

## The Way of the Early Church, Part 8: The Jerusalem Council

Remember, small groups are primarily for growing closer relationships with other believers. We can learn wonderful things in this environment but keep relationships first.

- Make sure everyone knows each other's names. Have everyone share a little about themselves and how life is going right now.
- **The Way of the Early Church**
  - In this series we unlock several powerful eternal principles in order to see God do mighty things!
- **This Week: The Jerusalem Council (or The Birth of the New Covenant!)**
- With Cornelius and Peter we saw the unchosen become chosen!
- Now the question of how they were going to handle that comes up.
  - Basic question: Do the gentile believers need to convert to Judaism in order to become Christians and be saved?
- **Acts 15:1-6** The debate begins.
  - Why would the Pharisees think this? What would a modern application of this be?
  - It's one thing to include the gentiles, it is a whole nother thing to change how we serve God!
- Peter addresses the Council. **Acts 15:7-11**
  - Huge statement: Salvation by grace, not by following the law!!
- Paul and Barnabas' turn. **Acts 15:12**
- Then James speaks and seems to have the final word. **Acts 15:13-19**
- This idea was accepted by the group so they wrote a letter. **Acts 15:22-29**
  - Very nice. But, kind of a strange 4 Commandments...don't you think?
- How do we understand all of this?
  - So, the gentiles could murder people, right? 'Cause that's not on the list! NO, of course not.
  - Here is the idea: The New Covenant goes from following religious rules to simply learning God's ways. Now we start to "get it."
- The shortest explanations of this are **Romans 7:6 and Hebrews 8:10. (Romans 8:1-17 for more)**
  - Not rules, but we just start to "get it." That is, we follow the Holy Spirit!
  - Are there things that you just "get?" Computers, cars, fashion, music, etc.?
    - Have you met people who just don't "get" those things? Umm, YES!
    - Does giving them a list of rules make them "get it?" NO!! Same with God stuff!
  - The promise of the New Covenant is that when anyone truly seeks God they will start to "get it!"
    - Have you ever wondered why some people are so excited to pray, to serve, to worship, to give, etc.? It's because they get it!! You can too!!
- Problem: Most people seem to interpret Christianity from a Law perspective rather than a Spirit perspective.
  - Did you do that with the list of 4 things?
  - Two things that go away under the New Covenant: technicalities and loopholes! Why?
  - Rule focus can stop people from actually trying to get it! Has that ever happened to you?
  - Cheap Grace is still just seeing things from a law perspective! Someone explain that...
  - Even people who "get it" can learn from others and get it more!
  - Following rules that you don't understand is a hassle. But, when you "get it" its fun and you don't realize it but you end up following the rules! Has that ever happened to you?
- This problem often comes up when people talk about salvation. Ex: **Acts 15:1 vs Acts 15:11** from above.
  - Often people will start getting rule or law oriented when discussing how to be saved.
    - First thing: It is NOT by a technicality you have been saved, through theological gymnastics! No technicalities or loopholes. You can't reject God but go to Heaven on a technicality.
  - Let's look at some salvation scriptures and try to "get it." Discuss the following:
    - **Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 10:9-10, Romans 2:6-8, 2 Thessalonians 2:13**
  - Thomas was willing to say what others were thinking. **John 14:1-6**
    - Jesus is the way. Follow him! Look how simple Jesus makes this! Bottom line, salvation is there for you. You don't need to be afraid.
- Pray for each other before you finish up!