



THEY CAME TOGETHER

Acts 15 and the first Christian debate

ACTS 15:1-5

- Some will always feel like it is their job to serve as quasi-apostles, ever in-the-know and involved in the affairs of area churches. We cannot judge their motives, but the effect can be rather disruptive..
- Our only hope is that an appeal to apostolic authority (and a respect for church autonomy) will check the perceived need to regulate and dictate in areas of confusion, freedom, or silence.

A scenic view of a medieval village built on a cliffside, with a large text overlay. The village features numerous stone buildings with arched windows and a prominent domed structure. The foreground is a rocky, light-colored slope. In the background, there are rugged, layered mountains under a blue sky with light clouds.

“IT IS NECESSARY”

For whose sake? Yours or theirs?

ACTS 15:6-11

- “Much debate” – God allows us to work some things out among ourselves. Healthy debate is good because it sharpens us and helps us clarify what we really believe.
- Peter appeals to precedent, indicating that God had already answered this question when He not only granted the Spirit to Cornelius but also cleansed his heart in the exact same way as any Jewish convert (Gal. 3:23-29, Rom. 3:21ff).

ACTS 15:12-21

- “Kept silent” – Do we have enough respect for each other to listen, and not just talk over the one with whom we disagree? Remember James 1:19-20, Proverbs 18:2, 4, 6-7, 17:27.
- The ones directly involved in the issue and those most qualified to comment are the only ones contributing to the debate.
- The fact of God’s grace to the Gentiles is established in scripture. On that point, everybody must agree.



WHY THESE REQUIREMENTS?

Calling for circumcision and Law-keeping was a move that only benefited those who were concerned with “fitting in”. The requirements described by James were intended to promote spiritual purity. They touched the soul through lifestyle change, not empty rituals or physical qualifications.

THE LETTER

- The leadership in Jerusalem takes responsibility for its members who cause dissension. This is admirable and provides a model for today.
- “One mind” – This was not decided by a majority vote, but was unanimous after consulting scripture.
- “The Holy Spirit” – Inspired men came to an inspired conclusion, and others were expected to receive it that way (1 Thess. 2:13).
- The decision prompted joy and relief.