

ACTS 15:4-11 | THE CONFRONTATION AT JERUSALEM: THE CONSIDERATION OF THE MATTER

- Verse 4 –
  - Having been **received** by the assembly (ekklesia) and the **apostles and elders**, Paul and Barnabus and those who accompanied them (likely with Paul as spokesman) **declared all the things God had done with them.**
  - This report was likely partially the activities of God, but also (and chiefly) the revelation of God to them through Paul. Thus, at this time, the Pauline revelation is first spoken in Jerusalem.
- Verse 5 –
  - These **Pharisees which believed** were biblically right and dispensationally wrong.
    - The Torah certainly stood on the side of the Pharisees, thus they were biblically right.
    - However, the new revelation from Paul was exactly the opposite of the Pharisees belief, thus they were dispensationally wrong.
  - We cannot fault the Pharisees, for they believed exactly what had been revealed to them to this point. In fact, we should commend these men for being determined to obey the Word of God, even at the cost of losing a new group of adherents.
- Verse 6-9 –
  - The **much disputing** gives evidence that this issue had not previously been under discussion, and therefore that the works of the law had always been a requirement of believers (since they were in the dispensation of the law).
  - When Peter was sent to Cornelius, Peter shared **the word of the gospel** and Cornelius believed.
    - God then gave **them the Holy Ghost, even as he did** for those at the day of Pentecost. In fact, at this time God **put no difference between us and them** and was **purifying their hearts by faith.**
    - This sounds so much like the Pauline Gospel that one could easily (and incorrectly) presume that the Pauline Gospel had been given to *Peter* even before Paul.
    - What must be understood is that what Peter preached and what Cornelius received was a *faith* Gospel, but it was also a *kingdom* gospel.
      - It should be noted that what took place with Cornelius was some 10+ years prior to the Jerusalem council.
      - During this lengthy time (called **a good while ago** by Peter), the gentiles were told the same message as Cornelius, even when Paul was the preacher (until Acts 13:38-39).
      - It should also be remembered that hearts were always purified by faith (Ps. 51:16-17), but the expression of that faith required subsequent works, and those works were limited in what they could accomplish.
      - Now, under Paul's mystery, there was justification from things **which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses** (Acts 13:39). Before this time, salvation was a kingdom salvation coming when Messiah began to reign.
- Verse 10 –
  - If God had opened the door to the gentiles to experience a kingdom Salvation (as with Cornelius), why **tempt ye God** (i.e.: put Him to the test) by placing upon them an attachment to the Law?
  - The wording of this verse confirms that circumcision was the *talking point*, but obedience to the whole law was the matter at hand.
- Verse 11 –

- These are the last recorded words of Peter in the book of Acts, and they are significant. He does NOT say, "they are saved the same way we are" but rather, "we are saved the same way they are." Peter has made a clear recognition of the dispensational change.
- Note Peter's closing words in 2 Peter 3:14-18.

## ACTS 15:12-21 | THE CONFRONTATION AT JERUSALEM: THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER

- Verse 12 –
  - Barnabus and Paul seem to piggy-back on Peter's words and share the wonders God had worked among the Gentiles (as recorded in the previous chapter, and perhaps more).
- Verses 13-17 –
  - These words of James confirm our earlier interpretation, that the salvation offered to Cornelius was a kingdom salvation, previously prophesied.
  - Here, James speaks of how **Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles**.
    - James is not talking about what God is doing of late through Paul, but what God had done a decade earlier through Peter.
    - Were these the same thing? Absolutely not! What God did through Peter (here and here alone in the book of Acts called **Simeon**, for unknown reasons) was in harmony with **the words of the prophets** (unlike Paul's message, which was previously unrevealed - Eph. 5-6, etc.).
    - To confirm, James quotes Amos 9:11-12, which teaches:
      - the **tabernacle of David** will be rebuilt (note that this is a *kingdom* verse)
      - the rebuilt kingdom will be for both Jews and Gentiles.
      - Note that in Amos 9:12 the KJV says **the remnant of Edom** while James speaks of **the residue of men**.
        - The words *Edom* (the name of a nation) and *adam* (mankind) are the same word in Hebrew, with only the vowel markings different.
        - Since the Hebrew Biblical text doesn't include vowel markings, the word can be translated either way.
        - Here, the Greek clarifies for us the Hebrew.
- Verse 18 –
  - These are words of James, not of Amos (as in NASB).
  - The words speak of James' confidence in God's ability to establish a new dispensation that he has not previously revealed. In effect, James concludes by saying, "God knows what he is doing."
- Verse 19 –
  - James gives his *judgment* (i.e. **my sentence**, but not in the sense of a judge declaring the sentence) is to **trouble not** the believing Gentiles.
  - This is monumental for James, who had previously (we believe) written that one must **keep the whole law** and not **offend in one point** ([James 2:10](#)).
- Verses 20-21 –
  - These two verses must go together or confusion will arise. The *reason* that the requests of verse 20 were made is because of the reality of verse 21. James was trying to reach those **in every city that preach him** (Moses). How much progress would James make if this Pauline group went about doing things that would be downright offensive where Moses is preached?
  - The requests were to avoid things (i.e.: food) polluted by idols, **fornication** (sexual immorality), **things strangled** (the Jewish rabbinical interpretation of the law was that kosher meat be killed in a quick manner) and from **blood** (kosher meat is to be drained of its blood as much as possible).
  - The reason for the above prohibitions was not *sanctification* but *evangelism*. Paul declared that he was willing to do anything for the salvation of the Jews, so this did not become an issue for him. He did not flaunt his liberties.
  - Note that the Jehovah's Witnesses forbid blood transfusions based on this verse.