

WEEK 3: THE COUNCIL MEETING AT JERUSALEM
DAY 1: THE CHURCH TOOK CARE OF THE PROBLEM

Acts 15:6-12

1. Good morning. I hope you are ready to begin a new week of lessons. This week we will go on learning about the problem of circumcision.

Write two dangers which the problem of circumcision brought to the church.

(1) _____

(2) _____

2. These were the dangers: People would think that faith in Christ is not enough. The church would be divided. Something had to be done about the problem. The church at Antioch sent leaders to the mother church in Jerusalem. The church in Jerusalem acted wisely. Today we will learn three good ways they worked on the problem.

(1) They faced the problem quickly.

(2) They talked about it peacefully.

(3) They agreed to accept the decision.

Take your Bible now and read Acts 15:6 to 12.

What do the people in your village do when they have a problem? _____

3. Perhaps the chief or headman gathers the old men of the village. He sits and talks about the problem with them. He listens to the advice of these men. He knows they have much wisdom. When they have all talked about it, he knows the best thing to do. Then he gives the decision agreed on by the elders. This decision stands. The people must obey it.

This is something like what the church in Jerusalem did. Did they face the problem quickly or did they wait for a long time? _____

4. They faced the problem quickly. They did not wait. They did not try to forget the problem. They did not try to hide it. They called a meeting right away.

Acts 15:6:

The apostles and the elders gathered to consider this matter.

What problem did they face quickly? _____

5. It was the problem of circumcision. Problems often come up in the church. It is hard to know what to do with them. Seeing what the early church did can help us. We believe the Holy Spirit helped them know what to do. As we study this, the Holy Spirit shows us how to take care of problems in our churches.

Did the early church face the problem quickly. or did they turn from the problem? _____

6. They faced it quickly. Sometimes when there is a problem, we are afraid to face it. Someone may get angry. So we let it be. We say nothing. We hope it will go away. But the problem only gets worse and it hurts the church.

Asa is a pastor of a church in Cameroon. Some of his church members go to the village medicine man. Some members say it is wrong to do this. The members are arguing with each other.

From the way the early church took care of its problems, what is the first thing Asa should do to the problem?

7. He should face it quickly. This will take wisdom and courage from the Holy Spirit. We should not hide the problems which we have in the church. We should not run away from them. We should do as the early church did.

What is the first good way the leaders of the church worked on the problem of circumcision?

- (1) _____
 - (2) They talked about it peacefully.
 - (3) They agreed to accept the decision.
-

8. First they faced the problem quickly. The church in Antioch did this. They sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem. The apostles and elders in Jerusalem received them. Paul and Barnabas told the things God was doing among the Gentiles. Again in Jerusalem, some believers said that Gentiles must be circumcised. They called a meeting to talk about the problem.

In what city did they discuss the problem of circumcision peacefully? _____

9. This was in Jerusalem. The meeting was an important one. We now call it the Jerusalem Council. They discussed the problem as we discuss a problem in our villages. But sometimes men in our villages become angry. The church leaders in Jerusalem did not become angry. Many different men talked. They heard all sides of the problem.

Acts 15:12:

And all the assembly kept silence; and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related (or told) what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

In what way did the leaders talk about the problem of circumcision at the Jerusalem Council? Was it peacefully or angrily? _____

10. They talked about this problem peacefully. Sometimes when we have meetings about problems, we quarrel. Or only part of the truth is told. Or we are not obedient to the Holy Spirit. But we see that the meeting at Jerusalem was friendly. They talked peacefully. This was the second good way the leaders of the church worked on the problem of circumcision.

What was the first way? _____

11. First they faced the problem quickly. Perhaps you have gone to a meeting where people would not listen to each other. Perhaps the meeting ended in anger. The people could not reach a decision. Or perhaps the people did not accept the decision which was made. When this happens, we know people are not allowing the Holy Spirit to lead.

What was the second good way the leaders worked on the problem of circumcision at the Jerusalem Council?

(1) They faced the problem quickly.

(2) _____

(3) They agreed to accept the decision.

12. They talked over the problem peacefully. They were allowing the Holy Spirit to lead them. Because the Holy Spirit was leading, they could agree. They could be united. They were willing to accept the decision which was made. They knew it was God's will.

What happens after a meeting like this if people do not agree to accept the decision?

13. We can answer in many ways. We can say that the problem is not taken care of. We can say that the people go on arguing. Or there is still trouble among the people.

In a village, the chief or headman listens to the advice of each elder. Then he tells the decision. In the Jerusalem Council, the apostles and elders all spoke. Then they decided what to do.

When a decision is made about a problem with God's help, what must we all do with that decision?

14. We must accept it. When there is a problem, the leaders find God's will. They make a decision and we must agree to accept it. This is the only way the church can be united and go on growing. But this does not mean that the highest leader makes a decision by himself. We must do as the early church did.

What is the second good way they worked on the problem of circumcision at the Jerusalem council?

(1) They faced the problem quickly.

(2) _____

(3) They agreed to accept the decision.

15. The second good way was: They talked about the problem peacefully. Everyone took part. They looked at all sides of the problem. Then they knew what to do. They made a decision. The leader, James, told what the decision was. Then all the people had something they must do.

What was the third good way they worked on the problem? _____

16. They agreed to accept the decision. They did not go on arguing. They did not go on asking questions. They accepted the decision. They were happy.

What were the first two good ways they worked on the problem of circumcision?

(1) _____

(2) _____

17. They faced the problem quickly. They talked about it peacefully.

What is the third good thing they did? _____

18. They agreed to accept the decision. This week we will study some of the things the apostles said at the meeting. Tomorrow we will see what Peter had to say. We remember that God spoke to him about the Gentiles. What Peter says about this is important. I am sure that studying this meeting will help you.

Write one thing your church can learn from the Jerusalem Council. _____

19. Write three good ways the church worked on the problem of circumcision at the Jerusalem Council.

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

WEEK 3: THE COUNCIL MEETING AT JERUSALEM
DAY 2: THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JEWS AND GENTILES

Acts 15:6-12

1. Write three good ways the church worked on the problem of circumcision at the Jerusalem Council.

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

2. They faced the problem quickly. They talked about it peacefully. They agreed to accept the decision. But it took time to come to this decision. Paul and Barnabas spoke. The other apostles and elders spoke. Peter spoke. And James spoke. Today we will learn the great truth Peter told the council. We will memorise his words.

Acts 15:8-9: And God who knows the heart bore witness to them giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith.

Take your Bible now and read Acts 15:6 to 12 again. What was the problem they were discussing which arose after the first missionary journey?

3. Some Jews said that Gentiles must be circumcised in order to be saved.

Acts 15:7:

And after there had been much debate, Peter rose and said to them, Brethren, you know that in the early days God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

Who first began to find the great truth that there is no difference, but Jews and Gentiles are all saved by faith? _____

4. Peter first began to find this truth. Now he spoke it again to the Jerusalem Council. He was agreeing with the words of Paul and Barnabas.

Acts 15:8:

And God who knows the hearts bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us.

What did God give to show that there is no difference in his sight between Jews and Gentiles? _____

5. God gave the Holy Spirit. He also did something else for them.

Acts 15:9:

and he made no distinction (or difference) between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith.

Does God save Jews and Gentiles in different ways? _____

6. He does not save them in different ways. We remember what Jesus said to Nicodemus, the Jew.

John 3:36:

He who believes in the Son has eternal life.

How are Jews saved? _____

7. Jews are saved by believing. Their sins are forgiven by faith. Now Peter was talking about his visit to Cornelius and other Gentiles. He said that God made no difference.

Acts 15:9:

but cleansed their hearts by faith.

How are Gentiles saved? _____

8. Gentiles also are saved by faith. Peter told all about his visit to Cornelius in Acts 10. Peter told Cornelius and his friends the good news about Christ. They heard and believed. Peter did not tell them to become Jews. They trusted Christ and were forgiven. And God gave them the Holy Spirit as he did the Jews.

What was Peter saying about the difference between Jews and Gentiles?

9. He was saying that God makes no difference between them. Peter was telling a great truth to the Jerusalem Council. He wanted to be sure they did not make a mistake. See what else he said.

Acts 15:10:

Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

Who were trying God by saying that the Gentiles had to be circumcised in order to become Christians?

10. Some of the Jews were doing this. We should try to understand the Jews. This was a big change for them. They had learned that to belong to God they had to be circumcised. It was hard for them to accept the change which Christ brought. Now God was telling them that man is saved by believing Jesus. They must not refuse to obey God's leading, even if it meant change.

Romans 10:4:

For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified.

What two groups of people did Peter say are both saved by faith?

(1) _____ (2) _____

11. Jews and Gentiles are all saved by faith. Read again the great truth Peter told the Jerusalem Council.

Acts 15:8-9:

And God who knows the heart bore witness to them giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith.

Take time to memorise these verses now. Read them three times. Try to say them without looking at them. Read them again. When you can say them without looking, write them here.

Acts 15:8-9: _____

12. Through the gospel the Gentiles have a part with the Jews. They share in God's blessings. They are members of the same body, the Church. God's plan from long ago was to save men from every nation. Now in the New Testament he showed this plan to the apostles. Paul later wrote this.

Ephesians 3:6:

the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Did Peter and Paul and Barnabas agree in the things they said at the Jerusalem Council?

13. They all agreed. Paul and Barnabas told what God had done on the first missionary journey. They told how Gentiles in the two Antiochs, Cyprus, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe had believed Christ. Peter told how Cornelius and his friends had believed Christ.

What is the great truth Peter told the Jerusalem Council? Answer by saying Acts 15:8-9.

14. Peter wanted the church to know that there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles. All of them are saved by faith. He did not want anyone to think they are saved by keeping laws.

Think about these questions but do not write answers. We will talk about them in class. Do we in the church put burdens on new believers which God does not want? Do we say they must obey laws before they can be saved? Do we say they must be just like us before they can be accepted into the church? Are we failing to follow God's leading in this?

15. What is the great truth Peter told the Jerusalem Council? Answer by writing Acts 15:8-9:

WEEK 3: THE COUNCIL MEETING AT JERUSALEM

DAY 3: JAMES ANNOUNCED THE DECISION

Acts 15:13-21

1. What is the great truth Peter told the Jerusalem Council? Answer by saying Acts 15:8-9 to yourself.

2. Open your Bible to Acts 15:8-9 to see if you said it right. Leave your Bible open. After Peter spoke, the people in the Jerusalem council were quiet. They were beginning to agree. Paul and Barnabas told more about what God had done among the Gentiles. Today we will see the decision that was made. Two important teachings come from the words of James to the council.

(1) A man is not saved by obeying laws.

(2) A man who is saved will want to obey God.

In your Bible now read Acts 15:13 to 21. Read verse 13 again. Who put together the thoughts of the council and said what should be done?

3. James did this. James was a Jew. He was the leader of the church in Jerusalem. Perhaps he was the leader of the council meeting. This is how James began his speech.

Acts 15:13-15:

Brethren, listen to me. Simeon (Or Peter) has related (or told) how God first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And with him the prophets agree.

Do you think James agreed with Peter and Paul and Barnabas?

4. James agreed with them. He put together all that had been said. We get two lessons from the words of James to the council. First we see that a man is not saved by obeying laws. James did not want the Gentiles to be led in the wrong way.

Acts 15:19:

Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God.

Think about yesterday's lesson. Are Jews saved because they obey laws?

5. This is not the way they are saved. You remember what Peter said.

Acts 15:10:

why you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear.

Even the Jews were not able to keep all of the law. That is why Jesus came. He wanted to save us by faith in him.

As we understand from the Jerusalem council, in what way are we not saved?

6. We are not saved by keeping laws. The Gentiles could be Christians even though they did not have the law of Moses. James told the council that God was taking a people for himself out of the Gentiles. These Gentiles were not circumcised. But they were now people of God. James quoted the words of the prophet Amos.

Acts 15:16-17 and Amos 9:11-12:

After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up, that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name.

In this prophecy, what would other nations some day be called by? _____

7. They would be called by God's name. They would be his. They would be saved by believing in God's Son whom he sent. They would be saved by faith in Jesus. They would belong to God because they believed. James said that they must not trouble the Gentiles who believed. From James' words to the council, we see how a man is not saved.

What is the first teaching we get from James' words to the council in Jerusalem?

- (1) _____
(2) A man who is saved will want to obey God.
-

8. The first teaching is that a man is not saved by obeying laws. But God's word teaches us more. If a man believes, he is saved already. And if he is saved he will want to obey God. Because he is saved, he has a new heart. He has the Holy Spirit.

Will a man who is saved want to go on doing all the wrong things he has done?

9. He will not want to do this. This is what James meant. He said there were some things the Gentile believers should not do. He named four things. He was not saying that they would be saved because they stopped doing those things. But he was saying they would stop doing them because they were saved. They would want to please and obey God.

What is the first teaching we get from James' words to the Jerusalem council?

- (1) _____
(2) A man who is saved will want to obey God.
-
-

10. First we learn that a man is not saved by obeying laws. But if he is saved he will want to obey God. James named four things the Gentiles should stop doing.

Acts 15:20:

but (we) should write to them to abstain (or keep away) from the pollutions (or sins) of idols and from unchastity (or adultery) and from what is strangled (or killed without bleeding) and from blood.

What had happened to the Gentiles that would make them want to stop doing these things?

11. They were saved. They had believed in Christ. They were freed from their sins. Baba was a preacher in West Africa. He said people must leave their sins. Then they would be saved. They must stop stealing, drinking beer, and committing adultery. Then they would be saved. But what happened in the early church? The Gentiles came to Jesus with their sins. God forgave them. He changed their hearts. Then they wanted to leave their sins. They wanted to obey God.

Do you think we can obey God's word before receiving Jesus? _____

12. Some people try to do this. But before we can obey God we must have our hearts changed. We must believe in Jesus and be saved.

Faith is enough to save us. But what kind of man wants to obey God?

13. A man who is saved wants to do this. This does not mean he will keep all the law of Moses. God gave this law to point forward to Christ. It was to help the Jews have faith and keep away from sin. When Christ came, he fulfilled the law. The parts of the law which pointed to Christ were fulfilled in him. The parts of the law which helped men be right were now put into their hearts. This was prophesied by Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 31:33:

I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts.

What will a man who is saved want to do? _____

14. He will want to obey God. James said the Gentiles should be careful about four things. They should stay away from idols. They could not worship idols and God at the same time. They should keep away from fornication and adultery. These sins would spoil their bodies and hurt others. They should keep away from eating things killed without bleeding. And they should keep away from the blood itself. The blood stood for life. They should not eat it.

What two important teachings do we get from what James told the Jerusalem Council?

(1) A man is not saved by obeying laws.

(2) _____

15. The second truth is: A man who is saved will want to obey God. The council in Jerusalem sent a letter to the Gentile churches. They told them that they would not have to become Jews. But they should live clean lives. Later Paul, Peter, and John wrote many letters to help people live right. But they were always careful to say that this is not what saves us.

What is the first teaching we get from James' words to the Jerusalem Council?

16. The first teaching is: A man is not saved by obeying the law of God.

What is the second teaching? _____

17. The second teaching is: A man who is saved will want to obey God. Enoch is a good church member. He preaches to unsaved people. He tells them to stop stealing and getting drunk, and come to church. Enoch has forgotten that people must first come to Christ. Then they will want to stop doing these things. Enoch's pastor can help him understand this. Perhaps your people need help too.

Prepare a sermon for your people from today's lesson. On another paper write the big things you will say. Think about how you can explain these things to your people. Preach the sermon if you can. Bring your paper to class.

18. What two important teachings do we get from James' words to the Jerusalem council?

(1) _____

(2) _____

WEEK 3: THE COUNCIL MEETING AT JERUSALEM
DAY 4: THE CHURCH COULD KEEP THE FAITH AND GROW
Acts 15:22-33

1. What two important teachings do we get from James' words to the Jerusalem Council?

(1) _____

(2) _____

2. These are the teachings: A man is not saved by obeying laws. A man who is saved will want to obey God. James put together the things people said in the meeting. He gave the decision. He said that a letter should be sent to the churches. The letter would say that Gentiles did not have to become Jews. This helped the young churches very much. Today we learn two ways in which the letter helped them,

(1) It helped them keep the truth of the gospel.

(2) It allowed the church to go on growing.

Take your Bible now and read Acts 15:22-33. Did the council accept what James said? _____

3. They accepted it. What James said became the decision of the meeting. The elders agreed that a letter should be sent to the Gentiles. They wanted them to keep the truth of the Gospel.

Acts 15:22:

Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.

Who needed to keep the truth of the gospel? _____

4. The Gentiles needed to do this. The elders did not want them to think they must become Jews. They did not want them to think they were saved by keeping laws. The decision of the Jerusalem Council was important for the churches.

If the Gentiles had been forced to be circumcised, would the truth of the gospel have been kept? _____

5. It would not have been kept. Later Paul wrote about this to the Galatians. He was writing to Gentile Christians. He said that Jews who taught circumcision wanted to make slaves of the Gentiles.

Galatians 2:5:

to them we did not yield submission (or give up) even for a moment, that the truth of the gospel might be preserved (or kept) for you.

What did Paul want to keep safe for the Gentiles? _____

6. Paul wanted to keep the truth of the gospel. Last week we learned two dangers which came to the church. They came from the problem of circumcision.

What was the first danger which the problem of circumcision brought?

- (1) _____
(2) The church would be divided.

7. The first danger was: People would think believing in Jesus is not enough. But the leaders knew that we are saved by faith in Christ. This is the truth of the gospel. It must be kept safe. So the Jerusalem Council helped the Gentile churches very much.

What is the first way in which the letter from Jerusalem helped the churches?

- (1) _____
(2) It allowed the churches to go on growing.

8. It helped the churches keep the truth of the gospel. Today we can thank God for what the Jerusalem Council did. We still have the truth of the gospel. But we have to be careful when we preach. It is easy to make people think they are saved by obeying laws. But this is not true. We need to teach the truth of the gospel and keep it safe.

What is the truth of the gospel? _____

9. The truth of the gospel is that we are saved by faith in Christ. The council at Jerusalem understood this. They made a decision which helped the church. The church at Antioch was happy when she received the letter. Now they knew they were accepted as true Christians.

Acts 15:31:

And when they read it they rejoiced at the exhortation (or teaching).

What is the first way in which the letter from Jerusalem helped the churches?

- (1) _____
(2) It allowed the church to go on growing.

10. The letter first helped them keep the truth of the gospel. In the letter, the leaders of Jerusalem called the Gentiles "brothers." This made the Gentiles happy. This meant that they were one with the Jewish Christians. Remember that one danger of circumcision was that it would divide the church.

If the church was always arguing over circumcision, would it go on growing well?

11. It would not grow well. The Jews would always say that the Gentiles must be circumcised. The Gentiles would not want this. They wanted to believe in Christ. They wanted new life in him, but they did not want to become Jews.

Do you think people want to join other tribes or change their customs in order to become Christians?

12. People do not want to join other tribes. They do not want to change their customs. Some of the things they do will be changed. They will stop doing many wrong things as God shows them. But some of the things they do are good. They should not be asked to change all their customs.

If all the Gentiles were forced to become Jews to be saved, what would happen to the growth of the church?

13. The growth of the church would stop. All people would have to become Jews. They would have to learn the laws of the Jews. They would have to go to the Jewish synagogues. People would not want to do these things. They would hear of Christ and turn away. Few people would become Christians. The church would not grow.

But if the problem of circumcision was taken away, what could the church go on doing?

14. The church could go on growing. Remember that Paul and Barnabas were missionaries. God had called them to tell the good news. When the problem of circumcision came up it stopped their work. After it was taken care of, they could go on working.

In what two ways did the letter from the Jerusalem council help the church?

(1) It helped them keep the truth of the gospel.

(2) _____

15. It allowed the church to go on growing. Paul and Barnabas went back to teaching and preaching. Other Christians did the same. This is the real work of Christians. Now the church could grow again. It was not divided. How thankful they must have been! I am sure the Gentile Christians had thanksgiving meetings.

What is the first way in which the letter from the Jerusalem Council helped the churches?

16. First, it helped them keep the truth of the gospel. Pastor Lifu had a good church in Nigeria. The church sent out two missionaries. After a year, the missionaries reported that five people had received Christ. One church elder asked whether the new Christians could read. He said they should not be baptised until they could read.

The church began to argue about this problem.

Do you think the elder was right? _____

17. Talk about this together. It is important for people to learn to read God's word. But a person does not have to read in order to become a Christian. Forcing people to read might keep people from receiving Christ. It would keep the church from growing as it should.

What is the second way in which the letter from the Jerusalem Council helped the church?

18. It allowed the church to go on growing. It took care of a bad problem. The Holy Spirit showed the council what to do. He will show us what to do if we will listen to him.

Is there a problem in your church now which is keeping it from growing?

What is it? _____

19. Be ready to talk with the class about what can be done with this problem.

In what two ways did the letter from the Jerusalem Council help the church?

(1) _____

(2) _____

WEEK 3: THE COUNCIL MEETING AT JERUSALEM
DAY 5: REVISION

Today we will see how well you remember what you have learned. We hope you remember all you have studied in these three weeks. Try to answer every question. Then go back and find the answers. Correct your answers if they are not right.

Questions from Week 1.

1. Who is the great missionary in the third part of Acts? _____
2. How is a missionary different from other Christian workers?
 - (1) _____
 - (2) _____
3. From the meeting of Paul with Elymas of Cyprus, whose power is greater? Is it the power of sorcerers or the power of the Holy Spirit?

Where does this teach us to go when we have problems? _____

4. What were the three parts of Paul's sermon at Antioch?
 - (1) _____
 - (2) _____
 - (3) _____
5. On Paul's first journey, what did many of the Jews in Antioch do to him after he preached and many received Christ?

What do Paul's actions in Antioch teach us to do when this happens? _____

Questions from Week 2.

6. On the first journey, where did Paul and Barnabas plant a church after planting churches in Cyprus and Antioch?

7. When the people of Lystra began to worship them as gods, how did Paul and Barnabas feel?

8. When people praise us because of what happens in our church, what should we say?

9. When Paul and Barnabas returned to visit the new churches at the end of the first journey, what did they do?
 - (1) _____
 - (2) _____

10. When the Jews refused the message of salvation, to whom did Paul go?

11. What big problem arose in the church after the first missionary journey?

Questions from Week 3.

12. Write two dangers which the problem of circumcision brought to the church.

(1) _____

(2) _____

13. Write three good ways the church worked on the problem of circumcision at the Jerusalem Council.

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

14. What is the great truth Peter told the Jerusalem Council? Answer by writing Acts 15:8-9.

15. What two important teachings do we get from James' words to the Jerusalem Council?

(1) _____

(2) _____

16. In what two ways did the letter from the Jerusalem Council help the church?

(1) _____

(2) _____

Last week you began to pray about your church sending missionaries. This week you must begin to talk about this to others. Think of someone in your church who loves God's work. Meet with this person. Explain to him what you have learned about missionaries in these three weeks. Talk together about what your church can do. Talk about who could be sent. Talk about how money could be collected to help them. Talk about what people need missionaries. Pray together about these things.

Write the name of the person you have chosen to talk with. _____

After you have talked with him, write something he said about sending missionaries. _____