

Acts 15 - Jerusalem Council; Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey; Paul & Barnabas Separate; Silas Joins Paul

III. Outreach to the remote parts of the earth (Acts 13:1–28:31)

(2) Jerusalem Council (15:1-35)

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C. Second missionary journey (15:36–18:22)

(A) Paul and Barnabas split (15:36-41)

1st Apostolic Council

Paul's first missionary was the primary event that changed the makeup of the Church from overwhelmingly Jewish to begin to include Gentiles. During this journey, Jewish rejection of the Gospel began to increase, but Gentiles began to get saved like crazy. A good example of what happened in just about every city Paul went is found in Acts 13:44-49.

So what began to happen to the Church, which began exclusively Jewish, is that Gentiles by the hundreds began coming into the Church. There arose a question about what to do with these Gentiles. Did they have to obey the Mosaic Law? Must they be circumcised?

This is probably what the apostles believed initially, because this had been the practice of Jews for over 1,500 years. In the prior dispensation (Law), Gentiles had to become Jewish proselytes and follow the Mosaic Law in order to serve God.

This question is what the Jerusalem Council considered in Acts 15: Did the Church need to follow the conversion process (becoming a proselyte) in order for Gentiles to join the church? Kingdom Now theologians misread the main question of this passage: The question before the council is not whether Gentiles needed to do anything (obey the Law, be circumcised, etc.) to be saved. That question was resolved with Cornelius, and the

subsequent meeting in Jerusalem (Jerusalem Council #1, Acts 10-11). The question before the apostles in Acts 15 not about what, if anything, Gentiles needed to do to be saved, it's what, if anything, they needed to join the Church. It wasn't a justification question, it was an ecclesiological question.

This council in Jerusalem falls between the first and second missionary journeys of Paul. On one hand, the Jerusalem Council became necessary because of what took place in the first missionary journey with the turning of many Gentiles to the acceptance of the Messiah, apart from the Law of Moses and circumcision. But, on the other hand, any further missionary activities by Paul, such as his second missionary journey, would have been impossible until this issue had been resolved once and for all. This is why we have the Jerusalem Council at this particular point in the Book of Acts.

Acts 15

(2) Jerusalem Council (15:1-35)

(A) Necessity of Paul and Barnabas to travel to Jerusalem (15:1-6)

1 Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

1 Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

1 Then some men came down from Judea and started to teach the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the Law of Moses, you can't be saved."

1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

- The objections to the inclusion of Gentiles apart from circumcision continued to come from some within the Jerusalem Church

- "Some men" - these were Pharisees who were saved ("brothers") by faith alone in Christ alone, but they believed that all believers had to adhere to the Mosaic Law in order to grow in Christ or join the church. They were called Judaizers

— These men were likely members of the same extremist group mentioned in 11:2, who challenged Peter about going into the home of an uncircumcised Gentile. They were united to insist that Gentiles adopt all of the Jewish practices. They wanted the church to grow by the same process as when proselytes entered Judaism: males must be circumcised, all must agree to keep all the Jewish covenant laws and conditions, which included all the traditions added by rabbis through the years.

— In the Bible, anyone who mixes faith with law is called a Pharisee. These Pharisees were all over the early church (Cf. Gal 2:4) and constantly come up in Acts. In the first Jerusalem Council (Cf. 11:2), these Jewish believers "took issue with him" for leading a Gentile to Christ.

— In the NT, there are three types of Pharisees:

1. Justification Pharisees (Matt 5:20) - these Pharisees believed that faith alone in Christ alone was not enough. You have to have faith plus circumcision in order to be saved. These are the primary people that Paul was always arguing with.
2. Sanctification Pharisees (Gal 3:3) - they believed that a person was saved/justified by faith alone in Christ alone, but you have to go under the Mosaic Law in order to grow as a believer. This is who Paul is dealing with in his epistle to the Galatians, which he wrote right after returning from his first missionary journey.
3. Ecclesiological Pharisees (Acts 15) - this group believed a person is saved by faith alone in Christ alone, but had to adhere to the Mosaic Law (and be circumcised) in order to join the Church. Once a person was saved, they had to obey the Law including observing Jewish feast days, keeping the Sabbath, tithing, etc.

— "...came down from Judea" - these men traveled from Judea (Jerusalem area) to (Syrian) Antioch

— "...teaching" - *didaskō*, imperfect tense meaning they began to teach and they kept doing so; they set about teaching with determination.

— "...the brothers" - these Pharisees were saved people, who were teaching other saved people how to grow in their walk with Christ

— They had this belief because this had been the way things worked in Judaism since Mount Sinai. If you were a Gentile in the OT and wanted to follow the God of Israel, you would become a "proselyte" (a Gentile convert to Judaism) and put themselves under the Mosaic Law in order to grow in their faith.

— The most famous proselyte in the OT is Ruth. She was from Moab, but wanted to follow the God of Israel (Cf. Ruth 1:16). These Pharisees believed that things would continue after the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ as it had for the past 1500 years.

— "...be saved" - *sōzō*, refers to second tense salvation, saved from the power of sin

— The issue in this chapter, as noted in the introduction above, was not whether or not Gentiles could be saved/justified. That was the question in Acts 11 and was resolved there.

— The issue at this Council meeting was whether Gentiles had to be circumcised and go under the Mosaic Law in order to "operate" as a believer, in order to join the church

2 And after Paul and Barnabas had a **heated argument** and debate with them, *the brothers* determined that Paul and Barnabas and **some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders** concerning this issue.

2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

2 Paul and Barnabas had quite a dispute and argument with them. So Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles and elders about this question.

2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

- Paul and Barnabas, fresh off their first missionary journey where they saw multitudes of Gentiles saved, would not allow these Gentiles to be brow-beaten by self-appointed "guardians of orthodoxy"

- "...heated argument" - *stasis*, an uproar; an insurrection. The implication is that these Judaizers caused a great deal of strife, which broke up the beautiful unity in the Church of Antioch (Cf. 11:19-30). The apostles needed to settle this issue to preserve truth and unity.

- "...some others of them" - to counter this dissension, the brethren decided to send a leadership delegation—Paul and Barnabas and "certain others" (Titus, an uncircumcised Greek, Gal 2:1-5)—to Jerusalem to lodge an inquiry

— These men accompanied Paul and Barnabas no doubt to protect them from accusations of distorting the facts

- "...should go up to Jerusalem" - travel from Antioch to Jerusalem

- Two categories of leaders of the Jerusalem Church:

- "...apostles" - the Twelve, who were with Christ from the beginning (except Matthias). It was important to consult with the apostles on this matter since the church was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Cf. Eph 2:20).

- "...elders" - the leaders who would replace the apostles once the apostles died. These were qualified, godly men whom God raised up as the next generation of leadership, once the apostles died off.

3 Therefore, after being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and they were bringing great joy to all the brothers *and sisters*.

3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren.

3 They were sent on their way by the church, and as they were going through Phoenicia and Samaria they told of the conversion of the gentiles and brought great joy to all the brothers.

3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

- As Paul and Barnabas were traveling from Antioch to Jerusalem, they stopped at various churches and assemblies of believers and told them about what God had done during their first missionary journey, and how many Gentiles came to faith in Christ.

— This news brought great joy and encouragement to the believers because they saw a continuation of what had happened to them. Their point was that salvation had been granted to these Gentiles apart from circumcision.

4 When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were received by the church, the apostles, and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them.

4 When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them.

4 When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church, the apostles, and the elders, and they reported everything that God had done through them.

4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

- Upon their arrival in Jerusalem, they were greeted by the apostles and elders, and they began to described all that God had done through them during their first missionary journey

Four Meetings?

1. A public meeting, at which Paul recounted what God had done among the Gentiles (Acts 15:4)
2. Paul's private meeting with the leaders (Gal 2:2). Paul met with the leaders privately to keep out the "spies" (Gal 2:4) and to avoid any open disagreements that would only add fuel to the fire.
3. The public debate (v5; Gal 2:3-5)
4. The council session at which the matter was finally settled (v6-29)

5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees **who had believed** stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to keep the Law of Moses."

5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

5 But some believers from the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The gentiles must be circumcised and ordered to keep the Law of Moses."

5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

- Anytime the Lord is working or His people are celebrating His work, the Pharisees (legalists) seem to show up and rain on the parade

- "...who had believed" - these Pharisees were saved people, but they just had bad theology; they were born again, but they were legalists

- 6 The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.
- 6 The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.
- 6 So the apostles and the elders met to look into this claim.
- 6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

- The Council meeting is convened by the apostles, and the decision will be binding upon the church because of the presence and authority of the apostles.

— Peter and the rest of the apostles were given the authority by Jesus Himself of "binding" and "loosing" (Matt 16:19; 18:18) which means to restrict behavior or allow behavior, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that were on par with Scripture.

— This is an authority only given to the Apostles (including Matthias and Paul), not to anyone else. A pastor today, no matter the size of his church, does not have the authority to make church-wide decisions that are on par with Scripture like the original Apostles did.

— The Roman Catholic church, as well as many Protestant denominations, like to hold meetings like the Jerusalem Council to make decisions that, they say, should affect all Christians. However, there are no longer apostles today, so all decisions made must be made based on what the Bible says, not what the pope, priests, bishops, pastors or elders today have to say.

The OT taught that Gentiles would share in the promises made to Israel (Gen 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Is 49:6; 55:5-7; Zeph 3:9-10; Zech 8:22). The OT prophets also spoke of Gentile salvation as happening in the last days (Is 2:2; 11:10; 25:8-9; Zech 8:23) through the witness of a restored Israel (Is 2:3; 60:2-3; Zech 8:23).

The Jerusalem Council

In v7-12, Peter, Paul, and Barnabas speak of God's eternal plan, where He chose to include Gentiles as recipients of God's blessing through the gospel. James, the half-brother of Jesus and head of the Jerusalem Church at the time, explains the council's decision in v13-29.

James explains in v14 how Peter said, "God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name." The vocabulary chosen by James paints the picture of God surveying the Gentiles and based upon His scrutiny, He then selects out from the mass of Gentile humanity "a people for His name." In v15 James says, "with this the words of the Prophets agree." Amos 9 speaks of the Kingdom when Gentiles will be saved. Then, by way of application, because of only one point of similarity, the salvation of

the Gentiles, he applied this verse to their present situation. When he stated: *as it is written*, he was pointing out that the OT actually predicted the salvation of the Gentiles. The important thing to note is that James quotes an OT passage that speaks of Gentile salvation in the millennium. The implication is that if Gentiles are going to be saved as Gentiles, without converting to Judaism, in the millennium, then Gentiles do not need to convert to Judaism in order to be saved in the present Church Age. Since James spoke of prophets (plural), he indicates that more than once the prophets spoke of Gentile salvation, even though his example comes from Amos 9 (see Is 42:1; 49:4-5).

The prophets anticipated a future dealing with the Gentiles and so this present visitation of God to the Gentiles is not out of harmony with the divine attitude toward them. The quotation serves to voice God's approval of the present extension of salvation to the Gentiles although it is fulfilled by a future work among them.

Four reasons James asserted that Gentiles will be saved in the Millennium when Christ will return and rebuild David's fallen tent (restore the nation of Israel):

1. This fits the purpose of the council. If Gentiles will be saved in the Millennium, why should they become Jewish proselytes by circumcision in the Church Age?
2. This approach suits the meaning of "in that day" in Amos 9:11. After the Tribulation (Amos 9:8-10) God will establish the Messianic Kingdom (Amos 9:11-12). James (Acts 15:16) interpreted "in that day" to mean that "at the time when" God does one (the Tribulation) He will then do the other. In this sense James could say "After this."
3. This interpretation gives significance to the word "first" in v14. Cornelius and his household were among the first Gentiles to become members of Christ's body, the Church. Gentile salvation will culminate in great blessing for them in the millennial kingdom (Cf. Rom 11:12).
4. A number of prophets predicted Gentile salvation in the Millennium, as James stated in Acts 15:15 (e.g., Is 42:6; 60:3; Mal 1:11).

(B) Deliberations (15:7-21)

(a) Peter's speech (15:7-11)

7 After there had been **much debate**, **Peter** stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that **in the early days** God made a choice among you, that **by my mouth** the Gentiles would **hear the word of the gospel and believe**.

7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.

7 After a lengthy debate, Peter stood up and told them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days, God chose me to be the one among you through whom the gentiles would hear the message of the gospel and believe.

7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

— "...much debate" - notice that there was a "debate" meaning both sides were able to present their arguments and evidence; one side wasn't muzzled, cancelled, or forbidden to speak. Everything was aired and out in the open.

— "...Peter" - Peter disappears from Acts in 11:17 (see notes there), but makes a brief appearance at this Jerusalem Council due to the important topics being debated

— "...in the early days" - about 10-12 years earlier. It was God who chose Peter among all Jewish believers to minister the gospel to the Gentiles, that they should believe.

— Peter makes it clear that it was God's choice, not his, that the Gentiles should hear the gospel. Peter's point was that God gave the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles as soon as they believed in Jesus Christ; they did nothing but "believe" and they received the sign of their acceptance by God, exactly the same way the Jews did at Pentecost.

— "...by my mouth" - Peter is referring back a few years to when God used him to lead Cornelius, the first Gentile, to Christ

— "...hear the word of the gospel and believe" - another example of the need for an unbeliever to "hear" the gospel in order to believe (see note: **The Gospel Is Necessary for Salvation** in Rom 1:16). If the gospel is not articulated to someone, they cannot get saved.

— This defeats the whole Social Gospel movement, which believes that Christians should do humanitarian work, service projects, give food to the needy, etc., but never gives them the gospel.

— There is obviously nothing wrong with humanitarian projects, giving food to the needy, etc., but if you never give them the "word of the gospel" all you're doing is sending people to hell on a full stomach. These types of good deeds should be used as a platform to give people the gospel.

— Mowing lawns, pulling weeds, doing home repairs, or giving someone food is NOT fulfilling the Great Commission

8 And God, who knows the heart, testified to **them giving them the Holy Spirit**, just as He also did to **us**;

8 And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us;

8 God, who knows everyone's heart, showed them he approved by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us.

8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

— "...them" [2x] - the Gentiles

- "...giving them the Holy Spirit" - God's giving of the Holy Spirit to believing Gentiles was the key evidence of God's acceptance by grace through faith, apart from circumcision and works of the Law
- Peter used this same evidence twice before (10:44-48; 11:15-17)
- "...us" - the Jews
- The Spirit came into those uncircumcised Gentiles just as He did the circumcised Jews on the Day of Pentecost (2:4-12). The church had questioned Peter at that time, and it was determined to be right to accept the new believers without discrimination.

9 and He made **no distinction** between **us** and **them**, **cleansing their hearts** by faith.
 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.
 9 He made no distinction between them and us, because of their faith-cleansed hearts.
 9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

- "...no distinction" - when the Jews were saved at Pentecost, they received the Holy Spirit; likewise, when Cornelius (an uncircumcised Gentile) and his household were saved, they received the Holy Spirit just like the Jews did.
- There was absolutely zero difference between the way the Jews at Pentecost were saved and the way the Gentiles, beginning with Cornelius, were saved. Paul later talks about this in greater detail in Eph 2:15-16 as he develops the concept of the body of Christ (Cf. Gal 3:28).

Eph 2:15-16:

15 by abolishing in His flesh the hostility, *which is the Law composed of commandments expressed in ordinances*, so that in Himself He might make the two one new person, *in this way establishing peace*;
 16 and that He might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the hostility.

- "...them" - the Gentiles
- "...us" - the Jews
- "...cleansing their hearts" - alludes to the New Covenant, which is all about changing the heart (Cf. Jer 31:31-34)
- The New Covenant was given by God to Israel, but the Church is a partaker (not a take-overer) of this covenant. We participate (receive) some of the salvation-oriented promises of the New Covenant.
- This is why Paul is raising money for the suffering saints in Jerusalem (Cf. Rom 15), he says that Gentiles owe a debt to the Jews, although they are in unbelief, to bless them materially because we are beneficiaries spiritually of the New Covenant.

10 Since **this** is the case, why are you **putting God to the test** by placing upon the neck of **the disciples a yoke** which **neither our forefathers nor we have been able to bear**?

10 Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

10 So why do you test God by putting on the disciples' neck a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we could carry?

10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

- "...this" - since God made no distinction between Jews and Gentile salvation (v8-9)

- "...putting God to the test" - literally means to "try God's patience"; requiring Gentiles to become Jews before joining the Church would "test" God in that it would question the rightness of His action in giving the Spirit to Cornelius

- "...the disciples" - in this context, Gentile followers of Christ; it's used here in its generic form to simply refer to a believer

- "...a yoke" - *zygos*, refers to a burden or bondage; something that encumbers someone from getting where they want to go. The Mosaic Law was a "yoke" (Gal 5:1).

— When a Gentile became a Jewish proselyte, the Jew in charge of the ceremony said the Gentile now "took up the yoke of the kingdom of heaven" (Cf. Matt 23:4; Gal 5:1)

— Peter said this "yoke," the Mosaic Covenant, was an obligation that was both unbearable and unnecessary (Cf. Matt 11:29-30)

— "...neither our forefathers nor we have been able to bear" - Peter's point is that Israel in the OT committed at Sinai to follow all of God's laws, then proceeded to completely over-promise and under-deliver. They didn't obey anything, hardly ever. As you read the OT, all you see is disobedience to God's law, and the punishment/discipline that He meted out because of it.

— Since the time that God gave the Israelites the Mosaic Law, almost 1500 years before Peter's speech here, Israel rarely ever kept the Law. And those few times they did, it was only a short period of time before they would retreat back into idolatry or other sins.

— So Peter's reasoning here is...we've had the Law almost 1500 years...our forefathers had a horrendous track record of keeping the Law, and even ourselves, here today, have failed miserably...so where's the logic in telling these newly saved Gentiles that they have to obey the Law when we've stunk at doing so for almost 1500 years?

— And besides, Ps 147:19-20 tells us that the Mosaic Law was only for Israel, not for any other nation. So this is another reason why the Gentiles did not need to go under the Mosaic Law for their salvation, their sanctification, or in order to join the church.

Psalm 147:19-20:

19 He declares His words to **Jacob**, His statutes and His judgments to **Israel**.

20 He has not dealt this way with any other nation; And as for His judgments, **they have not known them.** Praise the LORD!

11 But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, **in the same way as they also are.**"

11 But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

11 We certainly believe that it is through the grace of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, that we are saved, just as they are."

11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

- "...in the same way as they also are" - by referring to Jews being saved in the same manner as the Gentiles, instead of vice versa, Peter repudiated any thought of Jewish superiority

— Clearly Peter had recovered from his lapse at Antioch (Gal 2:11-14)

- Why would we put them under a legal system that didn't save anyone, and that Jews historically have never been able to follow?

- Both Jews and Gentiles are saved in the exact same way: through the grace of Jesus Christ

- Notice that Peter does not mention water baptism being required for salvation. He simply says that Jews and Gentiles were both saved in the same way, not by keeping the Law or through water baptism, but by the grace of God.

- These are the last recorded words of Peter in Acts

To summarize Peter's argument: first, it was God's choice that the Gentiles should hear the gospel; secondly, He gave them the Holy Spirit without distinction and without discrimination, which was the evidence of their acceptance; and thirdly, the Law was an unbearable yoke upon the Jews, so why inflict it upon the Gentiles?

(b) Paul and Barnabas' speeches (15:12)

12 All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles.

12 All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

12 The whole crowd was silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul tell about all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the gentiles.

12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

- "...Barnabas and Paul" - why this order when Paul is usually noted first? Because Barnabas was better known to this group (4:36-37; 11:22).
- After Peter finished giving his two cents, Paul and Barnabas began recounting for the apostles and elders how God had shown them unbelievable favor in bringing numerous Gentiles to Christ
 - This was the first time the gospel left the borders of Israel and went into Gentile territory, and God prospered them
 - They likely also described that in every city they entered, they first went to the Jewish synagogue to preach the gospel to the Jews, and most of the time they were thrown out. Then they went to the Gentiles, preached the gospel, and they were saved in droves.
 - In fact, Paul and Barnabas were so successful in preaching to the Gentiles that the Jews who had thrown them out of the synagogue got angry and began persecuting them, which is why they had to move from city to city.
 - Paul's point is that God would not have blessed and prospered this first missionary journey like He did if God did not want Gentiles to be saved

(c) James' speech (15:13-21)

- 13 After they stopped speaking, **James** responded, saying, "Brothers, listen to me.
- 13 After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me.
- 13 After Paul and Barnabas had finished speaking, James responded, "Brothers, listen to me:
- 13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

- "...James" - there are four "James" mentioned in the NT (Cf. 1:13-14):
 - James, the father of Judas (not Iscariot)
 - James, the son of Alphaeus
 - James, the son of Zebedee, brother of Apostle John
 - James, the half-brother of Christ, pastor/leader of the Jerusalem Church
- It's unlikely that the James here is the father of Judas or James the son of Alphaeus, as both are relatively unknown and not often mentioned. It could not be James the son of Zebedee and brother of John because he was martyred (Cf. 12:2). So the only option remaining is James, the half-brother of Christ and the pastor of the church at Jerusalem.
- There are also key similarities between James' speech here and the epistle of James, which demonstrates that this James is the James, half-brother of Christ
- "...Brothers" - another clue that the dispute here is amongst believers, not between believers and unbelievers. Everyone in this room was a believer, wrestling with an ecclesiological (church) issue, not a justification (salvation, resolved in Acts 11) or sanctification (growth, resolved in Galatians) issue.

14 **Simeon** has described **how God first** concerned Himself about **taking a people for His name** from among the Gentiles.

14 Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name.

14 Simeon has explained how God first showed his concern for the gentiles by taking from among them a people for his name.

14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

- "Simeon" - an Aramaic form of Peter's Hebrew name, Simon

- "...how God first" - James recapped Peter's testimony (v7-11) before the council, about how Gentile evangelism was first begun by Peter, then carried on by Paul

— God, through Peter, visited the Gentiles for the purpose of opening the door of salvation to them (Cf. Matt 16:19). Paul led the majority of Gentile evangelism after Cornelius was saved.

- "...taking" - *lambanō*, "to take for oneself for the purpose of carrying away." It's a reference to the Rapture, and indicates it will take place before the 70th Week of Daniel begins.

- "...a people for His name" - the vocabulary chosen by James paints the picture of God surveying the Gentiles, and based upon His scrutiny, He then selects out from the mass of Gentile humanity: "a people for His name."

— God is working out His plan: Israel, His covenant people, had been set aside nationally because of their rejection of the Messiah, and God is now taking out a people, Jew and Gentile, to constitute this "new man," the Church of God.

— God has always had a "people for His name" among the Jews (the Jewish Remnant); now He will also have "a people" among the Gentiles (a Gentile Remnant)

James explained how the decision of the council at Jerusalem was an outworking of God's purpose for this age. God's plan for history relates to the past ages with Israel and to Israel's role in the coming age (the millennium), but the current Church Age will center around the Gentiles. After the Church Age is concluded, the Lord will return, and 'rebuild the tabernacle of David' (v16), i.e. the nation of Israel. This OT reference is from Amos 9:11-12. During the Tribulation, the Lord will work to convert the nation of Israel to Himself, ending with the Second Coming and the millennial reign of Christ. God's plans for history will come to pass just as He ordained. [Thomas Ice]

15 The words of the Prophets **agree** with this, just as it is written:

15 With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written,

15 This agrees with the words of the prophets. As it is written,

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets;

- To backup his statement that this was God's plan all along, James quotes Amos 9:11-12...

- "...agree" - *symphōneō*, supports, harmonizes, suitable; James reminded the audience that the OT prophets supported the salvation of Gentiles apart from Judaism. What Peter said was "in harmony" with what the OT prophets said (Cf. Is 42:1; 49:4-5).

— Note that James did not say the salvation of Gentiles *then* was the *fulfillment* of these prophecies; he said the prophets' predictions of future Gentile salvation *harmonized* with the present salvation of Gentiles apart from Judaism (Cf. 2:16).

— *Symphōneō* is where we get the English word "symphony." The word *symphōneō* is much different than the Greek word for "fulfilled" [*plēroō*] (Cf. 1:16). Why does this matter?

— It matters because amillennialism teaches that we are in the kingdom now/today in spiritual form, and they use this verse to argue in favor of that belief, interpreting the word *symphōneō* in the same way you would interpret "fulfilled" [*plēroō*].

— The problem is, James does not say that this prophecy (v16-18, Cf. Amos 9:11-12) is being "fulfilled," he says that the prophets "spoke as one" on this issue.

— What do the Prophets "agree" about? What all of the OT prophets agree on is that when the future millennial kingdom comes, believing Gentiles will be full citizens of that kingdom, just like the Jews.

— What James is actually doing here is using an OT passage about the future millennial kingdom to explain a pattern of God. Then he uses it to reason that if Gentiles are being saved now, in the exact same way that Jews are being saved, and both are filled with the Holy Spirit, and if Gentiles will one day be full citizens in the millennial kingdom, then why would we (the apostles) force the Gentiles to do something now to join the church that Jews don't have to do to join the church?

- This verse, coincidentally, is one of the great "war zones" in the Bible. Reformed Theology, which believes and teaches Replacement Theology, interprets "agree" in this verse as "fulfilled." To get to this interpretation, you have to completely disregard the different Greek words for each of these words, and then read into the text what you need it to say in order to support your amillennial belief system.

— Kim Riddlebarger, an amillennialist, says the following about this verse:

James saw the prophecy as fulfilled in Christ's resurrection and exaltation and in the reconstitution of his disciples as the new Israel. The presence of both Jew and Gentile in the church was proof that the prophecy of Amos had been fulfilled. David's fallen tent had been rebuilt by Christ. In Amos's prophecy, 'after this' indicated that the prophecy referred to what God would do for Israel after the exile. When James applied this prophecy to the church, was he spiritualizing an OT text? Or was James reading

the OT through a Christ-centered lens typical of the greater light of the messianic age?

- About the dispensational view of this passage (see notes), Riddlebarger says:
If this is true, when Paul and Barnabas sought guidance for a concern that was immediate to them (Should Gentile converts be circumcised to join the church?), James responded by pointing to a future millennium thousands of years distant.
- Yes, exactly. God didn't speak to anyone in this council, as He had multiple times elsewhere in Acts, both before and after this council meeting. Since God was silent on this groundbreaking issue, James went to the OT (Hebrew Bible) for guidance, identified Amos 9:11-12 (among others), and used the Amos passage to analogically reason that if Gentiles would be full-fledged citizens of the kingdom, as Gentiles and not as proselytized Jews, then it made sense for the council to allow Gentiles to become members of the church without circumcision or going under the Mosaic Law.
- The Bible often gives us a prophecy of an event in the future, then describes how that event, which has not yet come to pass, should affect our lives today. Probably the best example is 2 Peter 3:10-11:

The Prophetic Event

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be discovered.

The Present Application

11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

- The Prophetic Event described in v10 will occur after the Tribulation and millennial kingdom, so it is a minimum of 1007 years future.
- The Present Application is that because of this event, at least 1007 years future to right now, will take place, how it should affect my daily life today.
- So it is not unreasonable or out of the norm for the Holy Spirit to inspire and a biblical author to write about an prophetic event far into the future, then get a present-day application from that future event.
- So when Riddlebarger or other amillennialists say that the future cannot inform the present, they are dumping on to you an assumption or presupposition that isn't present in, or arguable from, Scripture.

- Contrary to Kingdom Now theology, the budding salvation of Gentiles did not *fulfill* Amos 9:11-12, they merely "agreed" with the words of the prophets, specifically Amos (but included others)

- The present inclusion of Gentiles in the Church is consistent with God's promise to Israel through Amos (Rom 16:25; Eph 3:9). The present salvation of Gentiles apart from Judaism does not contradict anything Amos said about future Gentile blessing.

16 'AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE FALLEN TABERNACLE OF DAVID, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT,

16 'After these things I will return, And I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, And I will rebuild its ruins, And I will restore it,

16 "After this, I will come back and set up David's fallen tent again. I will restore its ruined places and set it up again

16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

- "AFTER THESE THINGS" - James introduced his quotation from Amos to show the time period in history that Amos was referring to: the time after the present world witness, when Christ will return at the Second Coming to setup the millennial kingdom.
- James drops the phrase "In that day" from his quotation of Amos 9:11, and adds here: "After this I will return..."
- "In that day" in Amos 9:11 provides the timing that the Lord will rebuild the fallen tabernacle of David, which is within a millennial context (compare to Amos 9:13-15)
- "...I will return" - James was telling the council, which was primarily Jewish, that after the present Church Age is complete, then the Lord will "return" and fulfill His promises to Israel
- This provides a clear outline for history...the current Church Age followed by fulfillment of the Davidic promises to Israel in the messianic kingdom
- Thus, "After this" is after the fullness of the Gentiles. After this, two things happen:
 1. Blindness is relieved from Israel
 2. The return of Jesus Christ
- "...REBUILD" [2x] - Amos used poetic language for the house and throne of David, describing it as a broken down hut, having no power. The promise was that it would be restored, built again. The picture was of a desolate, fallen, torn-down tent of David, but God would rebuild it.
- They knew it would soon be destroyed (Matt 24:2; Luke 19:41-44), but James used a prophecy from Amos that was already 800 years old to show the Temple will be rebuilt when the Lord has finished with the Church.
- After that the Gentiles who will have missed the Rapture will have one final chance to be saved as well. This settled the issue of Israel's future.
- "...TABERNACLE OF DAVID" - the nation of Israel, specifically the Davidic throne, kingdom and dynasty during the messianic kingdom.

- By no possible stretch of the plain meaning of the passage can the "tabernacle of David" be equivalent to the NT Church. The prophecy concerns the rebuilding of that which was fallen down. The "ruins" are to be rebuilt "as in the day of old."
- Equating "tabernacle of David" with the Church completely misunderstands or ignores the mystery nature of the Church; the Church is nowhere found in the OT. There is no way Amos could be prophesying of the Church Age in the OT, as he had no idea what the Church Age was.
- The nature of the blessings are earthly, territorial, and national, and have nothing to do with a spiritual church to which none of these blessings has been promised. There are other reasons:
 1. The eschatological context of Amos 9 is against this view
 2. It would be unlikely to say that the Church was in a state of "having fallen down"
 3. It is inconceivable that the Church could ever be called the "dynasty of David," or, for that matter, any kind of dynasty
- Is 16:5 states that a King from the household of David will sit on a throne inside the tent of David, and will execute mercy, judgment and righteousness
- See note: **Tabernacle of David** in Amos 9:11.
- "...RUINS" - the Davidic dynasty is currently in "ruins" because Israel rejected the Messiah, her King

So why does James quote from Amos 9? He's not using it to teach that we're in the kingdom now or that Jesus is sitting on David's throne; he's using it as an analogy because God did not directly speak by vision/dream or audible voice (as He did numerous other times in Acts) in regards to the question before the council. So the apostles consulted prior revelation, the OT/Hebrew Bible, under the influence of the Holy Spirit in order to understand God's will in this situation.

So James' point is this: according to Amos, when the millennial kingdom is setup, Gentiles will be full partakers in it. And if they will be full partakers in the kingdom, why shouldn't they be full partakers now? In the kingdom, Gentiles will not be converted into Jews; instead they will be in the kingdom as Gentiles. This allowed James to conclude that if God had a program for Gentiles in the future kingdom, there was no reason to deny that God could include Gentiles as Gentiles in the Church. Thus, the issue was settled—the Gentiles did not need to be circumcised and bring themselves under the Mosaic Law in order to participate in the Church. See [The Coming Kingdom 64 Is Jesus Reigning from David's Throne? - Part 11 \(Acts 15:14-21\)](#).

17 SO THAT **THE REST OF MANKIND** MAY SEEK THE LORD, **AND ALL THE GENTILES** WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,'

17 So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,'

17 so that the rest of the people may search for the Lord, including all the gentiles who are called by my name,' declares the Lord. 'He is the one who has been doing these things

17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

- "...THE REST OF MANKIND" - includes Gentiles

- "...AND" - better translated "even" (in the exegetical use of this conjunction). This is the reason the Lord will rebuild the house of David: Gentile salvation.

— This was the purpose of God from the beginning. God always intended to allow for Gentile salvation, and now He finally made that a reality.

- "...ALL THE GENTILES" - another reference to Gentiles. James is showing through this quote that there will be Gentile believers at this time (in the kingdom), thus he concluded that Gentiles are not required to become Jewish proselytes by circumcision in order to join the church.

— In the kingdom, Gentiles would not be proselytized into Judaism, but instead they would be in the kingdom as Gentiles. This allowed James to conclude that if God had a program for the Gentiles as Gentiles in the millennial kingdom, there was no reason to deny that God would include Gentiles as Gentiles in the church.

— Thus, the issue was settled: Gentiles did not need to be circumcised and put themselves under the Mosaic Law in order to participate in the church. Rather, apart from the Law, through faith alone in Christ alone, they are equal participants with believing Jews in the church.

- James' logic here, taken from this passage in Amos (but agreed upon by all the prophets) was that if Gentiles would be full-fledged citizens of the millennial kingdom, then what is the reason we should now allow them into the church now?

— James has to reason analogically from the OT (Hebrew Bible) because there was no direct revelation from God (a dream or vision) regarding this issue

18 SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS known from **longago**.

18 Says the Lord, who makes these things known from long ago.

18 that have been known from long ago.'

18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

- Quoted from Is 45:21

- James added this quote from Isaiah to add authority to the Amos prophecy

- "...long ago" - *aion*, from all eternity

In James' quote of Amos, he does not change Amos' meaning one iota. James is reading and interpreting Amos 9:11-12 in the context in which Amos wrote. Amos said, and James was in agreement, that when the future millennial kingdom comes, Gentiles will be full-fledged citizens of that kingdom. So James reads Amos' writings in context, then analogically applies it to the question at hand. Based on what Amos said, and not just Amos by all the other prophets "agree" as well, Gentiles will be full-fledged citizens of the messianic kingdom. Since this is the case, why not allow the Gentiles to become part of the church now? If believing Gentiles will be co-equal citizens with believing Jews in the kingdom, why shouldn't they be co-equal citizens of the church now?

James is essentially reasoning analogically from the millennial kingdom back to the church age that if the Gentiles are allowed by God into the kingdom, they should be allowed into the church now. If God's pattern is to include all believers, Jews and Gentiles, in the kingdom in the future, it would logically be God's will to include all believers, both Jews and Gentiles, in the church now.

James is not arguing that the kingdom had begun in spiritual form. He is respecting the original intent and context of Amos 9, and is just using it here by way of analogy.

These few verses answer several important theological questions. They show the New Covenant did not *replace* the Old Covenant, but merely *interrupted* it. They prove God didn't intend for the Church to replace Israel in His plan forever, He just set Israel aside temporarily so the door of salvation could be opened to the Gentiles. In Is 49:6 the Father said to the Son: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

With the added insight from Rom 11:25 we can also confirm that Israel and the Church are like oil and water in that they don't mix. For one to be here the other has to be gone. The two systems are theologically incompatible. You can't have a system of faith evidenced by obedience to the Law complete with daily animal sacrifices functioning beside a system of grace through faith alone with no other requirement than to believe in the one He has sent (John 6:29).

Therefore the Church is not the next dot on a straight line from Creation to Eternity. It's a giant right hand turn that takes believers to a unique and exclusive destiny that no other believers will share, and allows the Lord to fulfill His promises to Israel at the same time. We tend to think the only reason for the Rapture is to get the Church out of the way of the end times judgments. But this shows us there's another reason why the Church can't be on Earth during any of Daniel's 70th Week: we have to leave so Israel can come back to God.

Conclusion: Concerning the Gentiles

19 Therefore, it is my judgment that we **do not cause trouble for those** from the Gentiles who are turning to God,

19 Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles,

19 "Therefore, I have decided that we should not trouble these gentiles who are turning to God.

19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

- James delivers his resolution for adoption by the council...

- "...do not cause trouble for those" - do not "trouble" the Gentiles by placing upon them the requirements of Jewish proselytes: circumcision and observance of the Mosaic Law

— In other words, they should not make it difficult for these Gentile believers to be saved. The Gentiles who had turned to God should not be annoyed with a demand for their circumcision.

20 but that we write to them that they **abstain from things contaminated by idols**, from **acts of sexual immorality**, from what has **been strangled**, and from **blood**.

20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.

20 Instead, we should write to them to keep away from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from anything strangled, and from blood.

20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

- James is concluding that the Gentile converts are not to be burdened with the yoke that Israel has had to bear. There is no reason for them to be, because Israel and the Church are separate entities.

- James suggest four Gentile abstentions that involved ethical and moral issues, that would control social interaction between Jewish and Gentile believers (these practices would've offended Jews).

— So the decision was for Gentiles to be "put under the Law" in order to not offend their Jewish brothers, and maintain their witness for the purpose of evangelism. The purpose was not for the salvation (justification or sanctification), but for their evangelism. It's difficult to evangelize someone whom you are at the same time offending.

— Paul would often "put himself under the Law" in order to further his ministry: he got his haircut and went under the Nazarite Vow (?:?); he issued an animal sacrifice (21:26); he circumcised Timothy so that he might better minister to Jews (?:?). But if you told Paul that he'd have to go under the Law to be justified or sanctified, he'd fight you to the death.

- "...abstain from things contaminated by idols" - abstain from things sacrificed to idols (Cf. v29; 1 Cor 10:14-22)
 - This was forbidden under the Mosaic Law (Ex 34:15), but it was permitted to eat meat sacrificed to idols under grace (1 Cor 8:1,4,7,10; 10:19)
 - "...sexual immorality" - *porneias*, normally this refers to sexual immorality, but in this context, it is not dealing with actual sin, but rather the issue of not offending Jewish believers. It probably refers to unlawful Levitical marriages, such as those listed in Lev 18:6-18, close family marriages.
 - "...been strangled" - meat from which the blood had not been drained; this was also forbidden by the Mosaic Law (Lev 17:13)
 - "...blood" - from drinking blood; this was a pagan practice, also forbidden by the Law (Lev 17:10-14)
 - The idea here is not to put the Gentiles back under the Mosaic Law, since they had just ruled that this would be foolishness. Rather, while the drinking/consumption of blood was forbidden in the Mosaic Law, it was first forbidden in the Noahic Covenant (Cf. Gen 9:4), thus the command preceded the Mosaic Law by hundreds of years.

21 For from ancient generations Moses has those who preach him in every city, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

21 For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

21 After all, Moses has had people to proclaim him in every city for generations, and on every Sabbath his books are read aloud in the synagogues."

21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

- In the weekly synagogue Scripture readings, teachers of the Law had stressed Jewish scruples regarding these matters for generations; consequently, the Jews regarded them as extremely important

— If Gentile believers disregarded the convictions of these Jews, they would alienate those they hoped to bring to faith in Christ or to grow and mature in their walk (Cf. 1 Cor 8:13)

The Christian Jews could love God by letting go of many of their demands. The Christian Gentiles could love God by avoiding practices that were particularly offensive to Christian Jews. All believers are free to limit what we do to serve others in love.

(C) Resolution (15:22-35)

(a) Antioch delegation: Paul, Barnabas, and Silas (15:22)

22 Then it seemed good to the **apostles** and the **elders**, with **the whole church**, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: **Judas** who was called Barsabbas, and **Silas**, leading men among the brothers,

22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas—Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren,

22 Then the apostles, the elders, and the whole church decided to choose some of their men to send with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch. These were Judas, who was called Barsabbas, and Silas, who were leaders among the brothers.

22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

- "...apostles" - who had authority over the universal church
- "...elders" - who had authority over the Church of Jerusalem
- "...the whole church" - the congregation in general
- The whole church made the decision to send Judas and Silas to Antioch, along with Paul and Barnabas, to witness the validity of their report
- "...Judas" - a Hebraic Jew; not to be confused with Judas the brother of James
- "...Silas" - aka "Silvanus"; a Greek name, likely a Hellenistic Jew
- He was a leader in the Jerusalem church (v22,27); he was a prophet (v32); a vocal minister in Antioch (v32); a Roman citizen (16:37); an amanuensis (1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; 1 Peter 5:12); he became Paul's close companion on his second missionary journey (15:40; 16:19,25,29; 17:4,10,14-15; 18:5)

(b) Letter (15:23-29)

23 and they sent this letter with them: "The apostles and the **brothers** who are elders, to the brothers *and sisters* in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles: Greetings.

23 and they sent this letter by them, "The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings.

23 They wrote this letter for them to deliver: "From: The apostles and the elders, your brothers To: Their gentile brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Greetings.

23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:

- "...brothers" - the fact that the Jerusalem believers address the Gentiles in Antioch as "brethren" shows they had been accepted as fellow believers

24 Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have confused you by *their* teaching, upsetting your souls,

24 "Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with *their* words, unsettling your souls,

24 We have heard that some men, coming from us without instructions from us, have said things to trouble you and have unsettled you.

24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:

- This is a clear repudiation of the Judaizers (Cf. v1-2)

- The result of their false teaching was that they were subverting the souls of the Gentile believers; the picture is one of "total havoc" caused by the activity of the Judaizers among the Gentile believers

- The Judaizers came from Jerusalem, but were not sent by the Jerusalem Church, nor were they authorized or have any approval to preach what they were preaching

25 it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

25 it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

25 So we have unanimously decided to choose men and send them to you with our dear Barnabas and Paul,

25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

26 who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah.

26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

27 Therefore, we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth.

27 "Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth.

27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas to tell you the same things by word of mouth.

27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.

- The authorization of Judas and Silas, who traveled in order to affirm the report which Barnabas and Paul will make (Cf. Deut 19:15)

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials:

28 "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials:

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to place on you any burden but these essential requirements:

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

- The conclusion reached by the Jerusalem Council was the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, it was the Holy Spirit who also suggested refraining from the four things as a basis for fellowship

29 that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from acts of sexual immorality; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."

29 that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."

29 to keep away from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from anything strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you avoid these things, you will do well. Goodbye."

29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

- Similar list to v20 (see notes there), but in a different order

- These abstentions, inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit, were not a basis for salvation, but rather a basis for fellowship between Gentile and Jewish believers

- This list is used by Jehovah Witnesses as a doctrine against blood transfusions

(c) Ministry in Antioch (15:30-35)

30 So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and after gathering the congregation together, they delivered the letter.

30 So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter.

30 So the men were sent on their way and arrived in Antioch. They gathered the congregation together and delivered the letter.

30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle:

31 When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.

31 When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.

31 When the people read it, they were pleased with how the letter encouraged them.

31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

- After the public reading of the letter, they rejoiced and were encouraged by their Gentile liberty

32 Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brothers *and sisters* with a lengthy message.

32 Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message.

32 Then Judas and Silas, who were also prophets, said a lot to encourage and strengthen the brothers.

32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

33 After they had spent time *there*, they were sent away from the brothers *and sisters* in peace to those who had sent them out.

33 After they had spent time *there*, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out.

33 After staying there for some time, they were sent back with a greeting from the brothers to those who had sent them.

33 And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.

34 [But it seemed good to Silas to remain there.]

34 [But it seemed good to Silas to remain there.]

34 But it seemed good to Silas to remain there, and Judas went back alone.

34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.

- This verse was probably a scribal attempt to explain how Silas could leave with Paul from Antioch on the second missionary journey (v40)

— It's likely v34 is not part of the original text, because both Judas and Silas returned to Jerusalem, and Silas came back to Antioch some time later to accompany Paul on his second missionary journey

35 But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

35 But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord.

35 Both Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch to teach and proclaim the word of the Lord, as did many others.

35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

- This ministry included Peter (Cf. Gal 2:11)

— The confrontation between Peter and Paul (Cf. Gal 2:11-21) occurred sometime during this period; the reason for this confrontation was likely the fact that the Judaizers did not accept the decision of the Jerusalem Council

C. Second missionary journey (15:36—18:22)

(A) Paul and Barnabas split (15:36-41)

36 After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's return and visit the brothers *and sisters* in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, *and see how they are.*"

36 After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, *and see how they are.*"

36 A few days later, Paul told Barnabas, "Let's go back and visit the brothers in every town where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they're doing."

36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.

- Time is summarized. A substantial amount of time goes by before v36, the "2nd Missionary Journey"

37 Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also.

37 Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also.

37 Barnabas wanted to take along John, who was called Mark,

37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

38 But Paul was of the opinion that they should not take along with them this man who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

38 But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

38 but Paul did not think it was right to take along the man who had deserted them in Pamphylia and who had not gone with them into the work.

38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

- John Mark: Barnabas was his uncle and he had left earlier. Paul won't give Mark another chance at this time (he would later...).

— Prov 18:19: A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city.

— Aren't you glad that Paul gave Mark another chance? Mark became Peter's amanuensis (ghost writer) and converted Peter's gospel from the Aramaic to the Greek which gave us the Gospel of Mark!

39 Now it turned into such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.

39 And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.

39 The disagreement was so sharp that they parted ways. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus,

39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

- Some commentators overestimate the "sharp disagreement" between Paul and Barnabas over Mark. They disagreed vigorously over the issue, but there is no evidence that they ended up disliking one another, as is sometimes inferred.

— An important lesson: two devoted believers can differ on important issues, and God can bring good from both circumstances

— They were both led by the Holy Spirit to arrive at their respective conclusions, and their separation was likely friendly

— Paul later wrote of his respectful admiration of both Barnabas (1 Cor 9:6) and John Mark (Col 4:10; Philemon 24; 2 Tim 4:11)

— Their decision to go in separate directions resulted in greater gospel expansion

40 But Paul chose Silas, and left after being entrusted by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

40 But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.

40 while Paul chose Silas and left after the brothers had entrusted him to the grace of the Lord.

40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

- Paul and Silas departed Antioch on Paul's second missionary journey, with the church's blessing

41 And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

41 And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

41 He went through Syria and Cilicia and strengthened the churches.

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

- Barnabas now disappears from the record...
- On this journey, they traveled first by land, north through Syria, then through Cilicia where Paul was born and previously labored