



Tell Me the Story of Jesus

Lesson 39 – Acts 15

People — Who is involved?

Converted Pharisees from Jerusalem (15:1, 5)
Paul and Barnabas – went to Jerusalem
Peter and James – speakers
John Mark – subject of contention between Paul and Barnabas.
Silas – chosen to travel with Paul

Places — Where does it happen?

Antioch – Where Jewish teachers came to require Christians to be circumcised
Jerusalem – Where Paul and Barnabas went to talk to the apostles and elders.
Syria and Cilicia – Where Paul and Silas went to continue spreading the gospel.

Pearls — What information will help me to understand better?

Vs 1 – Circumcision was a sign of the covenant between God and Israel (Gen. 17:10-11).
Vs 1 – The issue was whether Gentiles are bound to obey the Law of Moses, Israel's national law.
Vs 3 – The distance between Antioch and Jerusalem through Phoenicia and Samaria is about 250 miles.
Vs 5 – The issue was not accepting Gentiles. It was the criteria for acceptance: circumcision & Moses law.
Vs 6 – This is a consultation. It is not a council in the later ecclesiastical sense. The entire church met. This was not a conclave of bishops. There were no votes taken to make decisions.
Vs 7 – Peter addresses the church. He appeals to earlier experience teaching Gentiles when no such requirements were made. He is forced to the conclusion that they should not require it either.
Vs 11 – This is the last we see of Peter in the book of Acts.
Vs 12 – Paul and Barnabas speak next and refer to doing miracles which showed God's approval. These experiences illustrate that there was no need to require circumcision.
Vs 13 – James then speaks and quotes Scripture (Amos 9:11-12) to prove his conclusion.
Vs 18 – See also Isaiah 45:21 and Jeremiah 12:15.
Vs 19 – None of the items required of Gentiles were exclusively a part of the Law of Moses. Each has always been required of God's people: "Things polluted by idols" (see Romans 1:18-32); "Sexual immorality" (See Genesis 19); "Things strangled and blood" (see Genesis 9:3-5).
Vs 22 – Judas Barsabbas and Silas are messengers. They are also prophets (v. 32).
Vs 36 – The purpose of the second trip was to see how brethren led to Christ on the 1st trip were doing.
Vs 37 – John Mark went part-way on the first trip but returned home. He was cousin to Barnabas (Col 4:10)
Vs 39 – Because they had traveled to Cyprus, and Barnabas was from Cyprus, he and Mark to there.
Vs 40 – Paul chooses Silas and goes by land through Syria and Cilicia to the cities where they were before.

Perspectives – What may I learn from this chapter?

1. The decision was based on the acts of God and upon Scripture, not from a vote of fallible men.
2. Christians are not required to keep the laws and traditions of the Law of Moses.
3. We should not engage in idolatry, sexual immorality, or eating things strangled and blood.