabas pointed to God’s self-disclosure through the world he created and sustains, which the Lystrans observed every day. Dennis Johnson

God CREATED ALL PEOPLE – Jew and Gentile – Able to REASON and THINK

v. 15 "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you."

## b. God the Provider

v. 17 Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."

ALL that PEOPLE NEED and ULTIMATELY DESIRE – ONLY Found IN GOD  
JOY > GOD'S GREAT GIFT - NOT from SUBSTANCES – SEX – SELF Attained

These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.  
Psalm 104.27-30

c. God the Judge v. 16 In the past, he let all nations go their own way.

TWO ERAS of God's RELATIONS to GENTILE NATIONS 'in the past...'

In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.  
Acts 17.30,31

d. God the Savior v. 15 We are bringing you good news...

Luke's SYNOPSIS of Paul's Sermon in LYSTRA > emphasis UNIQUENESS  
PERHAPS Interrupted by STONE Throwing MOB

Paul's PURPOSE in Ministry was to PREACH CHRIST and His CROSS

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.  
1 Corinthians 2.2

THIS is the EVANGEL – GOOD NEWS – of Life, Salvation, Forgiveness, Heaven

We need to learn from Paul's flexibility. We have no liberty to edit the heart of the good news of Jesus Christ. Nor is there ever any need to do so. But we have to

begin where people are, to find a point of contact with them. With secularized people today this might be what constitutes authentic humanness, the universal quest for transcendence, the hunger for love and community, the search for freedom, or the longing for personal significance. Wherever we begin, however, we shall end with Jesus Christ, who is Himself the good news, and who alone can fulfill all human aspirations.

John Stott

### 3. Ministry of Paul and Barnabas – Evangelism and Discipleship

#### a. Example

vs. 19,20 They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

DERBE – EASTERN Most Extremity of Paul’s MISSION TOUR

60 Mile TRUDGE to Derbe THE NEXT DAY!

Luke makes it clear that the road his heroes are traveling the way of the cross.

C.K. Barrett

We’ll NEVER MEASURE UP to Paul – but he is MODEL for us to FOLLOW

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. 1 Corinthians 11.1

LYSTRA Citizens OFFENDED by Paul & Barnabas REFUSAL of their Worship

When a person is stoned until he becomes unconscious and is then dragged out of the city, perhaps deeper than the physical pain is the mental anguish and the pain of utter humiliation.

Ajith Fernando

SEEN SUFFERING and ATTACK against Church/Believers in SRI LANKA

Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned... I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know--God knows.

2 Corinthians 11.25, 12.1,2

NOT Clear if RESURRECTED or RESCICITATED in Lystra: Great Work of God REALLY DIED? Or Just LOOKED Really DEAD? – Either Way, MIRACLE!

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings - what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted  
2 Timothy 3:10-13

b. Evangelized - PRESSED ON in HARD Work of Evangelism

v. 21 They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples.

World HATES God & Gospel > Men LOVE Darkness more than LIGHT

For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.  
Philippians 3.18

ANY Sympathy PEOPLE have for GOSPEL is WORK of HOLY SPIRIT in Them  
PAUL FELT Intense HATRED for Gospel in Lystra // like HE DID to STEPHEN  
Many Times BEGIN WELL in Evangelism – Some SAVED – Warm, Welcoming!  
GREAT to be with NEW, ENTHUSIASTIC, APPRECIATIVE Believers  
MORE AFFIRMING of your Efforts than ANTAGONISTIC UNBELIEVERS

v. 20 he got up and went back into the city

MUST NOT be FULLY CONSUMED by Caring for NEW CONVERTS  
MANY Converts >> MANY, MANY, MORE who have NOT YET BELIEVED!  
RETRACED STEPS Visiting DANGEROUS CITIES > Meet CHURCHES  
Not about their DIGNITY – SAFETY – REPUTATION >> WISDOM  
MAIN GOAL is ADVANCEMENT of CHURCH in NEW PLACES



### c. Encouraged God directs Believers even THROUGH their SUFFERINGS

vs. 21,22 Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

Barnabas = Son of Encouragement / Church grew in Atmosphere of LOVE & JOY

Barnabas had the biggest heart in the early church. William Barclay

PATTERN in ANTIOCH: The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. Acts 11:21

a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Acts 11:24

So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. Acts 11:26

Evangelist BILL GLASS – Preaching to over 1000 PRISONERS

“How many had someone say ‘*You’re so bad, someday you’ll end up in prison!*’”

Nearly EVERY HAND went UP! – PARENTS > Self-FULFILLING PROPHECY

Encouragement to Church > God is with You > CHURCH BELONGS to God

MEN will Leave > But GOD Stays

### d. Elders Appointed TEAM Ministry > Left them w/ BIBLE & BOARD Elders

v. 23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

This is FIRST Reference to ELDERS OUTSIDE of Jerusalem

NEVER Find CHURCH in NT Led by ONE MAN – Always a TEAM of ELDERS

TEAM Likely: Part-time / Full-time – Men / Women – Paid / Volunteer

I do not know how ‘elderly’ these elders were, but I know they had not been Christians very long, since the gospel itself had not been known to them very long. Was this any way to establish a church? Most Presbyterians wouldn’t do it that way. We want to be slow, careful, dull, and (maybe) ineffective. But Paul had faith in what God was doing, and if there were to be churches in these cities, they obviously needed sound organization. So Paul appointed elders, more than one, and the churches thrived.

James Boice

EXAMPLE of HOME Church in ANTIOCH that SENT them OUT on Mission

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.

Acts 13.1

PRIMARY Purpose of CHURCH > MAKE KNOWN Word of God to WORLD  
 ...God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

1 Timothy 3.15

PRIME Necessity of ELDERS to PRACTICE and PREACH Word of GOD

Very THANKFUL > GO for MONTH of Mission: ZGC Elders, Admin, Leaders

LIGHTS ON – BILLS Paid – People Faithfully WORSHIPPING & Serving Jesus

Nothing can alter or disguise the fact that St. Paul did leave behind him at his first visit complete Churches.

Roland Allen, 1912

The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. Titus 1.5

e. Ended Well > ALONG the Way – WONDERED IF they’d GET HOME

vs. 24-26 After going through Phisidia, they came into Pamphylia, and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed.

LOOKING BACK > CLEARER Evidence of God’s Gracious Guidance

Joseph to his brothers: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” Genesis 50.20

By God’s GRACE – FINISHED Well – MARK Quit – RAN HOME in FEAR  
PAUL & BARNABAS – TOUGHED it OUT to GOD-APPOINTED Conclusion

I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.  
Acts 20.24

OVER 30 yrs ago > MY Life Verse – HOPING God Enables Me to Fulfill

LAST Chapter Paul Wrote – SHORTLY Before Executed for PREACHING Gospel

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

2 Timothy 4.7

VICTORY Not those who START, BUT those who FINISH, Finish WELL

GRACE Came FROM God > GLORY goes TO GOD

f. Educated the Church

v. 27 On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

NATURAL that Church that SENT THEM receives REPORT of their WORK

Met ANGLICAN Bishop of KAMPALA – Last saw 20 yrs ago – Both Theol Ed.

Walked into office at All Saint’s Cathedral – “TELL ME THE STORIES!”

“Let me hear what God is DOING in YOUR LIFE --- in BEIJING!”

NO Cathedral in Antioch – PROBABLY Bishops – EAGER, Interested Church

Paul LOVED to TELL the Stories of how GOD OPENED DOORS for GOSPEL

I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me  
2 Corinthians 2.12

Pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Colossians 4.3

CHAINS will NOT CLOSE DOORS – IF the SOVEREIGN Lord wants to OPEN a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.  
1 Corinthians 16.9

CONVENTIONAL Wisdom – MANY OPPONENTS = CLOSED DOOR!

SENDING Churches and those SENT Need REMINDERS > GOD opens DOORS  
ADVERSITY can be the DOOR of OPPORTUNITY for the MESSAGE of Christ  
g. Enriched v. 28 And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

DISCIPLE – 28 X's in Acts – FAVORITE word for Believers 'FOLLOWER'

John describes way MISSION WORKERS were Sent OUT by Church in Ephesus

They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.  
3 John 6

Hope that SOME OF YOU have SUCH CHURCHES Behind You – Sent Like God  
Approx ONE YEAR of Missionary SERVICE – Now REST for WINTER

Missionaries are not to be sent, gone, and forgotten: a line of communication is to remain so that both communities can be connected and blessed by seeing how God is working and binding them together.  
Darrell Bock

Sometimes MOST SPIRITUAL thing you can DO is TAKE A LONG NAP!

NOTICED Some of YOU doing that during THIS SERMON!

After ELISHA'S Great VICTORY on Mt. CARMEL – Tired & Discouraged

6 Nights on Voice of Life – CALL IN – Basked in Words of ENCOURAGEMENT

TESTIMONIES of What God had Done through our Mission

## One Pastor – Became Believer thru Mission to his Secondary School, Now Pastor

### Acts 14:8-28

8 In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. 9 He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed 10 and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. 11 When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. 13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them. 14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: 15 "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. 16 In the past, he let all nations go their own way. 17 Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." 18 Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them. 19 Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. 20 But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe. 21 They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, 22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. 23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. 24 After going through Phisidia, they came into Pamphylia, 25 and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. 26 From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. 27 On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.