

## The Book of Acts Study Notes

### CHAPTER 15

#### The Council at Jerusalem

- ❖ Vs. 1: Not all but certain – everyone did not share their view but they were heard by many
  - In error, taught that except (only if) circumcised after the manner of Moses, can't be saved
    - The truth is: Acts 2:21, 16:31; John 3:3,36; Romans 3:24; Eph. 2:8-9
  - Note that they "came down" – they claimed faith but did not follow the teaching of faith and thus tried to deter others from true faith in Christ
- ❖ Vs. 2: The importance of order
  - Disputed with Paul and Barnabas but decided to take issue to apostles and elders
    - Requires apostles and elders to be in faith
- ❖ Vs. 3: Continued to share the conversion of the Gentiles as they went to Jerusalem to great joy...
- ❖ Vs. 4: Received at Jerusalem
- ❖ Vs. 5: The sect of the Pharisees:
  - Judaizers: believed salvation only if circumcised and live by Law – Gal. 2:14-15

#### IT'S TIME TO SPEAK UP

##### Peter Speaks Up (vs. 7-11)

- ❖ God chose to be inclusive of every one who would believe – Acts 10:34-35, 44-48
- ❖ No difference (no discrimination) – Rom 10:12-15
- ❖ Faith purifies our hearts not works –
- ❖ Vs. 10: Why tempt God
  - By putting yokes of bondage on fellow believers – Mat. 23:5; Gal. 5:1
    - Expect them to follow standard we can't even follow
- ❖ Vs. 11: We need the same salvation they have already realized
  - ➔ **THOSE WE OVERLOOK AND MARGINALIZE MAY BE A LOT CLOSER TO GOD THAN US**
  - Read Isa. 65:1-8 (MSG)

##### Barnabas and Paul Speak up (vs. 12)

- ❖ The multitude showed their willingness to listen by becoming silent – James 1:19-20
- ❖ They focused on what God was doing amongst His children – Acts 14:27; 15:3-4

##### James Speaks Up (vs. 13-21)

- ❖ James, the half-brother of Jesus (Acts 12:27)
- ❖ He is highly respected and presided over the council; is the author of the epistle James
- ❖ Vs. 14-17: Simon's words validated by scripture – Amos 9:11-12
- ❖ Vs. 18: God knows what He is doing – Acts 17:26; Eph. 1:11
- ❖ Vs. 19: don't trouble them
  - They are called out from among the Gentiles – 1 Pet. 2:9
  - They have turned to God – Acts 26:20; Isa. 55:7; 1 Thes. 1:9
- ❖ Vs. 20: gave them parameters – Acts 21:25; Lev. 17 & 18

- Abstain from pollutions of idols – defilement, idolatrous practices, meat from animals sacrificed to idols (Acts 15:29) – 1 Cor. 8:4-13
- Abstain from fornication (porneia) – 1 Cor. 6:18; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; 1 Thes. 4:3
- Abstain from things strangled – Deut. 14:21
- Abstain from blood – Gen. 9:4
- All of these would be highly offensive to common fellowship and known for centuries – vs. 21

### **How the Church Addressed the Issue and What We Can Learn from It (vs. 22-35)**

- ❖ They listened – vs. 12; Prov. 18:13
- ❖ Leadership spoke decisively – vs. 13-19; Eph. 4:1-6
- ❖ Leadership went beyond making a statement and took actions to address the concerns of these believers – vs. 22-35; James 2:14-17
  - They spoke on one accord – vs. 22
  - They chose ambassadors who weren't scared – vs. 22 & 26; 2 Cor. 5:18
  - They wrote a letter:
    - They identified the authority they spoke by – vs. 23
    - They spoke for everyone and on one accord – vs. 23; 25
    - They called the Gentiles their brethren – vs. 23
    - They addressed the issue and called it wrong – vs. 24; James 4:17
    - They said that the troublemakers did not speak for everyone – vs. 24
    - They empathized and acknowledged the pain it caused them – vs. 24
    - They specified what the error was – vs. 24; Prov. 28:13
    - They said clearly that they didn't speak for the Church – vs. 24; Eph. 2:14
    - They understood the need to send the right persons to handle the situation – vs. 22, 25
    - They acknowledge that they were led by the Holy Ghost and not mere flesh – vs. 28
    - They also told the Gentiles of their responsibility – vs. 28-29
  - They sent the right persons to assist in reconciliation:
    - They sent them off with clear directions – vs. 30
    - Judas and Silas gathered everyone together – vs. 30
      - Spoke to the crowd because they mattered to God
    - They encouraged and strengthened their brothers – vs. 31-32
    - They stayed longer than for a photo op – vs. 33
  - The brethren received and sent them back to apostles in peace:
    - They were willing to forgive and move forward

### **Paul and Barnabas Part Company**

- ❖ Went separate ways for a season but eventually came back together – Acts 15:36-39; 2 Tim. 4:11