



THEY CAME TOGETHER

Part Two



WHY THIS DEBATE?

Some of the Jewish converts to Christ were still convinced that key requirements of the Law were to be imposed on Gentile converts. Paul and Barnabas, who had enjoyed much success working with Gentiles, opposed this notion as unnecessary and burdensome. It was decided that the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem should be consulted so as to forever remove any confusion. God allows the debate to unfold naturally.

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 (Amos 9:11-12, Isaiah 11:10, 42:1, 49:6). On that point, everybody must agree.



ACTS 15:19

“Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles.”

TROUBLING THEM

- Imposing a dress code
- Unreasonable expectations about maturity
- Assigning responsibilities too soon
- Treating every moral deficiency like a scandal
- Expecting immediate doctrinal agreement
- Even when it comes to issues that are not morally neutral, patience and prioritizing will reap spiritual rewards. This does not mean we “turn a blind eye” or express approval, though.



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.