

Paul and Barnabas have left Antioch in Pisidia where '*... almost the whole city (came) together to hear the word of God.*' Many were saved, Gentiles and Jews alike: '*... and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed,*' but the Jewish leaders, filled with envy and jealousy at the huge crowds, coming and responding, stirred up those who'd rejected God's offer of forgiveness and Eternal Life to come against God's Servants; Paul said: '*It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles,*' and, so, '*they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.*' Acts 13:51

**Acts 14:1:** '*And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.*'

Once again, many have come to Faith unto Salvation ... maybe this city will be different...

**Verse 2:** '*But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.*'

'... made their minds evil affected...' Their minds were acted upon, affected by an evil influence. What was it about the '*unbelieving Jews*' in all these different places that they could have such a seemingly supernatural influence upon the minds of these unbelieving Gentiles!? Had they carried something with them up into these Gentile areas or is there something which makes them more susceptible to something up in these Gentile areas? And could it be a contributing factor in their ongoing supernatural blindness to, and hatred toward, their True Messiah?

The Israelites spent 400 years in slavery to Egypt where they were exposed to the worship of the false gods of Egypt: Horus, Osiris and Set; many began to worship those false gods.

When Moses led them out of Egypt they spent 40 years in the wilderness being hardened into an army which would then be capable, with God's power, to drive out many of the pagan tribes before them but then, for 400 years, they were led by Judges: Gideon, Samson, Deborah, etc., while all the time going back and forth between seeking God and falling back into worshipping the evil false gods of the peoples around them. Then, under kings, for the next thousand years, they worshiped the evil false gods such as, Baal, Asherah, Dagon, Chemosh and Molech to whom they sacrificed their children while they adopted and practiced the hideous evil of the peoples around them.

When they were conquered and spread out into the Greek areas, many began to worship the false gods of Greece: Zeus, Poseidon, Hermes, Pluto, Saturn, etc.

When the Roman Empire conquered Greece, many began to worship the false gods of Rome: Jupiter, Neptune, Mars, Mercury, Venus, etc.

In Isaiah 14: when Lucifer rebelled, he said '*I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will be like the Most High.*' This tells us that Lucifer had a throne; God had given him some area of His creation over which to rule; many believe that it was our solar system which was Lucifer's kingdom - see the names of the false gods above: Venus, Mercury, Gaia, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto...

Remember, the word tells us that we, his bride, will rule and reign with Him forever... Is it too much of a stretch to believe that He had blessed some of His angels in the same way before our creation?

All of these false gods, worshiped by peoples all around the world... I don't believe they are just made up out of someone's imagination; I believe common sense would dictate that just as in Genesis 6 when fallen Angels came down to humans, the same thing has happened many times all around the world as fallen Angels present themselves as gods, demanding worship.\*

Here's my point, finally: what if the motivating force in so many Jews to hate Jesus Christ and to hate His prophets, His bride and body, what if it's been the result of an overwhelming demonization of generations of Israelites... Surely Satan would have sought to demonically overwhelm Israel and all its people as well as other peoples around the World... How else to explain **such demonic hatred** of all things pertaining to the Lord Jesus Christ... how!?

I believe there has to be a superhuman cause of the Jews' and the World's hatred of the Lord Jesus Christ and this is, I believe, the major aspect of that cause.

**Verse 3:** *'Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.'*

In spite of great persecution and also because of it, Paul and Barnabas stayed, in Iconium, a long time preaching the gospel and performing many signs and wonders through the power of the holy Spirit.

**Verse 4:** *'But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them, they were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about: And there they preached the gospel.'*

Again, it's the Jews causing division in the entire city pulling Gentiles away from the hope of Salvation because of demonic inspiration.

Notice: Luke says: *the Apostles*, plural: this seems to indicate that Luke is saying, Barnabas was also an Apostle because we certainly don't see any of the original 11 or Matthew here in Iconium...

So once again, Jews and Gentiles and the city's leadership seek to murder the Lord Jesus Christ's ambassadors but the plan was found out and Paul and Barnabas left Iconium to go to Lystra and Derbe where they continued to preach the Gospel.

**Verse 8:** *'And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:'*

Once again, the Holy Spirit leads them to a crippled man who had never walked, of whom everyone knew and it was going to be one more dramatic miracle which could not be denied.

**Verse 9:** *'The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, <sup>10</sup> Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.'*

The crippled man is watching Paul, who is, in turn, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, looking intently at the crippled man; Paul loudly and authoritatively commands him to stand upright which he does as he leaps and walks... Just like so many other miracles which have been performed by the Holy Spirit through the Lord Jesus Christ and His chosen followers.

**Verse 11:** *'And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. <sup>12</sup> And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.'*

Again, the people are deceived; notice that the demon-inspired one who first cries out the deception... and, yes, it always begins with one... the demon moves him to dilute the true miraculous incarnation of God, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ by saying that Jupiter and Mercury, powerful fallen angels which the people have long worshipped, have 'come down as men!' This is planned to muddy the Truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's only Son, of Whom Paul is preaching.

They call the older, Barnabas, Jupiter: the head of the gods, and they call Paul, Mercury: the messenger of the gods.

We're told that they cried out in their Lycaonian language which neither Paul nor Barnabas understand; this is why it takes them some time to realize what is happening.

**Verse 13:** *'Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.'*

The priest of Jupiter would sacrifice unto Paul and Barnabas but suddenly, Paul understood what was happening... now notice the response compared to not long ago when the people conferred godlike status upon Herod who willingly received their praise but immediately fell down and was eaten by worms...

**Verse 14:** *'Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, <sup>15</sup> And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven,*

and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: <sup>16</sup> Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. <sup>17</sup> Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.'

Stop this!! We are just men, like you! Turn away from this vain, worthless worshiping of false gods and demons masquerading as gods; turn to the True and Living God Eternal, Creator of all that is. In the past, He allowed men to serve Him according to the revelation He had given but now commands all men everywhere to trust in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Soon, on Mars Hill, Paul will say: '*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:*' Acts 17:30

**Verse 19:** '*And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.*'

These evil, disbelieving Jews! Not being content to cast them out of their own cities, they take it upon themselves to follow them to the next cities in their murderous rampage but, as usual, God's plan prevails.

**Verse 20:** '*Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.*'

It doesn't even say that the disciples were praying; they were looking down on Paul's body in misery, believing this was the tragic end of a young life with so much potential... alas, dear Paul, we loved you and we will miss you terribly... but imagine their shock! Paul is roused, he stands up, brushes off, walks back in through the city gates, takes a nap and leaves to go on to his next exciting adventure, this time, in Derbe.

**Verse 21:** '*And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, <sup>22</sup> Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith...*'

There's never been anyone like Paul; no one was ever so used of God in the life of His Church. His entire life was used up and poured out for the Lord Jesus Christ and His precious Bride. Paul's love and affection were ever exhausted upon his own beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ's Own beloved, His Bride, the Church.

Paul never married because he could not be poured out in two directions; he couldn't allow anything to distract him from his one and only goal: to establish true churches, to strengthen and encourage believers and to guard them against the wolves which he knew would surely come in order to devour the sheep.

To the Corinthians, he wrote: '*But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.*' 1 Cor 7 32

Some are called to be unmarried and are content; others are called to be married in order to form a more effective ministry team but, sadly, many are too quick to become married to someone to whom they should never have been. Too often, we've had people who dreamed that marriage would fulfill all their dreams but eventually, sometimes rather quickly, all those dreams grew into one long miserable nightmare.

I always say, the woman who desperately longs for a husband, has obviously never had one.

Paul understood these things and had set his face like flint; he would not be deterred.

Isaiah wrote: '*For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.*' Isaiah 50:7

This was written, prophetically, of the Lord Jesus Christ, who would move with singular purpose toward His Own Sacrificial Death: '*And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,*' Luke 9:51

Paul knew what Jesus Christ had done for him and he was determined to do no less for Him and His Bride.

*'(To) be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: <sup>10</sup> That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; <sup>11</sup> If by any means*

*I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.* <sup>12</sup> *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*

<sup>13</sup> *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,* <sup>14</sup> *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'* Phipps 3:9

Perhaps Paul wrote wonderful letters to the Antiochians and to the Iconians and Derbeites but God was faithful to preserve all of Paul's letters which were necessary to give us the full understanding of Church Doctrine which God purposed us to have: *'According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:*

<sup>4</sup> *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.'* 1 Pet 1:3

Paul was ready, willing and strengthened to do all that God called him to do.

**Verse 22b:** *'... and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.'*

God set Paul's life as a picture of the extreme persecution and tribulation Christians may, or will, face. 'If Jesus could do it... I will do it! If I can do it... you can do it... do it!

He wrote: (I) *'Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.'* Paul is saying: I am a picture of Jesus Christ's suffering for you and a picture of the sufferings which you will have and which you can faithfully endure.

Paul's mission was to 'Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine,' Further, to lead as many as possible, to True Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to establish healthy churches with stable, Godly leadership and to finally write down most of the Doctrine Jesus intended for His Bride's preservation until He would finally come for her in the soon-coming Rapture.

**Verse 24:** *'And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.* <sup>25</sup> *And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:* <sup>26</sup> *And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.'*

They turned around and retraced their steps, returning to every city while encouraging and establishing the hearts of every believer until they finally returned to Antioch in Syria from whence they began.

**Verse 27:** *'And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.* <sup>28</sup> *And there they abode long time with the disciples.'*

This, Antioch in Syria is the most important church beyond Jerusalem at that time; this was the hub from which the Gentile World was eventually evangelized. Their first and most significant evangelists were, obviously, Paul and Barnabas but it would continue after Paul's death.

Paul sought to strengthen this church, as well as all the churches he would establish because he knew what would soon come; with these, he would have prayed what he prayed with the elders at Ephesus: *'Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.* <sup>29</sup> *For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.* <sup>30</sup> *Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.* <sup>31</sup> *Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.* <sup>32</sup> *And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.'* Acts 20:28

*\*(Yes, we've been through this, before: some believe Gen 6 does not refer to fallen angels but I believe, clearly, it does.)*