

# \* ACTS

The Continuing Work of Jesus

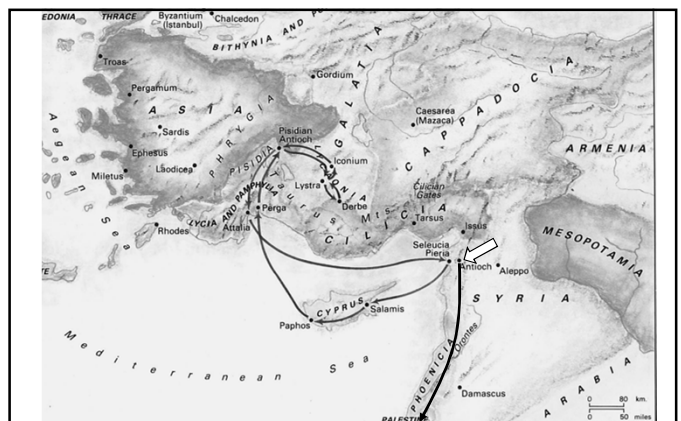
## \* Acts 15: The Jerusalem Council

Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." <sup>2</sup> And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. <sup>4</sup> When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. <sup>5</sup> But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

<sup>6</sup> The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. <sup>7</sup> After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. <sup>8</sup> And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; <sup>9</sup> and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. <sup>10</sup> Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? <sup>11</sup> But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

(Acts 15:1-11)

## Contending for the Gospel



## Contending for the Gospel

Why go to Jerusalem?

- the men came from Jerusalem – is this the teaching of the church and the apostles?
- the significance of the issue necessitated a clarifying, definitive statement for the whole church

## Contending for the Gospel

Q: What was the issue at stake?

- What is required for salvation? What is necessary to be included in the redeemed people of God?

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*“the issue is not merely post-conversion behavior but what constitutes true conversion in the first place” (S.G. Wilson)*

## Contending for the Gospel

1. Answer of the Judaizers

- faith in Jesus *and* submission to the Law of Moses beginning with circumcision
- Gentiles must believe in Jesus and become Jewish proselytes in order to be saved

## Contending for the Gospel

2. Testimony of Peter

- God gave the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles
- God cleansed their hearts by faith alone
- God Himself set aside the Mosaic regulations
- the Law was never able to save anyone

## Contending for the Gospel

➤ Implications

1. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ
2. Any requirement of ‘law-keeping’ in addition to faith in Christ is not the gospel and serves to nullify the grace of God

<sup>2</sup> Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. <sup>3</sup> And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. <sup>4</sup> You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

(Galatians 5:2-4)