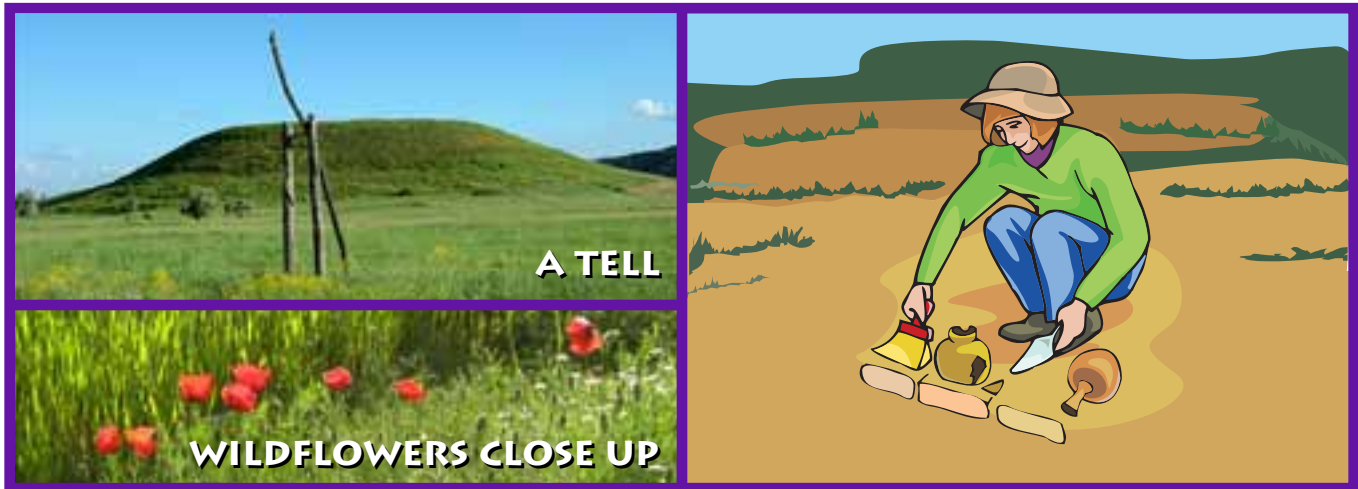
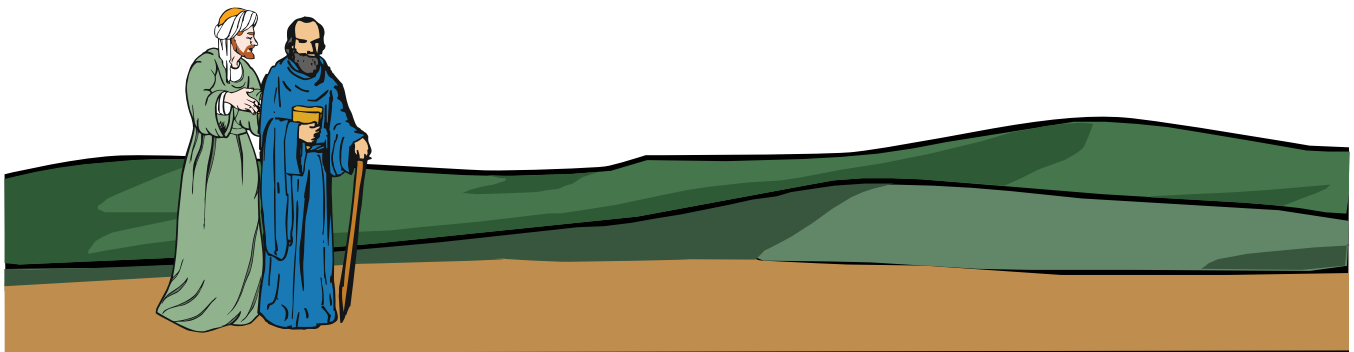


Tour of the Holy Lands - Lystra



Back on our bus, we're now heading to the next town, Lystra, for another adventure on our summer journey. Paul and Barnabas made their way to this town after fleeing the angry Jews in Iconium. It takes us about an hour to get there by bus. It probably took the apostles two or three days on foot!

As we arrive in Lystra, all we see is an empty hill or mound, called a tell. If we were part of a university archeology team, we would get out our shovels and carefully dig into the ground to discover what's left of the town beneath the surface of the tell. The stone blocks, and pottery, and tools we would find would give us hints and tell us stories about those who once lived there. But instead of digging today, we're just going to drive by and notice the grass and wildflowers growing on top of the tell. It's beautiful!





In Paul's day, the people of Lystra were very superstitious. Believing in gods, especially Roman and Greek gods, is called mythology. Here is a myth that these people once told their children. (Of course, we know that myths are never true.) It happened that two gods named Jupiter and Mercury visited Lystra a long time ago. (In this picture, they are looking down upon earth from the clouds. Jupiter is on the left and Mercury on the right.)

They dressed up as hungry strangers. But it was late at night, and nobody would feed them or let them in.

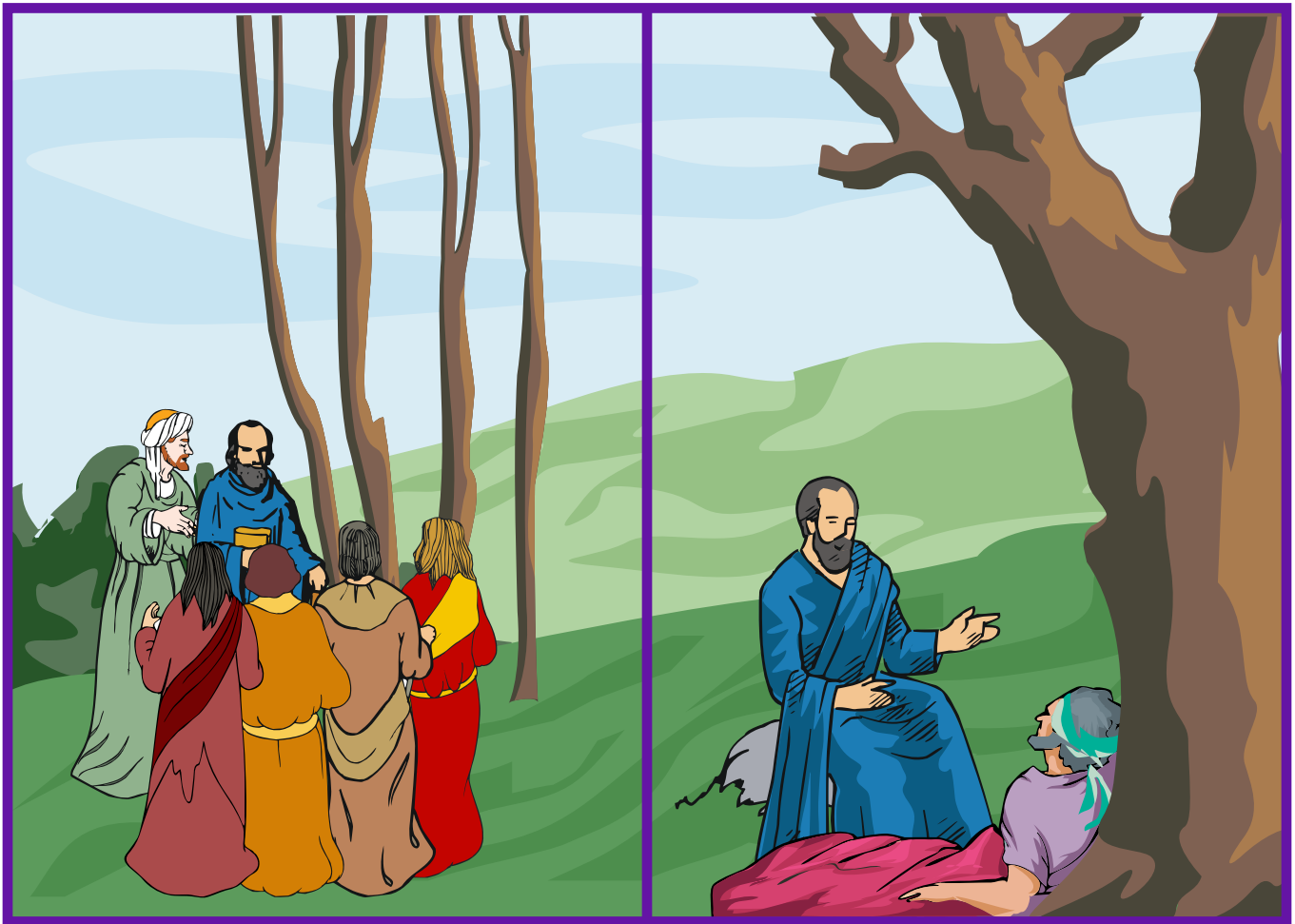


Finally, one family opened its door. It was the home of a poor elderly couple. They had very little, but what they had, they shared with the strangers. All of a sudden, the couple noticed that the wine they were serving never ran out. They fell on their knees in front of their guests, suspecting their guests were gods. The reward for their hospitality was that their home was turned into a temple, and they became the keepers of the temple. Years later, when it was time for them to pass on, they did not die. Instead, they turned into two trees standing side by side that will live together forever. Since then, the people of Lystra were always on the lookout for those gods to return so they could offer them a meal.



Look over there. Paul and Barnabas are arriving in Lystra. There's no synagogue to visit, and there are very few Jews to listen to Paul. But it looks like he'll still speak to these Gentiles, who know nothing about the one God.

Over there is a lame man. He has never walked, even as a child. He's ready to hear the message, too. Do you think Paul remembers the story of Peter and the lame man who was healed at the Temple gate? He had never walked, either.



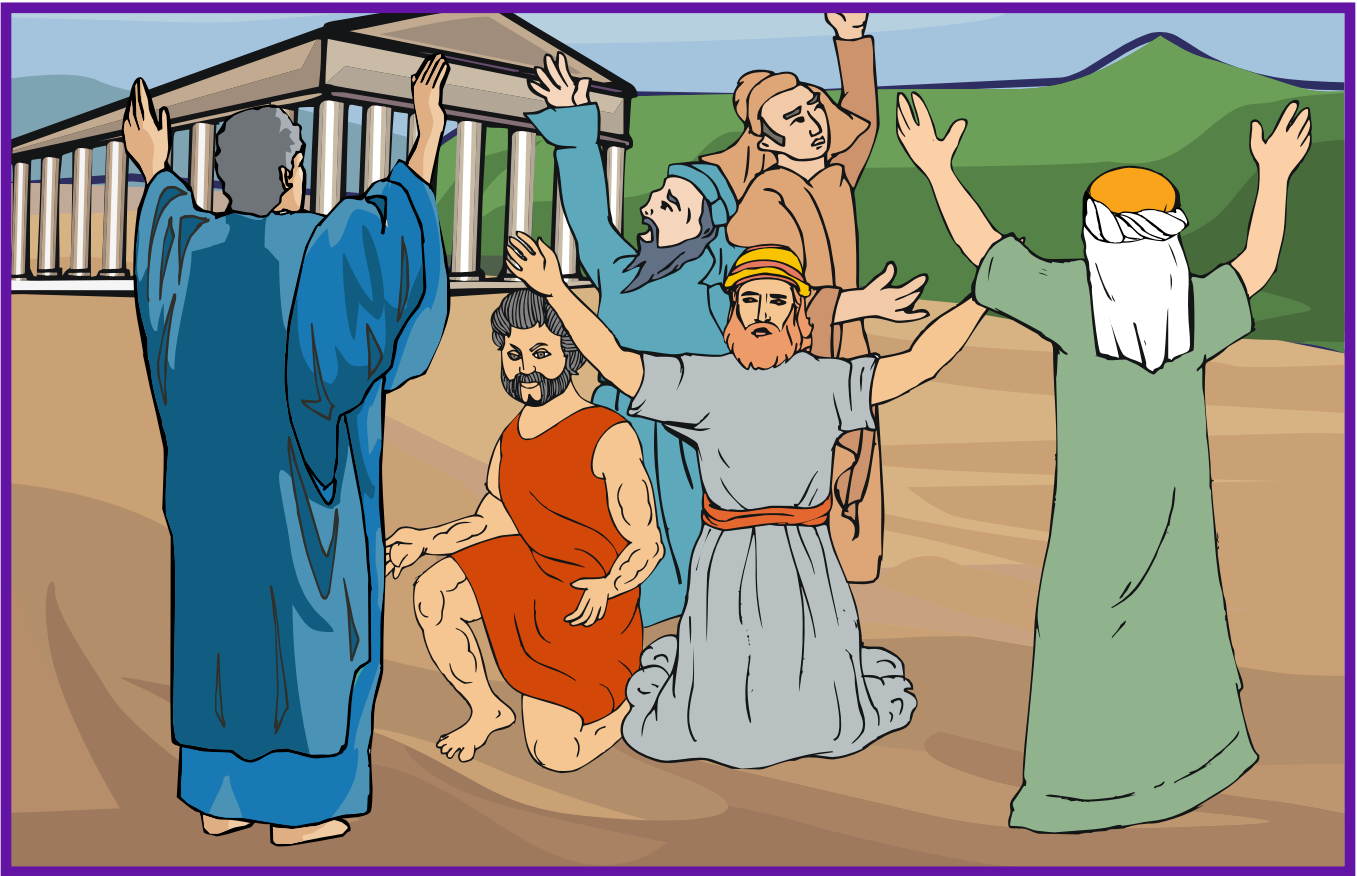
Paul begins to speak to the crowd. He's speaking Greek. Everyone in Asia Minor speaks Greek. He's telling them about Jesus, his teachings, and his power to heal. Let's watch what Paul does next. He's looking the lame man in the eye, exactly like Peter did to the other lame man. Paul can tell that this man has faith to be healed.



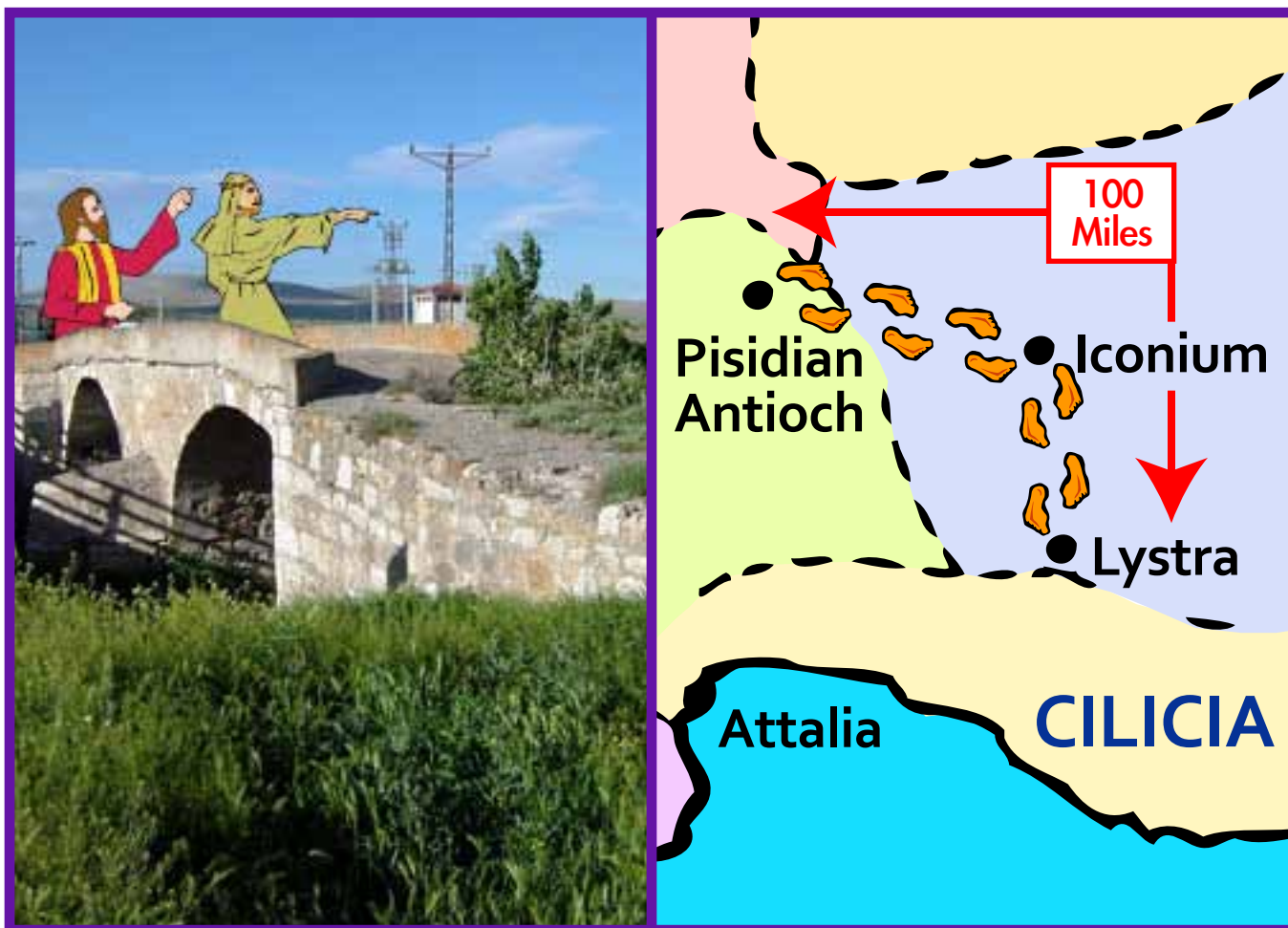
Listen! Do you hear what Paul is declaring to the lame man?
"Stand up on your feet!" Look! The man is doing it, just like the
lame man at the Temple. He's leaping and walking as if he's been
walking all his life! Aren't we glad we came today?



Suddenly, there is an uproar from the crowd. The people are wondering how these two strangers, Paul and Barnabas, can say and do such unusual things! Their voices are getting louder and louder. We can't understand them. They're shouting in their native tongue. Paul and Barnabas can't understand them, either. The people think that two of their gods have dropped down to them out of the clouds. Now, they're calling them by name: "Jupiter," "Mercury," "Jupiter," "Mercury"! They think Barnabas is Jupiter because he's noble-looking. They think Paul is Mercury because he's a good speaker. The priest is parading oxen to the Temple of Jupiter to sacrifice to the missionaries, believing they are gods.



Whoa! Stop! Paul and Barnabas finally understand what's going on. They begin to tear their robes. (Jews used to tear their clothes when they were protesting something horrible.) Now they're running into the middle of the crowd. They have to do some fast talking. "What do you think you're doing?," they yell. "Don't make gods out of us! We're men just like you. We've come here with a message from God to turn you away from these superstitions. Our God is living. Yours are dead. They can't help you. Our God made heaven and earth, the sea and everything in it. He is asking you to change those old ways. Our God's creation is good. He gives rain and good crops, good food and happy hearts." Finally, the people stop their parade to the Temple of Jupiter. Hooray, the people are convinced!



Oh, no, kids. Look who's coming over that old Roman bridge over there. We've seen those men before...in fact, just the other day when they were causing trouble for the disciples. They've followed Paul and Barnabas, not just from Iconium, but all the way from Pisidian Antioch. That's 100 miles! And they don't look happy! We better stay out of their way.



Look, they're talking to the people here. They're gathering a mob. Oh, no, they're picking up huge stones and throwing them at Paul as hard as they can. The stones are hitting Paul hard, again and again. Poor Paul!

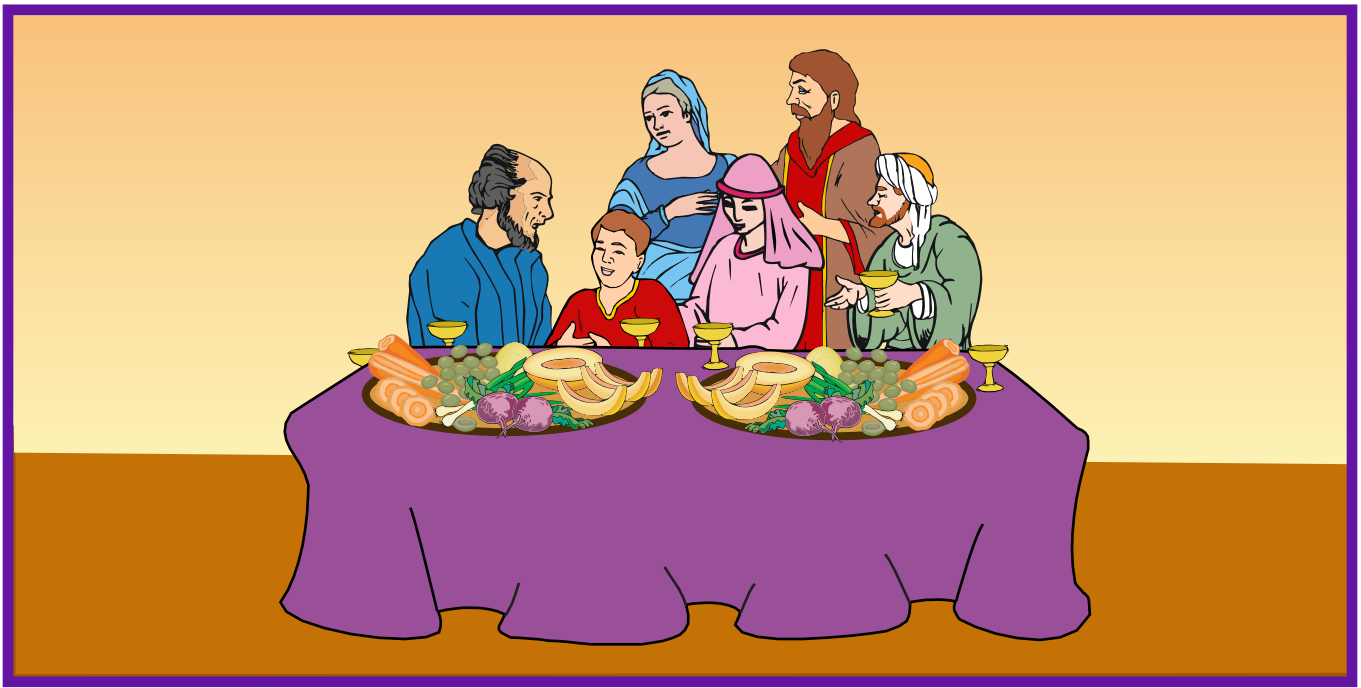


Now they're dragging Paul's lifeless body through the gates, and leaving him outside the city. What a horrible thing to happen!

Oh, but, wait! A group of men are coming to help, and they look friendly. Paul and Barnabas make both friends and enemies wherever they preach and heal. These friends are disciples and, therefore, Christians. They're making a circle around Paul. Barnabas must be there, too. We can't hear them, but they must be praying the way Paul taught them. The most important Christian lesson is the resurrection of Jesus, and proof of it occurred right here in Lystra when the man who had never walked rose up before the whole city. Will we see their prayers answered today?



Just look at Paul's friends! They are backing away to allow him to rise to his feet. What a good God we have! And, as it gets dark in Lystra, they are all returning to the city – yes, back into Lystra where all the trouble started. How brave these Christians are! They must know that if their God can raise the dead, He can certainly protect them from persecution. And we don't see the cruel men from Iconium and Pisidian Antioch any more, do we? They must have gone back home, thinking Paul was dead.



Paul and Barnabas need a place to stay in Lystra. We can imagine that they must have had lots of invitations to spend the night. The Bible tells us of one family in Lystra that might have given them a room. The family included Eunice, the mother; Lois, the grandmother; and Timothy, the young son. We don't know the father's name – only that he was Greek, and the mother was Jewish. We also know that when Timothy grows up, he will become an important worker in the Christian church. We assume that young Timothy met Paul and Barnabas, heard them preach, and was inspired enough to become a follower. And, so can we, thanks to the Bible and a tour like this one! Now, let's get back on our bus, and head to our next destination.

