

LESSON 8

PART I: THE JERUSALEM CONFERENCE

ACTS 15:1-35

Introduction

Although the door of the Kingdom had been opened to the Gentiles, the struggle had not ended. Not all Jewish Christians agreed with Paul that the New Covenant was established by faith instead of circumcision. Some Jewish Christians from Judaea went to Antioch and began teaching the brethren that they must be circumcised according to the teachings of Moses in order to be saved. Christianity had been born in Judaism. What in Judaism should be retained and what should be rejected? The Christians retained the Old Testament because it spoke of Christ, but they rejected many of the customs and traditions of the Jews which had no relevance to the Christian faith. Since the Old Testament spoke of circumcision as well as the Sabbath, should both be retained by the Church? In order to resolve these problems, the leaders of the churches at Antioch and Jerusalem met in conference. The representatives to the Conference included Apostles and elders. The Antioch Church decided that Paul, Barnabas, and certain other leaders should go to Jerusalem to deal with the question of which Jewish traditions and customs should be retained by the Church. The issues stated in Acts 15 created a great crisis for the Church. The Church had faced deceit, murmurings, and simony. Next she was confronted with doctrinal controversy.

Efforts have been made to harmonize Paul's visit to Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15 with those visits mentioned in his Epistles. Traditionally, scholars have identified Paul's visit to Jerusalem for the Conference with that visit described in Galatians 2:1-10. Some recent scholars have suggested that the visit mentioned in Acts 11:30 corresponds to his visit in Galatians 2:1-10.

The Galatian Epistle is concerned with Judaizers who perverted the Gospel of Christ by maintaining that the Galatian Gentiles must observe customs of the Jewish religion. Paul pointed out that he had been zealous previously for the traditions of the Fathers, but when he was set aside by God's grace to preach to the heathen, he conferred not with flesh and blood (cf. Gal. 1:14ff.). After his conversion, he did not go to Jerusalem to receive the doctrine of the Apostles, but he went to Arabia and returned to Damascus (Gal. 1:17). Although Paul received an account of the teachings and activities of Jesus, possibly from Mark, his understanding of Christ came largely through a reinterpretation of the Old Testament in the light of the resurrection.

Three years after Paul's conversion (c. A.D. 37), he spent fifteen days with Peter in Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18). Apparently James, the Lord's brother, had become the leader of the Church at that time (Gal. 1:19). Paul mentions a second visit to Jerusalem fourteen years later (Gal. 2:1). Barnabas and Titus accompanied him, and he went up "by revelation" (Gal. 2:1f.). During that visit he disputed privately with James, Peter, and John over the question of circumcision (cf. Gal. 2:1-10). It should be noted that in Galatians Paul gave his oath that he made only two visits to Jerusalem for the purpose of conferring with the Apostles. The first visit for a conference with Peter (c. A.D. 37), described in

Not all Jewish Christians agreed with Paul that the New Covenant was established by _____ instead of _____.

(faith, circumcision)

In order to try to resolve problems related to the imposing of Old Testament customs and traditions on Gentiles, the leaders of the churches at _____ and _____ met in conference.

(Antioch, Jerusalem)

Galatians 1:18ff., came several years earlier than the trip he made with Barnabas to take the offering during the famine (c. A.D. 43—cf. Acts 11:30). His second trip to Jerusalem for a conference came fourteen years after the first (c. A.D. 48–50). In the Galatians account Paul did not mention the trip made with Barnabas to take relief for the poor during the famine because it did not involve a conference with the Apostles. He actually made three trips to Jerusalem before A.D. 50, but only two were to confer with the Apostles.

The Journey to Jerusalem
Acts 15:2-4

Paul, Barnabas, and “certain others of them” were appointed by the Church of Antioch as official representatives to the Jerusalem Conference. During their journey to Jerusalem, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria. They visited the churches in those regions and told of the conversion of the Gentiles. The fact that the report on the conversion of the Gentiles brought “great joy to all the brethren” gave additional support in the Conference to Paul’s and Barnabas’ position.

When Paul and his party arrived in Jerusalem, they were warmly received by the church leaders— the Apostles and the elders. Before the opening of the Conference, Paul reported all that God had done through his ministry to the Gentiles. The pre-conference session with the Apostles and elders may have been the same as the communication “unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run or had run, in vain” (Gal. 2:2).

Convening of the Conference
Acts 15:5-11

The Pharisees who believed that Jesus was the Messiah listened to the report of Paul and Barnabas concerning the faith of the Gentiles (v. 6). They responded by insisting that Gentiles must be circumcised and charged to keep the Law of Moses. Luke does not indicate whether the Pharisees were the same as those who had gone to Antioch and debated with Paul and Barnabas. Galatians 2:1 states Paul took Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile, with him to Jerusalem. If Galatians 2 refers to the Jerusalem Conference, the hostility of the Pharisees can be understood better. The law of uncleanness caused the Jews to look contemptuously upon the Gentiles as unclean. Some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees expressed their antagonism and opposition to Paul’s practices and forced the convening of the Conference.

The Conference began with a debate on the question raised by the believing Pharisees. The question was no longer, “Can a Gentile be saved?” All were ready to admit this. The question was, “What must Gentiles do to be saved?” All were agreed that Gentiles and Jews must believe in the name of Jesus Christ—that Jesus is God’s anointed Deliverer. The unsettled question was whether Gentiles should be circumcised and required to keep the Law of Moses. Could Jewish Christians associate with uncircumcised Gentiles without defilement? Were Gentile Christians to remain in an inferior position in the Church, like the God-fearers in the synagogue?

The strict Pharisees were fearful that the Gentiles would not maintain the high moral standard of Judaism. Their fears were not completely groundless. The New Testament indicates that some Gentiles abused their liberty to the point of antinomianism (against the law). They pushed the doctrine of Christian liberty to

How many trips did Paul make to Jerusalem Before A.D. 50? _____

(three)

In what two places on their journey to Jerusalem did Paul, Barnabas, and other representatives tell of the conversion of the Gentiles? _____

(Phoenicia and Samaria)

The Pharisees who believed that Jesus was the Messiah insisted that _____ must be _____ and charged to keep the Law of Moses.

(Gentiles, circumcised)

List the questions raised in the Conference.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

an excess of licentiousness. The Christian cannot live without some law, nor can he worship without some form. Actually Paul was not advocating liberty from the moral law of the Old Testament but freedom from Jewish ceremonial and nationalistic customs. Many customs had arisen which the Pharisees strictly observed. However, these customs had no religious significance to Gentiles. Paul regarded circumcision and regulations for observance of the Sabbath as meaningless customs for Gentiles. Murder, adultery, and idolatry were moral and religious laws which must be kept. The distinction between meaningless customs and valid laws is based on the effect they have on one's relationship to his fellow-man and to God.

Little progress seems to have been made in the Conference until Peter stood up and shared his experience concerning the conversion of Cornelius. Peter was identified as being in the camp of the strict Jewish Christians, but he did not take the radical position that Gentiles must embrace the customs of Jewish society.

1. Peter had no doubt that God had chosen Gentiles to salvation since He had given the Holy Spirit to them "even as he did unto us" (v. 8).
2. He argued that the Gentiles were not to be considered inferior in the Christian Church because God "put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (v. 9).
3. Peter argued that since God put no "yoke upon the neck" of the Gentiles, why should the Jewish Christians place Jewish requirements upon the Gentiles which even the Jews could not keep? (v. 10). Instead of saying that Gentiles were saved by faith just as Jews, Peter reversed it and said: "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (v. 11). Peter argued that Jewish Christians also were saved by faith and not by circumcision or by keeping the traditions of the Fathers.

Peter's arguments were decisive. The evidences he presented made it clear that to disagree was to oppose God. God had made His will known to him through a special vision. Peter's prejudices may have caused him to desire to reject the revelation given through the vision, but he could not oppose God. The multitude sensed the truth which he spoke and "kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul" (v. 12).

The Speeches of Paul, Barnabas, and James Acts 15:12-21

The arguments of Peter prepared the multitude to listen with open minds to the reports of Barnabas and Paul. "The multitude" implies that a larger number than just the Apostles and elders was present for the Conference. The issue was so important that the consent of the whole Church was required to avoid a division within the fellowship.

Barnabas and Paul related what wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles (v. 12). The power of God had been manifested in the ministry of Paul and Barnabas. A Roman official had been converted, a Jewish magician who attempted to hinder the work of the Church had been blinded, and a cripple had been healed miraculously. Wherever Gentiles received the Word, there was evidence that they had been given the Holy Spirit. Surely these events proved that God's Kingdom included Gentiles.

Apparently, James was not only the leader of the Jerusalem Church but also of the conservative Hebraic Party. If anyone would be able to persuade the Pharisees who believed to accept

Some Gentiles abused their liberty

(1) to the point of _____

(2) to an excess of _____

(antinomianism, licentiousness)

What determines whether customs are meaningless and laws are valid? _____

(the effect they have on one's relationship to his fellow-man and to God)

Peter's arguments for the salvation of the Gentiles were:

1. God gave them the _____
2. Gentiles were not _____ because God purified their hearts by faith.
3. God did not put the _____ of Jewish customs upon their necks.

(Holy Spirit, inferior, yoke)

According to Acts 15:2, 6, 12 those who attended the Jerusalem Conference were:

P _____, B _____, certain others from A _____, P _____ who believed, a multitude from the J _____
C _____

(Paul, Barnabas, Antioch, Pharisees, Jerusalem Church)

the Gentiles, it would be he. Peter was a member of the Hebraic Party also; therefore, James saw wisdom in supporting Peter's arguments with Old Testament Scripture. He pointed out that according to Amos 9:11, Gentiles would be included in the Kingdom.

Amos had warned that the sinful Kingdom would be destroyed from off the face of the earth. Israel would be sifted among the nations, and sinners would be removed from the house of Israel. When the fallen Kingdom of David was restored, the rest of mankind would have the opportunity to find the Lord. The restored tabernacle, which was the dwelling place of God, would become the centre and means of unity for all men, both Jews and Gentiles. All the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, belonged to God who is the Creator and Lord of all. When the time comes that the Gentiles turn and seek after their Creator, the new Kingdom of God will be established. James seemed to have believed that the Day of the Lord had arrived; therefore, Jewish Christians should not hinder God's long-established plan by troubling the Gentiles who were turning to God. James showed from the Old Testament that the call of the Gentiles was part of God's eternal purpose (cf. Isa. 2:2).

The Hebrew majority followed James and Peter when a decision was made. James proposed that the Gentiles not be forced to be circumcised but that they should abstain from certain practices which were offensive to the Jews. It is uncertain whether the restrictions were just moral or both moral and ritual. James proposed that the Gentiles "abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood" (v. 20).

The first was a religious requirement. Idolatry was widespread among the Gentiles, but it was abhorred by the Jews.

The second, abstinence from fornication, was a moral requirement. It protected the sanctity of family life. Sexual vice was common among pagans.

The third decree referred to the Jewish belief that life was in the blood which should not be eaten. James proposed that Gentiles abstain from eating animals which had been killed by strangulation since the blood would remain in the flesh of the animal. They did not have the same scruples as Jews with regard to eating blood.

The fourth decree, to abstain from blood, might be related to the third, to prohibit the eating of blood whether it was mixed with the flesh or separate from it. Some scholars believe that it prohibited murder—"the shedding of blood." The early Western text omits "things strangled"; therefore, all the restrictions are either religious or moral: idolatry, fornication, and murder. It is unlikely that "things strangled" or "blood" should be deleted from the text or should be related to murder. Paul probably would not have opposed a Gentile concession at the point of the Jewish ritualistic custom of not eating blood. Since Jews and Gentiles had to respect one another if they were to be one in the Church, each would have to learn to tolerate the customs of the other.

James seemed to suggest that the Jews would continue their synagogue services in which the Laws of Moses and customs of the Fathers would be studied (v. 21). In the synagogues, the Law of Moses did continue to be read and proclaimed every Sabbath. For the Jews, the Law would suffer no loss. On the other hand, the Gentiles would not be burdened with certain meaningless customs and laws.

The Jerusalem Conference explains why many Jewish customs and festivals were not observed in the Christian Church even though they were presented in the Old Testament. Even the Sabbath as a day of worship had become the object of so many Jewish customs which were meaningless to Gentiles that the

Underline the name of the person who used the Old Testament to show that the call of the Gentiles to salvation was part of God's eternal purpose. (Barnabas, Paul, James, Peter)

(James)

Four practices from which Gentiles were to abstain were (1) _____

_____ (2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

In Acts 15:21, James suggested that Jewish Christians would continue to follow the _____ of _____ and _____ of the _____.

(Laws, Moses, customs, Fathers)

Church adopted the first day instead of the seventh for worship. The first day was significant to Christians because it was the day of Jesus' resurrection. The Conference did not fully settle the question of the observance of Jewish customs for the Christian Church. Today certain groups continue to teach that one is not saved if he fails to observe the Sabbath (the seventh day). It is interesting that the Seventh Day Adventists select only a few of the Jewish customs to enforce. They continue to stumble on the doctrine that salvation is by faith and not by works of the law (keeping certain customs).

The Decision of the Conference
Acts 15:22-29

Since James had not taken a radical position, his proposals provided the foundation for an agreement. Perhaps not all who were in attendance were in complete agreement, but Luke fails to mention any opposition to the proposal. He notes that the Apostles, elders and the "whole church" agreed to the proposal. It was important that the Jerusalem Church approve of the decision since these Jewish members must be reconciled to the decision of receiving Gentiles into the Church by faith and not by circumcision. The position of the Church at Antioch prevailed.

Paul, Barnabas, Barsabbas, and Silas were designated to take a letter, which stated the decision of the Conference, back to the Church of Antioch. The letter assured the Gentile churches that the Church in Jerusalem did not support the men from Judaea who taught that Gentiles must be circumcised and must keep the customs of Moses. It pointed out that the Judaeans brethren who went to Antioch to impose their views were not supported by the Jerusalem Church (v. 24).

The Conference was able to come to an agreement and decision because the members were guided by the Holy Spirit (v. 28). Life in the Spirit does not enslave to burdensome customs and regulations, but the Spirit gives freedom and guidance for effective Christian service.

The Report to Antioch
Acts 15:30-35

The authorized delegates took the letter to the congregation of Antioch. After the letter was read to the assembled group, they rejoiced because of its consolation and exhortation. It appears that the Church at Antioch was composed primarily of Gentiles. Judas and Silas verified the letter and added their own remarks of explanation and encouragement. The trouble caused by those who claimed to speak for the Jerusalem Church was officially settled. Since their mission was completed, the brethren from the Jerusalem Church returned in peace. Verse 34, omitted by some early manuscripts, adds that Silas remained in Antioch. Paul and Barnabas continued in Antioch for a period of time, teaching and preaching.

In our day, which sect selects only a few Jewish customs and stumbles on the doctrine that salvation is by faith and not by works.

(Seventh Day Adventists)

TRUE OR FALSE?

It was important that the Jerusalem Church approve the decision to receive Gentiles into the Church by faith. _____

(true)

The Conference was able to come to an agreement and a decision because the members were guided by the _____

(Holy Spirit)

Write the correct word in the blank (anger, joy, bitterness). The congregation at Antioch responded to the report from the Conference with _____

(joy)

PART II: VISITS TO THE CHURCHES IN SYRIA,

CILICIA, AND GALATIA

ACTS 15:36–16:5

The Separation of Paul and Barnabas

Acts 15:36-41

Luke gives the impression that the decision at Jerusalem solved the problem of the relation of Jews and Gentiles in the Church. A time of peace ensued in which the Apostles gave themselves to preaching and teaching. After several months had passed, Paul suggested to Barnabas that they visit the "brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do" (v. 36). Barnabas was agreeable to the suggestion and desired to take John Mark along with them. Paul objected since Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia. The disagreement was so sharp that Paul and Barnabas went separate ways. Barnabas took Mark and went to Cyprus. Paul chose Silas who had been one of the official representatives from Jerusalem to Antioch and travelled through Syria, Cilicia, and Galatia.

The disagreement between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark indicates that the issue of the relation of Jews and Gentiles in the Church may not have been completely solved. The proposals of James had left the Gentiles free from Jewish customs, but his suggestions implied that the Jewish Christians could continue to practise the customs of Moses. One interpretation of Moses was that Jews were not to associate with uncircumcised Gentiles. The plan worked smoothly as long as no one was present who took a radical position and agitated the Jews to a strict observance of the customs of the Fathers. Jewish customs prevented Jews from entering the homes of Gentiles; therefore, fellowship in mixed congregations was hindered.

John Mark had been associated with the Jerusalem Church; so had Barnabas. Although both were willing to receive Gentiles into the Church, it may be that neither felt completely at ease in the presence of uncircumcised Gentiles. Probably they did not feel as strongly as Paul concerning the doctrinal and fellowship issues involved. Although Luke does not specifically say that the disagreement between Barnabas and Paul arose over the issue of association with Gentiles, Paul's letter to the Galatians indicates that the issue was a source of tension between them.

It is uncertain whether Galatians 2:6ff. refers to the Jerusalem Conference. Possibly the occasion for the Epistle to the Galatians was the appearance of Judaizers who attempted to discredit Paul in the churches which he had established. They may have suggested that Paul was required by the leaders of Jerusalem to appear before the Jerusalem Council to defend his position. Paul asserts that "they who seemed to be somewhat . . . in conference added nothing to me" (Gal. 2:6). He pointed out that James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars in the Church, perceived that God had by His grace made him and Apostle to the Gentiles; therefore, they extended the hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas and encouraged them to go to the heathen (Gal. 2:9).

Apparently after the Jerusalem Conference, Peter came to Antioch. Peter was willing to associate with Gentiles, even to eat with them, until certain strict Jews came from James (Gal. 2:11f.). "But when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself,

Write in the correct name (Paul, Barnabas, John Mark).

_____ and _____ disagreed concerning taking _____ along on the trip to visit the churches.

(Paul, Barnabas, John Mark)

What two main ideas concerning the relation of Jews and Gentiles in the Church made the problem difficult to solve?

1. _____

2. _____

(Gentiles were free from Jewish customs, Jewish Christians could continue to practise the customs of Moses)

fearing them which were of the circumcision" (Gal. 2:12). Peter's action influenced Barnabas and the other Jews in Antioch (Gal. 2:13). Paul reminded Peter that he had admitted that even Jews were saved like Gentiles (Acts 15:11); therefore, why should Jews require Gentiles to live as Jews? (cf. Gal. 2:14)

Since the proposals of James permitted the moderate Jews to observe or neglect the customs of Moses, moderate Jews like Peter and Barnabas probably were willing to live like Gentiles as long as they were with Gentiles and like Jews when they were with Jews. This procedure would maintain peace until radical Jews appeared on the scene. Apparently strict Jews had put social pressure on Peter and Barnabas to observe Jewish customs while they were at Antioch. The Jewish customs prohibited association with uncircumcised Gentiles regardless if they were Christians or not. Peter and Barnabas yielded to the pressure and gave the Gentiles the impression that Jews considered themselves superior to Gentile Christians. The incident to which Paul refers in Galatians reveals the delicate relations of Paul and Barnabas. Since Paul felt keenly that his commission was to the Gentiles, he may have feared that Barnabas and John Mark would jeopardize the success of his mission.

After the separation of Paul and Barnabas, Paul took Silas with him to visit the churches in Syria and Cilicia. The purpose of his visit was to give them additional teachings and encouragement in the Christian faith. Barnabas took John Mark with him to Cyprus.

Visits to the Churches of Galatia Acts 16:1-5

Luke emphasizes two facts in connexion with the revisiting of the churches of Galatia. Timothy, a native of Lystra, became a companion of Paul, and Paul shared with the churches the decision of the Jerusalem Conference.

Some interpreters have accused Paul of inconsistency because he had Timothy circumcised. Timothy was the son of Eunice, a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. Eunice taught the Scripture to Timothy and she may have desired his circumcision. Few Jews lived at Lystra, and there was no synagogue or Jewish leadership there to perform the rite.

Paul did not deliberately antagonize the Jews. He stood firmly in his defence of the freedom of the Gentiles and the doctrine of salvation by faith apart from keeping Jewish customs. However, he did not neglect Jewish customs when they did not jeopardize his work. The circumcision of Timothy was not an act of compromise but a willingness to abide by the Jerusalem agreement that Jews would keep the customs of Moses. Circumcision was not to be required of Gentiles; neither was it essential to salvation. Paul was a Jew and Timothy qualified as the same through his mother's nationality and teaching of Jewish Scriptures and customs to him. But Timothy was also a Gentile because of his father (16:3). Since Timothy would be ministering to both Jews and Gentiles, it was expedient that he be circumcised in order that there would be no hindrance to the faith of the Jews. Those who considered Timothy to be a Gentile would not object to association with him if he met the requirements of proselytes.

Although the decrees of the Jerusalem Conference were specifically designated for "the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia" (15:23), Paul delivered them also to the churches of Galatia when he visited them. The experiences of Paul on the first missionary journey at Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, and Lystra reveal the intensity of the feeling concerning the issues of the decrees. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians gives further evidence of the seriousness of these

COMPLETE THE SENTENCE

Peter was willing to associate with Gentiles until

(certain strict Jews came from James)

TRUE OR FALSE?

Peter and Barnabas yielded to social pressure in Antioch and gave the Gentiles the impression that Jews considered themselves superior to Gentile Christians.

(True)

What are the two facts Luke emphasizes in connexion with the revisiting of the churches of Galatia?

1. _____
2. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

It was expedient for Timothy to be circumcised because he would be ministering to both _____ and _____

(Jews, Gentiles)

problems. Since the decision of the Jerusalem Church supported Paul's position he would naturally share it in Galatia also.

Acts 16:5 is a summary statement which indicates that Luke had completed another phase of his history of the early Church's growth. Since the Jerusalem letter is mentioned for the last time in this section, it indicates the closing of the history of the Council. R. B. Rackham states that this paragraph is the real conclusion of the chapter of the history which began in Acts 13:1.¹ The churches had been threatened by the false teachings of the Judaizers, but the Jerusalem decrees which supported Paul's position brought doctrinal stability. "And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily" (16:5).

Acts 16:5 states "And so were the churches established in the _____ and increased in number daily."

(faith)

¹ *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Methun and Co. Ltd., n.d.), p. 263.

Home Study Assignment

Basic study(Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. What was the first doctrinal issue to confront the new Church? _____

2. List the three probable visits Paul made to Jerusalem. Give Scripture references for each.
(1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____
3. Who challenged Paul's doctrine concerning the salvation of the Gentiles? _____

4. List Peter's arguments for the salvation of the Gentiles.
(1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____
5. Who was present for the Jerusalem Conference (cf. vv. 2, 6, 12)? _____

6. What was the subject of the Old Testament Scriptures James referred to in supporting Peter's arguments?

7. List the four practices from which Gentiles were to abstain. (1) _____
(2) _____ (3) _____ (4) _____
8. What does Acts 15:21 teach? _____

9. Why did the entire Jerusalem Church need to agree to the requirements of salvation for the Gentiles?

10. How did the Church of Antioch respond to the report from the Conference? _____

11. Did the decision at Jerusalem solve the problem of fellowship in congregations composed of both Jews and Gentiles? Explain. _____

12. What caused the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas? _____

13. Why did Peter withdraw from association with Gentiles in Antioch? _____

14. Give the two emphases of Acts 16:1-5. (1) _____

_____ (2) _____

Supplementary activities (Levels 2 and 3):

1. Was Paul inconsistent in having Timothy, but not Titus, circumcised?
2. Why did Peter support the position that Gentiles were not required to keep the customs of Moses at Jerusalem, but refused to associate with Gentiles in Antioch?

Advanced activities (Level 3):

1. Read pages 152 through 165 in *The Book of Acts* by Frank Stagg.
 2. What problems do scholars face in Paul's visits to Jerusalem and what solution does Stagg suggest?
 3. Why was James' support of Peter's arguments important?
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Seminar Discussion

1. Why do we not keep all the laws of the Old Testament?
2. Was it necessary for the Jerusalem Church to approve "officially" the doctrine of salvation by faith only for the Gentiles? Why?
3. What was the significance of the Jerusalem Conference to early Christian doctrine and fellowship?
4. Does the content of the Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians have any relation to the issues and decisions of the Jerusalem Conference?