



Acts: Jerusalem Council

July 26

INTRODUCTION: Having taken a break in Galatians (written between Acts 14 and 15) we return to exploring Christ's commission to be His witnesses. Acts 15 carries on the theme of Galatians: of the Church wrestling through the issue of old wine/skins and new wine/skins (Lk 5:36-37), or the transition from the Old Covenant to the New. We continue from the issue (15:1-5) to the defence & solution (15:6-21).

RECAP: [Acts 1-12](#) and [Acts 13-28](#) (Bible Project)

KEY POINT: truth and unity, discernment, salvation, people of God, councils

A.M. SERMON RECAP (What is Gender?)

- What is Gender? Why/how is it under assault?
- What is a Man? What is a Woman?
- How is this an identity issue? How is the Gospel/God's Word the only answer?

P.M. SERMON RECAP (Acts 15:1-5, The Issue)

- What was the issue? Why had it arisen? Why had it produced such sharp contentions?
- How did it risk compromising the truth, derailing the mission and compromising the peace of the Church?
- Why is it important to note the Council comes at the centre of Acts?
- What lessons can we learn for today from this historic issue/council?

READ: Acts 15:6-21

QUESTIONS:

Council

1. *V. 6- The Jerusalem Council is often known as the 'first ecumenical [or universal] council.'* (Later councils like Nicea or Chalcedon decided upon matters such as the deity and nature of Christ). Many traditions, Catholic, Orthodox (and

Reformed/Presbyterians/Anglicans with their synods) see councils as binding. Are the councils of men binding? Was this council binding because of Apostolic authority? Is there something else in the council that makes it binding?

2. *V. 6 and 12 and 22- Who was at the Council? Who were the key figures? What weight did they carry?*
3. **What value do church members' meetings, associations or convention meetings have in the life of the local/wider church?**
4. **How can clarity and agreement on core issues facilitate mission and ensure peace?**

Defence (Peter), vv. 7-12

5. How did Peter 'redeem' himself from the private episode in Gal 2:11? Have you ever redeemed yourself?
6. **Vv. 7-9- What story is Peter referring to? Were they required to be circumcised to be saved/join the NC? __, they believed and were b_____d. Notice who made the choice!**
7. *V. 10- A yoke is a metaphor for a burden. The Law was a gift (Gal 3) yet it couldn't save; Israel couldn't keep it perfectly. Did Peter want the burden? (c.f. Mt 11:29)*
8. *V. 11- c.f. Ro 3:23, why do both Jews and Gentiles stand in need of God's grace? Why is it amazing to be called by God's name?*
9. **V. 12a- Why did all fall silent?**
10. *V. 12- Paul and Barnabas then gave further evidence to elaborate Peter's defence.*

Solution (James, the brother of Jesus, head of the Jerusalem Church), vv. 13-21

11. **How did the council rely on charitable use of: order, reason/debate, experience and God's word? How is this a guide for our gatherings? (1 Pet 3:15; Ja 3:17).**
12. *James agrees with Peter's experiential defence and adds to it Scripture. He cites from Isa 45:21 and Am 9:11-12. How does this prophecy speak: a) to the faithful remnant of believing Jews embracing the Messiah and entering the New Covenant, b) the NC people being the restoration this remnant, and c) the fuller inclusion of the Gentiles into the Kingdom? How do we see this in Acts?*

13. Vv. 14b, 17- How is salvation rooted in election and not ethnicity?
14. Vv. 19–20- *Why this list? Two major solutions have been proposed: 1) this refers to areas of ceremonial law that some Jews would have found the most offensive. Sexual immorality is a moral law, however, and could be included because Gentile culture had low sexual ethics, or 2) These were all activities associated with pagan temples/idolatry (meat for sacrifice and sex with cult-prostitutes). Which option do you think best fits?*
15. *In saying this James is only appeasing the consciences of those believing Jews who were finding the transition to the NC difficult, not suggesting there are different requirements for one half of the community and another for the other half. (c.f. 1 Cor 8:1–11:1).*
16. V. 21- *Whatever the reason for the list, James' rationale is clear. Like Paul in 1 Cor 8:11, how is it either for: a) the weaker brother, or b) unbelieving ethnic Jews who might believe?*
17. Where is circumcision in this list? This shows...?
18. **From the issue, how had the Council enabled the Church to keep being Christ's witnesses? How was it a double victory for truth and peace?**

NEXT: Aug 9- Acts 15:36–41, Paul and Barnabas Separate