

URGENT

The Jerusalem Council



Acts
15:1-35

Theme Statement

The Jerusalem Council demonstrated that the LORD God has equipped His church with able spiritual leaders to resolve even the most sensitive issues and, in this case, to clarify for all times the doctrine of Salvation by faith alone through Christ alone.



Outline

Acts 15:1-35

The Issue

(The Reasons Behind the Issue)

The Strategy for Resolution

The Final Decision

The Communication to the Church

The Response of the Church

The Issue

Acts 15:1, 5

1. Is circumcision a necessity for a person to be saved?
2. Should a person who is saved be required to be circumcised and to keep the Law of Moses?

The Reasons Behind the Issue - Background

1. A multitude of Non-Jews (Gentiles) were being saved
2. Circumcision was given to Abraham as a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant and was included by Moses in the Law of the Passover

3. First Century Judaism is based upon Retribution Theology anchored in the Law of Moses and religious traditions

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: no foreigner is to eat of it; but every man's slave purchased with money, after you have circumcised him, then he may eat of it.....But if a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the **Passover** to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. **But no uncircumcised person may eat of it.**"

of your forefathers, and it shall be the **sign of the covenant** between Me and you."

The Strategy for Resolution

Acts 15:2-4

1. Paul and Barnabas vigorously defended the Antioch church against the Judaizers
2. The Antioch church decided to escalate the issue to the apostles and elders at the Jerusalem church

The Final Decision

Acts 15:6-21

Debate Considerations?

Romans 3:19-20

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because **by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified** in His sight; for **through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.**

While he was circumcised or uncircumcised?

Galatians 3:24

Therefore the **Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ**, so that we may be justified by faith.

The Final Decision

Acts 15:6-21

1. The Speech of Peter - v. 7-11

- a. Peter reminded the brethren that God had chosen him to bring the gospel to the Gentiles through the interaction with Cornelius
- b. Peter reminded them that God, Who knows the heart, had given the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles in the same manner as He had given the Holy Spirit to the Jews by faith
- c. Peter warned the Judaizers about opposing God by placing extra burdens on the Gentiles which even the Jews could not bear
- d. Contrary to the Judaizers who wanted the Gentiles to be “saved” like the Judaizers, Peter believed that true salvation of the Jews is like the salvation of the Gentiles, through the grace of God

The Final Decision

Acts 15:6-21

2. The Speech of Paul and Barnabas - v. 12

God had confirmed their ministry of the gospel to the Gentiles
with signs and wonders

The Final Decision

Acts 15:6-21

3. The Speech of James - v. 13-18

- a. James confirmed Peter's evangelistic work with the Gentiles with Old Testament Scripture (Amos 9:11-12)
- b. James quote refers to the millennial kingdom in which Gentiles will be included as Gentiles and not Jewish proselytes

The Final Decision

Acts 15:6-21

3. The Decision of James - v. 19-21

- a. James confirmed that salvation is by grace alone through Christ alone without mentioning circumcision
- b. James also requested that the Gentiles distance themselves from their pagan background in areas that might be offensive to the Jews

The Communication to the Church

Acts 15:22-30

1. In addition to Paul, Barnabas and the other Antioch members, “it seemed good” to send two of Jerusalem’s leaders, Judas and Silas, back to the church at Antioch to communicate the decision
2. The Jerusalem Council decision was recorded in writing for the Antioch church as well as for all future Gentile and Jewish churches
3. The written letter was delivered to the Antioch church and probably read aloud to the whole congregation

The Response of the Church

Acts 15:31-35

1. The Church rejoiced, was encouraged, was strengthened and was at peace with the church at Jerusalem
2. The Church resumed normal and fruitful ministry

Implications

1. It is crucial for the church and its members to be clear on the central doctrines of the faith and to defend them
2. God has equipped the church with able spiritual leaders to resolve even the most difficult issues