

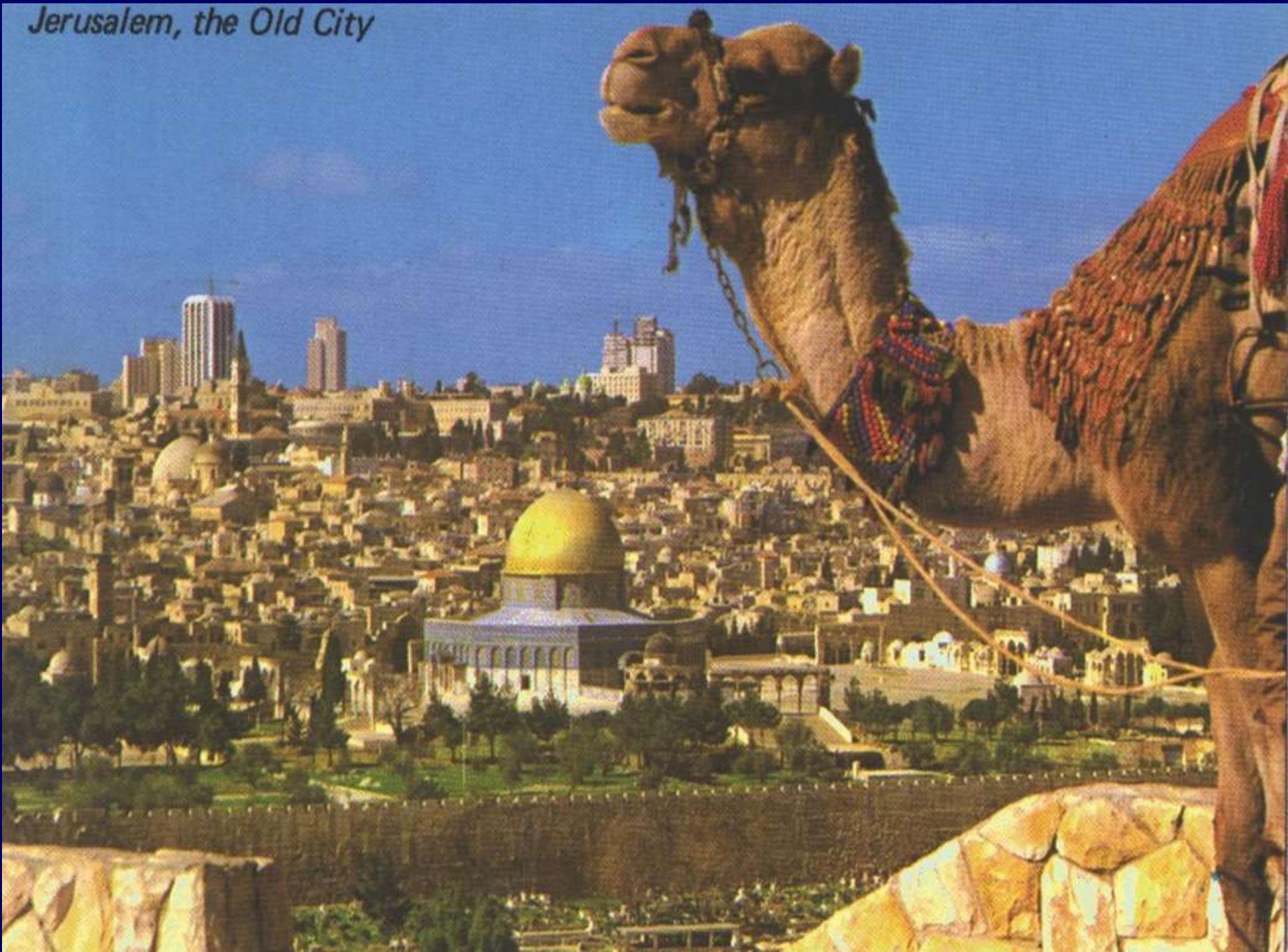
BIBLE STUDY.

The MEETING at JERUSALEM.

ACTS 15.



Jerusalem, the Old City



Acts 15:1; “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

There have been many so-called church councils down through history. As you study this meeting in Jerusalem, think about what sets this one apart from all the others.

For instance, **how was this meeting** different from **the Council of Nicea in 325 AD?**

Hint:- Did the Holy Spirit have a divine voice in any councils that were convened after the Apostles passed away?

First-century Jerusalem. (model).



Acts 15:1; “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren,
“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

**This was to be a decisive turning point
in the history of God’s New Covenant people.**

**Here the Family of God would either become an
ethnic religious sect, rehashing legalistic principles.**

Or the liberating, universal faith God intended.



Acts 15:1; “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren,
“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

Who are these men coming down from Judea?

These were men who had been Jews (of the sects of the Pharisees, verse 5), but who were converted to Christ.

The fact that they were willing to refer their dispute to the apostles and elders (verse 2) shows they had professedly embraced the gospel of Christ.

Yet in Galatians 2:4; they are styled “**false brethren** who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty.”

They could have genuinely converted to Christ then found it difficult to leave the law and their Jewish customs behind
Remember even Peter had some problems with this.

Acts 15:1; “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren,
“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

**They came from Jerusalem to Antioch of Syria,
and they claimed to have been sent from Jerusalem
by the Apostles. Acts 15:24;**

**They may have built their doctrines on statements
like the one written in James 2:10; which,
if taken out of context might sound as if
keeping the Law of Moses was necessary to salvation.**

Significance

**Unto whom did the Lord command the circumcision
first...? Abraham! He was first. Genesis 17:10;**

**“Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep
my covenant, you and your descendants after you
for the generations to come. Every male among you
shall be circumcised.” Genesis 17:9-10;**

Acts 15:1; “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren,
“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

“An alien living among you who wants to celebrate
the LORD’S PASSOVER must have all the males
in his household circumcised;” **Exodus 12:48;** (NIV)

How Old was Abraham when he was ordered by God
to circumcise himself? **99 years old. Genesis 17:23-27;**

People have different ideas concerning salvation
and they need to be taught properly! **Gal 5:1-4;**

“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy
and empty deception, according to the tradition of men,
according to the elementary principles of the world,
rather than according to Christ.” Col 2:8;

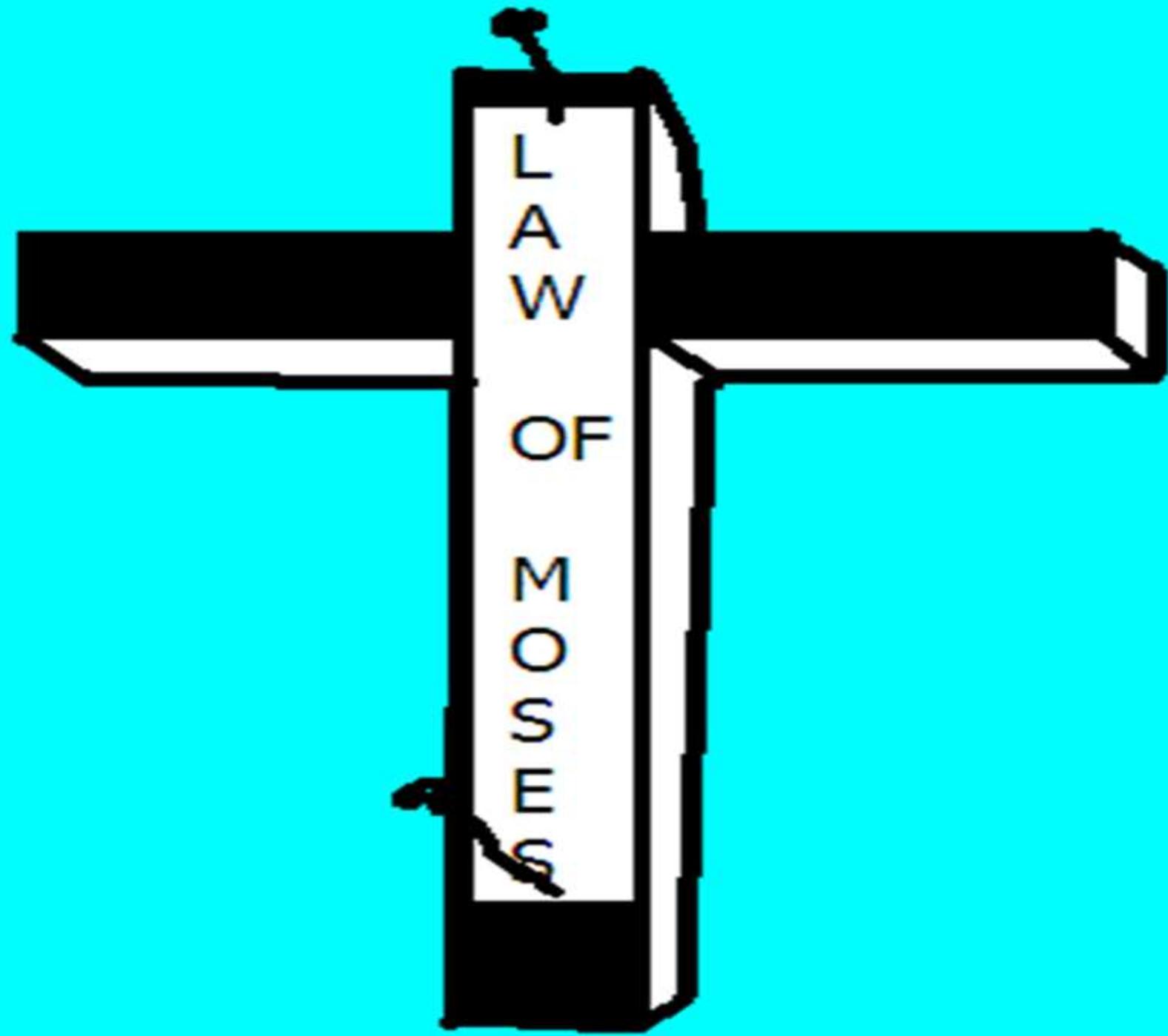
Acts 15:1; “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren,
“**Unless you are circumcised** according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

Salvation does not depend on the law of Moses
but **on the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross.**
No one will be saved by following Moses’ law!” **Gal 3:1-3;**

The Law of Moses cannot justify nor save man anymore.
By the way, **when Jesus died on the cross the law of Moses**
was nailed to the cross. Col 2:14; Ephesians 2:15-16;

Circumcision or uncircumcision
does not mean any more to the Lord than that
one is willing to obey His commandments.

Jesus cut the Law in two! **Matthew 27:51; John 19:30;**
That is **Moses’ law is done,**
a new one was coming and now is.



Acts 15:1; “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren,
“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

In time past we have discussed the fact that
the **Ten Commandments were a part of the Law of Moses,**
God’s special covenant with Israel. (Deuteronomy 5;)

This law, including the Ten Commandments,
was given to the nation of Israel and to no one else.
The Sabbath Day observance was first revealed at Sinai.
(Nehemiah 9:14;)

We have seen that **Christians are NOT**
commanded to observe the Sabbath Day.
(Colossians 2:14-16;).

We are **NOT** under **the Ten Commandments** today.
(Romans 7:4-7;)



Acts 15:1; "And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren,
"Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

**Moses led us to
Christ. Gal 3:24;**

**Moses was
a servant in the
house of the Lord.
Heb 3:5;**

**Moses was
a shadow of
good things
to come.
Heb 8:5; 10:1.**

**Moses did not
save anyone.
Heb 10:1;**

**THE
L
A
W
AND
G
R
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C
E**

**Jesus Christ
is the Master!
John 8:58;**

**Jesus is Lord
in the House.
Heb 3:6;**

**Jesus is
the reality.
Heb 9:24;**

**Jesus is the
Saviour of all.
Acts 4:12;**

Acts 15:1; “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren,
“**Unless you are circumcised** according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

This seems to have been the first **serious doctrinal division** in the church. It had to be corrected and settled immediately.

If **Gentiles had to be circumcised in order to be saved**, the implication was that they had to become proselytes to the Jewish religion or observe the laws of Moses **in addition to the teachings of Christ.**

There are religious groups today who teach that some parts of the Law of Moses must be observed by Christians, especially the Sabbath Commandment. **IS THIS RIGHT?**

Acts 15:2; “Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.”

From time to time tempers will flare when trying to teach some Bible topics, but we must understand that we can not lose our composure and moderation.

We are brothers in Christ and not enemies, we fight against Satan and his host of wickedness not against ourselves.

We must teach the truth regarding what is the view of people. That’s what Paul and Barnabas are doing.



Are people willing to reason and debate about religion today?



Acts 15:2; “Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.”

REASONING/DEBATE:-

Acts 15:2; “Sharp Dispute and debate.”

Acts 18:19; “went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.”

Acts 18:4; “every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue.”

Acts 17:2; “for 3 Sabbath days he reasoned with them.”

Acts 17:17; “he reasoned in the synagogue.”

Acts 15:2; “Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.”

Compare with Paul’s account in Galatians 2:11-14;

11 “But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.”

12 “For prior to the coming of certain men From James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.”

Acts 15:2; “Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.”

13. “And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.”

14 “But when I saw that they were not Straight forward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

The barrier holding back this flood of legalism had now dwindled to one man the Apostle Paul!

Acts 15:2; “Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.”

Paul’s Conclusion! Gal 2:16;

“nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus,”

“even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.”

Acts 15:2; “Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.”

Paul had received the Gospel he preached through a direct revelation from Christ, (Galatians 1:11-12;) and had a correct knowledge of the will of God for this age.

He knew perfectly well that this teaching about circumcision and the observing of the Law of Moses as a condition necessary for salvation was a false teaching.

Barnabas had learned the same truth, either from Paul, or by revelation just as Paul had;

The two united with all their might in opposing the doctrines taught by the Judaizers.

Acts 15:2; “Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.”

“The word **"dissension"** was used by classical Greek writers to express the greatest evil of all political societies, the discord and faction that opposite sides of a question often generate.” (Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War, III. 82; Aristotle, Politics, V. 2.)

It is the same word used of the **"insurrection"** in which Barabbas had been involved. (Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19;)

"Debate" comes from **zeteseos**, and speaks of a **"questioning examining together,"** often used in a negative sense.

Is it wrong to debate and discuss? Not when the truth is in the balance. (Jude 3; and Phil 1:17; are other passages often appealed to, they teach the Christian to resist error with all the arguments from the Word that he can muster.)

Acts 15:2; “Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.”

It is Christ like to stand for the truth.

Read the John 8 if you do not believe it.

Evidently Paul and Barnabas had caught the spirit of Christ!

They opposed the Judaizers.

Gal 2:2; Says they went up to Jerusalem because of a revelation. The apostles were not able to convince the Gentile believers at Antioch that the Judaizers wrong; but because of the revelation, they so conducted the debate that the brethren accepted the suggestion **"If you don't believe us, just go to Jerusalem and ask the Twelve!"**

Those arguing were **claiming they had the message from the 12 Apostles!** Paul knew that this was not the case.

Acts 15:2; “Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.”

The church at Antioch determined that they should send a delegation up to Jerusalem to find out for themselves the truth in this issue.

Paul and Barnabas are part of that delegation.

“certain others of them.” — Barnes suggests that there may have been some from each side in this debate — those who sided with the Judaizers and those who believed with Paul.

Gal 2:1; tells us that **Titus** was one of the ones whom Paul took along. Titus mentioned in the book of Acts.

The authority of the apostles in Jerusalem would be accepted by all, they had been instructed by the Saviour personally, and had been promised the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that their teaching must be right!

(John 14:26: Matthew 18:18;)

Acts 15:2; “Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.”

Why are the **"elders"** included? If we have assumed correctly that the Judaizers were claiming the example of the members of the Jerusalem congregation.

Then the elders (whose job it is to oversee the spiritual life of the brethren) would be the ones to ask about the practices of the members of the congregation in Jerusalem.

The converts have now been told by the Judaizers that Paul and Barnabas had been teaching a soul-destroying falsehood. Were the Judaizers right in their charges, or were Paul and Barnabas right? **This is the issue that must be settled in the people's minds.**

Acts 15:2; “Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.”

The Antioch church had no doubt about its position.

Note that the Antioch congregation was not seeking for the Jerusalem congregation to enlighten them on the doctrine of salvation.

**They sent Paul and Barnabas
to Jerusalem for three reasons!**

Acts 15:2; “Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.”

1) God told Paul to go: "I went up by revelation." (Gal 2:2;)

God willed a great meeting (one that would include the earliest apostles). A meeting that would issue a great verdict proclaiming the truth to every generation.

2) This declaration by the apostles would carry great weight and help tremendously in silencing those who would add a ritual to the requirements for salvation.

3) A declaration by the Jerusalem congregation would provide a great weapon to use in the struggle against "ritual of Moses' law."

The Jerusalem congregation was the ritual centre, the home base of those preaching the error.

At least that's what they claimed!

Acts 15:3; “So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren.”

These two countries were directly on their route from **Antioch of Syria to Jerusalem.**

(They could have gone by ship, landed at Caesarea or Joppa, and by passed both Phoenicia and Samaria.)

As they journey through the various towns where there are congregations, Paul and Barnabas are excited to share the news of the success of the 1st missionary journey among the Gentiles and about all those who responded to the gospel.

Their success may encourage others to reach out to the Gentiles.

Great joy at the news of the extensive spread of the Gospel. **Phoenicia and Samaria** were **not bound by Jewish prejudices**, as Judea would have been. This is the **strongest possible contrast** to the **narrowness and bitterness of the Judaizers.**

Acts 15:3; “So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren.”

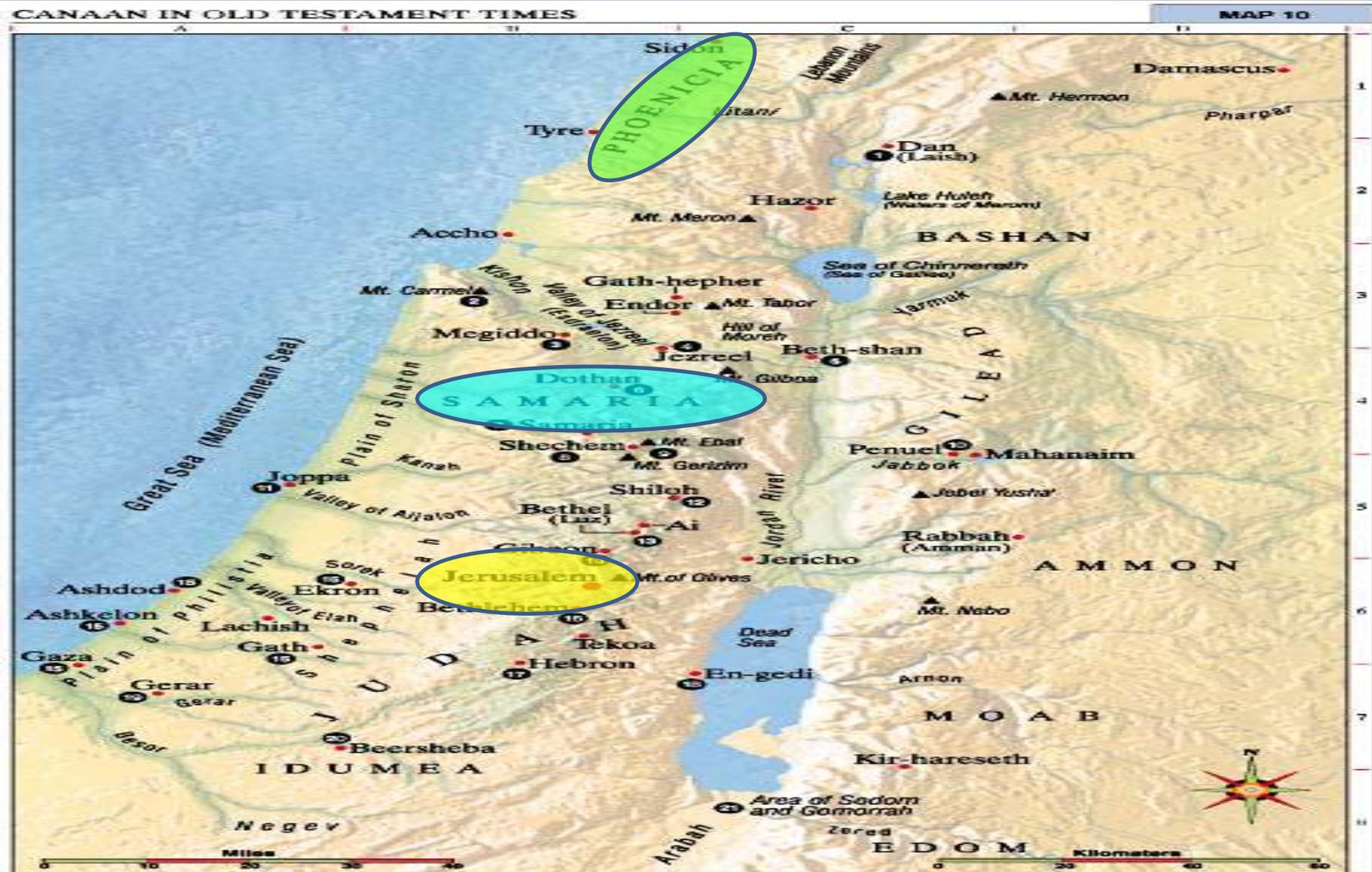
Not only does Paul want to share the good news of the Gentile response to the gospel.

He is concerned for the well being of the new Christians in these countries too. Paul, was always worried about new Christians.
2 Corinthians 11:28-29;

28. “Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.

**29. Who is weak without my being weak?
Who is led into sin without my intense concern?”**

Acts 15:4; “And when they had come to **Jerusalem**, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.”



Acts 15:4; “And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the congregation and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.”

It was a journey of some **300 miles** from Antioch to Jerusalem. This was Paul's third visit to Jerusalem since his conversion.

(See Acts 9:26; and 11:30; for the two earlier visits.)

There is no mention of the second visit (recorded in Acts) in the Galatian letter, evidently because Paul did not meet with any of the apostles long enough to be accused of learning his doctrine from them at that famine visit.

They were acknowledged as Christian brethren and received in a friendly, hospitable manner, with Christian kindness.

Barnabas was welcomed because he was one who had been so useful in the infancy of the Jerusalem congregation.

Paul was welcomed too for when he last left Jerusalem he was in good standing with the brethren. (Acts 9:30; 12:25;)

Acts 15:5; “But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”

This first major congregational meeting to discuss a serious problem that could affect other congregation in the future held about 49 AD was different from later “church councils” Because here they were guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Apostles were all inspired prophets. The elders no doubt were also inspired prophets, they had their gifts from the apostles themselves, though they could not pass on gifts of the Holy Spirit as the Apostles could.

**What was ultimately decided by this meeting had the stamp of approval from God.
This was not true of later “church councils.”**



Acts 15:4; “And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the congregation and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.”

Notice how well the apostles and elders get along in Jerusalem. There is no problem at all. Christians need to learn to live together in harmony.

We do not know how many of the apostles were present.

We do learn from Galatians 2:9; that

Peter and John and James the Lord's brother were there.

We do not know how many elders were in the congregation at Jerusalem.

Paul and Barnabas are reporting **to** the other apostles and elders! This is true **“humility.”** Romans 12:3; Phil 2:3;

The apostles, give a presentation and tell of the **thrilling journey they had made among the Gentiles.**

Paul and Barnabas state that it was really God working "with them."



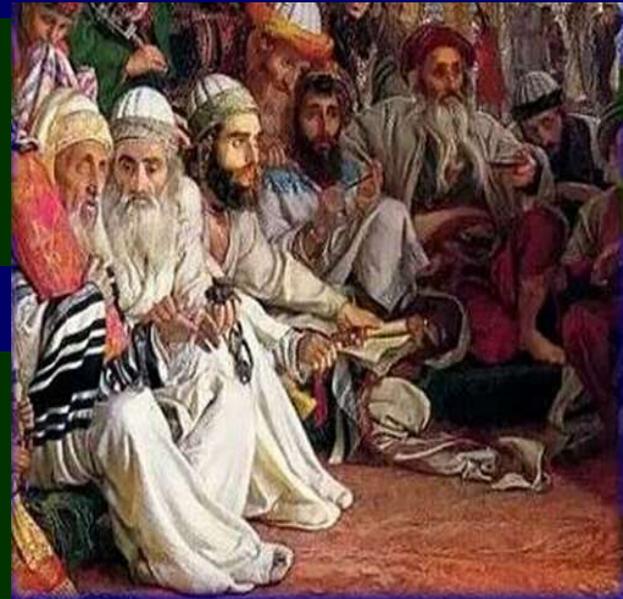
Acts 15:5; “But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”

Are these Pharisees Christians?

Paul was not the only Pharisee who obeyed Christ, Many of the Pharisees were converted to Christ also.

Yet like many of us after conversion they found it difficult to put off their old ways of thinking and doing things.

They then began to think it was more important to defend their old ideas and party traditions instead of Christ.



They are teaching that Christians ought to also believe and practice the law of Moses. Circumcision was a “part” of Moses’ law together with many other sacrifices but not a thing that we must do to be saved!



Acts 15:5; "But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."

Remember in Antioch those Judaizers regarded circumcision (and the keeping of the whole Law) as indispensable to salvation.

They wished to force the keeping of the Law on the Gentile converts, and they claimed that the church at Jerusalem had authorized them to so teach.
A claim which was false. (verse 24;)

These Jewish members of the Jerusalem congregation were the originators of this false doctrine.

So when they heard of the great work done Amongst the Gentiles they protested strongly.

Acts 15:5; “But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”

Long after this meeting, when Paul had come to fully understand the motives of the **Judaizing party**. he writes, calling them false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus that they might bring us into bondage.” (Galatians 2:4;)

McGarvey page 58-59 says “From this judicial sentence in Galatians upon these Judaizers, we ascertain that when they despaired of destroying the church by persecution from without, they deliberately confessed Christ and came into the church for the purpose of controlling it from within.

This implies that some of the Jews when they could not destroy the church from outside, pretended to become Christians to try to control it from the inside.

The wanted to bind the Jewish law & customs on Christians.

Acts 15:5; “But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”

The essential issue between Paul and the Pharisees had reference to the **perpetuation of the law of Moses** in the church of God: and **the same issue has been in debate under different phases from that day to this.**

Paul defeated the attempt to bind **circumcision** on the church, but later Judaizers **succeeded in perpetuating** it under the form of **infant sprinkling.**

That which the Pharisees failed to accomplish openly was thus accomplished under a thin disguise.

Many religions today try to emulate the old Jewish traditions such as the dressing up like the old Testament priests

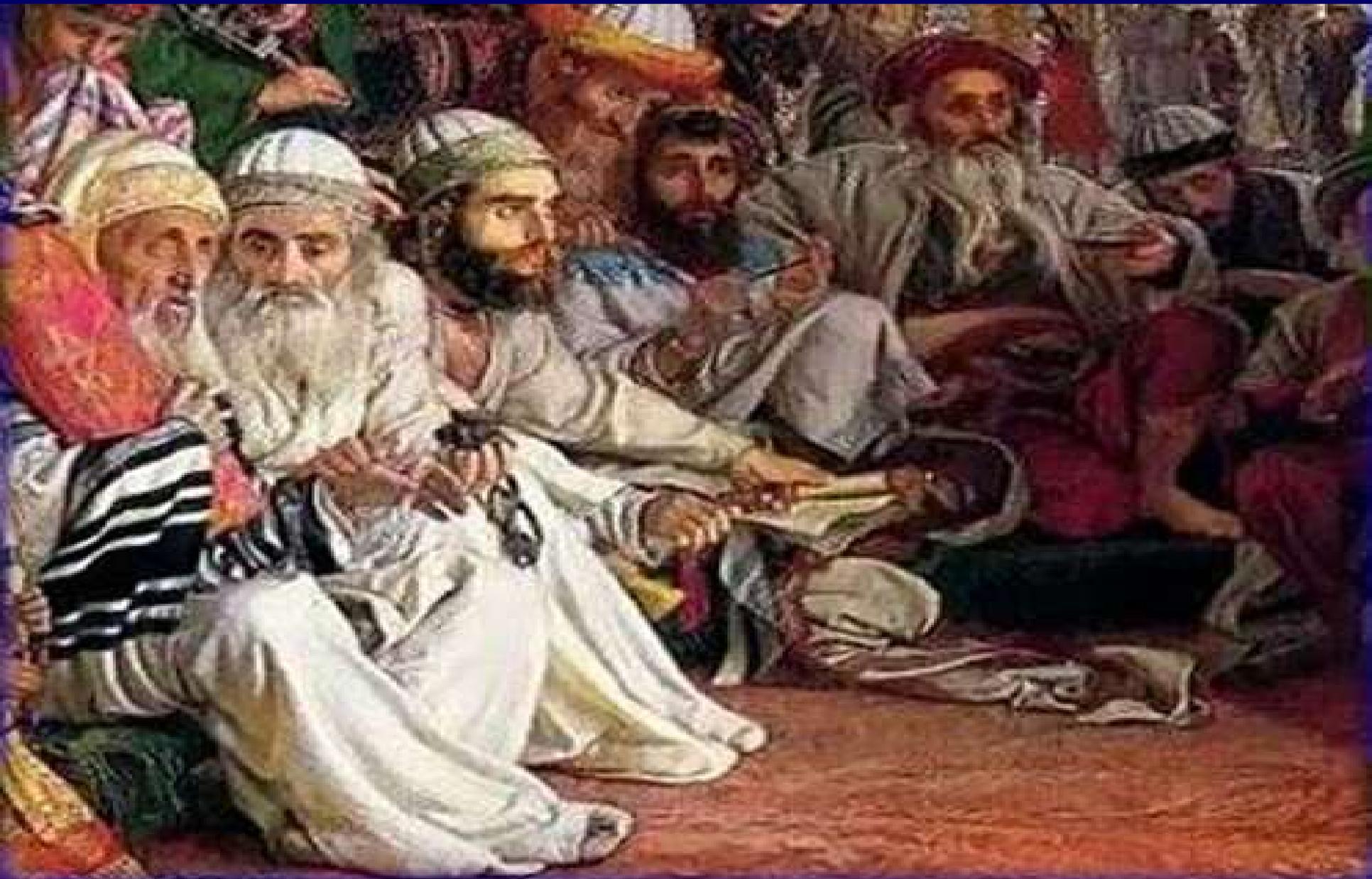
Creating a Clergy and laity system in their organisation with a lot of pomp and ceremony and man made heads of their churches acting like high priests.

5 “Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, **“The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses.”**”

5 The apostles and elders met to consider this question.”

One of the deadliest moments in the history of the church!

Acts 15:6; “Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.”



Acts 15:6; “Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.”

The apostles with the elders are coming together to discuss the accusation from the Pharisee Christians against the gentiles in Antioch.

When we compare the language of v6 with that of v 4, we see that there were two meetings.

In that first meeting, Paul and Barnabas had declared in detail the conversion of the Gentiles.

Then the Judaizers stated their position, distinctly insisting that the Gentile converts must be circumcised and required to keep the Law.

“after much discussion.”



Acts 15:6; “Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.”

Both meetings recorded by Luke were public meetings, meetings where the whole church at Jerusalem was present.

There was, however, a private meeting involving Paul, Barnabas, and Titus on the one hand, and Peter, John, and James the Lord's brother on the other, which was held between the two public meetings.

We learn from Galatians, in which Paul both states the fact and gives the reason for seeking the meeting the apostles who were in Jerusalem.

Gal 2:1-10; “Seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter with the gospel to the circumcised and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, They gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship.”

A perfect example of a grace plus gospel

You need to obey
the gospel of Christ
but you also need
to be circumcised
in the flesh to be saved.

Are you legalistic? How can you tell?

THE BACK PEW - JEFF LARSON

Go ahead.. break the rules.
MAKE MY DAY!!



LEGALISM - It's not just a job, it's a way of life.

**If you think that you only have
to attend worship every week
for your salvation**

Legalist!

**We don't attend worship
for our salvation;**

**We attend worship
because of our salvation.**

If you think that you

have good deeds

Legalist!

for salvation

We don't do good deeds
for our salvation.

We do good deeds
because of our salvation.

Acts 15:7; “And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: “Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.”

The point is hard, there was **“much” dispute**. They need, like many of us today, to cool down and be Christ like in attitude whenever something like this arises among us.

Peter is says “remember Cornelius” God chose the gentiles to be partakers of the gospel and He did it by the mouth of Peter. The reference is to Acts 10.

God makes no “partiality” of people. We do.

The gospel is for all and these Pharisees had not understood this yet. Romans 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18; 15:2; If we respond to God’s Grace through the blood of Christ in faithful obedience as he has prescribe in His word, we will be saved.



Acts 15:8; “So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us.”

God showed that He accepted the Gentiles by giving them a gift from the Holy Spirit.

The gift of languages was not a sign that they were saved but that God was now accepting Gentiles into the church.

Cornelius and the men in his household were not circumcised or commanded to be circumcised.

But he and every one in his household were commanded to be baptized in water.

We know from other scriptures that this **water baptism was **the point where their sins were washed away by the blood of Jesus** for the forgiveness of sins. **THEN** they were saved.**



Acts 15:8; “So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us.”

Of all the Apostles, Jesus had chosen Peter to preach the first sermon to Jews to admit this group into the kingdom, which is the church. Acts 2;

Jesus had also chosen Peter in Acts 10; to preach the first gospel sermon to Gentiles to admit this group into the kingdom-church.

This was what Jesus had meant when he told Peter that He was giving him the keys of the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 16:1-18;)

The gospel is to open the hearts of both Jew and Gentile.

Acts 15:9; "and made no distinction between us and them,
purifying their hearts by faith."

**The same God of The Jewish people is the same God of us
the gentiles. You and I must know that we are gentiles,
so God in His infinite mercy received us unto His Son.**

**But even that's the case now, the Jewish people
cannot comprehend how that change happened,
or who makes those changes...**

God purified our hearts, how?

1 Peter 2:22, 23; John 1:13; John 3:5; 1 John 3:9.

Rom 10:17; "Faith comes by hearing"

The word of God becomes the agent of our purification.

When men obey in honesty and with a pure heart,

God can help us with the changes!

Acts 15:9; “and made no distinction between us and them,
purifying their hearts by faith.”

No Distinction. Once God did make a distinction between the Jews and Gentiles as he did between the clean and unclean animals. He does so no more. (Eph 2:10-18; Romans 10:12; Galatians 3:26-29;).

Now every Jew who is saved is saved in exactly the same way and on the same basis that every Gentile is saved.

God has no further plans for fleshly Israel.

The church is the new Israel of God.

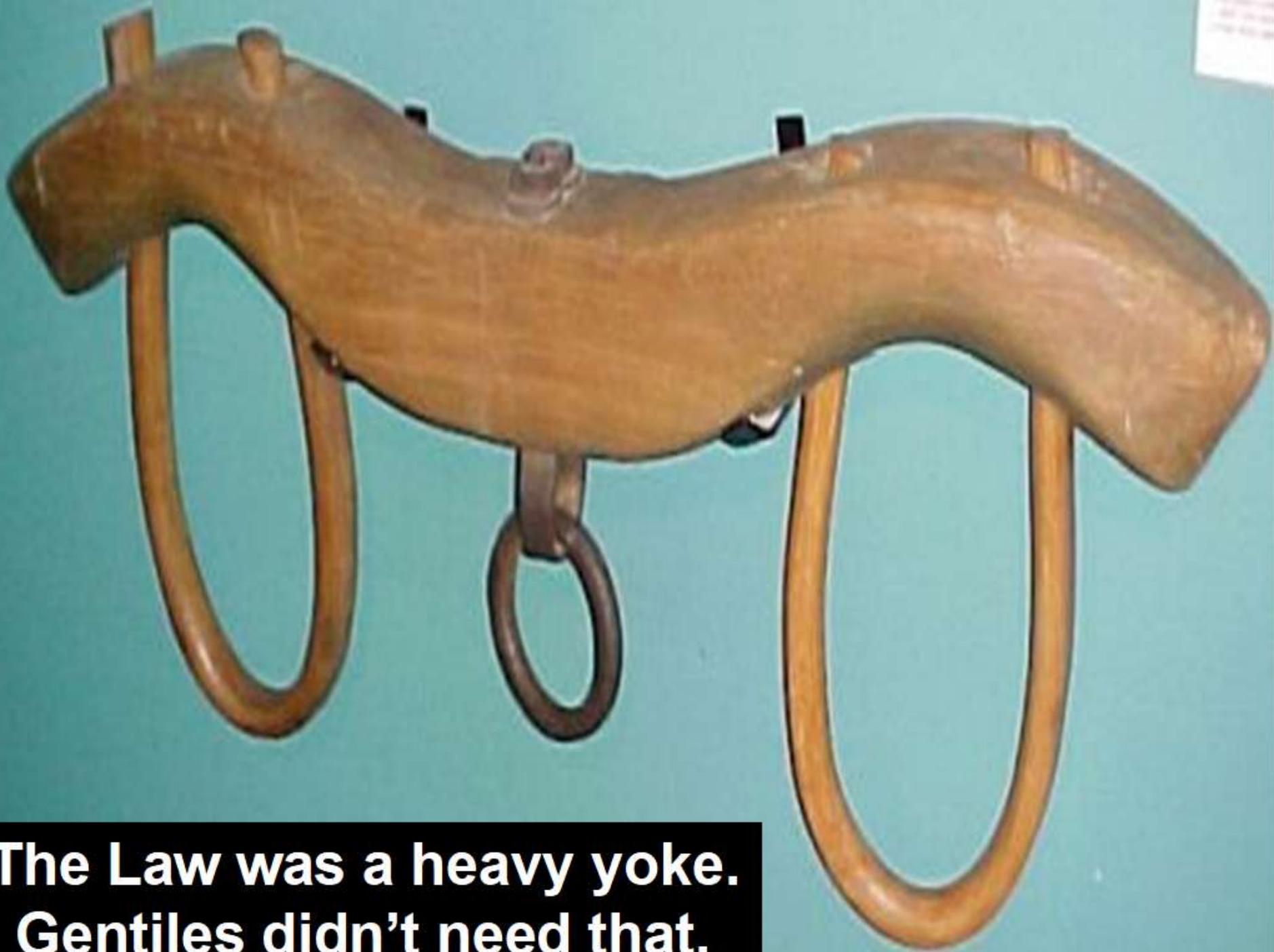
It has replaced the nation of Israel as God’s chosen and holy nation. (Ephesians 2; 1 Peter 2:9-10;)

Acts 15:10; "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

9 "He made no distinction between us and them,
for **He purified their hearts by faith.**"

10 "Now then, why do you try to test God by putting
on the necks of the disciples **a yoke that neither
we nor our fathers have been able to bear?**"

11 "No! We believe **it is through the grace
of our Lord Jesus that we are rescued,
just as they are.**"



**The Law was a heavy yoke.
Gentiles didn't need that.**

Acts 15:10; "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

We all know that a yoke is a **"burden,"** something hard to carry, something that not even the same Jews were willing to take any more.

Gal 3:10; "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, **"Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things** which are written in the book of the law, **to do them."**

We are now justified not by the works of the Law by but by faith in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 2:16;

This is Peters point in Acts 15:10;

Acts 15:10; "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.”

Gal 5:1-2;

“ This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome,”

1 John 5:3;

Acts 15:10; "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

To force Christians then and now to follow Old Testament opinions and traditions is **TO TEST GOD!**
Peter is calling **circumcision** a **'YOKE'**

God has expressed His will. You don't think you can go on with contradicting that, do you? **If you continue to argue for the necessity of circumcision,** you will only be going against God's manifest will, and in that opposition you will bring on yourselves His displeasure.

The Seventh Day Adventist are taking laws and commandments from Moses,
the same the Jews were not able to carry.
The law of Moses was very hard to keep and fulfill.

Matthew 23:4; Galatians 5:1;

Paul says, 'you want to justify yourself by following Moses law', you have fallen from 'GRACE.' Galatians 3:1-4;

Acts 15:11; "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

8 "For it is **by grace you have been saved**, through faith, and this not from yourselves, **it is the gift of God.** 9 **Not by works**, so that no-one can boast."
Ephesians 2:8-10;

"Ye see then how that **by works** a man is justified, and not **by faith only.**" James 2:24; (KJV)

"So you also, **when you have done everything you were told to do**, should say, **'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'** Luke 17:10;

Acts 15:11; "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

We are saved by the GRACE OF GOD.

Romans 3:24; 5:20-21; Gal 1:6;

But this grace cannot work alone,

It needs to be accepted,

we must be willing to do our part. John 3:16;

God has done His, now its our turn to do ours.

How?

**By responding to the grace of God
by being faithfully obedient
to what is prescribed in the word of God.**

Acts 2:38; 8:37-38; 22:16;



Acts 15:12; “Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.”

From time to time when we don't understand something it will be very noble and gentle to keep quiet.

This was enough to close the mouths of the gainsayers.

How could they argue that what Peter, Paul and Barnabas had said was not true and not a clear demonstration of the will of God?

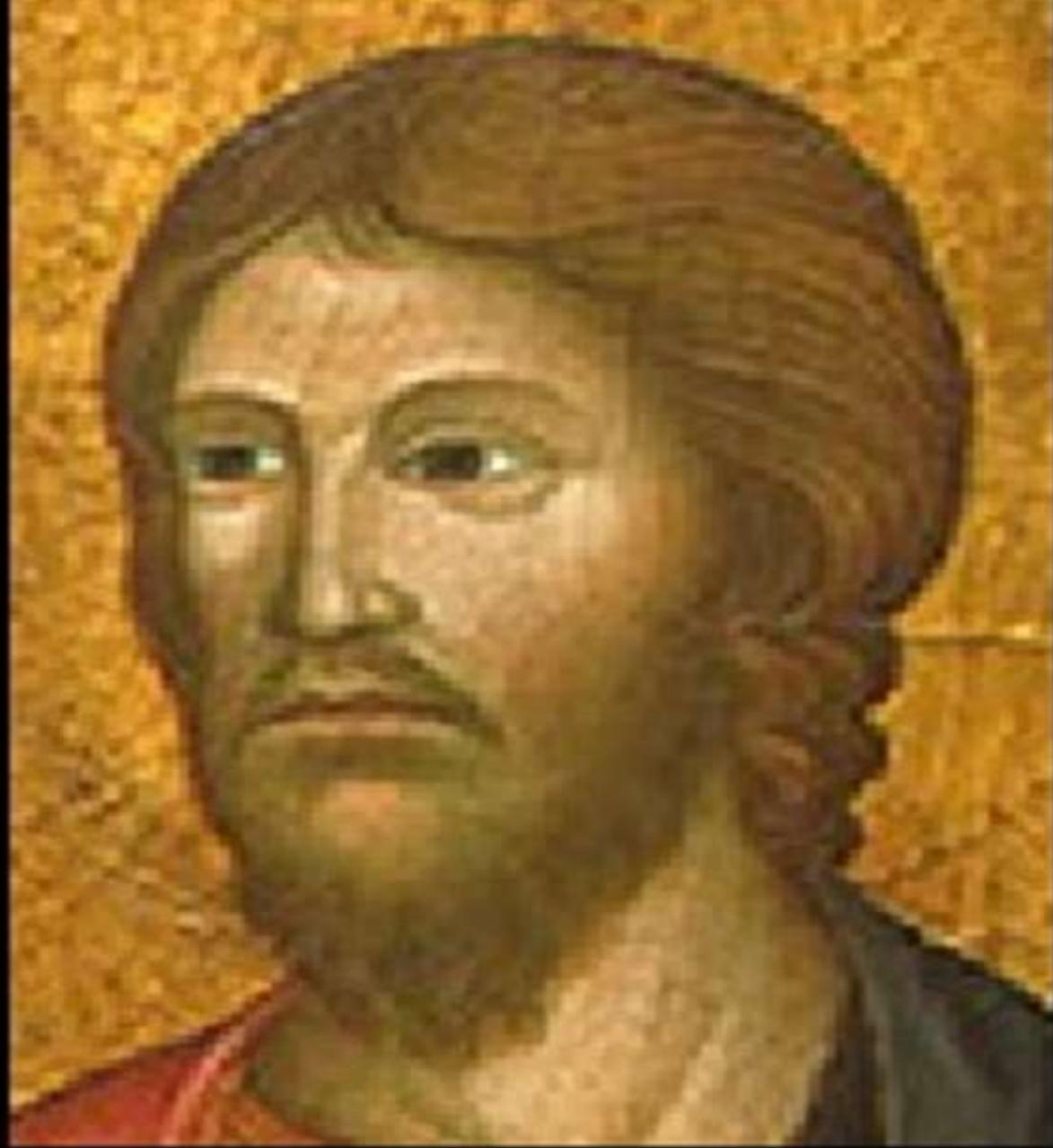
**The work belongs to God!
We are only servants for the Lord!
We need to remember that. Luke 17:10;**

Acts 15:12; “Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.”

2 Cor 4:5; “For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.”

1 Cor 3:5; “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers **through whom** you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?”

1 Cor 3:9; “For **we are God's fellow workers;** you are God's field, **you are God's building.**”



James the Just, Brother of Jesus

Acts 15:13; “And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, “Men and brethren, listen to me:-”

This James is not the son of Zebedee, James was **killed by Herod** in chapter 12;

This James is the **brother of Lord Jesus.**
1 Cor 15:7; Galatians 1:13; Matthew 13:55;

James seems to have been the spokesman of this assembly. This James was not an Apostle but evidently a prophet and one of the leaders in the Jerusalem congregation.

He was the author of the Bible book that bears his name.

**Remains of ancient synagogue
or church building.**



Acts 15:13; “And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, “Men and brethren, listen to me:-”

Even though James was **“an unbeliever”** at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. John 7:5; Now he is **“a pillar in the Jerusalem congregation.”**

He brought the meeting to its conclusion
By proposing a solution to which they all agreed.

He will explain something very wise
in order to comfort the brethren in Antioch.
Where they have been disturbed
by these Judaizers.

Acts 15:14; “Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.”

James is now defending the gentiles brothers and he will help this council by giving his Biblical and a very logical conclusion.

What is the Biblical rule that we follow in order to create or have a Biblical practice?

Acts 15:14; “Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.”

How To Determine What Is Authorized

vv. 13-21;	Command or Direct Statement.
v. 12;	Approved Example.
vv. 7-11;	Necessary Inference.

James will use this principle right now.

Acts 15:15; "And with this the words of the prophets agree,
just as it is written:-"

James recognized that this is what the prophets
spoke about and now he says:

This is the fulfillment of all that they wrote.

Isaiah 2:2-4; Isaiah 49:6; Micah 4:1-4;

James says that **Bible prophecy cannot fail.**

Everything that God spoke
"must" have a fulfillment.

All the prophets understood that David's house
will fall and that **God will raise a new people
who will worship him.**

This new people came when the Jewish people
as a nation rejected Jesus as in John 1:11-12;



Acts 15:16; "After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up;"

The tent of David was the Jewish nation over whom David ruled. He was a symbol of the Christ Who would come and rebuild David's fallen tent and restore its ruins.

Jesus did this when He built the church.

Matt 16:16-18; Acts 2:36-45;

James is taking this prophecy from Amos chapter 9:11-12;

People who think that Jesus will come back and that He will establish the throne of David in Jerusalem again are misunderstanding and misapplying many Bible passages.

Acts 15:16; "After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up;"

We the Christians are the “real” tabernacle of God and we are commanded to offer real sacrifices to God. (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 2:9;)

God did return and He set up the throne of David when Jesus sat at the right hand of God after His resurrection. Acts 2:22-26;

Did God know that the Jews will reject His Son? Yes, He did but at the same time He gave them the opportunity to make a choice, accept Him or Reject Him.

The Gospel is for mankind, no one should stay out, all can come to a relationship with the Lord, after all we were created for that reason.

Acts 15:17; "So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things."

**For Peter in chapter 10 of Acts
it is was very hard to believe that God
now was opening the door for all the gentiles.**

**This is the reason why it took him long to make
a decision in order to enter the home of Cornelius.**

Acts 15:18; "Known to God from eternity are all His works."

God knows in His infinite Power the heart of men.

If men want to be saved they must humble themselves to the offering from God.

There is an invitation open for every one and we must make the choice if we want to receive Him or not.

The same gospel that was preached for the Jews is the same gospel that God is offering for the gentiles. Salvation is now a reality for everyone who believes. Romans 1:16-17; 1 Cor 1:18.

So we the Christians can openly say:-
THE GOSPEL IS FOR ALL!

Acts 15:19; “Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God.”

Let's all notice something in here:-

The judgment from James is not left for anyone to vote on it.

The evidence that James presents is clear and everyone together must abide to this conclusion.

James says this is not my decision but the decision of the Holy Spirit.

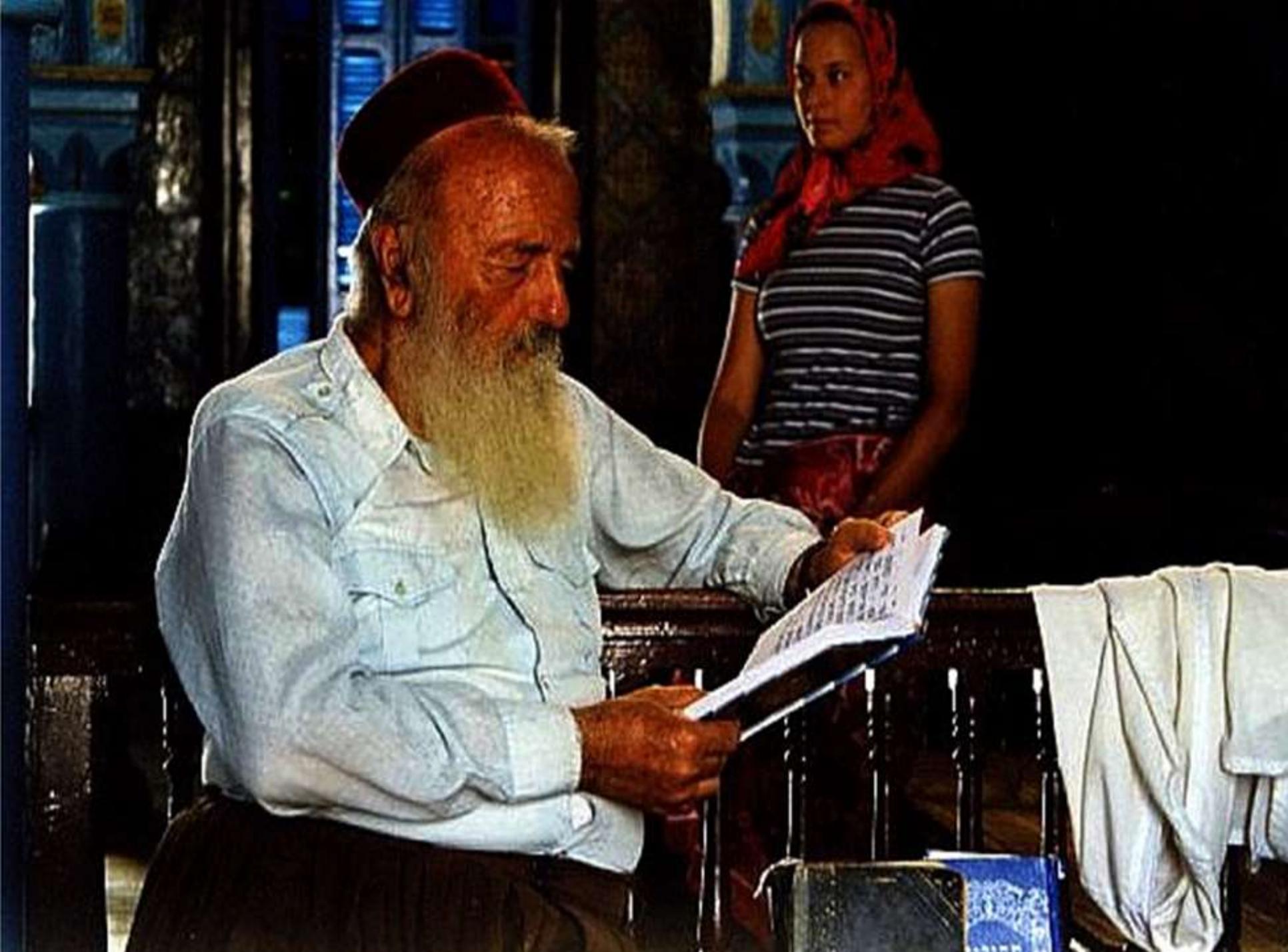
Acts 15:28; “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:

20 “Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from

- ① food polluted by idols, from
- ② sexual immorality, from the
- ③ meat of strangled animals and from blood.④

21 “For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”

No suggestion that salvation is at stake!



Acts 15:20; "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood."

It is my belief that **these four rules** were **emphasized** to the Gentiles because **these things were common practices among the pagan Gentiles** and they didn't think there was anything wrong with doing them.

The reason the Gentiles were told to keep these rules is given in verse 21;

Most cities in the Roman world had a Jewish synagogue and if the Gentile Christians did any of these things they would so offend the Jews that they might never come to Jesus and be saved.

**The Gentiles could easily
Do without these things.**

Acts 15:20; "but that we write to them to abstain from **things polluted by idols**, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood."

The prohibition:

Thing polluted to idols...Such as?
"Meat or any other food offer to idols."

The word rendered pollutions means any kind of defilement. But here it is evidently used to denote the flesh of those animals that were offered in sacrifice to idols.

See Acts 15:29; That flesh, after being offered in sacrifice, was often exposed for sale in the markets, or was served up at feasts,
1 Cor 10:25-29.;

Acts 15:20; "but that we write to them to abstain from **things polluted by idols**, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood."

1 Cor 8:1; "Next is your question about **eating food that has been sacrificed to idols**. On this question everyone feels that **only his answer is the right one!**

But although **being a `know-it-all` makes us feel important,**

what is really needed to build the church is love."

2 "If anyone thinks he knows all the answers, he is just showing his ignorance."

3 "If someone loves God, God knows this person."

4 "about meat which has been offered to false gods. We know that they really don't exist.

There is only one true God."

Acts 15:20; "but that we write to them to abstain from **things polluted by idols**, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood."

1 Cor 8:7; "However, not everyone has this knowledge. Some people still have the habit of treating idols as though they were real when they eat such meat. Their conscience is weak; they feel that the food makes them unclean."

8 "Food is not the thing that brings us closer to God. We are not losing anything if we don't eat some things. We are not any better off if we do eat."

9 "But be careful not to use your freedom to eat it, lest you cause some Christian brother to sin whose conscience is weaker than yours."

Acts 15:20; "but that we write to them to abstain from **things polluted by idols**, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood."

1 Cor 8:10; "You see, this is what may happen:

Someone who thinks it is wrong to eat this food will see you eating at a temple restaurant, for you know there is no harm in it. Then he will become bold enough to do it too, although all the time he still feels it is wrong."

11 "So because you `know it is all right to do it," you will be responsible for causing great spiritual damage to a brother with a tender conscience for whom Christ died."

12 "And it is a sin against Christ to sin against your brother by encouraging him to do something he thinks is wrong."

13 "Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble."



Acts 15:20; "but that we write to them to abstain from **things polluted by idols**, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood."

1 Cor 10; Also deals with the question of eating meats, some portion of which might have been sacrificed to an idol.

Paul said that if a pagan invites you, a Christian, to eat with him, you should eat anything that is set before you, asking no questions about the meat.

He said that a Christian knows that meat is just meat and an idol is nothing

But if a person thinks the idol represents a real god of some kind, then the "idol's meat" is special to him.



Acts 15:20; "but that we write to them to abstain from **things polluted by idols**, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood."

But if someone in the house of your host tells you that the meat has been used in idol worship, then you should not eat it.

This is in deference to the person who told you, and that person's conscience, not because of your conscience.

We must not encourage anyone to sin against his conscience or lead someone to think we worship an idol. In most of the western world until recently we had no problem with paganism or idol worship,

but because of the general lack of Bible knowledge these things seem to be coming back.

Acts 15:20; "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood."

**We may have
the right to do something
but we are willing
to give up that right
motivated by our love for Jesus
and our love for others.**



Temple Prostitutes in Pagan Temple.

Acts 15:20; "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, **from sexual immorality,** from things strangled, and from blood."

The Gentile pagans regularly practiced fornication as part of their worship in the temples of the Greek and Roman gods.

They believed that adultery was wrong but that the use of the temple prostitutes as part of the fertility rites in some temples was not wrong.

Sexual Immorality is any sexual activity that violates the order from God to keep marriage honourable.

1 Cor 6:18; Gal 5:19; 1 Thes 4:3; Heb 13:4;

The word used here – **porneia** - is applicable to **all illicit intercourse;** and may refer to **adultery, incest, and licentiousness in any form.**

Acts 15:20; "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from **things strangled**, and from blood."

Things strangled!

That is, from animals or birds that were killed without shedding their blood.

The reason why these were considered by the Jews unlawful to be eaten was, that thus they would be under a necessity of **eating blood, which was positively forbidden by the law.**

Hence it was commanded in the law, that when any beast or fowl was taken in a snare, the blood should be poured out before it was lawful to be eaten. Lev 17:13;

Acts 15:20; "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and **from blood.**"

From Blood? Is this commandment binding today?

Lev 17:10-14; The eating of blood was strictly forbidden to the Jews.

The reason of this was that it contained the life. But more than this **all through the Bible** blood is emphasised leading up to the greatest blood sacrifice, **Jesus blood to save us from our sins.**

The use of blood was common among the Gentiles.

They drank it often at their sacrifices, and in making covenants or agreements.

To separate the Jews from them in this respect was one design of the prohibition.

Acts 15:20; "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and **from blood.**"

Is Blood transfusion a sin then?

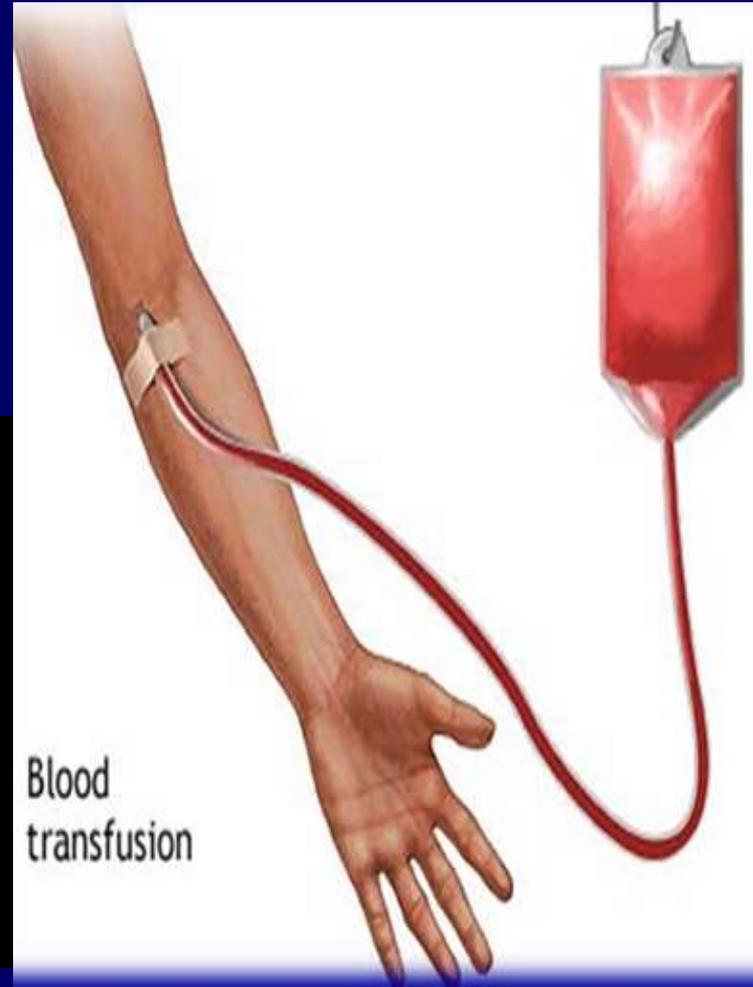
Blood is life!

Are the Jehovah witnesses right when they prohibit blood transfusions to their followers?

James is very specific when he mentions eating blood.

In blood transfusion we are not eating blood.

Gen 9:4;



Blood transfusion

Acts 15:20; "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and **from blood.**"

**The Scriptures and most people recognize the difference between eating or drinking something as a food for nourishment or pleasure, as compared to taking the same thing for medical treatment.
(see 1 Tim 5:23;)**

Acts 15:20; "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and **from blood.**"

The only New Testament passages that really deal with this subject are Acts 15:20-29; The whole point in **context** is that **these are things were forbidden by the law are still forbidden by the gospel,** hence Gentile converts should be taught to observe them.

The rest of the New Testament says virtually nothing about this point (cf. Acts 21:25), yet James is clearly saying that **this practice is forbidden in the New Testament.**

To understand the point, we must study the Old Testament law to which **James refers.**

Acts 15:20; "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and **from blood.**"

Since the **New Testament law here is clearly the same as the Old Testament, we can accept the Old Testament definition of the law.**

The Old Testament law required people not to eat flesh with the blood in it; rather, they were required to pour the blood out. See Gen. 9:4; Lev. 3:17; 19:26; 17:10-15; Deut. 12:16, 23-28; 15:23; 1 Sam. 14:31ff.;

Further, they were not to directly eat blood of any animal. - Lev. 7:26,27; 17:10ff; Deut. 12:23;

Acts 15:20; "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and **from blood.**"

The reason for this is that the life is in the blood, and the blood is offered as the atoning sacrifice.

Lev. 17:10-14; Deut. 12:23-28;

The wages of sin is death, and death is described as the shedding of blood.

Since blood then is the requirement of sin, **Jesus today is still our sacrifice having shed His blood for us.**



Jewish people eating

Acts 15:21; "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

The same reasons are true today.

We should not eat any animal that has died by strangulation, eat or drink blood or anything that we know has been sacrificed to an idol.

The main reason to forgo these things is because of the effect they might have on **Jewish and Islamic people**, many of whom are **still sensitive to the dietary teachings of the Law of Moses.**

These things are much more offensive to Jews and followers of Islam than eating shellfish or pork.

Acts 15:21; "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

What James is saying is that **Moses does not need any help from the Pharisees.**

Moses is always read in the Synagogues **so don't bother the Christians anymore!**

That's exactly what happen today. What many want again is to take Moses' law and avoid Christ.

Let's make something clear this morning:-

WE CANNOT KEEP TWO LAWS AT THE SAME TIME!

It is spiritual adultery to follow another law besides the law that Jesus already brought to us. **Rom 8:2;**

THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL

THE DIFFERENT OPINIONS



THE CHRISTIAN PHARISEES SAID A GENTILE HAD TO BECOME A JEWISH PROSELYTE BEFORE HE COULD BECOME A CHRISTIAN (V.5)

PETER ARGUES (V.7-11) THAT GENTILES WERE SAVED BY FAITH IN CHRIST THE SAME AS JEWS WERE. PAUL AND BARNABUS BACKED HIM UP (V.12)

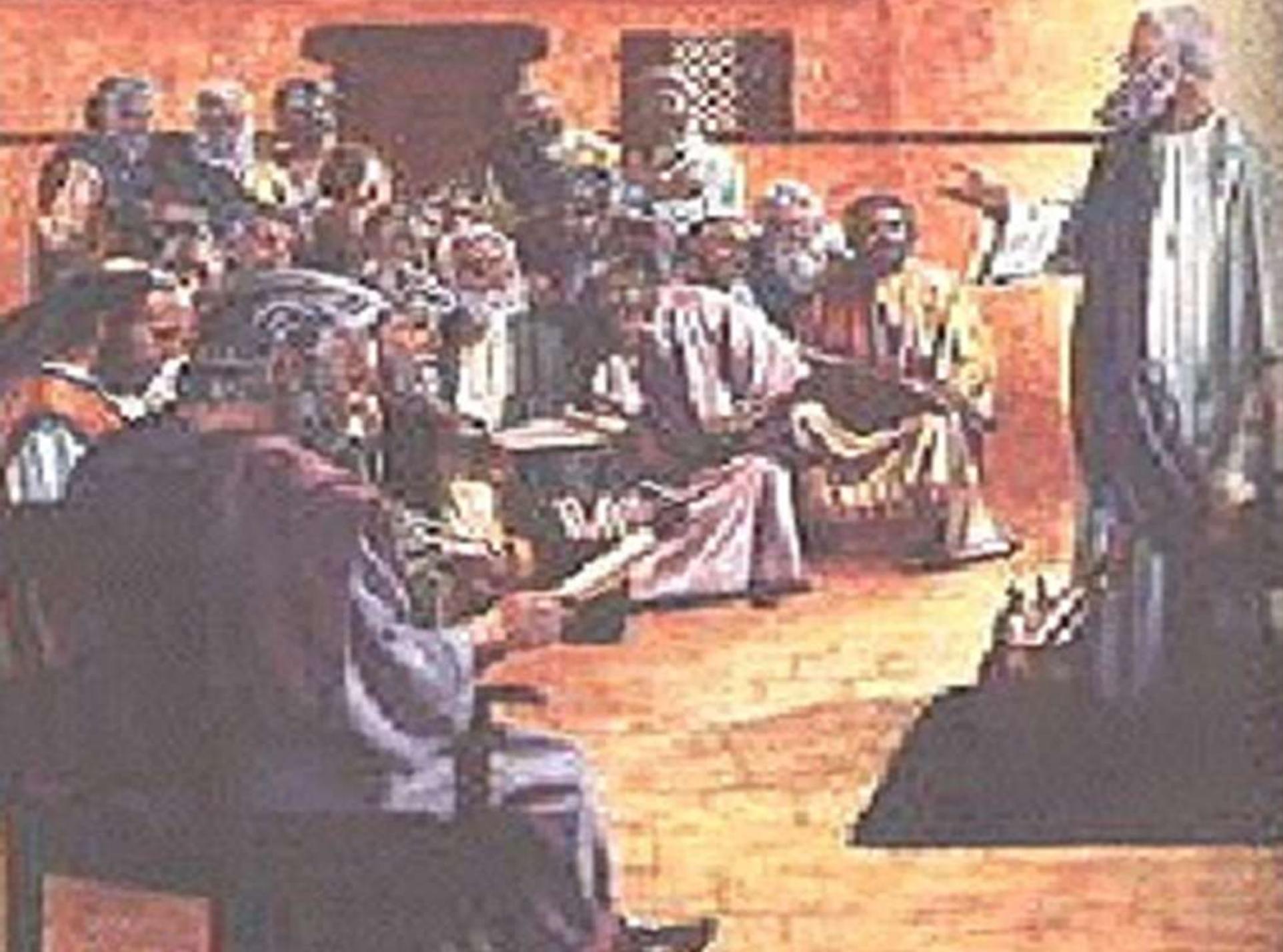
(3) **JAMES**

HE SUMMARIZES PETERS ARGUMENT (V.14) QUOTED RELEVANT SCRIPTURE (V.15-18) HE STATED THE CONSENSUS OF THE MEETING (V.19-22)

THE DIVINE SOLUTION

- (1) THEY HEARD ALL POINTS OF VIEW (V.5-12)
- (2) THEY CHECKED THE SCRIPTURES (V.15-18)
- (3) APPLIED SCRIPTURE TO THE ISSUE (V.19)
- (4) AVOIDED UNNECESSARY ANTAGONISMS (V.20-21)

THESE SAME PRINCIPLES APPLIED TO DISPUTES AMONG CHRISTIANS TODAY, COULD RESOLVE MANY SENSITIVE ISSUES.



Acts 15:22; “The apostles, the elders, and the whole congregation wanted to send some men with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch . The group decided to choose some of their own men. They chose Judas Barsabbas and Silas. These men were respected by the brothers.”

The proposal from James was accepted by:

Apostles! They are the authority that Jesus left.

The Elders! They are the government that Jesus left.

The called out ones! He die and shed His blood for this beautiful body.

This is the way that we ought to make decisions in a congregation, in a unanimous manner.

It is so nice to see that Apostles, Elders and congregation were working in unity!

Acts 15:22; “The apostles, the elders, and the whole congregation wanted to send some men with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch . The group decided to choose some of their own men. They chose Judas Barsabbas and Silas. These men were respected by the brothers.”

The action from the congregation is seen immediately by sending men from Jerusalem together with Paul and Barnabas.

Paul! Missionary preacher from Antioch.

Barnabas! Companion of Paul in the first trip.

Judas! (Barsabas) A Christian (Prophet) from Jerusalem.

Silas! Future companion of Paul and also (prophet). Roman citizen and also a Jew. Acts 16:37;

These men are **going to Antioch** to **encourage the brothers** and also **to fix the problem of circumcision.**

Acts 15:23; “They wrote this letter by them:- The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings.”

They wrote a letter:-

Follow please the order of authority

Apostles!

Elders!

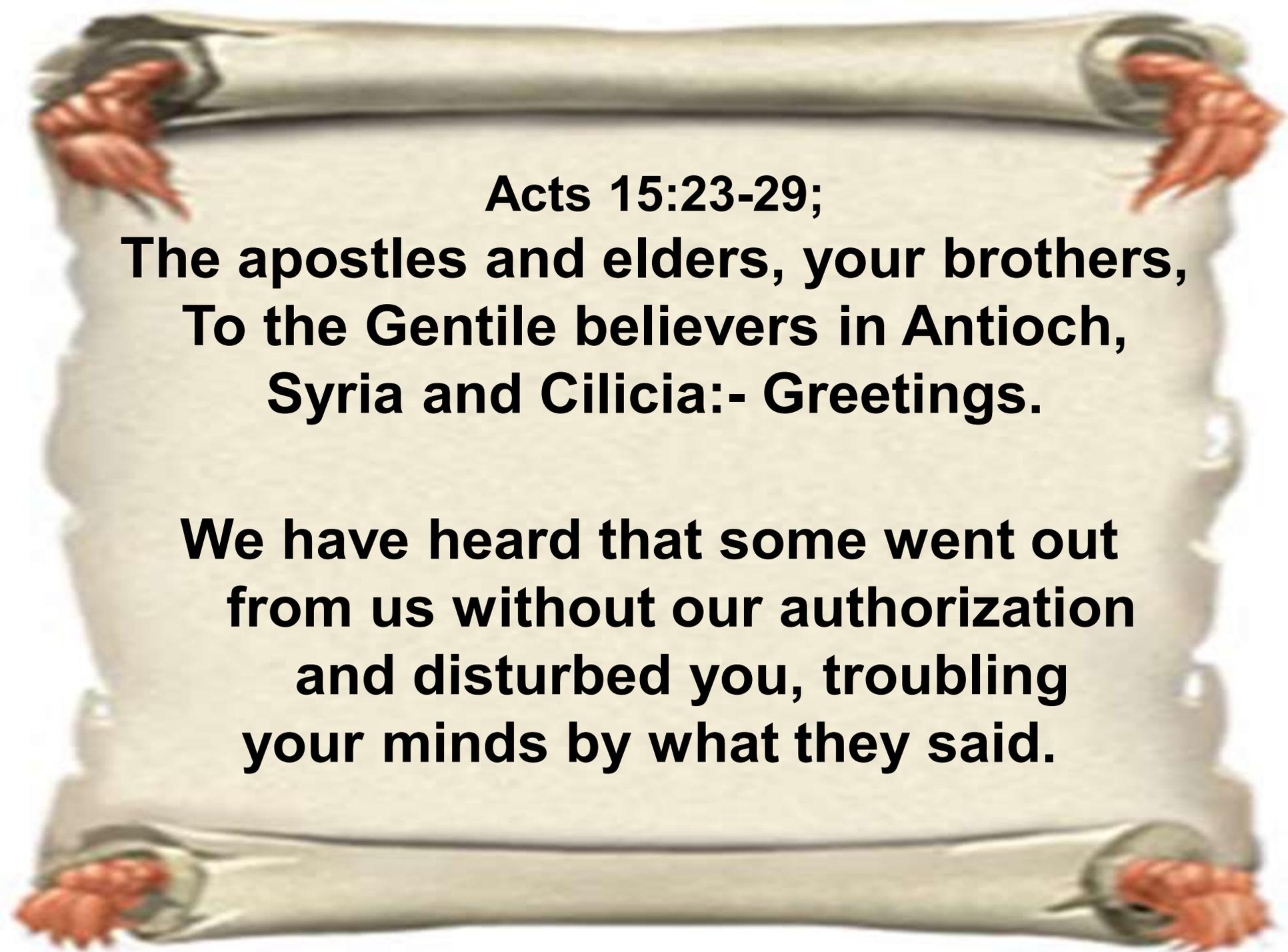
Congregation! (Brethren.)



Let us mention again that Jerusalem is not the mother church.

Jerusalem is just helping Antioch in the same way that we can help any congregation around the area that is struggling with any hard topic.

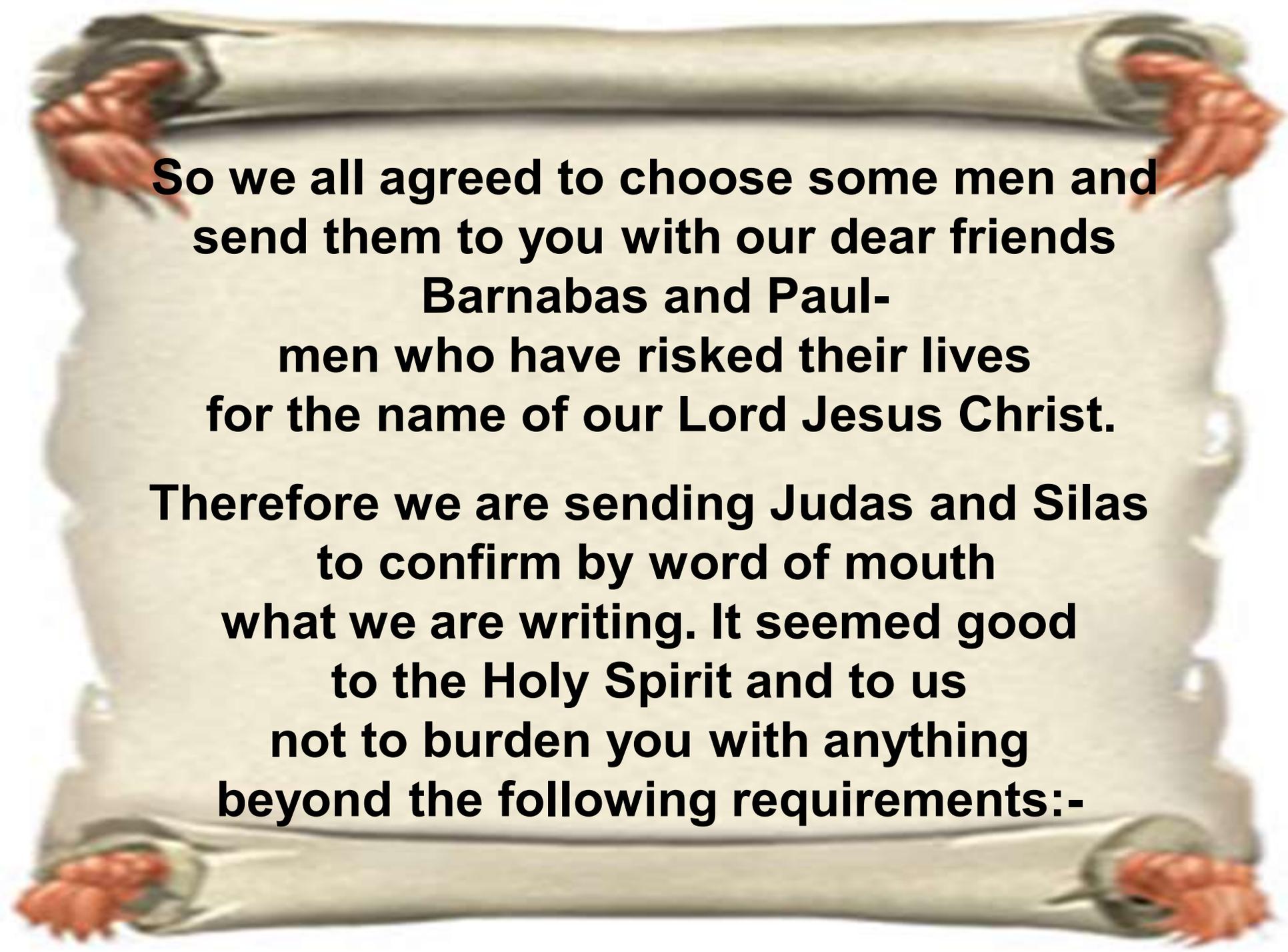
Circumcision was a hard topic and they needed the help of the Apostles.

A scroll with red wax seals at the corners.

Acts 15:23-29;

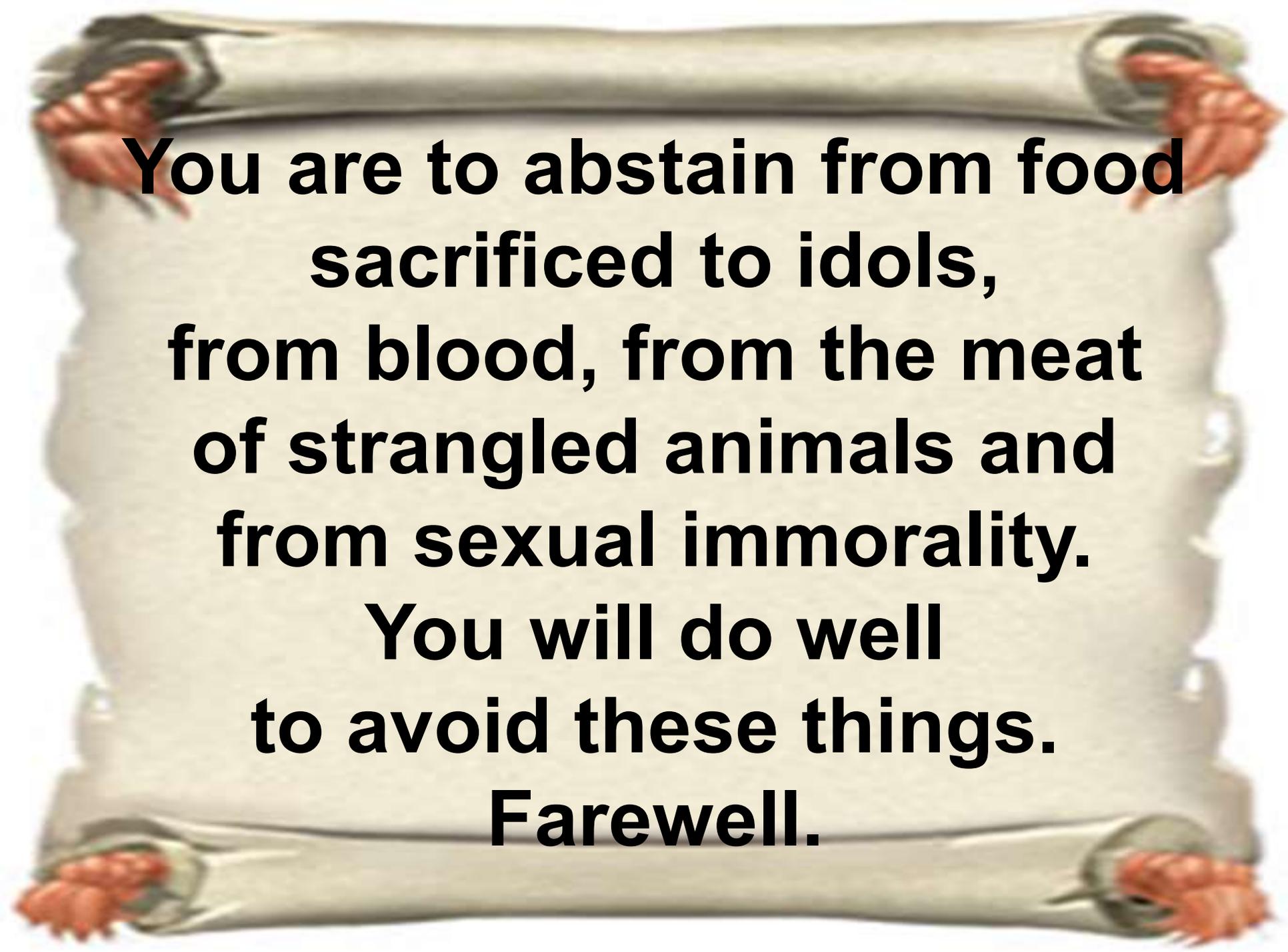
**The apostles and elders, your brothers,
To the Gentile believers in Antioch,
Syria and Cilicia:- Greetings.**

**We have heard that some went out
from us without our authorization
and disturbed you, troubling
your minds by what they said.**

A scroll with a light beige, parchment-like texture, held open by four hands (two on the left, two on the right) in a reddish-orange hue. The scroll is unrolled, showing text in the center. The text is in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The scroll has a slight shadow and a soft glow, giving it a three-dimensional appearance.

**So we all agreed to choose some men and
send them to you with our dear friends
Barnabas and Paul-
men who have risked their lives
for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas
to confirm by word of mouth
what we are writing. It seemed good
to the Holy Spirit and to us
not to burden you with anything
beyond the following requirements:-**

A scroll of parchment is unrolled, held at the corners by four hands. The text is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The scroll has a light beige color and a slightly textured appearance. The hands are rendered in a reddish-orange hue, suggesting a stylized or supernatural theme. The background is plain white.

**You are to abstain from food
sacrificed to idols,
from blood, from the meat
of strangled animals and
from sexual immorality.**

**You will do well
to avoid these things.**

Farewell.

Acts 15:23; “They wrote this letter by them:- The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles **in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:** Greetings.”

To whom is the letter addressed?

These “Pharisee brethren” are causing trouble not only **in Antioch** but also:-
Syria! / Cilicia!



“to whom we gave no such commandment:-”
Acts 15:24; (KJV)

The phrase “to whom we gave no such commandment.” (KJV) or “without our authorization.” (NIV) Gives us the concept of **the authority of the silence of the scriptures.**

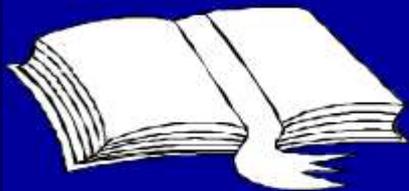
That is, when something is not mentioned, it can in some cases be binding. Some call this the **“law of exclusion.”** - See Heb 7:14; for example.

Acts 15:24; “Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law” **to whom we gave no such commandment.”**

Heb 7:14; “It is very clear that **our Lord came from the tribe of Judah.** Moses said **nothing about anyone in this tribe becoming a priest.**

V14. “Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch.”

15. “This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.”



Acts 15:24; “Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, **unsettling your souls**, saying, “**You must be circumcised and keep the law**“ to whom we gave no such commandment.”

They were troubling the Christians in Antioch.
James wants to make sure that all the members in Antioch understand that Jerusalem never ever said anything.

Wrong doctrines “unsettle” the souls of the members.
Wrong doctrine removes the peace from congregations and brings chaos and trouble.

This error is serious and James wants to fix it.
Gal 1:6-9; Gal 5:4;

Acts 15:25; “it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord,
to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,”

**To us, that is James and the apostles, and elders
and the congregation collectively.**

**UNITY IS IMPORTANT IN ORDER TO SOLVE
PROBLEMS IN ANY CONGREGATION.**

1 Cor 1:10; Rom 12:16; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 2:2;

**They are exalting the two men whom they are
sending. Paul and Barnabas were men greatly
respected in the congregation and here we can
see the way that they regard these two men.**

**Do we respect one another
and hold each other in high regard?**

Acts 15:26; “men who have risked their lives
for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul and Barnabas gain respect among the members of many congregations for the fact that these two men were **willing to suffer for the cause of Christ**. They did not run away from any danger, they were **willing to even “die” for the gospel of Jesus**.

They risk their life for who? For Jesus?

Was it really for Jesus? Jesus is in heaven.

Here we can see then that suffering for Christ is to suffer for the church and vice versa.

Christ and the church are so attached that whoever tries to detach the head from the body will be facing Jesus in the last day.

Acts 13:50; 14:19; 2 Cor 11:23, 26;

Acts 15:27; “We have therefore **sent Judas and Silas**, who will also report the same things by word of mouth.”

**With Paul and Barnabas, the congregation from Jerusalem is sending to Antioch another two men:-
(Acts 15:22;) Judas and Silas.**

They will help Paul and Barnabas to make sure that whatever they say to the other congregations is what the congregation in Jerusalem is approving.

Again brothers we can see how untied these men were. They are ready to speak the same thing and to lift up the congregations that were suffering under the false teaching.

Perhaps Silas and Judas had not been involved with the work among the gentiles, now they will rejoice with them.

Acts 15:28; “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:-”

With **every decision** that we make, we have to make sure that is **according to the will of God.**

What James was saying at the beginning of his speech was approved by the Holy Spirit.

According to verse 28;.

The teaching of the false “brethren” is now exposed by James. Gal 2:4;

Dealing with this problem was very necessary for the for the salvation of the gentiles and also for the unity of the body of Christ.

“I pray that **they will all be one, just as you and I are one, as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us **so that the world will believe you sent me.**” John 17:21;**

Acts 15:28; “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:-”

Note that every doctrinal point must be taken seriously as the church in Jerusalem did.

To let any **doctrinal error to go unstopped** will cause many problems among the saints. **No greater burden will these brethren suffer. Circumcision does not count any more!**

There would always be differences of views among Christians. Some of these would lead to heresy or schism, but others (in matters not involving serious dogmatic teaching) would simply demand **getting along with people who were not exactly like "us."**

We need to be “as wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”
“Speaking the truth in LOVE.”

Sometimes we destroy the work of God by “majoring on the minors” instead of dealing with that which is important.

Acts 15:28; “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us,
to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:-”

**Sometimes our love for others would need to be
a tolerant love ... getting along with Christians
from different countries whose religious culture
and habits **were not exactly like ours.****

Acts 15:29; “that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”

James is repeating here what he mentioned already in verse 20; If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

“You will do well to avoid these things.” This sounds more like a suggestion than a hard and fast law. And I think that is the correct interpretation of this letter.

They would not go to hell because of what they ate but they would be better off if they refrained from eating these things.

They would be more likely to be able reach, teach and convert Jews if they accepted and applied what was spoken of in the letter.



Acts 15:29; “that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.

If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”

Sexual immorality was absolutely was to be avoided.

They could never again participate with their pagan neighbours in sexual activities in the pagan temples nor take any part in idol worship.

Obedience is always included in every Bible commandment.

God is expecting from you and I to obey.

God has declared that his commandments are not burdensome and we do well to practice what He is commanding.

He is also expecting **“obedience from us.”**

Every commandment from God must be obeyed.

He wants us to listen to His word and to practice what He says everyday in our lives.

We are to be an example to the world!



Acts 15:30; “So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.”

Most problems in a congregation can be solved by ‘communication’ and talking.

They talked, discussed, drew conclusions, necessary inference and the peace was restored again in the congregation of Antioch.

This was NOT central government NOT a gathering of “bishops” or delegates from all areas, or even most of the congregations in a region, as is done in the religious world today.

This was an appeal by ONE congregation to the leaders of another congregation about a question or dispute.

Acts 15:30; “So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.”

In addition, there was
no ELECTION OF DELEGATES
or VOTING on the question
that was discussed as is often done today.

This was an appeal to INSPIRED MEN,
not to uninspired men as are found
in centralised religious bodies today.



Acts 15:30; “So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.”

Luke 22:30; – Christ had **authorised His apostles** to sit on thrones ruling spiritual Israel, the assembly.

John 14-16;

He had **promised and given them the Holy Spirit to guide them into all of the word of God.**

2 Pet 1:21; –

They spoke as the Holy Spirit moved them.

Acts 15:28; –

They specifically referred to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in making and announcing their decision in the letter.

Acts 15:30; “So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.”

Imagine the expectation and anxiety from the Christians in Antioch to know what was the resolution from the apostles.



Imagine the attitude of those who were causing this big division when they heard what was the verdict. They should at least have felt ashamed.



A Sabbath Walk in Jerusalem.

Acts 15:30; “So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.”

These Gentile Christians must have been very glad to learn that they did not have to keep all the burdensome rules and regulations of the Law of Moses.

Remember that Peter had said that neither he nor their fathers had been able to bear these laws. (verse 10.) He called the Law a yoke on the neck of the Jews.

There was no heavier burden than the Sabbath observance with all the strict regulations which had been added to it over the years, which incidentally, few modern Sabbath keepers obey.

Acts 15:31; “ When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement.”

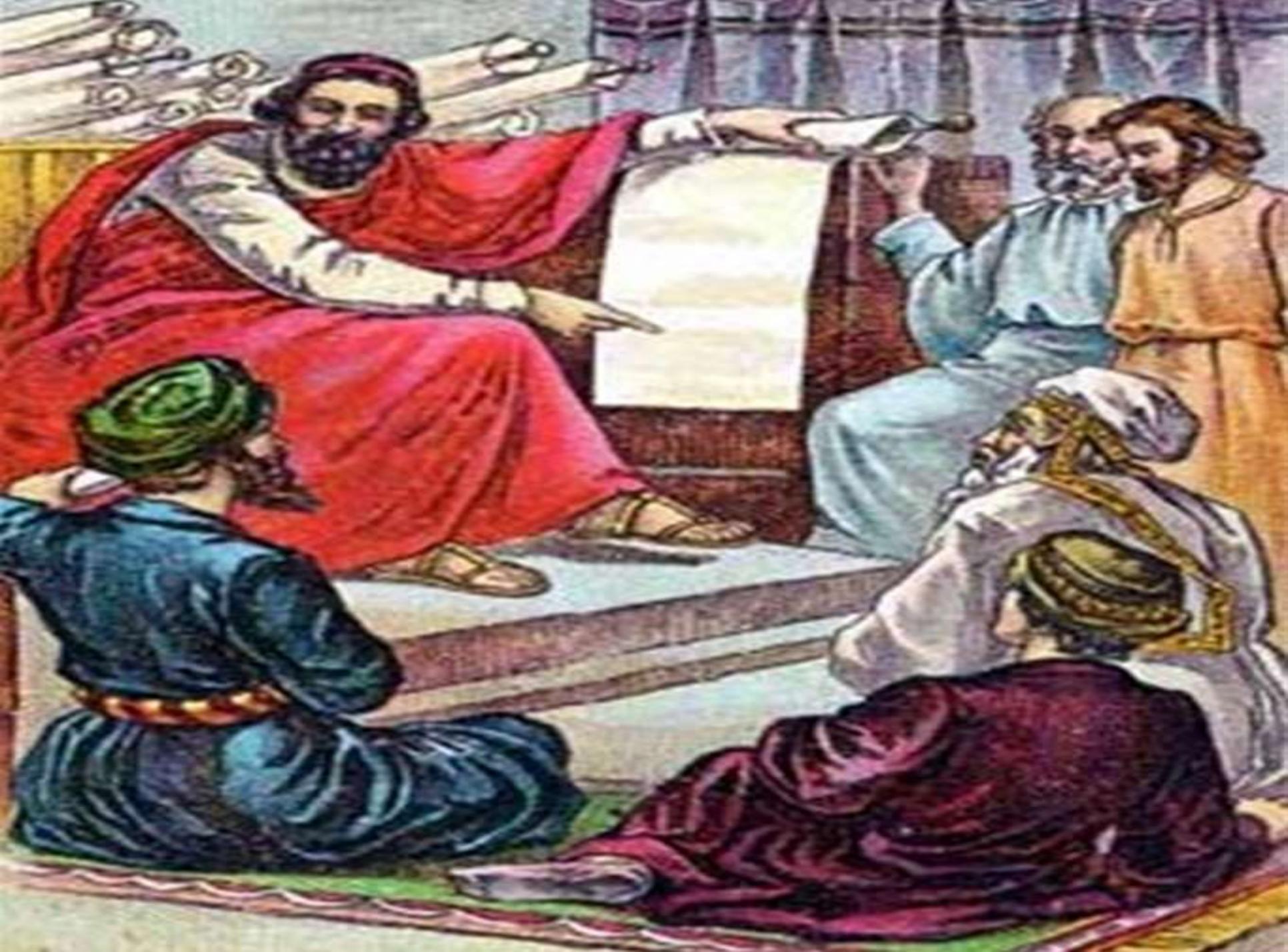
They were waiting for any kind of response from the other apostles, when the letters were read.

It is amazing how much **‘respect’** the Apostles of Jesus had.

They rejoiced when they found out that those who came were ‘false’ teachers. They were trying to divide the church and also to fulfill in full what Paul told the elders in Acts 20:29;

Let’s not be amazed to know that there are many who want to destroy the people of God. Satan is using many in order to cause damage to His body.





Acts 15:31; “ When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement.”

We rejoice when we know that there are others concern about us. These Christians were ENCOURAGED when the letter was read.

It is the **responsibility of the mature Christians** to support those who are weak or those who are having problems in any aspect in life.

Galatians 6:2; “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

John 15:12; “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

1 John 4:21; “And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.”

Acts 15:32; “Now **Judas and Silas**, themselves being prophets, also exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words.”

This is the “**entrance**” of **Silas**. From now on you’ll see this name very attached with the name “**Paul**”.

Notice that verse 22 says that Silas and Judas were “**leading men among the brethren**”.

We do not know for how long Silas and Judas stayed with the church. But the fact is that they spent some time in order to comfort them and enjoyed themselves with the congregation in Antioch.



33; After a while, they returned again to Jerusalem and Antioch sent greetings to the church in Jerusalem and to all the brethren and apostles by conduct of these two men.

Acts 15:34; “However, it seemed good to Silas to remain there.”

We will see that Silas also suffered for the sake of Jesus. They put their lives in danger of almost everything for the love that he had for Jesus.

He, being a prophet, probably knew that staying in Antioch and being partners with Paul will bring many problems in his life.

Later Silas went with Paul on his second missionary Journey.



Acts 16:19; “But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.”



Acts 15:35; “Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.”

The congregation in Antioch would be very strong with so many eloquent and holy men.



Acts 15 Conclusion.

The first doctrinal crisis in the fledgling church has been solved. Gentiles do not have to become Jews or keep any part of the Law of Moses to be saved.

But they do have to avoid offending Jews in matters of food.

And they have to give up their former immoral practices related to the worship of the pagan idols.

Acts 15 Conclusion.

THE TWO KINDS OF LAW IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

I. There are mandatory laws.
(commands and requirements).

A. Some of these are Precepts.

(The “**you shall!**” in the New Testament, certain things that are required by Christ that His people do).

B. Some of these are Prohibitions.

(“**you shall not’s!**” not in the Law of Moses, but as found in the New Testament; e.g., Gal 5:19ff; Ephes 5:3-5; and the four restrictions in the Jerusalem decree.)

2. There are permissive laws. (The realm of Christian Liberty.)

What Christians are permitted to do in the areas where Christ has neither commanded nor prohibited

In the realm of Christian Liberty has some limitations which help serve as guidelines for determining acceptable conduct.

A. Limited by the law of expediency. (1 Cor 6:12a;)

**“If what I propose to do will
cause my brother to stumble,**

I have no liberty in Christ to do that thing.”

Compare also 1 Corinthians 10; and Romans 14;

2. There are permissive laws.

B. Limited by the law of self-control. (1 Corinthians 6:12b;)

Some things, used in certain ways or degrees, will destroy the liberty which claims the right to use them.

For example, the Scriptures nowhere prohibit or command about drinking coffee, so the Christian has a **"liberty" to drink coffee.**

But if drinking coffee becomes a binding habit, we no longer have a freedom to drink coffee.

We have lost our liberty, and have become slaves to coffee; and at this point it becomes a sin to drink coffee.

C. Limited by the law of self-preservation.

(1 Corinthians 6:19)

Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

We have no liberty to take anything into our bodies, or do anything with our bodies that would tend to destroy our bodies and make them unfit as a dwelling place of the Spirit.

Under this limitation, smoking or the consumption alcoholic beverages etc, seem to be prohibited to the Christian, although both, to begin with, fall in the realm of liberty.

CONCLUSION: Instead of looking at Christianity as something that restrict! us, it is proper to view Christianity as giving us a freedom to find ways to be helpful to others.

D. Limited by the Law of Duty to God.

(1 Corinthians 6:20;)

**We are to do everything to bring glory to God;
and anything that would tend to shame Him,
we have no liberty to do.**

**Instead of looking at Christianity
as something that restrict! us, it is proper
to view Christianity as giving us a freedom
to find ways to helpful to others.**

**The right of the Christian to enter into any activity
must be determined in the light of the laws
of the New Testament before he acts, for:-**

**“We all must stand before the judgment seat
of Christ to receive the things done in the body.”**

(2 Corinthians 5:10.)

Acts 15 Conclusion.

I
THOU SHALT NOT HAVE ANOTHER GOD BUT ME

II
THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE AN IMAGE LIKE UNTO ME

III
THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN

IV
REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY TO KEEP IT

V
HONOUR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER

VI
THOU SHALT NOT KILL

VII
THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY

VIII
THOU SHALT NOT STEAL

IX
THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST THY BROTHER

X
THOU SHALT NOT COVERTLY

Acts 15 Conclusion.

Yes there are laws in the New Covenant that are similar to laws in the Old Testament.

But we don't obey them

because they are in the Law of Moses.

We obey them because they are in the law of Christ.

When the English colonists created their laws for the United States of America, many of their laws were similar to the laws of England.

But they do not obey those laws because their ancestors obeyed them in England; They obey them because they are now the laws of their own nation.



Acts 15 Conclusion.

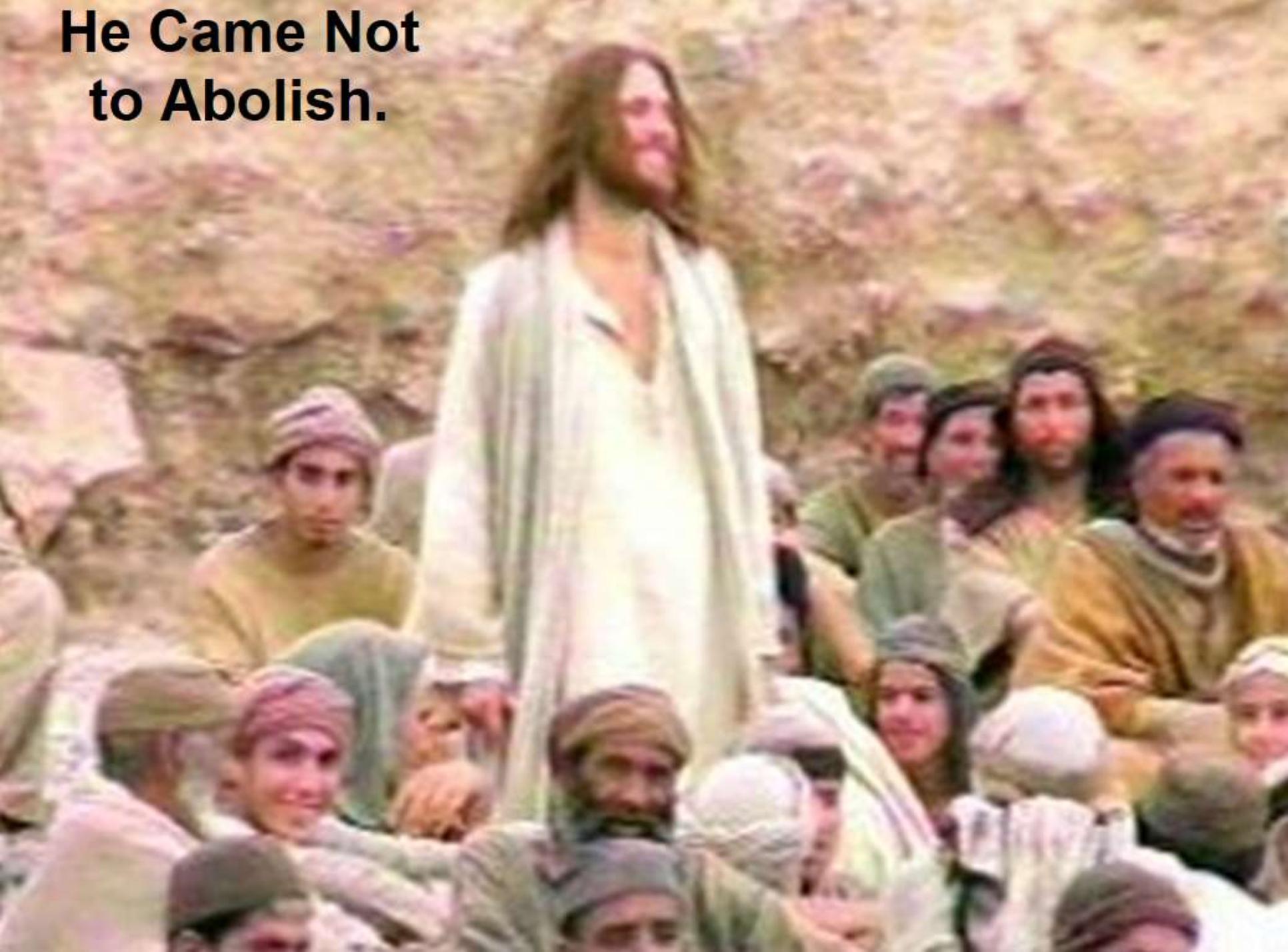
Under legalism, Christianity loses its uniqueness and appeal. We can get law-based self improvement from any man-made religion on earth.

**The intrusion of law shatters God-dependence
Law replaces relationship.**

**The NEW Law of the Spirit of LIFE in CHRIST
sets us free from the Law of SIN and DEATH.**

Gal 5:1; “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.”

**He Came Not
to Abolish.**



He Came Not to Abolish.

by Ellis Jones.

He came not to abolish,

But to fulfill the law. (Matt 5:17-19;)

That law would have continued,

But it had a flaw.

It was not universal,

But only for the Jews. [1]

It brought them toward the gospel,

But it was not “good news.” [2]

[1] Deuteronomy 5:1-3, 22;

[2] Galatians 3:19-25;



**Their sins were just “rolled forward.”
None God took away,
‘Til Jesus died on Calvary,
That gloomy, sad dark day. [1]**

**He fulfilled the Law in life;
Removed it by His death.
The Law of Moses then expired,
With His final breath. [2]**

**[1] Hebrews 10:1-4;
[2] Colossians 2:11-14;**



**Abolished now, that barrier,
That races stood between, [1]
Replaced by a better one,
The best the world has seen. [2]**



**[1] Ephesians 2:14-16;
[2] Hebrews 8:7-13;**

**Translated to his kingdom,
Obey the risen One. [1]
A better law than Moses'
Because He is God's Son. [2]**



[1] Colossians 1:13 & 14; Romans 7:4;

[2] Hebrews 3:1-6;

The MEETING at JERUSALEM. ACTS 15.

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Next in the series:-
Acts 16:1; 2nd Missionary Journey Part 1