

VV STUDY NOTES: 10th JUNE 2023

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COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM: Acts 15:1-35

The relationship between the Jewish Christian Community and the Gentile (or Hellenistic) Christian Community is critical to our understanding of the New Testament and the development of the Christian Church as a whole.

Our Texts for the day give us a basic understanding of a period of tension and controversy in the development of the Christian Church as it spread beyond the borders of Judea & Samaria. It is believed that this was probably in 49AD.

Acts 15: 1-4

Provides the background to the Council.

The CONTEXT must always determine the meaning of “certain people.”

V: 5 Provides that context as the “Party of the Pharisees”

**Is this definitive evidence that FACTIONS existed in the church from the very beginning?**

V: 6 The Council did not involve the whole community of believers, but the APOSTLES & ELDERS.

**What do you think is the significance of this in comparison with what happened when the all the believers participated in the selection of the Deacons?**

V:7-11 Peter’s assessment.

**What are the KEY POINTS of what he says?**

V:12 Paul and Barnabas testify to the reality of the work of God among the Gentiles.

V 13-19 By this time, James (Jesus’ brother) seems to have become the leader of the JEWISH CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

**With the history of multiple parties within Judaism itself, is this understandable?**

**What do you think of his COMPROMISE?**

V:22-35 The Response

**Was the DELEGATION and LETTER important?**

**DOES THE COUCIL clearly define the reality of a JEWISH CHRISTIANS and GENTILE CHRISTIANS?**

Remember, because of the Jewish Diaspora these groups had to co-exist within the church communities in different locations!

THE BIGGER PICTURE

The relationship of the Judean Christian Community must be seen in the light of the relationship they had to the TEMPLE. The temple services continued as normal till the destruction of the City and Temple in AD 70. What relationship did the early Judean Christians have with the TEMPLE and the TORAH (or Law)? If we fail to ask these questions the story that unfolds becomes incomprehensible, because we start making assumptions that may not be correct!

The questions below are pertinent to our understanding of the Council of Jerusalem:

- Did the Judean Christians continue to honour the LAW, and continue sacrificial acts of worship in the TEMPLE?
- Did they continue to follow circumcision, the keeping of the Festivals, the food laws, and all the other requirement of the Torah?
- Did the Judean Christians have a FUNDEMENTALIST FACTION that insisted that the TORAH and CIRCUMCISION were required for salvation even for the Gentile Christians?
- Did the **Judean based APOSTLES** continue those practices, but exempt the GENTILE CHRISTIANS from the need to do so?
- What did **PAUL as the Apostle to the Gentiles** by his **WORDS and ACTIONS** contribute to our understanding of his relationship to the JEWISH CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS and the GENTILES CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS?
- Let's not forget that there were GENTILE converts to JUDAISM who had been circumcised, obeyed the LAW and were irrevocably JEWISH!

The following passages have implications as we consider the above.

I am listing the passages and invite you all to ask what the connections might be.

GENERAL

- **1 Cor 9:19-23** One of Paul's general principles.

THE TEMPLE

- **Acts 21:17-26** This is the last time PAUL was in Jerusalem.
What are the implications of what James asks Paul to do, and Paul's response?
(Acts 21: 27 – Acts 26:32 is an incredible record of how Paul ended up going to ROME)

CIRCUMCISION

- **Gal 2: 1-5** Is a record of what happened when Paul went to the Council of Jerusalem and rejoices that Titus who was a Gentile was not required to be circumcised.
- **Acts 16:1-5** Just months later Paul and Timothy go on a missionary journey to carry the decision of the Council of Jerusalem. He and Timothy (whose mother was a Jewish) decide that Timothy should be circumcised.

THIS LIST COULD BE MULTIPLIED AT LEAST 10 TIMES
FOR OUR DISCUSSION TODAY THESE WILL SUFFICE.

**For the NEXT TWO WEEKS we will be summarizing the BOOK OF GALATIANS.
ALL OF THE ABOVE ARE DIRECTLY LINKED**