

THE DIVISIVE NATURE OF ACTS 15



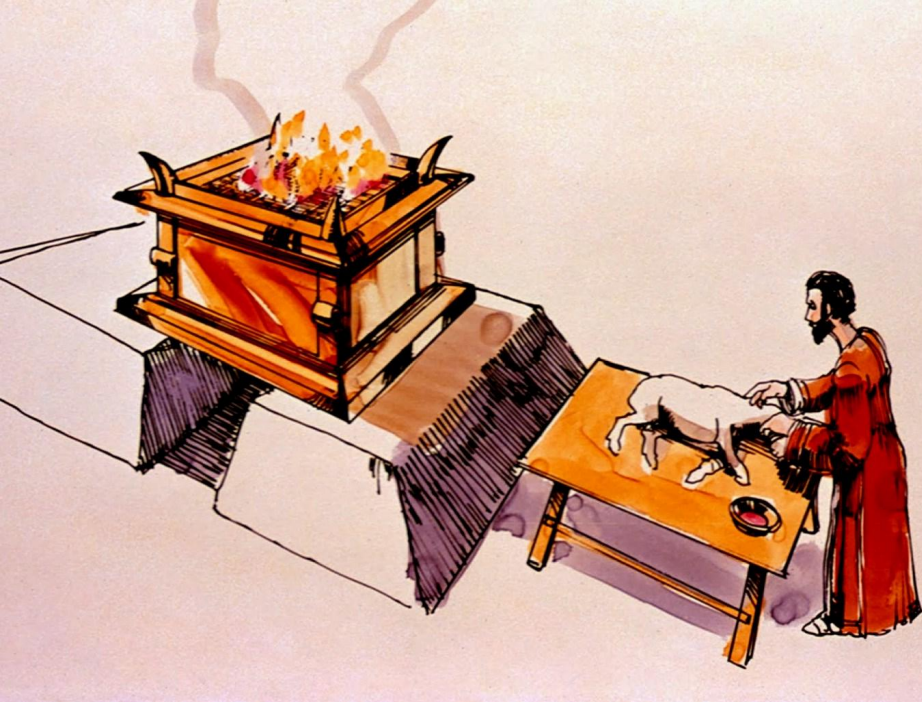
- Many differing Church doctrines from this chapter
- Are any of them right?
- Acts 15 is about the Jerusalem Council
- Meeting to decide on the basis for gentile inclusion
- It is an error to read and interpret this Jewish document, created within a Jewish culture, through Western 21st century cultural eyes



CONGREGATION GOVERNMENT

- In Acts 15, government was by leadership council
- The leadership of The Way was meeting in private session
- Majority-rules (leadership)
- This is how the Sanhedrin operated
- USA a democracy, so many Churches organized this way
- Whether in Acts 15, or in modern times, we tend to unconsciously organize according to our current societal customs and norms





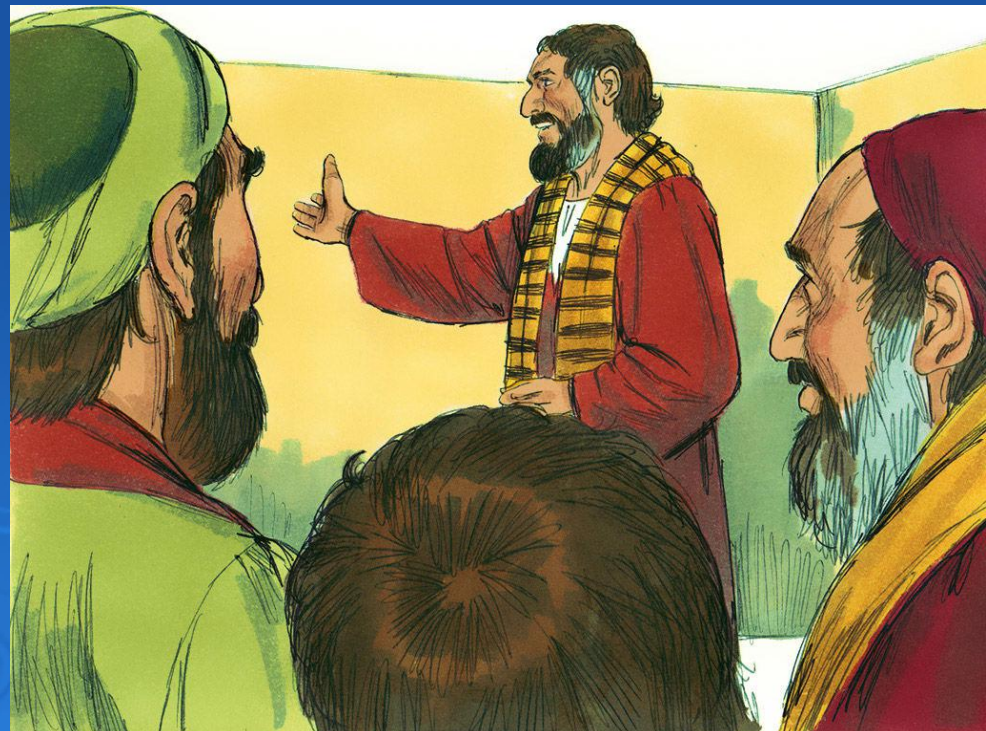
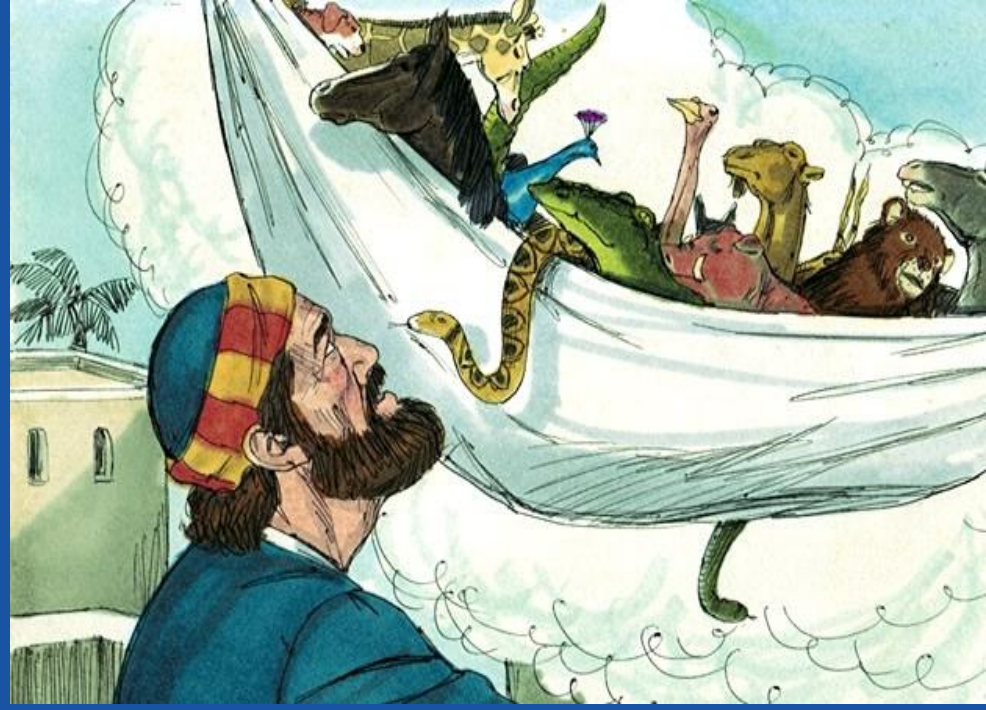
THE ISSUE BEFORE THE COUNCIL WAS CIRCUMCISION

- No thought by the leaders of The Way to separate from Judaism
- In Acts 21 Paul performs a vow offering to refute charges of being anti-Law
- When a gentile becomes a Jew, he is no longer inherently unclean
- Ritual defilement was shameful, inconvenient to remedy, could transmit the uncleanness to others



THE FOLLY OF HUMAN TRADITIONS

- Acts 10:34, 35
- *“...God does not play favorites...no matter what people he belongs to...”*
- Acts 15:6 – 9
- *“...God...made no distinction between us and them...cleansed their heart by trust...”*
- Acts 15:19, 20
- James says: *“...we should not put obstacles in the way of the Goyim who are turning to God...”*





SEEKERS

GOD IS LOVE



1 JOHN 4:16

- James agrees with Peter, Paul and Barnabas that they should not impede gentiles who only recently turned to God
- Everything was new to them, and they knew nothing of Holy Scriptures
- It was important to get the new gentile Believers trained
- Important that these new Believers go to Synagogue, because that is where God's Word is taught! Acts 15:21
- Council will immediately require 4 things of them
- These 4 things will keep the gentile Believers ritually pure so that they can go into the Synagogues and be with Jews

THE 4 RULES OF ACTS 15

- These are all NEGATIVE commands (do NOT)
- 1) abstain from things polluted by idols
- 2) refrain from fornication
- 3) do not eat strangled animals
- 4) refrain from blood
- These 4 rules taken directly from the Torah!
- Lev.17:8 – 14
- If something is offered to an idol, it cannot then be offered to God
- Slaughter of animals must be quick, humane
- Blood must be drained completely

THESE LAWS ALSO APPLY TO “FOREIGNERS”

- Pagans often strangled the animal so that the blood remained in them
- Hung the meat to age and give it a desired flavor
- Lev. 18:1 - 7 follows with sexual morality rules
- Fornication: 1) technical sense means unlawful relations between unmarried people 2) a general term referring to all immoral sexual behavior



ETERNAL REWARDS - MY EARTHLY CHOICES MAKE AN ETERNAL DIFFERENCE

The Mysteries of
HEAVEN



- James did not abolish the law for gentiles, rather he required gentiles to begin by following 4 laws from the Torah (taken from Leviticus)
- Any violation of these 4 laws cause ritual impurity
- If the only laws gentile Christians have to obey are these 4, then is murder, coveting, fraud, stealing, drunkenness, homosexuality, etc. OK?
- Matt.5:17 – 19
- Disobedience to the Law gives us the least rewards
- Obedience to the Law gives us the greatest rewards
- NOT about salvation, which is by grace alone

NATURAL LAW AND NOACHIDE LAW

- James is not undoing what Yeshua said
- Circumcision NOT needed for salvation of gentiles
- But, ritual purity still matters
- By staying ritually clean, gentile Believers can go to Synagogues
- No place in the Bible labeled Noachide Laws
- Noachide Laws created before God separated people into Hebrews and gentiles

The Seven Noachide Laws

Seven Noachide Laws

- Prohibit tearing limb from living animal
- Prohibit idolatry
- Prohibit blasphemy
- Prohibit bloodshed
- Prohibit incest & adultery
- Prohibit robbery
- Requirement to establish courts of law

The
**SEVEN
LAWS
of
NOAH**



CHRISTIAN GENTILES ATTACHED TO ISRAEL?

- Paul says gentiles are attached to Israel
- Romans 11:13 – 24
- Final decision: it is not necessary to be circumcised for gentiles to be saved
- One does not have to be a Jew to be ritually clean
- The 4 laws James decided upon **MUST** be obeyed by the new Believers even if they don't understand why
- New Believers' maturity will come from learning God's Word, starting with the Torah

