

## ACTS 15—JERUSALEM CONFERENCE.

Paul and Barnabas had returned from their first missionary journey and rehearsed all that had happened. They stayed in Antioch for a long time preaching and teaching God's word. While there, the question arose concerning the binding of circumcision on N.T. Christians. A decision is made to go to Jerusalem and try to resolve this matter. Acts 15 deals with that particular meeting.

A conference was held in Jerusalem to determine by apostolic authority the matter of whether Christianity was an extension of Judaism. Thereby requiring the Gentiles to be circumcised and to observe the tenets or requisites of the law of Moses, or whether Christianity was separate from the law of Moses, and therefore, a system in its own right.

### I. Jerusalem Conference.

#### A. Go up to Jerusalem.

1. Certain men from Judea come to Antioch in a deliberate effort to bind circumcision and law of Moses upon the law of Moses upon the Gentile converts.
2. They were causing problems in the church at Antioch.
3. It seems that these "certain men" were claiming apostolic authority for what they were teaching (v.24).
4. Paul and Barnabas both knew this to be false teaching.
5. A decision was made by the church in Antioch to send Paul, Barnabas and certain others to Jerusalem to discuss the matter with the apostles and elders.
6. As they made their way to Jerusalem, they preached the gospel and reported concerning the Gentiles.
7. When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were well received.
8. It is very likely that those who created opposition in Antioch are the same ones mentioned in v.5.

### II. Consideration of the a matter (6-35)

#### A. The apostles and elders came together to consider the matter (2<sup>nd</sup>. public meeting).

1. Most consider Gal. 2:2-10 to be a private meeting that took place between these two public meetings.
2. This meeting is not to figure out what the position of the apostles will be. Such has already been determined by revelation.
3. Purpose of this 2<sup>nd</sup>. Meeting was to enable the apostles to bring the whole church into agreement with themselves! (Accomplished in 15:22)
4. The Judaizers had their day in court—they were permitted to set forth in full their contentions.

#### B. Peter speaks (vss.7-11)

1. God made no distinction.
2. To require the Gentiles to keep the law, which no Jew had ever been able to do, would be to tempt God.
3. Both Jew and Gentile would be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus (v.11).

#### C. Paul and Barnabas speak (v.12).

#### D. James, the Lord's brother spoke (v.13).

1. He rehearsed what Peter had done (vss.14-18)
2. He gave his sentence (vss.19,20)
  - a. We do not trouble them.
  - b. We write to them.
    - (1) Abstain from pollution of idols [Do no go to the idols temple and participate in the feast held there].
    - (2) ...from fornication.
    - (3) ...from things strangled

- (4) ...from blood.
- 3. The apostles, elders, and the church were pleased.
  - a. Sent chosen men to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.
  - b. Ones sent were Judas, surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief among the brethren.
- E. Written letter (vss.23-29).
  - 1. This letter, so far as we know, was the earliest document issued from the pen of any apostle.
  - 2. Notice in verse 24.
    - a. Troubled you with words (agitated or intimidated)
    - b. Subverting your souls (unsettled effect)
    - c. We gave no such commandment (no authority)
  - 3. They were united in their position (v.25).
  - 4. H/S had part in this decision (v.29)
  - 5. No greater burden than these necessary things.
    - a. Abstain from meats offered to idols. [Afterwards sold in market place].
    - b. ...from blood (Gen. 9:4)
    - c. ...from things strangled (Animals deprived of life w/o shedding their blood).
    - d. ...from fornication [unlawful sexual relations].
- F. Letter Delivered (15:30-35).
  - 1. The reading of the letter at Antioch brought rejoicing.
  - 2. Judas and Silas exhorted the brethren.
  - 3. Let go in peace.
  - 4. Silas stayed in Antioch.
  - 5. Paul and Barnabas continued to teach and preach.
- III. Second Missionary Journey.
  - A. Paul is ready to go back and encourage the churches (visit is to help or look after—Matt. 28:19f, teach, baptize, teach)
    - 1. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark again.
    - 2. Paul would have none of it.
    - 3. Contention was so sharp.
    - 4. The best of friends sometimes differ on questions of expediency and personal preference.
    - 5. Later, these differences would be reconciled.
    - 6. Very likely that this was good for John Mark ...
      - a. There are times when the greatest disservice we can do our friends is to be too gentle and kind to tell them the truth.
      - b. Many a man has been saved by having some sincere Paul or brave Nathan look him squarely in the eyes, and tell him exactly what is wrong.
    - 7. Two missionary teams now.
    - 8. The separation of Barnabas from Paul, is our separation from Barnabas, for his name is not mentioned again in Acts.
    - 9. Paul and Silas confirming (strengthening by instruction and exhortation) the churches.

Con: If the apostles and elders in the first century did not have the authority to bind where God had not bound, why do people think they can do so today. We must follow what the Bible says, no more...no less. When we do that, we please God. If we please God, we will get to spend eternity with him.