

## Acts 15:1-11

September 28, 1976

**Acts chapters 13 & 14** are the first missionary journey of Paul.

### Acts 15:1

I think, in our day had God had this Word of God written, He might have said it something like, “And certain men and women, having been at Headquarters, came down to the areas and they taught the believers that unless they believe that Jesus is God, they would not be able to get saved.” In this day, when it was written, they taught the brethren, except the believers would get circumcised, they could not be saved. Circumcision has sort of ‘worn out’ from a religious point of view. What is happening, in many places, is that people are saying, “Except you be baptized in water, you cannot be saved. Except you get immersed, you cannot be saved.” From many different headquarters, you hear these things. One group will talk about sprinkling, another one about dipping. One group will talk about, “If you’re not baptized, there’s absolutely no way whereby you can be saved.

This first verse of Acts 15 is just as alive tonight as it was the first time God ever had a man to speak it, or to write it. **Acts 15:24** They came from headquarters’ area and they said, “Headquarters sent us.” Headquarters never sent them to begin with. They took it upon themselves to say headquarters sent them to get the people to give them a better listen; so they would carry influence in the areas when they would come in. It was an outright lie.

### Acts 15:2

“Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them” – Literally it would be translated – “Paul and Barnabas, having questioned them extensively about their sedition.”

“dissension” – This is the same word that we utilize in sedition. Sedition is whenever language or conduct tends toward treason. Concerning this requirement, that they’ were endeavoring to lay on the believers, that except you be circumcised according to the manner of the laws of Moses, you cannot be saved, Paul and Barnabas looked them straight in the eye and said, “That is treason.” Treason against whom? God! That’s the in-depth spiritual awareness of that verse.

“determined” – appointed - its basic word is “ordained” - This gives me an enlightened knowledge of the usage of the word ordained, in Biblical context. Ordination, then, is not just where you ordain a man or woman to the Christian ministry. Ordination is whenever a man or a woman, or men and women, are sent out on a special mission to carry out a specific task. They are ordained to do it.

“they” - the Church; Paul and Barnabas and the believers - not the ‘circumcision boys.’

The church decided to go right back to Jerusalem and to send Paul and Barnabas as ordained for that job. That is the great in-depth meaning of the word “ordained.”

When you really work that and you get that in your heart and you see it and I’ve got to send you someplace, if you can just understand it in the light of an ordination you will never be attacked by the adversary to cop out. You will just know that it’s God’s will for you to be there. If all hell breaks loose and you stand in the midst of the fire itself, the Word says God’s there; “and though I be in the midst of hell”, remember? (**Psalm 139:8**) No matter where you are, if you are in the center of God’s will, you are ordained to be there. God will see you through. That’s ordination. I know ordination to the ministry is there too. But what we have never seen, in the in-depth spiritual awareness of God’s

Word, is that when someone is assigned to a task that is “ordained.” When you get that in your head and heart, you’ll never “kick against the pricks.” When you see the greatness of that “ordination” in the Word and you really believe that, all of your major opportunities are over with in life, because you will know that whatever that particular “love of God” is, that you’re are assigned to do, it’s ordained of God and you and God will do it with the best of your ability, for God is on your side. You’re going to see that; with Paul and Barnabas walking right into that Jerusalem situation. This will now be the first meeting of the Church body; this is the first Jerusalem council. The whole possibility of ruining everything is at stake.

Before I finish chapter 15, you’re going to see the greatness of the word of knowledge and word of wisdom because, had they not walked by God and His Word, the Church would have split right down the middle at that time. One group would have been the circumcision gang and the other group, the uncircumcision gang. But, because men dared to believe God and they knew they were ordained of God to go, this thing could be carried out.

“determined” - ordained – our language today, that they would use, in the senses world is “appointed.” One phase of an appointment is ordination. “Ordination” is what should have been used here, to really get the in-depth greatness of it. They ordained Paul and Barnabas. They chose them by word of knowledge and word of wisdom. These manifestations do not dispel sense-knowledge information. They did not choose Paul and Barnabas because they were ignorant and stupid in God’s Word. They had the stamina, the academic qualifications, the head knowledge, they had been through the mill with the Gentiles, and they had natural leadership ability.

By word of knowledge and word of wisdom, they made the selection of Paul and Barnabas and others of them. How many others, I do not know; the Word does not say. I would say they had a fairly good delegation.

In **Acts 15:3** it says, “they passed through Phenice and Samaria” – that would be along the coast side. It only mentions the bigger cities, but I would venture, as I see this thing unfold, they had Twigs in every one of those towns as they came along. Every day they stopped with the believers. I can see Paul teaching one twig, Barnabas at another, and the others that came with them, met with the Twigs and taught. So they journeyed down to Jerusalem, stopping in route with the believers on the Twig level.

“apostles and elders” - I don’t know how many, but it’s a good-sized group that they were to meet with in Jerusalem. The reason I know that is because it says “multitude” in **Acts 15:12**.

“elders” - men of older years chronologically - They were perhaps 35, 40 or 50 years old, but they had been men who had been standing as believers.

### **Acts 15:3**

“And being brought on their way by the church” - literal translation - “They indeed therefore, were taken care of, and escorted on their way by the church.”

The Church had determined for them to go to Jerusalem and when they left for Jerusalem, they were taken care of and escorted on their way by the Church. They packed their food and sleeping bags and anything else they needed. The Church took care of Paul and Barnabas and the others and then escorted them for a mile or two, maybe three. That was Oriental culture; you never just shook hands at the door pushed him out and said, “Get going.” You walked with your friend for a way.

“Samaria” - was the capital city of the northern ten tribes of Israel at one time.

“declaring” - *ekdiēgeomai* – from *hēgēōmai* - to expound; to make known; to declare; to unfold fully

“conversion” - turning to the true God. In **Acts 3:19**, “be converted” is the same word. It is a complete about-face. Previously they were traveling one way spiritually, now they turn around to the true God. That’s the word “to convert.”

“declared” – literally means - gave a full and detailed report and analysis. They gave a full and detailed report and analysis of their turning to the true God. This same word is in **Acts 14:27** translated “rehearsed”.

#### **Acts 15:4**

“of” - by – sent on their way by the Church and when they got to Jerusalem, the Church received them.

“received” - *apodechomai* – that means they received them into their heart, received them into their homes; they opened their tables, they fed them; they lived with them, they allowed them to come right in. The Church received them into their hearts, into their lives.

“they declared all things” - they declared a full, detailed report and analysis of what has been happening.

“that God had done with them.” - In other words, it didn’t end with “that God had done,” but because they were witnessing, holding the Word forth. Therefore, God did it because they dared to move the greatness of God’s Word among the Gentiles.

#### **Acts 15:5**

“rose up” – the inner meaning of these words is “they stood up and yelled loudly.” - Literally they stood up. I can see them: they went right up to Paul and Barnabas and looked them straight in the eye and said, “You’re wrong! You’ve got to circumcise those Gentiles!”

“sect” – today they translate it “cult” - *hairesis* - literally translated “heresy” - transliterated into English “heresy”

The Pharisees were the Jesuits of their day. They were the watchdogs of legalism; to be sure that you washed your hands properly, at the proper time, and that you gave your tithe of everything. If you didn’t, penance was very costly. Historically, God never gave any Pharisees. They came into existence first after the Babylonian captivity. And if you will remember that, then whenever you read about certain things of the Pharisees, you will see why they would bring back from the Babylonian captivity with them that real adamant approach to the disciplinary action to be taken against people who didn’t quite agree with them and to be very legalistic in their walk. The Pharisees separated themselves by their special beliefs and by their practices, as some groups have done today. They were so strong on tithing, little details, food practices, and hand washing. (**Matthew 23:23 Luke 18:12**) The greatest thing about their teaching was that you had to have their oral law in order to understand the written law. Their oral law explained the written law. That oral law, you and I today would call a commentary. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection. They also believed in the “transmigration of the soul.” That was another doctrine which they propounded. They believed in what today is called “immortality of the soul”; that when you die, you’re really not dead, you just

have the transmigration of the soul into a higher realm, finally to come back to be joined with the body in the resurrection.

Only a man like Paul could have stood these guys. They sent Barnabas along to keep the love in Paul, and they sent Paul out there to lay the hell to them. Barnabas was sort of an easy-going, nice guy. But Paul; he could look them straight in the eyeball and spit in both of them and then fire right back at them. They stood up and yelled loudly. Paul stood right there and yelled just as loud. And they had a good old “word fight.” It was a big fight over circumcision; the legalism that they wanted to put the Gentiles under. It’s building for the biggest split in the Christian church. Had they split, I don’t know if you and I would have anything today. Even though they didn’t split, look at the amount of legalism that’s carried over today. They’re not even smart enough to go back to **Acts 15** and learn anything. We have the same legalism with us today in water baptism, Jesus Christ is God, and when you’re dead you’re really not dead, but floating around up there with God. It’s just like this word of God was written tonight. It’s just like you are ordained to go to Jerusalem tonight. It takes men and women who can stand toe to toe against the Adversary and not budge.

“circumcise them and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses” – in **verse 1** it says, “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses” – these mean the same thing – it means; according to all the laws that were laid down by Moses. You always have to remember that the law of Moses was given for the hardness of the hearts of the people. The hardness of the hearts of the people made it necessary for the law. If you have no hardness of heart; you just have the love of God, you don’t need the law, because that spiritual law is much bigger than any hardness-of-heart law.

I wish I knew where **verse 5** occurred. I do not know where it occurred; whether it was out in front of the temple area or in a back alley, but it was a hot time were ever it occurred, for then the elders and the apostles came together.

#### **Acts 15:6**

“apostles and elders” – means - top brass and men of experience

“matter” – *logos* - **John 1:1** “In the beginning was the *logos* – How you can tear them apart on their teaching that Jesus is God in **John 1:1**, is unbelievable; just by the usage of the word “*logos*.” Here, the word “*logos*” means, “the considering of the Word.” They came together to figure out if the Word of God today was circumcision, keeping the law of Moses, or whether the Word of God wasn’t. It was deeper than just talking about the stuff because it was a matter of the integrity of the Word that was at stake. The first Jerusalem council was on the integrity and accuracy of the Word.

#### **Acts 15:7**

“disputing” – same word as “disputation” used in **verse 2** - “questioning” There was much questioning; I see them going back into the law of Moses, reading it, looking it over and checking it out, seeing how God is moving today among the Gentiles; much questioning among the apostles and the elders. I do not believe that this was settled in a five-hour sitting. I feel, in my heart, that they got together, sat all day, started again next morning and sometime they got around to Peter in **verse 7**.

“rose up” – I did not check the word used here – “Peter rose up” – maybe he stood up and yelled loudly. I hope so. (Someone says, “It’s the same word as **verse 5** without the prefix, “*ek*.”) “Peter arose” – “Peter stood up”

They got into the subject of, “How was this all done, Paul, Barnabas, and the rest of you? How was it accomplished?” **Verse 8** already gives me a clue to what they did in **verse 7**, because Peter is now

going to lay stuff on them. The proof that Barnabas and Paul brought with them was that these Gentiles were speaking in tongues and abundantly sharing. These are the disputings that came up; the questionings: “Do they speak in tongues? Are they abundantly sharing? Are they still offering food to idols every night?” That was the questioning line of that verse.

“men and brethren” - You and I, today would say, “Ladies and gentlemen.” - a greeting, an opening

“a good while ago” - Walter taught you, I believe, it was fourteen years or more; the teaching from **Galatians 2**. Someone responds and quotes **Galatians 2:1**:

Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with *me* also.

The minimum you can come up with is thirteen, that’s for sure. If this is the same Jerusalem Council as in Galatians, as I believe it is, there are at least fourteen years that have gone by since the “good while” of **verse 7**.

“the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word” - You’ll remember that was the Cornelius record he’s talking about. Peter is bringing it up in front of the whole body.

“word” – *logos* – same as the word for “matter” in **verse 6**

“gospel” - good news – You can have a lot of different kinds of good news. In football it’s good news if your team won. This is the *logos* of the good news of the Word going to the Gentiles, and that through that Word that Peter brought, the Gentiles should believe.

### **Acts 15:8**

“God, Which knoweth the hearts” – literally translated – “God, the heart searcher”

“bare them witness” - How did God bare them witness? - For they spoke in tongues at the house-hold of Cornelius.

“giving them the Holy Ghost” - That’s how God bore them witness; giving them the *pneuma* the *hagion*.

“as He *did* unto us” - in **Acts 2:4** it was, “they spoke with tongues.” Now He gave the Gentiles the same. This again reiterates the greatness of speaking in tongues. It is the only proof in the senses world of the internal reality and presence of Christ in you, the hope of glory; that you have been converted; turned to the true God. It’s the only witness.

### **Acts 15:9**

“put no difference” – literally translated – “without discrimination”

“between us and them” - There is no discrimination between them, the Gentiles, and us, the born-again, Jewish by religion, believers. For now, both manifest speaking in tongues. The speaking in tongues is a million times bigger than a little cutting of the flesh of circumcision. Any stupid fool could get circumcised but you must be born again; turned to God, in order to speak in tongues.

“purifying” - *katharizō* – transliterated cathartic in English. A cathartic is taken by an individual for inner cleansing, usually for the alimentary canal. A cathartic is supposed to totally cleanse. No discrimination between them and us because they have had this cathartic; this spiritual purifying.

Cathartic in its basic meaning is; completely, completely, completely changed; cleansed. It is the word that is used in **Luke 17:17** (Dr. says **Matthew 8:3**, which also uses this same word as “cleansed”) about the lepers being “cleansed”, when it said, “were there not ten [all] cleansed?”

This same word is used in **Acts 10:15**, where God told Peter, so plainly about the household of Cornelius, “That which I have cleansed don’t you call uncommon.” Isn’t it significant that Peter uses that word here? Peter uses it significantly because; “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (**II Peter 1:21b**.) He used the same word here that God used when He had him up on the housetop and “beat his brains in.” He said to Peter, “Don’t you ever call that unclean, that I have purified.”

Look what people are doing even today; “If you haven’t been water baptized you’re not saved.” “Don’t you ever say I’m not saved. That which God has purified is pure.” That’s why **I John** talks about being pure as he is pure. In **I John 1:7** it talks about the blood of Jesus Christ purifying us. In **I John 1:9** the same word is used when it says “cleansed” us from all sin.

#### **Ephesians 5:26:**

That He [God through Jesus Christ] might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

The word “sanctify” means to set apart. Before you are born again, you are headed one way. Then you get born again, you make a complete turning; you’re converted. Conversion is a complete turn around from death unto life; sanctified; set apart. When He sanctifies, He cleanses. Otherwise you could not have the righteousness of God, the justification and the other rights. He so cleansed you that He put Christ in you, who is the greatest cathartic in the whole world, to make you clean clear through. That newness of life has no imperfection in it because it’s Christ in you.

The Puritans were nicknamed Cathari. They called the puritans Catharis.

#### **Acts 15:10**

“therefore” - because these Gentiles have been cleansed, they speak in tongues, they abundantly share, they aren’t offering to idols.

“why tempt ye God” – This is difficult because it say’s God can’t be tempted in **James 1:13** The word “tempt” means “to try”, “to put to the test.” To tempt God, in this verse, means to irritate God’s people. When I irritate you, god’s people, by wanting to put something on you that God didn’t put on you, nor did He command it, then I am “tempting God.” It. is the Oriental, eastern culture, way of saying, “Don’t try; don’t put to the test; to irritate God’s people.”

I would perhaps translate this as: “Now therefore, why put something on some believers that God has not and does not require.”

“a yoke” - is “a holding in” – that’s why a yoke was put on an oxen; to hold him in so he couldn’t run all “kitty-wompus.” Peter is saying, “Why do you want to put a yoke on some believers that God has not, and does not, require?”

“which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” – Literally - “which neither our fathers nor we had strength to carry or endure.”

### **Acts 15:11**

“to believe” – is first of all to have your mind renewed. Secondly it is to act on that renewal. Peter got his mind renewed at the household of Cornelius. I can just see the years that went by as Peter kept recalling and how he grew.

“grace” - They were saying, “Law of circumcision; law of Moses.” Peter had the audacity to stand in front of that group and make this declaration.

“through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ” – by the grace of the Lord Jesus - “Christ” is deleted. It does not appear in the text. “If thou will confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus” – that’s what he’s talking about. Grace is unmerited. Who of us ever deserved eternal life? Nobody! If we worked one little bit for it, it would not be grace. The reason we can’t work for it is we’re dead. When you’re dead, you can’t work. Then it has to be by grace.

“saved” – *sōzō* – literally - made sound; made whole

“we shall be saved” - He says “we,” and everyone knows he is Jewish, and he says “We shall be saved” Talk about techniques of psychology, look at that. Had he turned it around and said, “Through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ you are saved, we shall be too.” It would have been, psychologically, much weaker.

“even as they” - In other words, Peter was saying, “We Jews didn’t deserve anything and He saved us and if He saved us, there’s no reason why He can’t save them.” The word “even” is like “according.” A literal translation of “even as they” is “according to the way in which they [the Gentiles] all will be saved.”

### **Acts 15:12**

Those words of Peter are the last words of Peter recorded in the book of Acts. In this next verse, 12, is that word “multitude” and that’s an electrifying word because there is one usage of that word, translated “multitude here, that can be translated “fullness.” If you had five thousand people, you’d have a multitude but if I was just talking about you, and we had the first Jerusalem council here, this would be the fullness of all the elders and the apostles together. That’s its usage in the next verse.