

*Family Worship*

*The Council of Jerusalem*

*22·11·2020*

# *Opening Prayer*

Our Heavenly Father, thank you for our family.

And thank you for the privilege of coming together for worship.

Help us to understand Your Word and obey it with a joyful heart.

In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.

# *How Good It Is*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSxocnIaN0A>



# *Catechism Time!*

Bible truths for teaching children

# Question 26

**Q:** What else does Christ's death redeem?

**A:** Every part of fallen creation.

**This means...**

Christ's death restores not just each of us, but everything in heaven and on earth that has been corrupted by human sin.

**Bible verse (Colossians 1:19-20)**

God was pleased for all of himself to live in Christ. And through Christ, God decided to bring all things back to himself again—things on earth and things in heaven. God made peace by using the blood of Christ's death on the cross.

# The World is Full of Disagreement

Hong Kong Protest  
(June 2019)



US Presidential Election  
(November 2020)



<https://www.reuters.com/news/picture/trump-supporters-rally-around-the-presid-idUSRTX89C12>





# What would you do when you disagree with others?

Yes, yes and yes!!!



No, no and no!!!



Let's see how the early Church resolved a major disagreement that happened around AD 50.





# Background

- ❖ The earliest Christians were Jews. They lived in Jerusalem.
- ❖ When persecution broke out, they went everywhere and shared the Good News of Jesus with Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles).
- ❖ Remember Peter shared the Good News with Cornelius, a Roman centurion? The Holy Spirit came on Cornelius and other Gentiles there.
- ❖ But there was disagreement in the Church when Gentiles became believers. What must they do to be saved? There were two views:
  1. To be saved, one must believe in Jesus.
  2. To be saved, one must believe in Jesus and also obey Moses' law.
- ❖ Which is right? Let's see how the early Church came to an answer.

# The Council of Jerusalem

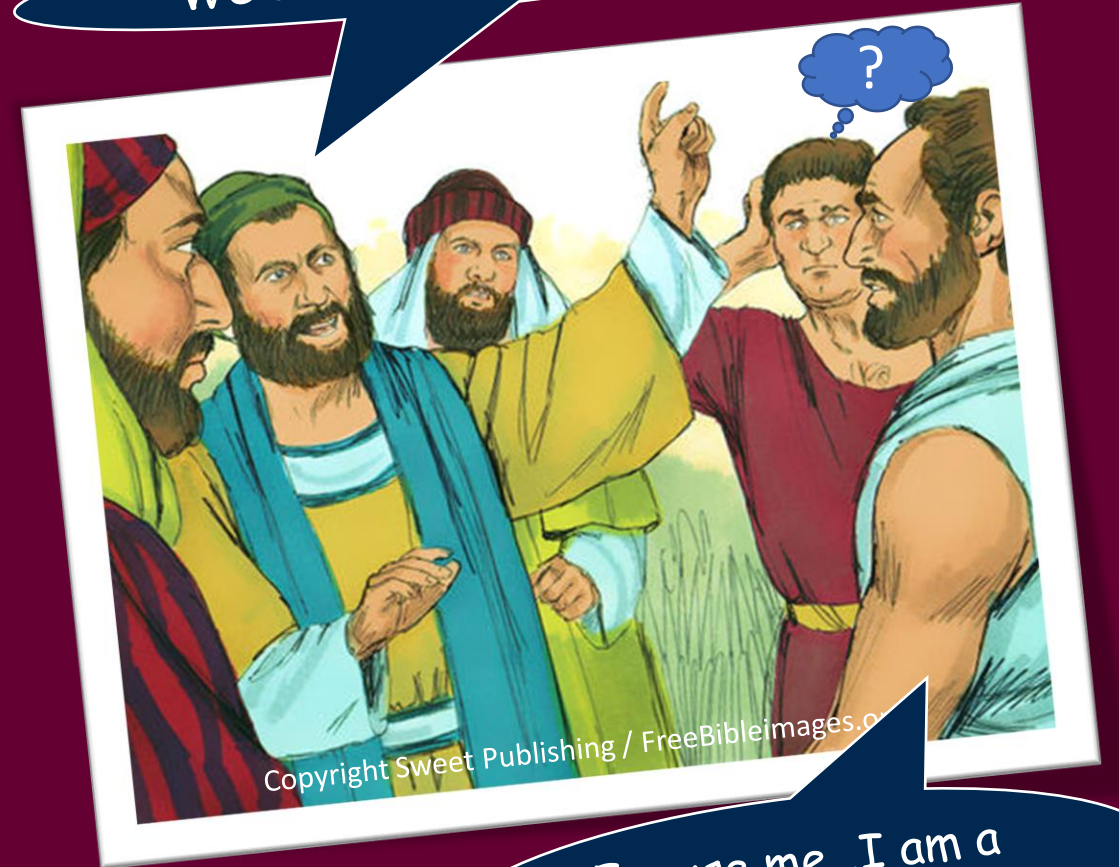
(Acts 15: 1-21)

Some men came to **Antioch** from Judea. They began teaching the non-Jewish brothers:

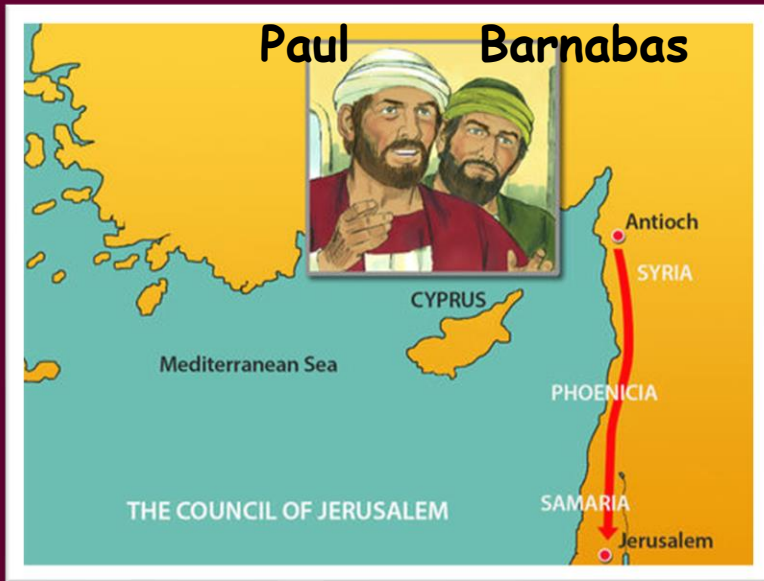
*"You cannot be saved if you are not circumcised. Moses taught us to do this."*

Paul and Barnabas were against this teaching and argued with the men about it. So the group decided to send Paul, Barnabas, and some other men to Jerusalem. There they could talk more about this with the apostles and elders.

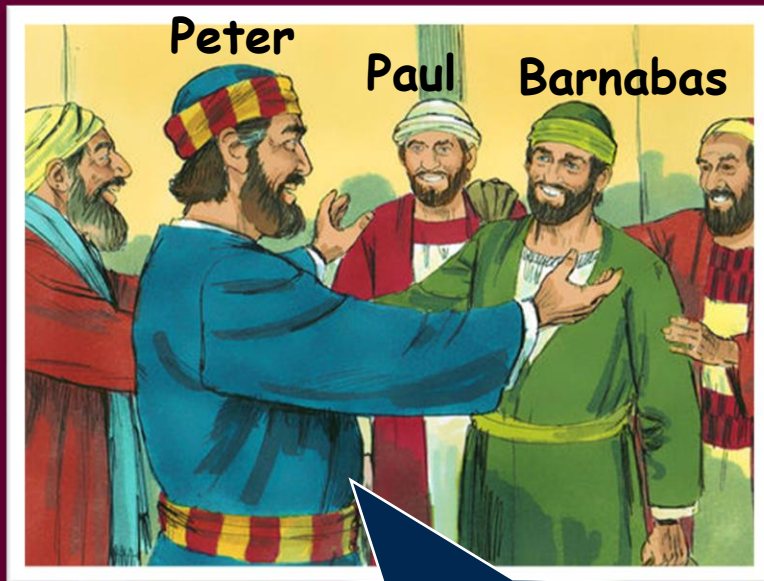
We all have to obey Moses



Excuse me...I am a Christian, not a Jew



The church helped the men leave on the trip. They went through the countries of Phoenicia and Samaria, telling all about how the non-Jewish people had turned to God. This made all the believers very happy.



Welcome, brothers!

When they arrived in Jerusalem, the **apostles, the elders**, and the church welcomed them. Paul, Barnabas, and the others told about all the things that God had done with them. But some of the believers who had belonged to the **Pharisee group** came forward. They said, "**The non-Jewish believers must be circumcised. We must tell them to obey the law of Moses!**"



The apostles and the elders gathered to **study** this problem. There was a long **debate**.

Then **Peter** stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know what happened in the early days. **God** chose me from among you to preach the Good News to the non-Jewish people. They heard the Good News from me, and they believed. **God**, who knows the thoughts of all men, accepted them. He showed this to us by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us. To **God**, those people are not different from us. When they believed, he made their hearts pure.

So now why are you testing **God**? You are putting a heavy load around the necks of the non-Jewish brothers. It is a load that neither we nor our fathers were able to carry. **But we believe that we and they too will be saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus!"**



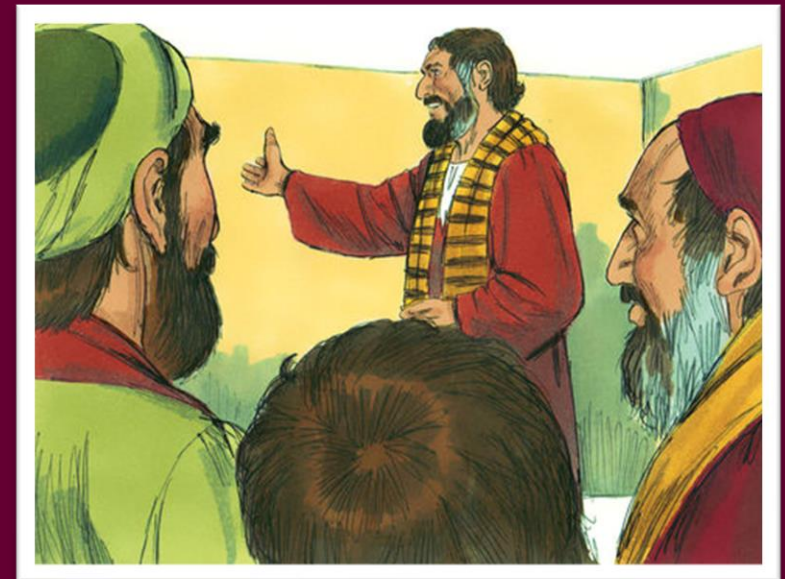
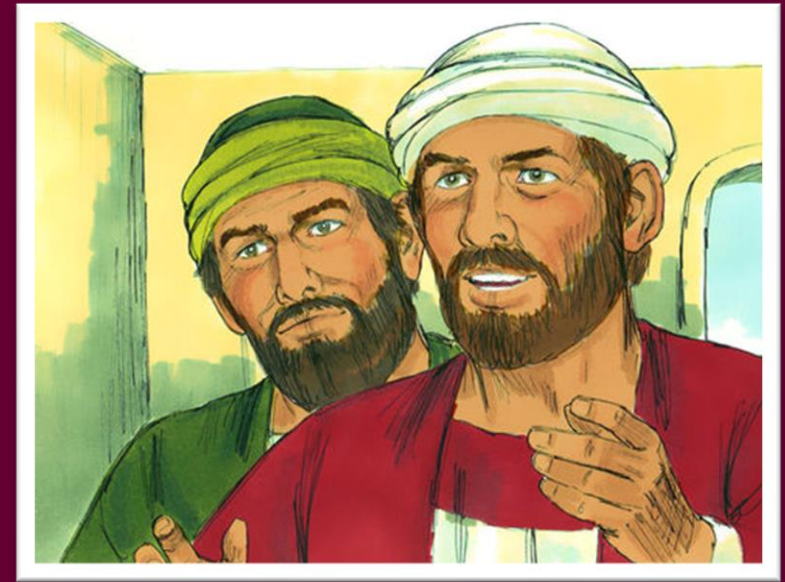
We and they are saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus!"



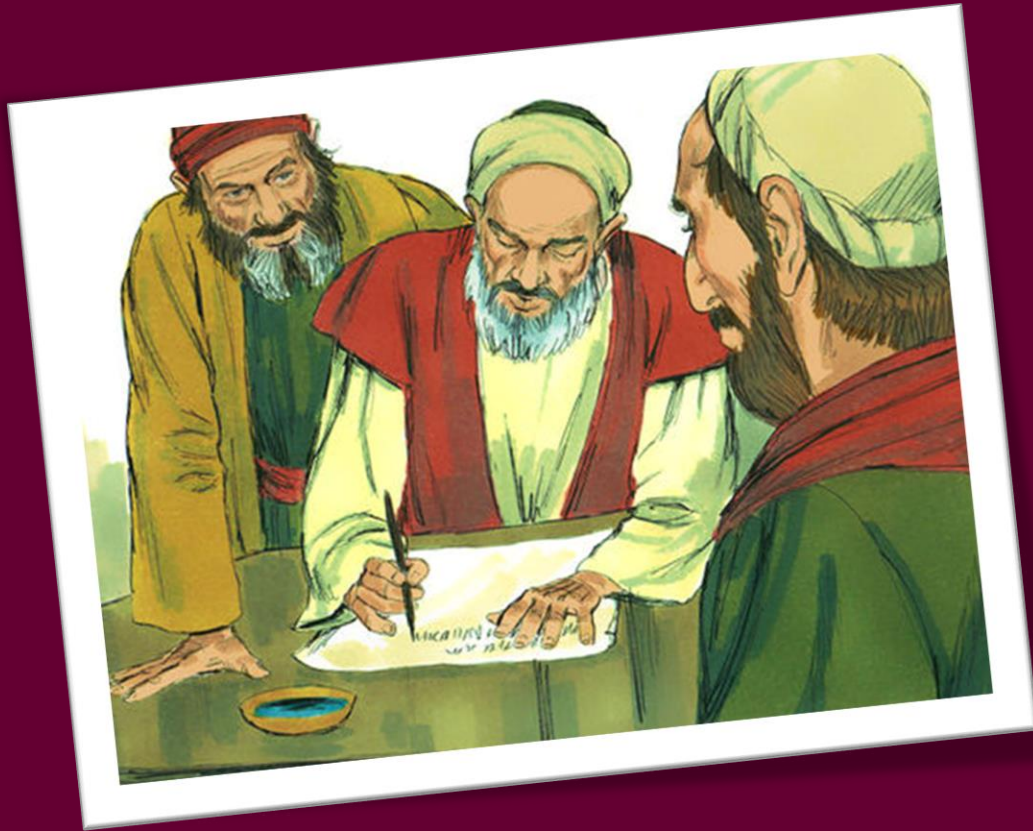
Then the whole group **became quiet**. They **listened** to Paul and Barnabas speak. Paul and Barnabas told about all the miracles and signs that God did through them among the non-Jewish people.

After they finished speaking, **James** spoke. He said, "Brothers, listen to me. Simon has told us how **God** showed his love for the non-Jewish people. For the first time he has accepted them and made them his people. The words of the prophets agree with this too:

*'After these things I will return. The kingdom of David is like a fallen tent. But I will rebuild it. And I will again build its ruins. And I will set it up. Then those people who are left alive may ask the Lord for help. **And all people from other nations may worship me**, says the Lord. And he will make it happen. And these things have been known for a long time.'* (Amos 9:11-12)







"So I think we should not bother the non-Jewish brothers who have turned to God.

Instead, we should write a letter to them. We should tell them these things:

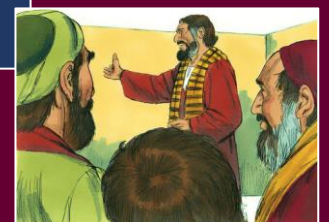
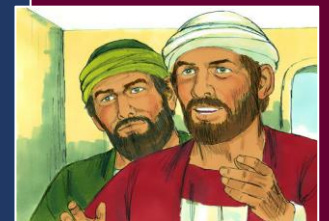
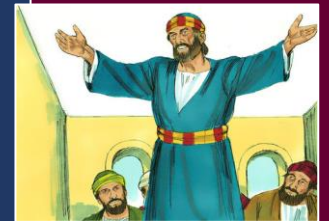
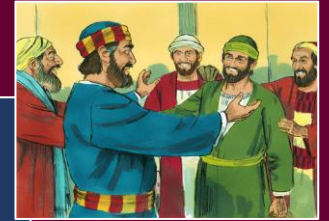
1. Do not eat food that has been offered to idols. (This makes the food unclean.)
2. Do not take part in any kind of sexual sin.
3. Do not taste blood.
4. Do not eat animals that have been strangled.

They should not do these things, because there are still men in every city who teach the law of Moses. For a long time the words of Moses have been read in the synagogue every Sabbath day."



# Here is the Storyline...

1. The Apostles & Elders welcomed Paul & Barnabas in Jerusalem
2. Paul & Barnabas told stories of Gentiles becoming Christians
3. The Pharisee group said Gentile Christians should obey Moses' law
4. The Apostles & Elders **studied** the problem...there was a long **debate**
5. Peter reminded that **God** had given Gentile Christians the Holy Spirit, and we are all saved by **God's grace**
6. All **listened** to Paul & Barnabas's stories of **God's work** among the Gentiles
7. James concluded that Gentile believers only needed to observe 4 requirements for the sake of the Jewish believers
8. All parties agreed



# Family Discussion

1. In the beginning of the story:

- Who were the people that went to Antioch and where did they come from?
- What did they teach?

2. People decided that the matter should be discussed in Jerusalem because (choose one)

- Jesus was living in Jerusalem at the time
- The Church leaders (Apostles and Elders) were in Jerusalem
- The Roman governor was there

3. The heart of the matter was whether A or B is correct:

A. To be saved, one must believe in Jesus (grace)

B. To be saved, one must believe in Jesus (grace) and obey Moses' law (work)

- Did the men who went to Antioch teach A or B?
- Did Paul & Barnabas agree with A or B?
- Peter said (i) God had given the Holy Spirit to Gentile believers (ii) both Jews and Gentiles are **saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus**. Did Peter agree with A or B? Why?

# Family Discussion

4. James also agreed with A.

- ❑ He added that God had said through the prophet Amos: "All people from other nations may worship me". This was a prophecy showing God's acceptance of Gentiles
- ❑ James cared about Jewish Christians and wanted Jewish & Gentile believers to remain united. His request for the Gentile believers was...
  1. Do not eat food that has been offered to idols
  2. Do not take part in any kind of sexual sin
  3. Do not taste blood
  4. Do not eat animals that have been strangled
- ❑ You see, the above 4 were lifelong habits of the Jewish believers (Gentile believers would keep #2 but might not keep #1, 3 and 4).
- ❑ So, when Gentile believers observed these 4 requirements, they showed consideration and love to their Jewish brothers. This would maintain unity of all believers, and allowed them to enjoy meals together.

# Acts 15 Principles

Review page 15 to understand that the Jerusalem leaders followed these "Acts 15 Principles" to find common ground to resolve disagreement:

1. Study the problem (discover the facts)
2. Engage in friendly debate (give reasons for your view)
3. Focus on God
4. Listen to each other
5. Be considerate

Let's apply to a real life situation...

- ❖ Joshua likes to play video games. His parents are concerned that he is spending too much time on games and losing focus at school. This has created a tense situation in the family.
- ❖ Have one person in the family play the role of Joshua, another person as the mother (or father). Use the above "Acts 15 Principles" to find common ground and resolve the conflict.



# *The Council of Jerusalem*

## *Summary*

- ❖ The Church reached a decision that *Gentile Christians* would not need to obey the law of *Moses* in order to be saved.
- ❖ Unity of the Church is of utmost importance.
- ❖ *Acts 15* contains good principles on finding common ground to resolve disagreements.


# *Family Prayer Time*

1. Thank God for His Word and help so we may learn from Him.
2. Ask your children to pray for what they have learned just now.
3. Ask your family how you can pray for them specifically.



# *Oh How Good It Is*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7i3rNM6k9Y0>



Oh how good it is  
On this journey we share  
To rejoice with the happy  
And weep with those who mourn.  
For the weak find strength  
The afflicted find grace  
When we offer the blessing  
Of belonging.