

# Authority And Acts 15

Acts 15:19-29

# Background

- Acts 15 is the record of a crisis point in the history of the early church.
- Key to early Christians learning the will of God as to what is essential for the salvation of the Gentiles.
- What we learn is how the first century disciples arrived at what God wanted them to do. Here, in regard to this matter of Gentiles and the law of Moses (circumcision).
- Provides for us a pattern of ascertaining God's will.

# Background

- The gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) conclude with the resurrection of Jesus and his preaching instructions (The Great Commission) to the apostles.
- The book of Acts opens with Jesus' ascension, after being with the apostles for 40 days - His instructing them concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit, and their work of spreading the gospel.
- Acts 1:8 → Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost parts of the earth.

# Background

- Acts 2 → Peter preaches the gospel and the church begins with the conversion of 3,000 Jews on the Day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem.
- Acts 3 → Peter's sermon at Solomon's porch, following the healing of the lame man.
- Acts 4-5 → The church continues to grow in the face of opposition over the preaching of the resurrection of Jesus. (4:1-4; 33; cf. 5:42)
- Acts 6 → Seven men are appointed to assist Grecian widows including Stephen and Philip. (cf. 6:7)
- Acts 7 → Stephen's sermon and stoning.
- Acts 8 → Persecution lead by Saul; church scatters; Philip's preaching in Samaria and to the Ethiopian eunuch.

# Background

- Acts 9 → The conversion of Saul, who was chosen to preach to the Gentiles. (v. 15)
- Acts 10 → The conversion of the first Gentile convert, Cornelius.
- Acts 11 → Peter is called on to defend his association with and preaching to Gentiles; the church in Antioch. (cf. vv. 20, 26)
- Acts 12 → James killed; Peter imprisoned and freed, and Herod eaten of worms.

## Background

- 13-14 → Paul's First Missionary Journey; cf. (13:42,46,48; 14:2; 27-28)



# Acts 15 → The Meeting At Jerusalem to Determine The Will of God

- The issue: Was it necessary for the Gentiles to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses to be saved? (15:1-5)
- The gathering to determine God's will with regard to the matter: The apostles and elders came together to consider the matter. (15:6)
- The resolution: It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things... (15:19-29; esp. v. 28)

## *How Did They Determine God's Will With Regard To This Question?*

- #1 → Peter's speech (15:7-11) → a combination of necessary implication and approved example based on the conversion of Cornelius.
  - Peter learned he was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Cornelius) by what God necessarily implied to him through a series of events. This also supplied an approved example.
    - The vision of the sheet. (10:9-16, 17,19)
    - The Spirit's instruction to go with Cornelius' messengers. (10:20-21)
    - The appearance of an angel to Cornelius. (10:22; cf. 28-29)
    - The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius. (10:44-48)
  - Peter's conclusion: 10:34-35; 11:15-18)



## *How Did They Determine God's Will With Regard To This Question?*

- #2 → Paul and Barnabas speak (15:12) → Declare their work among the Gentiles on their first missionary journey. What they did had God's approval.
  - (Primarily an appeal to approved example).

## *How Did They Determine God's Will With Regard To This Question?*

- #3 → The speech of James → an appeal to a direct statement of scripture. (Amos 9:11-12)
- The answer to the question seen in the revelation of God's will through...
  - Necessary implication (implying)
  - Approved Example (showing)
  - Direct Statement of Scripture (telling)
- God, who made us, communicates with us in a manner that is compatible with our nature, ability to understand and the way we communicate with other.

# Illustration...

- The Lord's Supper:
  - By direct statement (command) we learn we are to partake of it. (1 Cor. 11:24)
  - By approved example we learn that we are to partake of it on the first day of the week. (Acts 20:7)
  - By necessary implication, we learn that we are to partake of it weekly (frequency) (Acts 20:7; cf. Ex. 20:8)

# *The Importance of Learning and Doing The Will of God*

- Heb. 1:1-3 → God hath spoken.
- Eph. 3:3-5 → Read and know.
- II Tim. 3:16-17 → Scripture is complete to all good works.
- Matt. 7:21-23 → Only one doing God's will can enter His kingdom.
- I Pet. 4:11 → Speak as the oracles of God
- Heb. 5:8-9 → Jesus saves those who obey him.