

Acts 14:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

Analysis

They called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius—The assignment reveals ancient rhetorical expectations. Zeus (Jupiter) was king of gods, typically silent and majestic. Hermes (Mercury/Mercurius) was the messenger god and patron of eloquence. The Greek *hōgoumenos tou logou* (the chief speaker) explains Paul's identification with Hermes: his speaking role matched the herald deity.

Barnabas's apparently commanding physical presence (suggested by Zeus identification) contrasts with Paul's described weakness (2 Corinthians 10:10). This pagan theological framework completely inverted gospel truth—rather than recognizing the one true God, they multiplied deities.

Historical Context

Roman names Jupiter and Mercury translate Greek Zeus and Hermes. Archaeological discoveries near Lystra confirm local Zeus and Hermes worship. Inscriptions found in 1910 dedicated to 'Zeus and Hermes' verify Luke's historical accuracy about religious practices in this region.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do people today assign Christian ministers roles that obscure the gospel's true message?
2. What does Paul's identity as 'chief speaker' teach about the primacy of word ministry in apostolic mission?

Interlinear Text

ἐκάλουν	τε	τὸν	μὲν	Βαρναβᾶν	Δία	τὸν	δὲ	Παῦλον
they called	And	G3588	G3303	Barnabas	Jupiter	G3588	and	Paul
G2564	G5037			G921	G2203		G1161	G3972
Ἑρμῆν	ἐπειδὴ	αὐτὸς	ἦν	ὁ	ἡγούμενος	τοῦ	λόγου	
Mercurius	because	he	was	G3588	the chief	G3588	speaker	
G2060	G1894	G846	G2258		G2233		G3056	

Additional Cross-References

Acts 19:35 (Parallel theme): And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?