

## Lesson 18- Acts 14:8-28

### Mistaken Identities

Imagine standing in an aisle of your favorite store. You hear a friendly voice call out a name, but you don't look up; it wasn't your name being called. Within moments, you hear the voice say the name again and realize someone is walking toward you with a big smile. That person thinks you are someone you are not. But you quickly assure them you aren't that person. How awkward and embarrassing!

Paul and Barnabas encountered people in Lystra who clearly mistook them for someone else. While they were doing God's work spreading the Gospel and healing the sick, the people of Lystra got the wrong idea and thought they were gods appearing as men. In spite of the apostles' quick explanation, the misidentification was a lot more than an awkward moment. It nearly turned deadly.

#### Other religions? Other gods?

The Greek religion, with all its gods and goddesses, contained an explanation of reality. However, it was not the whole story, or even the correct story.

The Greek religion divided power between various gods and goddesses, some kind, some cruel, some attentive, some careless. The Lycaonians whom Paul and Barnabas encountered recognized in them attributes of two of their gods:

Zeus—king of the gods, the god of sky and weather, law, order, and fate.

Hermes—god of travel, trade, and communication, among other things. He was also the personal agent and herald of Zeus.

Like the Greeks, other religions attempt to explain what they see in nature by attributing it to some higher power. Every other religion makes an effort to find the truth, but they all miss the mark. Jesus is the truth.

[TM note: Zeus and Hermes are two of the mythological Greek gods known as the Twelve Olympians. In Athens, the cult of the Twelve Olympians can be traced back to the 6th century B.C.]

#### Into the Word: Acts 14:8-28

Paul and Barnabas traveled to Lystra because of threats to their lives in the town of Iconium. While preaching, Paul noticed a man sitting on the ground who was listening to Paul's words. This man had been lame since his birth.

1. Describe what happened next (vv.9–10): *The man was staring at Paul. Realizing that he had faith, Paul commanded the lame man to stand up and walk. He leaped up and began to walk.*

The crowd saw this miracle and raised their voices, saying, "The gods have become like men and have come down to us."

2. The priest of Zeus brought oxen and garlands to the crowd and wanted to *offer sacrifices to Paul & Barnabas* (v.13) with the people.

3. When Barnabas and Paul realized what was happening, they (v.14):

- *tore their clothes*
- *rushed out to stop the people*

4. They said (v.15): "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also *just men* of the same nature as you, and *preach* the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God."

5. Even though Paul and Barnabas clearly explained that they were just men, how did the people react? v.18 *They still wanted to worship them and wanted to offer sacrifice to them. Because of this, Paul and Barnabas had to restrain the crowd.*

6. Describe the turnaround in attitude of the crowd in verses 19 and 20. *One moment they wanted to worship them, and the next moment they were stoning them.*

7. Picture it: Paul had been dragged out of town. Everyone assumed he was dead, and his followers stood around his battered body wondering what to do next. Then, amazingly, Paul (v.20) *rose up and went into town!*

The very next day, Paul went with Barnabas to Derbe, where they continued to preach. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and to Antioch, strengthening and encouraging believers to continue in the faith.

8. Describe the process in which the leadership of the churches was established (v.23): *Elders were appointed for every church. Paul and Barnabas prayed for them and commended them to the Lord*

Bible scholars believe that when the evangelists returned to Antioch, the place where their missionary journey started, more than two years had passed. They gathered the church together and told what “God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles” (v.27).

### **New Ideas:**

#### **The Book of Galatians**

One of the New Testament letters written by Paul was addressed to the cities in Galatia he had been visiting in the last few lessons: Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

The Apostle Paul wanted to make sure these churches were not enslaved again by the Law. How were they being enslaved? Read Galatians 5:1–7 to find out.

*Circumcision was being required by false teachers. Paul clearly teaches that their salvation is only by faith and not dependent on anything else.*

This letter was intended to be read in one city and passed along to the next, so everyone eventually had a chance to read it—no group text messages back then!

What is the book of Galatians all about?

- There is one true Gospel of grace and mercy.
- We are saved through faith in Christ Jesus.
- Christ has set us free. We are no longer judged on the basis of what we have done.

### **Memory Verse**

For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men?

If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

Galatians 1:10

### **Extra Memory Challenge**

Galatians 6:14

*But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

## Discussion Questions

*Each teacher should encourage, as much as time permits, discussion and inquiry on the part of students. Not every aspect of the following questions is addressed here, and students may have thoughts related to but not mentioned in this guide. The obligation of the teacher, then, is to understand as deeply as possible the Scriptures that are being discussed, in order to answer as well as possible any questions a student might have.*

1. The Jews came into Lystra and stirred up the Lycaonians against Paul and Barnabas because the apostles' message was offensive to them (Acts 14:19). As Christians, how can we be grounded in the truth of God's Word so that we are not swayed by wrong influences? Read Ephesians 4:11–15.

*God has given us teachers in Sunday School, our parents if they are believers, pastors, and a congregation to worship with and have fellowship with. First and foremost though He has given us His Word which we need to read and study diligently. Students should be encouraged to bring questions and concerns to youth leaders, other adults and sometimes to their peers for discussion*

2. How did Paul's experience in Lystra (Acts 14:19) prove true his statement in Galatians 1:10? What type of persecution might you expect as you seek the favor of God rather than men?

*Teasing, ridicule, ostracism, loneliness, unfair treatment.*

## Daily Devotions

Sunday:	I Thessalonians 3:6-13
Monday:	I Thessalonians 4:1-8
Tuesday:	I Corinthians 16:5-13
Wednesday:	II Corinthians 2:12-17
Thursday:	Revelation 3:7-13
Friday:	Colossians 2:5-7
Saturday:	Colossians 4:2-6

## THE LUTHERAN CHURCH: THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE AFLC

### \* Fundamental Principle 5

Some church bodies have levels of authority above the congregation such as synods or bishops. According to the Word of God, the congregation is free to govern its own affairs subject only to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. No other ecclesiastical (church) authority has the right to impose rules or programs upon it.

1. How is the truth of this principle illustrated in Acts 13:1-5?

*The congregation at Antioch saw a need to spread God's Word there and elsewhere. They prayed for more workers and sent them out to Cyprus and beyond as the Holy Spirit lead them.*

2. Why is freedom for the congregation essential?

*Each congregation understands its calling to its own people and area. Its sphere of influence is familiar to them and can reach out with the Word in an acceptable way.*