

Book of Acts

Session 20: Acts 15-16

The Jerusalem Council

1. Read Acts 15:1-21. A dispute arose in the Antioch church... *“Unless you are circumcised . . . you cannot be saved.”* What are the key misunderstandings about circumcision which these Christians had?
2. Paul and Barnabas knew they were correct. Yet what did they and the believers in Antioch decide to do to resolve the issue? Explain why this decision was a loving response to those who were in error.
3. What was Peter’s main point in his address to the council (i.e. to what event does verse 7 refer?)
4. What were Paul’s and Barnabas’ contributions to the discussion?
5. Describe the role that James played in this discussion. Read 2 Timothy 3:16, 17, and explain how we can learn from James’ example.

The Issue of Gentile Circumcision Decided

6. Read Acts 15:22-35. Describe the Gentiles’ reaction to the Jerusalem letter.
7. Why were the Gentile Christians asked to *“Abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled”*?
8. The Jerusalem believers wrote a letter to their gentile brothers, but they also sent along two representatives. What wisdom do you see in this plan? What insight does this give us as we communicate truths of God to fellow believers and to unbelievers, particularly in an age when communication often occurs at a distance (telephone, e-mail, etc.)?

Paul’s Second Missionary Journey

9. Read Acts 15:36-41. Why didn’t Paul want to bring John Mark along on his second journey? How did the Lord use their disagreement for the good of the church?
10. Read Acts 16:1-10. Paul shared the good news that circumcision was not necessary for salvation. Why then did he circumcise Timothy, his new partner in ministry? (See Acts 15:1, 2 and 1 Corinthians 9:22.)

11. Paul intended to preach the good news in the Roman provinces of Asia and Bithynia. What prevented him from carrying out this plan?

The name of Jesus defeats the devil

12. Read Acts 16:11-15. Which words tell us that the conversion of Lydia was a miracle worked by the Lord?

13. Read Acts 16:16-24. The evil spirit in the slave girl was speaking the truth. Why did God drive the spirit from her?

14. Why were the slave girl's owners upset at her healing? How did they alter their accusation when they came before the magistrates, and what benefit did they gain by doing that?

15. People in Philippi were willing to pay a great deal of money in the hope of discovering information about the future. Read Proverbs 3:5 and Romans 8:38. Why is it wrong to seek information about the future from any place other than God's Word? How can Christians be content though many details of the future are unknown?

Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved

16. Read Acts 16:25-40. *"What must I do to be saved? . . . Believe in the Lord Jesus."* What is amazing about that answer from this Gentile's perspective?

17. When Peter was in prison in Jerusalem, the Lord freed him quietly and secretly. Here, the Lord made all kinds of commotion. Why the difference?

18. Why did Paul insist that the magistrates escort them out personally?

19. Paul and Silas were singing prayers to the Lord as they endured the brutal discomfort of stocks and suffered the indignity of false imprisonment. Why could the apostles glorify God even in prison? Discuss how trouble in our lives can be a unique opportunity for witnessing to those around us.