

Acts 15 Here's what's happening:

I. Paul and Barnabas are back in Antioch.

- Certain individuals came down from Judea – who are they?
- We don't know but they do not speak against carrying the Gospel to the gentiles. They are arguing for covenant inclusion not for racial exclusion.
- God's covenant with Israel included blessing to all the families of the earth.
- The sign both covenant and blessing was circumcision.
- So their argument is that gentiles could not possibly participate in the blessings promised to the covenant people without the sign of that blessing.
- Paul and Barnabas argue with the men from Judea.
- To resolve the issue Paul, Barnabas and others were sent to Jerusalem to consult the Apostles and elders.

II. Paul and Barnabas in Jerusalem

- When they arrived they reported all their work to the church, The Apostles and the elders.
- But some of the Pharisees present said they still must be circumcised.
- So the Apostles and elders meet to consider the issue. Luke tells us there was much debate.
- Finally Peter stands to speak. First he establishes his "credentials." I am the one through whom God sent the message to the gentiles.
- God knows the heart and gave the Holy Spirit to them as God did to us. We saved by God's grace
- Peter's argument I based on first his vision (revelation); second on the gift of the Holy Spirit; third on the experience of gentiles coming into the fellowship.
- James affirms Peter's words by quoting scripture Amos 9:11-12.
Church debates might choose to follow this same method:
Listen to church leaders. Look for revelation. Trust experience. Test by scripture.
- Out of concern for the Jewish Christians the Apostles and elders reach the conclusion that only 4 things are necessary for the gentiles to be in the fellowship:
 - - abstain from meat sacrificed to idols,
 - from fornication,
 - from anything strangled and
 - from blood.
 - Leviticus 17-18 applies these rules to both Jews and aliens who reside in Israel.

III. Paul and Barnabas revisit the churches they have founded.

- Barnabas wanted to include John Mark. But Paul did not because John Mark had left during the first missionary journey.(Acts 13:13)
- So Barnabas and John Mark go one way and Paul, Silas and Timothy go another.