

ACTS: THE STORY CONTINUES

Acts 14 — Into the World of Southern Galatia

The First Missionary Journey

Perga → Pisidian Antioch → Iconium → Lystra → Derbe

Derbe → Lystra → Iconium → Pisidian Antioch → Perga → Attalia



Following the Road

When Paul and Barnabas traveled inland from Perga, they entered a Roman transportation network already decades old. Portions of the **Via Sebaste**, constructed under Augustus beginning in 6 BC, still survive today.

We can reconstruct the Roman road system more confidently than we can reconstruct Paul's exact route. The map therefore distinguishes between **established Roman roads** and **probable or possible routes traveled by Paul and Barnabas**.

Key geographical movement:

Mediterranean coastal plain → Taurus Mountains → Anatolian plateau → Lycanian interior

Walking Through Their World



Perga was an important city of Pamphylia situated on the fertile coastal plain. Its distinctive twin-towered Hellenistic gate was already centuries old when Paul and Barnabas arrived around AD 46–48.

Much of Perga's spectacular monumental architecture visible today belongs to later Roman development. The reconstruction above therefore attempts to represent the **earlier city Paul and Barnabas encountered**.

Read Acts 13:13–14

“Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem. But they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia.” ~ Acts 13:13-14

The Via Sebaste: The Augustan Roman Road System

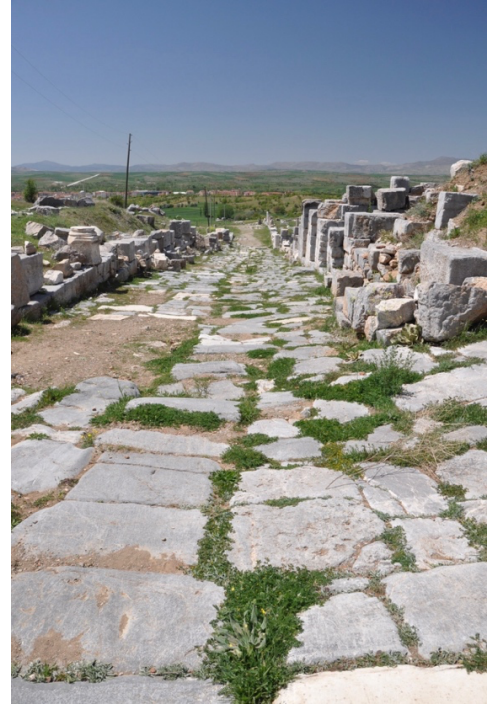


The Via Sebaste was not one road stretching all the way to Derbe, but part of a wider Roman road network connecting the colonies and cities of this region.

Rome constructed an extensive road network through this difficult country under Augustus. Surviving road pavement and milestones allow archaeologists to reconstruct portions of this network with remarkable confidence.

The journey from coastal Pamphylia into the interior required crossing the formidable Taurus country before reaching the high Anatolian plateau.

Pisidian Antioch



Pisidian Antioch

Pisidian Antioch was a Roman colony situated high on the Anatolian plateau. Under Augustus it became an important center of Rome's colonial road network. Milestones along the Via Sebaste measured their distances from Antioch, identifying the city as a **caput viarum** — “road-head.”

The exposed archaeological site preserves portions of Roman streets, public buildings, an imperial sanctuary, aqueducts, and other remains of the city Paul and Barnabas visited.

Last week we studied Paul's sermon here in Acts 13. After opposition drove Paul and Barnabas from the city, Luke tells us:

“And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” — Acts 13:52

Then:

“Now at Iconium...” — Acts 14:1

Iconium

Ancient Iconium lies largely beneath the modern city of **Konya**, making a detailed reconstruction of Paul's city impossible.

The geographer **Strabo**, writing near the New Testament period, describes Iconium as:

“a town that is well settled and has a more prosperous territory.”

Acts tells us that Iconium contained a Jewish synagogue and that Paul and Barnabas encountered both Jews and Greeks there.

Read Acts 14:1–7

“Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles. When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country, and there they continued to preach the gospel.”

Notice:

- A great number of **Jews and Greeks** believed.
- Opposition spread beyond the synagogue.
- Paul and Barnabas **remained for a long time**, speaking boldly.
- Eventually **the city was divided**.
- When a violent plot developed against them, they fled toward **Lystra and Derbe**.

Lystra



Lystra was a **Roman colony**, yet much of its population retained its indigenous Lycaonian culture. Luke preserves a remarkable detail: when the crowd reacts to Paul's miracle, they begin shouting **in the Lycaonian language**.

An inscription discovered at the site names:

COLONIA IVLIA FELIX GEMINA LVSTRA (Can you find Lystra in the inscription?)

The inscription helped establish the identification of the ancient city.

Archaeological work at Lystra continues today. Systematic excavation started in 2024, and is only beginning to uncover the long history of the settlement.

Remember Lystra.

In Acts 16 we will return here and meet a young disciple named **Timothy**.

Acts 14:8-20

"Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, said in a loud voice, 'Stand upright on your feet.' And he sprang up and began walking. And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, 'The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!' Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, 'Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news that you should turn from these vain things to the

living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving your rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.’ Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them. But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.”

A Different Audience

At Pisidian Antioch, Paul spoke to people who knew Israel's Scriptures.

At Lystra, he speaks to people whose worldview is thoroughly pagan.

Notice where Paul begins:

“the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.”

~ Acts 14:15

Paul points them toward:

Creation → Providence → the Living God

The message hasn't changed, but Paul's **starting point** has.

The Religious World of Lystra

The crowd identifies:

Barnabas → Zeus and Paul → Hermes

Luke also mentions a local **priest of Zeus**, bulls, garlands, and preparations for sacrifice.

- Inscriptions discovered in the region attest the worship of Zeus and Hermes, fitting the religious world Luke describes at Lystra.

Notice the whiplash reversal:

Acts 14:18: They can scarcely restrain the crowd from sacrificing to them.

Acts 14:19: The crowd stones Paul and drags him outside the city.

Derbe



Ancient Derbe is generally located in the vicinity of **Kerti Höyük**. An inscription discovered at Kerti Höyük, dedicated by the council and people of Derbe, provided important evidence for locating the ancient city in this vicinity.

Archaeological excavations have uncovered evidence from multiple periods of occupation. The remains do not yet allow us to reconstruct the Derbe Paul and Barnabas saw.

Read Acts 14:21

“When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch...”

Paul and Barnabas **turn around**.

The Road Back

Read Acts 14:21–26

“When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. And when they had appointed elders in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia, and from there they sailed to Antioch...”

Follow their return on the map:

Derbe → Lystra → Iconium → Pisidian Antioch

They return through the very cities where they had encountered opposition.

Luke tells us why:

“strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith...”

And:

“they appointed elders for them in every church...”

Notice Luke's language

At the beginning of the journey, there were no churches in these cities.

Now Luke can speak of:

“every church.”

The gospel has produced more than hearers.

- People believed.
- Disciples were made.
- Churches were established.

Paul and Barnabas then:

“committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

Ultimately, these churches belonged not to Paul or Barnabas, but **to the Lord**.

Preparing for the Journey Home



Attalia — modern Antalya

The ancient port city of Attalia stood on the Mediterranean coast approximately 15–20 km west of Perga. On their return, Paul and Barnabas preached in Perga and then traveled down to Attalia. From its Mediterranean harbor they sailed toward Antioch in Syria, beginning the final leg of the first missionary journey home.

Back to Antioch

Acts 14:26-28

“And from there (Attalia) they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they remained no little time with the disciples.”

After returning through Pamphylia, Paul and Barnabas sailed home to the church that had sent them.

Their report summarizes the entire journey:

“They declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.”

— Acts 14:27

Around the Table

- What did you notice in Acts 14 that you had never noticed before, or that became clearer after seeing its geography, archaeology, and cultural setting?