

Lesson 46: Acts 15:1-21 The Jerusalem Council

Background: Paul and Barnabas before the church council in Jerusalem.

Acts 15:1-5 Which group was claiming that believers in Jesus had to also follow the customs of Moses? _____

Acts 15:6-14 How did Peter know that God had saved the gentiles even though they did not follow the customs of Moses? _____

Acts 15:15-21 What did the Jerusalem council say that the gentile believers should do? _____

4 Prize dollars if an adult reads the Bible passage with the student and helps them fill out their Study Sheet.

Adult Signature X _____

Acts 15:1-21 Question Answers

Acts 15:1-5 After preaching the Gospel to the gentiles, telling them the Good News that Jesus died for the sins of all who trust and follow Him, Paul and Barnabas heard that there were men going around saying that, “unless you follow the customs of Moses, you can’t be saved by Jesus.” The customs of Moses are the dietary and ceremonial laws that God gave to His chosen people, the Jews, so they would stand out in the world as they told other peoples about the One True God. Other peoples worshiped fake gods by eating pigs, lizards, and insects, which they often boiled in milk or ate with the animal’s blood; God though told His people that they could only eat animals like cows, deer, lambs, chickens, and turkeys if they were drained of their blood and cooked without milk. This was done so that the non-Jews would know that the One True God was different from their fake gods.

One custom of Moses the Jews were given by God was circumcision, a mark in the flesh given to every baby Jewish boy to show the world that he was a member of God’s chosen people. Now that the gentiles, the non-Jews had heard the Gospel of Jesus and were trusting and following Him, there were **Jews from the party of the Pharisees** who wanted all non-Jewish gentile men to also receive the mark of circumcision if they were going to be part of Jesus’ church family.

Acts 15:6-14 God had shown Peter that **He had saved the gentile followers of Jesus by sending the Holy Spirit upon them,** just like He had sent God the Holy Spirit upon the Jewish believers in Jesus. Now that Barnabas and Paul had told everyone how God had saved gentile believers throughout their missionary journey, the leaders of the church in Jerusalem knew that it was not right to make gentile believers in Jesus keep the customs of Moses.

Acts 15:15-21 All you have to do to be saved is trust and follow Jesus, nothing more. Anyone who says you have to believe in Jesus and not eat meat on Friday, or believe in Jesus and stay home on Saturdays, or believe in Jesus and... whatever... they are a false prophet, they do not speak for God. The customs of Moses could only hide the sins of Gods people for a little while. When Jesus died on the cross for our sins, He fulfilled the customs of Moses by completely cleaning away our sins.

Because the Jerusalem council knew that the gentiles had been accepted by God and saved from their sins, **they instructed the gentiles to no longer worship the fake gods,** but to live in a way that others would know that they are followers of Jesus.

Lesson 47: Acts 15:22-35 The Council's Letter to Gentile Believers

Background: Judas, who was also called Barsabbas, and Silas take a letter to Antioch.

Acts 15:22-26 Why did the church in Jerusalem want to send a letter to the church in Antioch?____

Acts 15:27-29 What was the reason that the church council gave in their letter for why the gentiles did not need to follow the laws of Moses?_____

Acts 15:30-35 Why did the church in Antioch rejoice after hearing the letter from the church in Jerusalem?_____

4 Prize dollars if an adult reads the Bible passage with the student and helps them fill out their Study Sheet.

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Acts 15:22-35 Question Answers

Acts 15:22-26 After telling the church council in Jerusalem that God had brought gentiles into His church family, a group of Jewish believers in Jesus started to go around teaching that Jesus cannot save a person from their sins unless they first become a Jew, and obey the laws given to the Jewish people through Moses. Because every human heart has been stained by sin, it is impossible to keep God's law perfectly. So even Jews need Jesus, God the Son, to save them from the punishment of their sins.

Because **there were Jews saying that the gentiles had to believe in Jesus and keep the laws of Moses** to be saved, the church council in Jerusalem sent a letter to the church in Syrian Antioch to tell the gentile believers that all they have to do to be saved is trust and follow Jesus.

Acts 15:27-29 The leaders of the church family of God in Jerusalem, knew that because God the Holy Spirit had entered the hearts of the Jewish believers in Jesus on the day of Pentecost, that God the Father had accepted them and saved them from their sins. Now that **God the Holy Spirit had entered the hearts of the gentile believers in Jesus**, the church council in Jerusalem knew that the gentiles had been accepted by God too, even without keeping the laws of Moses. Even though the gentiles were saved, just for trusting and following Jesus, the Jerusalem council told them not to worship idols, statues of fake gods, by eating the food given to the idol as a gift. God warned the gentile believers not to drink animal blood or to eat animals that had been strangled, because their blood would still be in their bodies. This may have been because gentiles were drinking animal blood as a means of worshiping fake gods. Also, because the gentiles who did not believe in Jesus, had worshiped fake man-made gods by doing what God said was wrong, the Jerusalem council told the gentile believers in Jesus not to sin with their bodies.

Acts 15:30-35 Because this letter had come from both the leaders of the church in Jerusalem and also from the apostles, the men Jesus had sent out to tell everyone about Him, the gentile believers in Antioch knew that all they had to do to be saved was believe in Jesus. **This was an encouragement**, because before hearing the letter, they were not sure if they were really saved, or if they had to start following the laws of Moses.

Lesson 48: Acts 15:36-41 Paul and Barnabas Separate

Background: Paul and Barnabas in Syrian Antioch, just before Paul's second missionary journey.

Acts 15:36 Why did Paul want to return to all the cities in which they had taught people about Jesus? _____

Acts 15:37-38 Why didn't Paul want to take John Mark on their second missionary journey back through the gentile cities in Galatia? _____

Acts 15:39-41 What did Paul and Barnabas agree to do? _____

4 Prize dollars if an adult reads the Bible passage with the student and helps them fill out their Study Sheet.

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Acts 15:36-41 Question Answers

Acts 15:36 Paul and Barnabas had traveled from Syrian Antioch across the Mediterranean Sea to Salamis on the island of Cyprus, to Paphos on the other side of Cyprus, back across the Mediterranean Sea to Perga in Pamphylia, to Pisidian Antioch in Galatia, to Iconium, to Lystra, to Derbe, to Attalia, back across the Mediterranean Sea to Syrian Antioch, and then to Jerusalem to report on how God was saving the gentiles. From Jerusalem, Paul, Barnabas, Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas went to the gentile church in Syrian Antioch to bring them the letter from the Jerusalem Council. From Antioch, Paul wanted to visit each of the cities where they had proclaimed the Good News about Jesus, **to see how the believers in Jesus were doing.**

Acts 15:37-38 John Mark was Barnabas' nephew and the writer of the book of Mark in our Bible. Mark had traveled with Paul and Barnabas across the Mediterranean Sea to the island of Cyprus at the beginning of their missionary journey to tell the gentiles about Jesus. Mark had probably never been in a non-Jewish city before and was shocked by the way the gentiles lived. Whatever the reason, when they crossed the sea again to go to the city of Perga in Pamphylia, **Mark left Paul and Barnabas and went back to Jerusalem.** Because of this, Paul was not sure that he could trust Mark to stay with them on a second missionary journey.

Acts 15:39-41 While Paul did not think John Mark was trustworthy, because he had left them during their first journey, Barnabas wanted to give his nephew another chance to help them tell the gentiles about Jesus. Paul and Barnabas argued over what they should do, but in the end, **they decided to go separate ways for the time being.** Barnabas took Mark and sailed to the West, back to the island of Cyprus, while Paul took Silas North through Syria and then through Cilicia. Even though they could not agree about what to do about John Mark and had to separate, from his letter to the Galatians, we know that Paul still loved Barnabas and counted him as his equal. Also, we know from Paul's letters to the Colossians and to Philemon, that Paul considered John Mark to be his fellow worker.