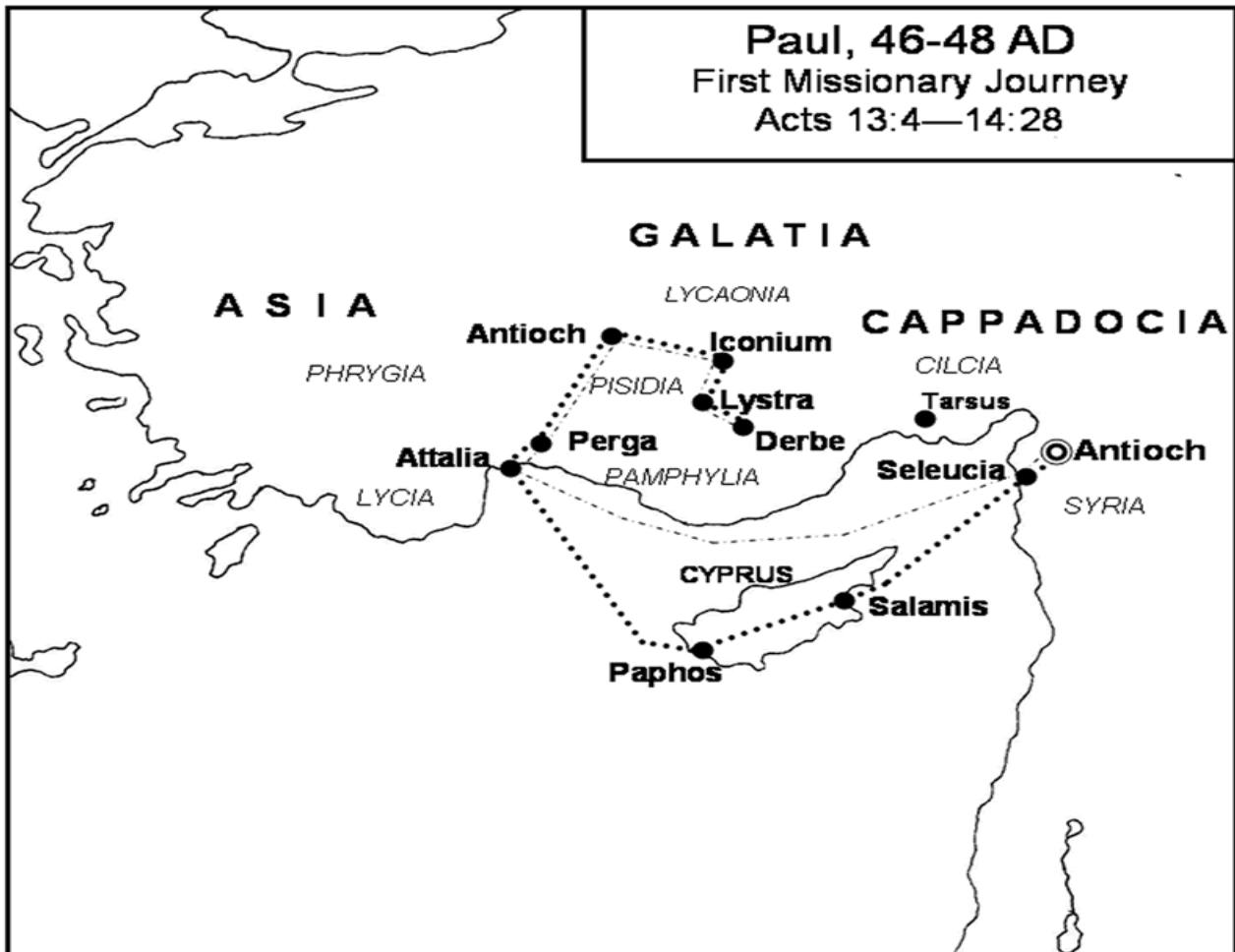


THE LIVING GOD!
ACTS CH14:8-23

ILLUSTRATION

What makes a Church, a Church? The Preaching of God's Word, the administering of the sacraments, both the Lord's Supper and Baptism, and Church Discipline. Along with these three distinct marks, some would add a fourth, Church Planting!



Google Images - (Missionary Map Project | Paul's First Missionary Journey)

AN ATTEMPT TO WORSHIP! V8-13

“The healing of the man who was lame parallels the ministry of Peter and John in the Temple forecourt (Ch3:1-10; cf. Jesus in Luke Ch5:18-26), though subsequent events show a different outcome. This is part of a larger sequence of parallels between Peter and Paul, by which Luke demonstrates the authority and significance of Paul and seeks to convince his readers that ‘God works out the divine plan in regular and orderly patterns’.

For the first time in Acts, Paul and Barnabas encounter outright heathenism and adapt their preaching accordingly. With elaborate detail, Luke presents the seriousness of the man's situation 'a certain man used to sit in Lystra, powerless in his feet, lame from his mothers womb, who had never walked.' This poor man listened to Paul as he was speaking – presumably in Greek – in some public place. Like Peter and John, Paul looked directly at him, intending to help him. However, the novel element in this narrative is the statement that Paul saw he had faith to be healed. The Greek verb is rightly translated “healed” rather than “saved”. Such faith had possibly been aroused by the preaching of

the Gospel, but it was not yet a seeking for salvation in the sense of forgiveness, eternal life, and entrance into the kingdom of God.

The command “stand upright on your feet” challenged the lame man to express his faith by doing what seemed impossible for him. Complete healing followed immediately; the man jumped up and began to walk. The description of the man as jumping provides another verbal link with Ch3:8. The healing in both contexts results in a similar problem, although one setting is Jewish and the other pagan; “there is a tendency to confuse the power that heals with the healer himself, and the healer acts immediately to set the record straight” (Cited in David G. Peterson, Commentary on Acts, pg 407).

The miracle of the healing once again testifies to the authentic Word that Paul was preaching! According to Dale Ralph Davis writing concerning Joshua the object of the text “is to impress us with the adequacy of God, to grill into us that God is not merely a three letter word of our Christian jargon, not merely the honorary leader of our club, but is the living God who works and intervenes and comes and saves and rescues and counsels his people in all their perplexities” (Cited in Dale Ralph Davis, Commentary on Joshua). Although Pastor Davis writes the above words in relation to Joshua Ch3, what he is saying can also be used here in Acts. We are meant to see through this miracle, the continuing words and work of Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit by the apostles!

AN ATTEMPT TO SAVE! V14-18

Why Zeus and Hermes?

“A significant miracle, associated with the preaching of the Gospel, was the immediate reason for identifying Barnabas with Zeus, the supreme god of the Greek pantheon, and Paul with Hermes because he was the chief speaker. Since the people were shouting in the Lycaonian language, the missionaries were at first unaware of the honour that was being paid to them. Two inscriptions discovered near Lystra, dating from the 3rd century A.D., indicate that Zeus and Hermes were worshipped in the region at that later time.

However, the Latin poet Ovid (43 B.C – A.D. 17) had earlier recorded the legend of a visit by the supreme god Jupiter (Zeus to the Greeks) and his son Mercury (Hermes) to “the Phrygian hill country” disguised as mortals seeking lodging. According to the legend, an elderly couple welcomed the gods, with the result that their house was transformed into a temple and they were made priests. The gods then destroyed the houses of those who did not receive them. The crowd, apparently moved by this legend, assumed that the gods had returned in human form and needed to be honoured appropriately this time” (Cited In Dale Ralph Davis, Commentary on Joshua, pg 408)!

Paul and Barnabas are so appalled by the response of those in Lystra that they tear their clothing, a clear sign of how God is being blasphemed against and a second recording of Paul's sermon is made by Luke!

Paul brilliantly models how to preach to “heathens” or “pagans” by engaging with them in a way that they can fully grasp! Using nature, as the people of Lystra were polytheists (meaning believing in many gods!)! Used to honouring all kinds of false gods connected with rain, harvest, food etc! Paul skilfully introduces them to the real living God of nature, v15, “you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them.” Unfortunately, this had very little affect on them!!!!

Barnabas - Ch4:36 – His name means – son of encouragement, a Levite, a native of Cyprus! Ch4:37 – He sold a field and laid the money at the feet of the apostles! Ch9:27 – Stuck up for Paul in front of the early Church! (Galatians Ch1:18) Ch11:24 – A good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith! Ch11:25-26 – Found Paul and took him to Antioch! Ch13:1-6 – Sent out by the Antioch Church! Ch13:46 – Speaking boldly with Paul! Ch14:4+14 – He has apostolic gifting! Ch15:36-39 – Had a huge disagreement with the apostle Paul over John Mark! Colossians Ch4:10 – A cousin of John Mark! 1st Corinthians Ch9:6 – Like Paul, never took the rights of an apostle! Galatians Ch2:9-14 – Gentile missionary work, but easily misled! Whenever the apostle Paul mentions Barnabas, it is always with words of sympathy and respect!

Was Barnabas an apostle? John Stott says “On the one hand there were the apostles of Christ, personally appointed by him to be witnesses of the resurrection, who included the twelve, Paul and probably James (Acts Ch1:21; 1st Cor Ch9:1; 1st Cor Ch15:7-9; Acts Ch10:41). There is no evidence that Barnabas belonged to this group. On the other hand, there were the apostles of the churches (2nd Cor Ch8:23) sent out by a Church or Churches on particular missions, as Epaphroditus was an apostle or messenger of the Philippian Church. So too Paul and Barnabas were both apostles of the Church of Syrian Antioch, sent out by them, whereas only Paul was also an apostle of Christ” (Cited in John Stott, Commentary on Acts, page 229). So, I would like to suggest that Barnabas was not an eye-witness to the resurrection of Christ, and therefore not an apostle of Christ.

AN ATTEMPT TO MURDER! V19-23

Paul and suffering in Acts:

- *Acts Ch13:45 Antioch – Filled with jealousy and talking abusively about what Paul!*
- *Acts Ch13:50 Antioch – Stirred up persecution for Paul and drove then out!*
- *Acts Ch14:5 Iconium – Plot afoot to ill-treat Paul!*
- *Acts Ch14:19 Lystra – They stoned Paul!*
- *Acts Ch16:22 Philippi – Paul was stripped and beaten!*
- *Acts Ch16:23 Philippi – Paul was severely flogged!*

The suffering that Paul had gone through up until now, had been pretty minor, this time the persecution develops into full blown attempted murder, with the crowd being influenced by the Jews who have travelled around 120 miles, dragging him outside the city and stone him! They think Paul is dead!!

What a bloke Paul is, by the grace of God, after being surrounded by the disciples, who were no doubt praying for him, he gets back up from the stoning, bravely goes back into the lynch mobbing city, and stays a further night! He then travels around 60 miles, no doubt battered and bruised to Derbe and preaches the Gospel, which results in many being saved!

V21 is mind blowing!

V22 - In light of Paul and Barnabas planting Churches in *Antioch Ch13:13-52, Iconium Ch14:1-7, Lystra Ch14:8-19a and Derbe Ch14:19b-23, he now travels back through these areas to do 3 things:*

1. *To encourage them to continue in the faith!*
2. *To appoint Church Elders!*
3. *To commit them to God (just like Paul + Barnabas in Ch13:1-3)!*

APPLICATION

There was no known synagogue in Lystra at the time of Paul's arrival, so what was Paul's strategy?

Are there any similarities with the healing here Ch14:8-13 and in Ch 3:1-10? If so what are they?

How did Paul and Barnabas strengthen the Churches that they had planted in Antioch Ch13:13-52, Iconium Ch14:1-7, Lystra Ch14:8-19a and Derbe Ch14:19b-23?

So, what makes a Church, Church?