

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE BIRTH OF CHRISTIANITY

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PART 3: WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE GENTILES?

I receive a number of American Jewish publications and their definition of anti-Semitism can be summed up as any Gentile talking about Jewish matters. But it is impossible for a Christian to study the Bible without reading and thinking about Jews since Christianity came out of the Jewish faith and all apostles and members for the first years were Jewish. It is important for every Gentile Christian to know that the roots of Christianity cannot be divorced from the children of Israel, and in order to have a solid Christian doctrine, we must know where it came from. Therefore I hope that no one will take these sermons the wrong way and feel that I am bashing Jews.

The two previous messages have dealt with the Jewish mindset at the time of Christ and how the Holy Spirit had to intervene to move the Christian Jews away from the Talmudic/Kabbalistic religion of Judaism and re-connect it with the teachings of the Old Testament.

WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE GENTILES?

This was the burning question among the Christian Jewish leadership when Gentiles were converted by the thousands to faith in Jesus Christ. As the church in Antioch steadily grew with more and more Gentiles coming in, some of the Christian Jewish leadership from Judea traveled to Antioch and started to teach that a Gentile was not saved by faith in Jesus alone, they also had to be circumcised. **Acts 15:1**

Paul and Barnabas had a strong confrontation with these men from Judea and it was decided that Paul and Barnabas would travel to Jerusalem for a conference with the apostles and settle the issue. **verses 2-4**

A number of Pharisees had accepted Jesus as their Messiah and were part of the church in Jerusalem but they could not let go of their Talmudic teaching and they attacked Paul and Barnabas. **verse 5**

There were two points of contention:

1. Circumcision
2. The Law of Moses

The issue had reached a boiling point and it became clear that this matter had to be settled by the apostles and the elders of the church. **verse 6**

In this first convention of the Christian church some 12 years after the day of Pentecost, there was a lot of arguing among the Christian Jews and finally the apostle Peter rose and laid out the following points: **verses 7-11**



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- ❖ The Gentiles were given the Holy Ghost.
- ❖ Their hearts were purified by faith.
- ❖ Do not put a burden upon them that we could not carry.
- ❖ Salvation for Gentiles is by grace, just like it is for us.

TESTIMONY FROM BARNABAS AND PAUL

Peter's speech put all the people to silence as they could not refute what he said and then it was time for Barnabas and Paul to tell the convention what God had done for the Gentiles. **verse 12**

JAMES, THE HALF-BROTHER OF JESUS

James did not believe that his half-brother was the Messiah when Jesus ministered before his death on the cross but James came to believe after the resurrection. After the death of the apostle James (**Acts 12:1-2**) who was the brother of the apostle John, James, the half-brother of Jesus was named an apostle and historical records indicate that he became the chief leader of the church in Jerusalem. Jewish conservatives known as "zealots," who accepted Jesus as their Messiah, clung to James as their leader and his followers can be likened to "enforcers of their belief system." **Galatians 2:11-13**

It was James who spoke for the entire Christian leadership in Jerusalem and pronounced the official ruling. **Acts 15:13**

He cited the prophet Amos. **verses 14-15**

"After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things."
(Acts 15:16-17)

Here is the direct quote from Amos:

"In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this." (Amos 9:11-12)

It is obvious that James did not read from the book of Amos but quoted it verbally to the best of his recollection. If you want to understand these two verses from Amos, it is necessary to read the entire chapter to find that Amos is prophesying about the end times when the salvation of God will again be given to the people of Israel, including the Gentiles. **Amos 9:1-15**

James built his ruling upon the testimony of the apostle Peter and the quote from the prophet Amos. **Acts 15:18-20**

1. We are not going to cause trouble for the Gentiles who have been saved.

2. They should abstain from idolatry.
3. They should not fornicate. This is any unlawful sexual intercourse, including adultery.
4. Don't eat the meat from animals which have been strangled.
5. Don't eat anything that contains blood.

Then James gave the reason for his ruling: There are Jews in every city of the Roman Empire, and in order not to offend these Jews, Gentiles should obey the ruling from Jerusalem. **verse 21**

This ruling did not come from the Holy Spirit but was man's attempt to solve a spiritual problem in the flesh. Many Christians over the centuries have used this ruling to mistakenly reject the Old Testament.

The entire assembly in Jerusalem agreed to this ruling and an official letter was sent with Paul and Barnabas. Since the Christian Jewish leadership did not trust Paul and Barnabas, they selected Christian Jews from Jerusalem to validate the letter to the church in Antioch. **verses 22-32**

SUMMARY

The Jerusalem council took place some 12 years after the resurrection of Jesus. The Christian Jewish leadership, including the apostles, believed that Jesus would come back in their lifetime.

They didn't know that some 32 years later Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed.

If this ruling was from God, then the rest of the New Testament writing is false. Years later Paul, John, Peter, James, Luke, Matthew, Mark and Jude wrote the doctrine of the Christian church which clearly states that the Moral and Practical laws and the prophets were not only for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles who had been grafted into the church of Jesus Christ. They finally had lined up with their Master. **Matthew 5:14-19**

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

DO YOU HAVE AN EAR TO HEAR WITH?