

Acts 15:1-21

EMC Wednesday Night Bible Study - 5-3-17

Context

IV. The Apostle to the Gentiles (12:25-21:17)

- A. The first missionary journey (12:25-14:28)
- B. The Council of Jerusalem (15:1-16:5)**
- C. Mission in Macedonia (16:6-17:15)
- D. Paul in Athens (17:16-34)
- E. Corinth and Ephesus (18:1-19:41)
- F. More about Ephesus (20:1-21:17)

The Council of Jerusalem - Introduction

Sequence of Gentile inclusion: Cornelius (ch. 10) > unnamed missionaries (ch. 11) > First missionary journey (chs. 13-14)

Question: How did God intend for Gentiles to be incorporated into the community?

- Assumption: _____ and observance of the _____
- Reality: Gentiles joining the community through baptism _____ circumcision
- Could Jerusalem accept: Conversion without circumcision? Faith without works of the law? Commitment to Messiah without inclusion in Judaism? The Gospel for the whole world? The church of Christ as an international community instead of a Jewish sect?

Ch. 15 is the _____ of Acts

- Luke's shifts of emphasis:
 - Paul replacing _____
 - Asia and Europe replace _____
- Council of Jerusalem
 - Liberates the gospel from its Jewish clothing
 - Jewish-Gentile church's self-conscious identity as one, reconciled body

The Issue at Hand (vv. 1-4)

V. 1 - Peace/unity in Antioch disrupted by Judean men ("troublemakers," Gal. 1:7; 5:10)

- Epistle to the Galatians
 - Written to the south Galatian churches of the first missionary journey
 - Dictated this letter while on the way from Antioch to Jerusalem
 - The situation described in Galatians 2:11-16
- Identity
 - Sent from James? (cf. Acts 15:24) - causing _____?
 - V. 5 - "a sect of the Pharisees who had believed" who were "zealous for the law" (21:20)
- Teaching: "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (v. 1) and "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses." (v. 5)
 - Not opposed to the Gentile mission, but demanded that conversion must involve circumcision and obedience to the law.
 - Named "judaizers" or the "circumcision party"
- Significance: Without circumcision, a convert cannot be "_____"
 - More than a sign of God's covenant, it had become a condition for salvation

- Faith + circumcision + law = salvation
- Fallout - Galatians 2:11-21

V. 2 - "great dissension and debate." Church in Antioch initiates the Council of Jerusalem.

The Debate in Jerusalem (vv. 5-21)

3 summarizing speeches following charges (v. 5) and debate (vv. 6-7)

Peter (vv. 7-11)

- Reminded them of the _____ incident
- 3-fold work of God
 - _____ Peter (v. 7)
 - Giving of the _____ (v. 8; cf. 10:35)
 - V. 8 - God knows the heart - Καρδιογνώστης ("kardiognóstés" - heart-knower, cf. Acts 1:24)
 - No _____ to conversion
 - Purifying the _____ (v. 9)
 - _____ purity of heart vs. _____ purity of diet/ritual.
- Conclusion (v. 10) - echoes of Paul's correction in Gal. 2
 - Paul: "We know that a man is...justified...by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 2:16)
 - Peter: "We believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are." (Acts 15:11)
- Central theme: God "made no distinction between us and them" (v. 9)

Paul and Barnabas (v. 12) - details contained in chs. 13-14

James (vv. 13-21) - the brother of Jesus (Mk. 6:3), believer (Acts 1:14; I Cor. 15:7), apostle (Gal. 1:19); leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 21:18; Gal. 2:9), moderator of assembly, balanced view of faith and works (James 2:14-26)

- V. 14 - "A people" and "for his name" = normally applied in the OT to _____
- V. 15 - agreement of prophecy
 - Councils have no _____ unless their conclusions agree with Scripture
 - 2 truths from Amos 9:11-12
 - Restoration of David's fallen tent and rebuild its ruins = _____
 - A Gentile remnant will seek the Lord
- Scripture + experience = _____ (v. 19) - a firm proposal from one with authority and influence. (unanimous, v. 22)
- Vv. 19-20 - the ruling: no Jewish _____ + respect _____
 - V. 21 - synagogues throughout the Empire
- V. 20 - ceremonial acts from Leviticus 17-18
 - Abstinence = _____ matter of _____.
 - Not an essential Christian duty, but concession to the consciences of others