

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Mistaken for a God**    Fifth Week of Easter    Monday, May 19, 2014    8:15 AM  
**Acts 14:5-18;**    Jn 14:21-26    (What Paul and Barnabas are really preaching about is a whole new way of looking at life, not inserting them into the old way.)

Today we have a very interesting story from the Acts of the Apostles about how **Paul is mistaken for some sort of god**. Now this idea that the gods showed up on earth was a common belief. So since Paul and his associates preached with great power and even brought healing to this man crippled from birth, that would lead them directly to think that, oh, these two must be gods. **They called one Hermes** because he was the speaker and Hermes was the god of messages, the god of communication, and **the other Zeus**, who is really the chief god, the father of the heavenly pantheon.

Now, you might say, some people have said, that this is a very innocent way of people trying to put the Christian gospel into their own world, their own framework. However, the real problem is that it misunderstands the actual nature of the gospel. First of all, **in the gospel the Word of God comes to earth not for a visit**—not for a visit! All the stories of the gods visiting were just that: they were visits. They were there for a while and then they left. Perhaps they left behind some favor or some gift, but they left, because the idea in the pagan world was that the gods were the real thing. Human beings weren't really of any real value. **Human beings were nothing but pawns on a chessboard. The gods were playing the game.** Even kings were just on the chessboard. Everyone was just a piece in a game; the gods played the game. The gods were the players.

What **Jesus** indicates is, first of all, he **becomes human and he stays**, number one. Number two, **That very idea of God becoming human elevates the whole value of humanity.** We cannot regard ourselves as the pagans did as merely pieces on a board. We are not being manipulated by some players. And if life looks that way, if the political and

economic conditions seem to justify that viewpoint, then they are actually evil. That's how the Church interpreted this from the very beginning: that **paganism was really a projection into some sort of theological picture of what was really going on on earth, which was evil**, because God did not intend it that way. And for God's plans to come to fruition, God himself came in the form of humanity. Why? Because humanity was already made in the image and likeness of God. This already gave a value to it that paganism never knew and never even guessed.

So what Paul and Barnabas are really preaching about is a whole new way of **looking at life, not inserting them into the old way**. And so they were appalled and aghast at this reception even though they are being honored. **They are being honored in a way that was perverse and completely reprehensible**, totally contrary to the very truth they were trying to share with these people.

This is something we have to take into consideration, that **sometimes people in their ignorance, in their sincerity, completely misunderstand everything and don't get the implications of anything. What the gospel requires is a complete change of mind and heart and will—and nothing less.**