



Acts Book Study Chapters 15-16
Sunday July 21, 2024

ACTS CHAPTER FIFTEEN (49 AD)

The Jerusalem Council (vs 1-21)

The apostle Paul records an interesting incident in Galatians 2:11-14:

Galatians 2:11-14

11 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;

12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.

13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

While there is no way to verify when this incident happened, we can make an intelligent guess, that this may have happened after Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch after their first missionary journey about AD 48. Peter was visiting Antioch, and although Peter knew that the Gospel was for the Gentiles, there was this tension between "how do I relate to Gentile believers as a Jew?" and "how do I relate to Gentile believers as a Christian?" Things were still not very clear in most people's minds. Even the apostle Peter, and Barnabas struggled with this.

Up until recently the Gospel was proclaimed to Jews. Jews had become followers of the Way. They continued with their Jewish tradition, worshipped as always in the Synagogues, and followed the Lord Jesus as Savior. After Peter's visit to the house of Cornelius things began to change. Non-Jewish people were embracing faith in Jesus Christ. Gentiles and Jews were part of the same community of faith, and yet many things were unclear. How could a Jew eat a meal with a Gentile, although both were followers of Christ? Could a Jew go to the home of a Gentile, or invite a Gentile to his home, even though they were both followers of Jesus Christ? There was a clash of theology (spiritual understanding), traditions and cultures. Some of the Jewish brethren began insisting and teaching that the Gentile Christians had to also embrace Jewish



tradition including being circumcised and following other Jewish customs. Was this correct?

The doctrinal problem: *Should Gentile believers in Jesus Christ be circumcised and keep the law of Moses and follow the practices of Judaism?*

The year was 49 AD, under two decades since the Church had been born. Tensions were rising.

The apostles and elders at Jerusalem, met with Paul, Barnabas and others from Antioch. Paul and Barnabas brought Titus with them (Galatians 2:1-3) to this meeting in Jerusalem. Titus was Greek (a Gentile) and a believer in Jesus Christ.

This is often referred to as the Jerusalem Council, a first of its kind meeting of Christian leaders to discuss and find a solution to a doctrinal matter. This also sets for us a good example on how leadership should discuss, debate and work together on spiritual matters/issues.

Open discussion (vs 6-7)

It began with people freely sharing their thoughts: *"Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute..."* (vs 6-7)

Peter (vs 7-11)

After a time of free discussion Peter spoke up. Peter points back to what He saw God do in opening the door to the Gentiles and pouring out the Holy Spirit on them. His conclusion is clear that the Church must not put a yoke on the neck of these Gentile disciples, instead believe that we will all (Jews and Gentiles) be saved by grace: *"But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."* (vs 11)

Barnabas and Paul (vs 12)

Barnabas and Paul, who had just completed their first missionary journey testified, reporting all the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through the preaching of the Gospel.

James (vs 13-21)

James, the current leader of the Church in Jerusalem, had the final closing statement and decision. James referenced Peter's testimony. James then pointed to Scripture (Amos 9:11-12), and then made a clear decision (vs 19) and action step to write it and send it to the churches (vs 20). **A great example for decision making. Recognize the**



value of credible testimony. Always point to the written Scriptures that undergird the decision. Make a clear and firm decision. State it clearly and concisely. Write it out and share it with everyone.

Everyone agreed – apostles, elders, whole church (vs 22)

The apostles and elders agreed. It must have then been communicated to the church community, and everyone came to agreement.

A Written Decision (vs 22-29)

With the decision made, the statement was written and sent across to the churches in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia (South-Eastern part of modern-day Turkey). Judas and Silas prophets from the Jerusalem church, along with Barnabas and Paul, carried this statement back to Antioch.

It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us (vs 28)

This decision, though made through a process of debate, deliberation, discussion and serious thought, in the end, was attributed to the Holy Spirit and to the apostles, elders and brethren. God and men working together. Powerful!

A wonderful picture on how decisions can be made by the leadership of the church.

Team Ministry At Antioch (vs 30-35)

When the letter was read to the church at Antioch, people celebrated. They rejoiced. Were encouraged. Judas and Silas, prophets from Jerusalem, stayed on with Paul and Barnabas at Antioch, ministering to the believers there.

Writing Of The First Epistles: James, Galatians

The first New Testament book to be written was the epistle of James. Written about this time around 45-49 AD. We can now understand the emphasis in James on faith, and the call to demonstrate this faith through good works.

Paul's epistle to the Galatians may have also been written around this time after his first missionary journey (or some put it as during his third missionary journey) 48-55 AD. Galatians is perhaps the clearest statement on the Christian life being a walk in the Spirit, apart from the Law.

The Great Fall Out: Paul and Barnabas Over John Mark (vs 36-41)

As Paul and Barnabas decided to go on a second journey to visit the churches they had established on their first journey, there was an intense disagreement over John Mark.



Leaders are mere men and have their strengths and weaknesses.
Neither Barnabas nor Paul would concede and give in to the other.

Wonder how this fall-out would have affected the church in Antioch? Verse 40 seems to indicate that despite this dispute, the church in Antioch prayed and sent Paul and Silas, backing them wholeheartedly.

Barnabas and John Mark leave to Cyprus. We no longer hear of Barnabas. Barnabas must have nurtured John Mark who later made a significant contribution writing the Gospel of Mark. It is traditionally believed that Barnabas and Mark evangelized various parts of Cyprus and established churches there. According to early Christian tradition, Barnabas was martyred in Cyprus.

Paul and Silas travel through Syria.

John Mark

John Mark is first introduced in Acts 12:12, as the son of Mary, a woman whose house in Jerusalem served as a meeting place for early Christians. He is also the cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10). In Acts 12:25, Mark accompanies Barnabas and Saul (Paul) when they return from Jerusalem to Antioch. Mark joins Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey as their assistant (Acts 13:5). However, he leaves them and returns to Jerusalem early in the journey (Acts 13:13). The reason for his departure is not specified, but it leads to tension later. When Paul and Barnabas plan their second missionary journey, Barnabas wants to take Mark along, but Paul disagrees because of Mark's earlier departure (Acts 15:37-38). This disagreement leads to Paul and Barnabas parting ways: Barnabas takes Mark to Cyprus, while Paul chooses Silas as his new companion (Acts 15:39-40).

Despite their earlier conflict, Paul mentions Mark positively in his later letters, indicating that Mark is useful to him in ministry (Colossians 4:10, Philemon 1:24, and 2 Timothy 4:11). Mark may have matured and proven himself over time, and Paul recognized what Mark was capable of.

Mark is also associated with Peter. In 1 Peter 5:13, Peter refers to Mark as his "son," suggesting a close relationship, possibly indicating that Mark served as Peter's companion and interpreter. Later, Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark, based on Peter's accounts of Jesus' life and ministry. According to various early Christian writings, Mark is believed to have founded the church in Alexandria, Egypt, and served there as its first bishop.



ACTS CHAPTER SIXTEEN (49-52 AD)

Acts 16 records the second missionary journey of Paul (49-52 AD) as he travelled with Silas from Antioch. Travelling on land through Syria and Cilicia, they strengthened the churches there and then arrived at the tri-cities of Derbe, Lystra and Iconium.

Derbe and Lystra: Enter Timothy (vs 1-5)



(Adapted from biblestudy.org)

We hear about a young man Timothy for the first time in Acts 16. It is possible that his grandmother Lois, his mother Eunice and Timothy have come to faith in Jesus, when Barnabas and Paul had come to their cities during their first missionary journey. Timothy has grown in the faith and has had a good report among the community. Paul recognizes God's plan and purpose for Timothy and invites him to join his missionary team. Timothy is ready. Timothy was likely around 18-20 years old when Paul asked him to join him. Timothy's father is Greek, while his mother is Jewish. This means that Timothy himself was not circumcised according to Jewish tradition.

Paul circumcised Timothy! The Council in Jerusalem had just got over. Paul, along with all the others had shared a written statement that Gentiles need not be circumcised or follow Jewish tradition. And Paul, seems to do exactly the opposite. He has Timothy circumcised. *"Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised*



him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek." (vs 3) Paul did not have Titus, a Gentile to be circumcised. But in this case, Timothy, a half-Jew, Paul had him circumcised. Our inference is that he did so for the sake of the Jews whom they intended to reach with the Gospel, so that as a circumcised Jew Timothy could enter and minister in the synagogues. **This was a strategic move, rather than one out of legalism to keep the Law of Moses, which Paul himself knew was not a requirement for salvation through Christ.**

In the tri-city area Paul and Silas delivered the statement issued at the Jerusalem Council (vs 4). The churches in Galatia were strengthened and continued growing.

Asia – Not Yet! (vs 6-8)

After their ministry in Galatia, Paul and his team wanted to minister in Asia and the neighboring areas, but the Holy Spirit did not permit them to do so.

"...they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia." (vs 6)

"...they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them." (vs 7)

How did the Holy Spirit tell them not to go Asia, Mysia and Bithynia?

Why did the Holy Spirit tell them not to go into these regions at this time?

These are interesting questions to consider. The key lesson for us is that we must be attentive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, whether through the inner witness, a vision, a dream or a prophetic word. As a ministry team we should remain yielded to the directives of the Holy Spirit in the work we do.

What we do see is that during his third missionary journey all of Asia is powerfully affected. Much of this happened without Paul travelling to Asia. It took place through people he trained and ministered to out of Ephesus. We will see this later. God knows the right time for harvest and guides us on how to reach regions with the Gospel.

Paul and his team moved east and came to the port city of Troas (vs 8).

The Macedonian Call (vs 9-10)

The Holy Spirit now speaks to Paul in a vision, directing them to Macedonia.

Luke on board

Vs 10, Luke introduces the word "we" indicating he joined Paul's missionary team at Troas and travelled with them from here. The team now consisted of Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke.



They crossed the Aegean sea and made their way to the city of Philippi.



Philippi (vs 11-40)

Philippi was originally a small town known as Crenides. It was re-founded and renamed as Philippi by Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, in 356 BC. Under Macedonian (Greek empire) rule, Philippi became an important and prosperous city. In about 42 BC Philippi was established as a Roman colony. As a Roman colony, Philippi was granted privileges such as Roman citizenship for its inhabitants, exemption from certain taxes, and the right to follow Roman law. Veterans of the Roman legions were settled there, bolstering the city's Roman character. Philippi was the first city in Europe where Paul established a Christian community.

Some key highlights from their time of ministry here:

Lydia – The Lord Opened Her Heart (vs 14)

Interestingly, God opened the heart of a businesswoman, to be the first believer in Jesus Christ in Europe, through the ministry of Paul's missionary team.

A spirit of Divination (vs 16-23)

A powerful deliverance took place with a young girl being set free from a spirit of witchcraft. This upset a lot of people who were making money out of their use of this woman and fortune-telling. They had Paul and Silas arrested and put in jail.



Praying and Singing Hymns At Midnight (vs 24-25)

Acts 16:25

But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

What a lesson for us! To pray and sing to God in the middle of a prison in the midnight hour!

Every Door Opened, Every Chain Loosed!

Acts 16:26

Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately **all the doors were opened and **everyone's chains** were loosed.**

God moved in a supernatural way. An unusual miracle.

The jailor and his family got saved and were baptized! (vs 27-34)

Roman Citizenship!

Philippi, being a Roman colony, had special privileges for Roman citizens. Paul invoked his Roman citizenship after being beaten and imprisoned without a trial in Philippi, leading to an apology from the magistrates.

SUMMARY

GOSPEL AND SALVATION CALL

SUPERNATURAL MINISTRY TIME

Minister as the Spirit leads



Acts – Book Study – Chapters 15-16
Sermon Notes, Sermon Outline and Small Group Study Guide



Acts Book Study Chapters 15-16
Sunday July 21, 2024

This is a simple guide for use in Life Group discussions. Our objective is to focus on the application of the Sunday sermon - how each one is becoming a doer of the Word and building their life on God's Holy Word. The Life Group meeting would normally last for 2 hours. Each Life Group would have up to 12-15 people.

Preparation

To prepare for the Life Group meeting, you can listen to the Sermon Key Points (sermon summary in five minutes) or the full-length Sunday sermon. You can also review the Sunday Sermon notes. All these are available in the "All Peoples Church Bangalore" mobile App or online at our [sermons page](#). Pray for the Life Group meeting and invite the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Welcome

The Life Group meeting may commence with a time of prayer, worship, and a fun activity.

LISTEN to God's Word

Read the following Scripture references: *Please request Life group members to read Acts 15-16, before the Life Group Meeting. This can help save time.*

INVESTIGATE God's Word Together

Please discuss a few of these together, giving time for people to share their insights. We encourage each one individually to make notes of their personal learning during the Group discussion.

1, Review how the Jerusalem Council went about arriving at their decision (Acts 15:6-23) and what key insights can we take in collaborative decision making for the purposes of God's Kingdom.

2, Consider the fallout between Barnabas and Paul over John Mark (Acts 15:36-41). What could have been the reasons for such an intense dispute? How could this have



affected the church in Antioch, and the church in Jerusalem? How could this have been handled differently/in a better manner by Barnabas and Paul?

3, Paul got Timothy to join his team (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy must have been 18-20 years old at this time. Discuss the importance of nurturing young people for the call and purpose of God for their lives and provide them the opportunity to come alongside and learn hands-on, from those doing the work of the ministry?

4, Discuss how the Holy Spirit directed Paul and his team away from Asia and into Europe (Acts 16:6-10) during their second missionary journey. How can we be sensitive to the Holy Spirit in how we position ourselves so that God's work can be carried out through us?

5, God used a businesswoman, Lydia, in Philippi to help establish the church there. Discuss how believers in business/professionals can be used by God to further the work of the Gospel in today's world.

If time permits, each one can take a few (3 minutes max) to share one or two key learning and how they see themselves applying it into their specific life situations. Encourage each one to participate and share.

FELLOWSHIP by sharing your life and spiritual journey

Each one takes a few (3 minutes max) to share anything from their walk with God, something God has been teaching them, a testimony of answered prayer or a specific challenge that they would like prayer for. Encourage each one to participate and share.

ENCOURAGE each other by praying and ministering to one another

Get into small groups of two or three and take turns to thank God and pray for each other in the light of what was learnt today. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Expect the gifts of the Holy Spirit to flow bringing healing, releasing miracles, prophecy, etc.

Regroup and pray together for:

1, families to be protected and strengthened

2, a mighty outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on us as a church and through us to bless many others in our city and nation. Nothing but a mighty work of God's Spirit can change our city and nation.

3, for the BUILD TO IMPACT project - for all details to go well as we plan and build our Bible college and church facilities to serve the Lord and people.

Close by thanking God together.



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USEFUL RESOURCES



Watch our online Sunday Church service live stream every Sunday at 10:30am (Indian Time, GMT+5:30). Spirit filled, anointed worship, Word and ministry for healing, miracles, and deliverance.

YOUTUBE: <https://youtube.com/allpeopleschurchbangalore>

WEBSITE: <https://apcwo.org/live>

Our other websites and free resources:

CHURCH: <https://apcwo.org>

FREE SERMONS: <https://apcwo.org/resources/sermons>

FREE BOOKS: <https://apcwo.org/books/english>

DAILY DEVOTIONALS: <https://apcwo.org/resources/daily-devotional>

JESUS CHRIST: <https://examiningjesus.com>

BIBLE COLLEGE: <https://apcbiblecollege.org>

E-LEARNING: <https://apcbiblecollege.org/elearn>

WEEKEND SCHOOLS: <https://apcwo.org/ministries/weekend-schools>

COUNSELING: <https://chrysalislife.org>

MUSIC: <https://apcmusic.org>

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SERMON OUTLINE

The book of Acts records the first 40 years of the Early Church. This is a book study of the Acts of the apostles, or more correctly, the acts of the Holy Spirit through the early believers. As we study the book of Acts there are two compelling perspectives that we develop: (A) the Church's DNA – what a Spirit filled church would look like and (B) how the Church would go about fulfilling the Great Commission empowered by the Holy Spirit. We glean spiritual and practical insights from each chapter and share ways we can apply these in our lives. In this sermon we cover Acts chapters 15-16. We learn how the Jerusalem Council went about arriving at their decision and key insights can we take in collaborative decision making for the purposes of God's Kingdom. We also consider the fallout between Barnabas and Paul over John Mark. We follow Paul and his team on their second missionary journey. We see how Paul got Timothy to join his team. Timothy must have been 18-20 years old at this time. We learn how the Holy Spirit directed Paul and his team away from Asia and into Europe. We also see how God used a businesswoman, Lydia, in Philippi to help establish the church there.



Acts – Book Study – Chapters 15-16 Sermon Notes, Sermon Outline and Small Group Study Guide

KEYWORDS

Acts of the apostles, book study of Acts, Gospel preaching, Spirit filled church community, sermons, sermon notes, sermon outline, free sermon notes, free sermon outlines, Bible study resources

REFERENCES/CITATIONS

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