



## Week 13 Acts 15:1-35 The Jerusalem Council

### 15:1-4 Paul & Barnabas sent to Jerusalem

1) What is the relationship between the two parties involved in the conflict described here? Who has the most power?

### 15:5 The Pharisee's statement

2) What are Pharisees doing in the midst of the church?

3) Can we take their identity as Pharisees as an indication that their faith was less sincere, or that they were "less Christian" than other believers? What might it cost them (as Pharisees) to become associated with The Way (those who followed Christ as Messiah?)

4) What do you think is the core concern of the Pharisees in their request that the Gentiles be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses?

### 15:6-11 Peter's response

This council has been dated around 49 AD, about 9 years after Peter's vision of the picnic blanket being lowered and the conversion of Cornelius.

5) Does Peter's response set aside the Law of Moses as defunct in light of grace? What is our relationship to the Law of Moses in our own walk with God? If we are not under the law, does that mean we can disregard it?

### 15:12-21 James' response

6) Read Amos 9:11-12 (based on the Masoretic Hebrew text) and compare it to the text found in Acts 15:16-18 (based on the later Septuagint Greek text). Given the differences between the two texts, could the Amos text as we have it have been used to make James' point? What does this say about the nature of the Bible's authority and its function in the church?

7) What do you make of James' suggestion that the Gentiles should follow only certain dietary restrictions and ethical guidelines? How does this make sense in light of Peter's statement, "We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are," (15:11).

### 15:22-29 The letter to the Gentiles

That we have the full transcript of the letter sent out indicates the importance that this matter had in the early church.

8) What apostles/leaders did the Gentiles have the best relationship with? What does this letter do to encourage them regarding their relationship with these leaders?

9) Beyond sharing certain guidelines, what is the basic *purpose* of the letter?

### 15:30-35 The letter is received [MAKE SURE YOU GET TO THESE QUESTIONS]

10) What areas of disagreement threaten the unity of the church today? How are we addressing those issues? In what ways does the Jerusalem Council show us a way forward in these issues, and in what ways are our situations too distinct to adopt this kind of model?