

**STUDYING THE BOOK OF ACTS**  
**IN SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

**Lesson 38 – The Council at Jerusalem - [Acts 15:1-21](#)**

Read the following verses in the Last Days Bible or a translation of your choice. Then discuss the questions that follow. Questions should be studied by each individual before your discussion group meets.

Materials may be copied and used for Bible study purposes. Not to be sold.

***The Church Council***

**15** Then some men came down from Judea and began teaching the Lord's followers that, "Unless you are circumcised, as the Law of Moses requires, you can't be saved."

<sup>2</sup> Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed, and entered into quite an argument with them. So it was decided that Paul and Barnabas and some of the other believers in Antioch should go up to Jerusalem and talk to the apostles and church leaders about this matter.

<sup>3</sup> After being sent on their way by the church, they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria. They brought great joy to all the Lord's followers in these areas as they told them in detail how the Gentiles had been converted to the Lord.

<sup>4</sup> When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church, the apostles, and the leaders, to whom they reported everything that God had done through them.

<sup>5</sup> But then some Pharisees who had become believers stood up and said, "It's necessary now that these Gentiles be circumcised, and that they be told they must obey the Law of Moses."

<sup>6</sup> So the apostles and church leaders met together to consider this matter.

<sup>7</sup> After much vigorous debate, Peter stood up and said, "Men and brothers, you know that quite some time ago, God decided that it should be from my lips that the Gentiles should hear the message of the Great News and believe.

<sup>8</sup> "And God, who knows the deepest motives of everyone, accepted them, as proven by His giving them the Holy Spirit\* in the same way He had to us.

**Acts 15:8 – "Giving them the Holy Spirit."\* See Acts 10:1-48.**

<sup>9</sup> "He didn't distinguish between us and them. He purified their hearts from all guilt when they firmly believed.

<sup>10</sup> "So why do you now want to question God's actions by putting a heavy burden on His followers, that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear?"

11“We believe that we are saved by God’s undeserved favor through Jesus Christ. The same is true with them!”

12Then silence came over the whole crowd as they listened to Barnabas and Paul tell of the many miracles and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

13After they finished speaking, James responded: “Men and brothers, listen to me!

14“Simon Peter has just told us how God, for the first time, has showed His concern for the Gentiles by taking out from among them a people who would belong to Him.

15“And this agrees with the words of the prophets, which say:

16’After all these things have happened I will return, and I will rebuild the house of David which has fallen down. I will rebuild its ruins and restore it,

17so that all the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles whom I have called to be My own. This is the declaration of the Lord, the One who is doing all these things.’ (*Amos 9:11-12*)

18“The Lord has known from eternity what He will do.

19“So it is my opinion that we should not put difficulties in the way of the Gentiles who are turning to God.

20“But we should write to them to abstain from food that had been offered to idols, from sexual immorality, and from eating blood or the meat of strangled animals.

21“Because the Gentiles are familiar with these basic Laws of Moses that have been preached in every city for many generations. And they are read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Lesson 38 – The Council at Jerusalem - [Acts 15:1-21](#)

593. Who came to Antioch? Why? ([15:1](#))

594. What were the men from Judea teaching the Christians? ([15:1](#))

595. On what did the men of Judea base their theology? ([15:1](#))

596. How did Paul and Barnabas respond to the teaching problem at Antioch? ([15:2](#))

597. How did the apostles determine to resolve the problem in Antioch? ([15:2](#))

598. What were the apostles’ experiences on their way to Jerusalem? ([15:3](#))

599. When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem, how did the church receive them? ([15:4](#))
600. What did the believing Pharisees say? ([15:5](#))
601. How did the church leaders respond to the Pharisees? ([15:6](#))
602. What did Peter say to the party of the Pharisees? ([15:7-11](#))
603. What did Paul and Barnabas add to Peter's testimony? ([15:12](#))
604. How did James summarize his views? ([15:13-21](#))
605. How did James deal with the circumcision question from a biblical standpoint? ([15:15-18](#))
606. What practical judgment did James make? ([15:19-21](#))
607. What did James mean by his concluding statement? ([15:21](#))

### **Lesson 39 - The Council's Letter to Gentile Believers - [Acts 15:22-35](#)**

#### ***The Letter to Gentile Believers***

<sup>22</sup>It was then decided by the apostles and church leaders, and agreed to by the whole church, to appoint some of their own men to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch. They chose Judas, called Barsabas, and Silas. These were leading men among the Lord's followers.

<sup>23</sup>The following letter was sent with them:

From the apostles, leaders, and other followers of the Lord at Jerusalem, to the Gentile followers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings.

<sup>24</sup>We have heard that some men, coming from us but without any instructions from us, have troubled you by their teachings, and continue to upset you by insisting that, You must be circumcised and keep the Law.

<sup>25</sup>So it seemed good to us after coming to full agreement on this matter to choose some of our men and send them to you with our much-loved Barnabas and Paul,

<sup>26</sup>men who have risked their very lives to glorify the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>27</sup>So we are sending Judas and Silas to assure you in person of the same things we are now writing you.

<sup>28</sup>It seemed right to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything more than the following necessary requirements:

<sup>29</sup>Abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from eating blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these things, you will do well. Farewell.

<sup>30</sup>So the men were sent off, and in due time arrived in Antioch. When they had gathered all the Lord's followers together, they delivered the letter.

<sup>31</sup>When it was read, the followers were overjoyed by its encouraging message.

<sup>32</sup>Judas and Silas were prophets too, so they taught the followers many things and strengthened them in the faith.

<sup>33</sup>After they had been there for some time, they were sent back with words of greeting from the followers to the apostles.

<sup>34</sup>But Silas decided it would be best if he stayed there.

<sup>35</sup>Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, where together with many others they taught and preached the message of the Lord.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Lesson 39 - The Council's Letter to Gentile Believers - [Acts 15:22-35](#)

608. Who went to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas? ([15:22](#))

609. Why did the men go to Antioch? ([15:23](#))

610. In whose name was the letter to Gentile believers sent? ([15:23](#))

611. To whom was the letter addressed? ([15:23](#))

612. What was the letter to Gentile believers about? ([15:24-29](#))

613. What was the tone of the letter? ([15:24-29](#))

614. How did the letter confirm the findings of the council? ([15:24-29](#))

615. How was the letter delivered? ([15:30](#))

616. How did the Christians in Antioch respond to the message from Jerusalem? ([15:31](#))

617. How did Judas and Silas help the Christians in Antioch? ([15:32](#))

618. When Judas and Silas left for Jerusalem, what kind of send-off were they given? ([15:33](#))

619. What did Paul and Barnabas do in Antioch? ([15:35](#))

## Lesson 40 - Disagreement Between Paul and Barnabas - [Acts 15:36-41](#)

### *Paul and Barnabas Separate*

<sup>36</sup>Sometime later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let’s go back now and visit the Lord’s followers in every city where we preached His message, and find out how they’re getting along.”

<sup>37</sup>Barnabas agreed, but he was determined that they take John Mark along too.

<sup>38</sup>But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had deserted them in Pamphylia, and hadn’t gone on with them to the work.

<sup>39</sup>The argument between them became so sharp that they broke off their partnership. So Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus.

<sup>40</sup>Paul then chose Silas. They left, with the followers declaring their confidence that God’s favor and help would be with them.

<sup>41</sup>Paul first of all traveled through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## Lesson 40 - Disagreement Between Paul and Barnabas - [Acts 15:36-41](#)

620. What did Paul suggest to Barnabas? ([15:36](#))

621. What did Barnabas want to do? ([15:37](#))

622. Why might Barnabas have wanted to take John Mark with him? ([15:37](#))

623. Why didn’t Paul want Mark to accompany the apostles on their trip? ([15:38](#))

624. Whom did Barnabas take with him when he went to Cyprus? ([15:39](#))

625. What did the apostles do about their difference of opinion? ([15:39-40](#))

626. How did both men reach a solution? ([15:39-40](#))

627. Whom did Paul select as a traveling companion in ministry? ([15:40](#))

628. As a result of the separation between Barnabas and Paul, how many missionary expeditions set out? ([15:39-40](#))

629. What did Paul and Silas do on their journey? ([15:41](#))

