
Book of Acts – Course B

Instructions:

Please take all courses in order as listed on our home page (the computer will ask!). If you have not done all the lessons of previous courses, please [click here to go to the beginning](#).

If you have not already done so, save this lesson to your computer using the "save" feature of your browser or PDF reader. Then print out the lesson (or at least open it in your browser or PDF reader **offline** – not on the Internet). Read the lesson and **study in your Bible the passages indicated >>> Scripture <<<**. Following each passage, study each question that has a number enclosed in asterisks (*1*, *2*, etc.), and **write down your answers on paper**. Some questions include more than one number because they have more than one blank to fill in. ("Think" questions should be carefully considered for your own benefit, but your answers will not be submitted to us.) Please take your time, study each passage carefully, answer the questions honestly, and consider the applications to your own life (John 12:48; 2 Tim. 2:15).

When you have studied the whole lesson and written down answers to all the indicated questions, return to the menu for this course on our web site at www.BibleStudyLessons.com and click on the link for the **answer quiz** for this lesson (or simply click on the link at the end of this lesson). Follow the directions to submit your answers and receive your grade. You will then be given an opportunity to see the correct answers to the questions. Please save this lesson and the correct answers for future reference.

Then move on to the next lesson or the next course in order. **Please study all lessons in all courses in order as listed in the menus on our web site.**

Thank you for your interest, and God bless your study of His word.

Preaching among Gentiles – Acts 14,15

Lesson 2

Introduction:

Acts 13 had ended as Paul and Barnabas fled from Antioch of Pisidia due to persecution. In this lesson they continue their preaching trip.

I. Preaching in Iconium – Acts 14:1–6

>>> Please read Acts 14:1–6. <<<

1 In what city did Paul and Barnabas preach next? Answer: They preached next in _____.

2 What confirmed their message to be true (v3)? (a) church tradition, (b) the heirarchy agreed, (c) God sent signs and wonders. Answer: _____.

3 What caused Paul and Barnabas to leave this city? Answer: Jews and Gentiles attempted to _____ them.

Comments: From Antioch, Paul and Barnabas traveled to Iconium (see map). Again they preached first in the Jewish synagogue, and again many people believed. But the Jews began to oppose the message.

Throughout the book of Acts, we have observed examples of miracles. V3 clearly states the purpose of miracles. They were God's means of bearing witness to His word. Satan has always sent false teachers, who claim to preach the truth (2 Cor. 11:13–15; Matt. 7:15–23). So that people could know that His prophets were directly guided to reveal His true message, God enabled them to do miracles which false teachers could not duplicate. This has always been the main purpose of miracles. See also Mark 16:20; John 5:36; 20:30,31; Acts 2:22; 2 Cor. 12:11,12.

The gospel is here called the word of God's grace. Grace means unmerited favor. None of us deserve eternal life, but God offers it to us through Jesus' sacrificial death (John 3:16). But the only way anyone can know about this grace and how to receive it is by the **word** of grace, the gospel (Rom. 1:16; 10:13–17; Acts 11:14; John 6:44,45).

Some folks think grace will save everyone. Others think God directly reveals to people how to be saved, apart from the word of God. Others observe the errors of sincere religious people and conclude that surely God's grace will cover them. But the only way to know anything about what God's grace will or will not do is by the word of grace!

Opposition to the truth grew till Paul and Barnabas were compelled to leave town or be stoned to death. Some people think that all devout religious people are acceptable to God. Others advocate "peace at any price," saying we should never be a cause of division among religious people. But throughout the book of Acts, religious people were the primary ones who opposed the gospel and persecuted faithful Christians. Often they are motivated by envy (Matt. 27:18; Acts 13:45). When people resisted the truth, faithful teachers did not hush for the sake of peace. They kept preaching, even when persecution resulted.

II. Preaching in Lystra – Acts 14:7–20

Healing of a Crippled Man

>>> Please read Acts 14:7–13. <<<

4 Describe the problem a man at Lystra had. Answer: The man was _____.

5&6 Who did the people think Paul and Barnabas were? Answer: They thought they were gods named _____ and _____.

7 What did the priest want to do to them? (a) kill them, (b) offer sacrifice to them, (c) give them money, (d) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

Comment: As the account continues, more and more Gentiles are taught. Cornelius was the first recorded Gentile convert (Acts 10). From the beginning the Lord had emphasized that Paul would work to save Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:21). In Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas had turned to teaching the Gentiles, when the Jews rejected the truth (13:46–48). They had quoted authority for this action from the Old Testament (cf. Acts 13:47 to Isaiah 49:6). However, in this story for the first time

we are shown how inspired teachers taught heathen Gentile idol worshippers.

By God's power Paul healed a man who had been crippled, impotent in his feet, having never walked. Twice before we have read of miraculous healings of people unable to walk (Acts 3:1–10; 9:32–35). Unlike the power of modern so-called faith healers, in all these Bible miracles the people were healed obviously, completely, and immediately.

The people in this city were idol worshippers. They misunderstood the purpose of the miracle, concluding that Paul and Barnabas must be gods in the form of men. They called them the Greek gods Zeus and Hermes (or the Roman gods Jupiter and Mercury). The priest of Zeus or Jupiter even wanted to offer sacrifice to them!

Barnabas and Paul's Sermon

>>> Please read Acts 14:14–20. <<<

8 How did Paul and Barnabas describe their own nature? (a) they were men like others, (b) they were gods, (c) they were angels. Answer: _____.

9 Why does God deserve to be worshipped, instead of idols? Answer: God _____ the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them.

10&11 What witness does God give that He continues to exist (v17)? Answer: God's witness is that He does good, giving _____ from heaven and fruitful _____.

Comments: Paul and Barnabas urged the people not to worship them, because they were simply humans. People should worship the true God, because He created everything in nature. For many generations God had given up on the Gentiles, making no special appeals to save them (see Rom. 1:18–32). Even so, however, they could have known from observing nature that God existed.

Unlike the Jews, these Gentiles worshipped many gods. Paul sought to convince them to believe in the one true, living God. Idolatry is wrong fundamentally because it involves worshipping and honoring as gods that which really is not God. It almost invariably involves serving various created things, either things in nature (sun, stars, ocean, people, etc.) or things people have made (images, etc.) or imaginary super-humans that do not even exist! See Rom. 1:25.

Teaching such people always requires emphasizing God as the living Creator. There must be some explanation for the Universe, and the only reasonable explanation is that God created it (Rom. 1:20). Since life comes only from life, the Creator must be alive. Since creation requires great power and wisdom, the Creator must be all-powerful and all-wise. Since He made us, we belong to Him and ought to serve Him. No "god" in nature and no "god" made by men would be adequate. This is confirmed by miracles and the resurrection.

Even so, Paul and Barnabas barely prevented the efforts to worship them. Incredibly, some supposedly "Christian" leaders today still allow people to honor them as only God should be honored (cf. Acts 10:25,26).

Amazingly, one day the people sought to worship Paul and Barnabas, then they turned around and were quickly persuaded by the Jews to stone Paul (v19)! People who will easily jump to one wrong conclusion may be easily persuaded to jump to another wrong conclusion.

Paul and Barnabas were again forced to leave town. They moved on to Derbe (see map), where again they preached the gospel.

III. Completion of Journey #1 – Acts 14:21–28

>>> Please read Acts 14:21–28. <<<

12 Where did Paul and Barnabas preach next? (a) Rome, (b) America, (c) they returned to the cities where they had already preached. Answer: _____.

13&14 What did they do in the churches they had established (v23)? Answer: They appointed _____ in every _____.

15 What happened when they returned to Antioch of Syria? Answer: They _____ all that God had done with them.

Comments: Paul and Barnabas then returned to the cities where they had already preached. These disciples had already observed much persecution, so Paul and Barnabas strengthened them, exhorting them to remain faithful, and reminding them that tribulation in this life is to be expected (v22). Our ultimate reward comes after this life at judgment.

They also appointed elders in every church. We first read about elders in 11:30. Elders are spiritual overseers who lead a congregation in serving God (1 Peter 5:1–3; Acts 20:28). Before they are appointed, they must possess the qualities described in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9.

Notice that every church, as it matures, should seek to appoint qualified elders. This shows that the work is local in nature. Elders oversee only the local church among them (1 Peter 5:1–3; Acts 20:28). They never oversee two or more local churches. Also note that elders in a church were always plural. No one man alone ever supervised any local church.

Paul and Barnabas then completed their journey by returning to Antioch of Syria, the church that had sent them on their preaching trip. There they reported all that had happened to them in their journeys.

IV. Controversy about the Law – Acts 15:1–35

A Dispute over Circumcision and the Law

>>> Please read Acts 15:1–5. <<<

16 What was being taught by certain disciples from Judea? Answer: Some taught people must be _____ to be saved.

17 Where were Paul and Barnabas sent? They went to the apostles and elders at (a) Rome, (b) Athens, (c) Salt Lake City, (d) Jerusalem. Answer: _____.

Comments: In Acts 10 and 11 Gentiles had been introduced to the gospel. Now some Jewish disciples were teaching that Gentiles could obey the gospel but must also obey the Law of Moses. They said this was "necessary" to be saved (vv 1,5,24). They bound circumcision, because it was the symbol of submission to the old law (Gen. 17).

The issue was whether or not the gospel alone could save. Did the gospel replace the Old Testament or just add to it? Even today many profess to be Christians yet claim we should keep parts of the old law. This issue is also discussed at length in Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews.

Paul and Barnabas were sent to discuss this with the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. Some say this authorizes church-wide conventions to vote and establish church doctrine. However: (1) this event involved only one church communicating with another church. (2) Inspired apostles were consulted in an age when the written word was incomplete and direct revelation prevailed. (3) Jerusalem was involved because the false teachers came from there (vv 1,24). (4) Paul received a revelation telling him to go, not to learn the truth, but to stand up for the truth and urge others to teach it properly (see Gal. 2:1–9).

The Meeting with the Apostles and Elders

>>> Please read Acts 15:6–12. <<<

18 How did the salvation of Jews differ from that of Gentiles (v9)? Answer: There was no _____ in their salvation.

19 How had God testified to the salvation of Gentiles? Answer: God acknowledged them by giving them the _____.

20 What did Paul and Barnabas talk about? (a) miracles and wonders, (b) bingo parties, (c) a new seminary, (d) new robes for the choir. Answer: _____.

Comments: A meeting was conducted with the apostles and elders. After much controversy, Peter told about preaching to Cornelius (Acts 10). He claimed the law was a yoke that no one could bear (v10). This was because everyone violated it, but its animal sacrifices could not give lasting forgiveness (Heb. 10:1–18; Rom. 3:20–23; Col. 2:14–17; Gal. 5:1–4). He concluded that both Jew and Gentile would be saved in the same manner by grace through faith in the gospel. This had been confirmed when the Holy Spirit had come upon Cornelius' household.

Barnabas and Paul then told about their preaching among the Gentiles. They clearly had not required Gentiles to obey the Old Testament, yet God had confirmed their teaching by miracles (cf. Acts 14:3).

>>> Please read Acts 15:13–21. <<<

21 Who gave the final recorded statement? Answer: The last recorded speech was made by _____.

22 According to prophecy, who could be called by God's name? Answer: The prophecy said _____ could be called by God's name.

23 What conclusion was stated about Gentiles keeping the law? Answer: V19 says they should not _____ the converted Gentiles.

24 What should Gentiles be taught to avoid? (a) pollutions of idols, (b) fornication, (c) things strangled and blood, (d) all of these. Answer: _____.

Comments: James confirmed the previous testimony by quoting from Amos 9:11,12, which showed that Gentiles would seek the Lord and be called by His name. So even the Old Testament itself prophesied that Gentiles could be saved. (The tabernacle of David probably refers to the

reestablishment of David's line of kings, which was fulfilled when Jesus began to rule on David's throne – see Acts 2:30–33).

James concluded that the Gentiles should not be troubled – i.e., should not be required to keep the law (as was under discussion). However, they should be taught to avoid sacrifices to idols, fornication, and eating blood and things strangled. Clearly, the point is that, though the Old Testament is not binding today, there are some laws it contained that are also included in the New Testament, so they should still be observed today. If so, then abstaining from blood and things strangled must mean they should not be eaten as food, but when animals are killed the blood should be drained out as the law taught (Lev. 17:10–15; Deut. 12:23–25).

Note: If as some claim, Peter was Pope, why did he not speak authoritatively and solve this issue? Instead, he was only one speaker, and he spoke neither first nor last (see vv 7,12,13). The issue was solved by the group as guided by the Holy Spirit (v28).

The Letter to Antioch

>>> Please read Acts 15:22–29. <<<

25 How did Jerusalem communicate its views to Antioch? Answer: They sent a _____ along with brethren to confirm it.

26 What did they say about those who bound circumcision (v24)? Answer: They said they had given them no such _____.

27 Who ultimately led them in this decision (v28)? (a) their own human wisdom, (b) the Pope, (c) the Holy Spirit, (d) no one. Answer: _____.

Comments: The brethren at Jerusalem communicated their views to Antioch (and other places that apparently knew of the problem) by a letter. It said that those who bound the old law had not received that teaching from the apostles or elders at Jerusalem. This cleared the influence of that church, so no one could claim they had authorized such a doctrine. This is not an example of a church-wide conference to settle doctrine. It is an appeal to one church to correct its influence. And it is an appeal to the teaching of inspired apostles (cf. Acts 2:42), which today can be found only in the written word (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

The letter also gave approval to Paul and Barnabas, then it stated the conclusions James had described. Note that these conclusions were ultimately determined by the Holy Spirit (v28), who guided the apostles and other inspired men (John 16:13). Doctrine is determined by inspiration, not by human wisdom or majority rule.

Finally, notice that certain things are "necessary," but those necessary things did not include circumcision and obedience to the Law of Moses. The Old Testament no longer constitutes authority for our activities in God's service. If you have any doubts about this conclusion, please read Hebrews 10:1–10; 7:11–14; 8:6–13; 9:1–4; Galatians 3:24,25; 5:1–6; Romans 7:1–7; Ephesians 2:11–16; Colossians 2:13–17.

>>> Please read Acts 15:30–35. <<<

28 What was done with the letter? Answer: The letter was read to the church at _____.

29&30 Who had been sent to confirm the letter? Answer: Prophets named _____ and _____ confirmed the letter.

Comments: The letter was delivered and read to the church at Antioch. Being prophets, Judas and Silas confirmed the message and taught the people. This brought the joy of reassurance to the Gentiles.

Silas then remained a while in Antioch, as did Paul and Barnabas.

(Note: If you would like to learn more about our relationship to the Old Law today, please see the links at the end of this lesson.)

V. Conflict about Mark – Acts 15:36–41

>>> Please read Acts 15:36–41. <<<

31 Whom did Barnabas want to take on the next trip? (a) Peter, (b) John Mark, (c) James, (d) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

32 Why did Paul not want to take him with them? Answer: John had _____ them on their first trip.

Comment: After some time, Paul and Barnabas wanted to take another preaching trip. Conflict arose because Barnabas wanted John Mark to go again, but Paul objected since Mark had deserted them once before (cf. Acts 13:13). The disagreement led them to separate. Barnabas took Mark with him, but Paul took Silas.

Some time later, Mark had redeemed himself in Paul's eyes (2 Tim. 4:11). Yet Paul was here approved, not rebuked, by the church (Acts 15:40). Some issues, like binding circumcision, are matters of faith that cannot be compromised. Other decisions, such as whom we choose to work with, may not be bound by God so they involve personal judgment. In such cases, we sometimes disagree without anyone committing sin.

Personal application questions:

(These questions are for you to ponder. Your answers will help us understand your thinking, however they will not affect your "score.")

33 Should people bow to honor religious leaders today? _____

34 Do you believe that miraculous signs, as in the Bible, occur today? _____

35 May we use the old law as authority for our practices today? _____

When you have carefully studied this lesson and written down answers to all the questions, [click on this link to submit your answers.](#)

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