

In fact there are a lot of things that we don't really know concerning the Apostle Paul that we would like to know. And the reason that we don't know these things is because the Holy Ghost didn't want us to know certain things, or we would have been told in scripture. Some of the things that we don't know for sure about the Apostle Paul is when he went to Illyricum, but ROMANS 15:19 tells us that he went there, stating: *Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.* Some think that Paul may have visited Illyricum during this "long time" mentioned in ACTS 14:28. Scripture doesn't say, so we can't say.

Paul's third visit back to Jerusalem after being Saved

We come to ACTS 15. Brother Copley correctly notes that "there is scarcely a more important portion of Scripture than this chapter. The only general council recorded in the New Testament met to settle questions which have disturbed the peace of saints in this age. If the teachings of that council were really believed and practiced, there would be no need of many convocations today." (End of quote from Brother Copley).

Understanding the teaching of ACTS 15 really takes the guidance of the Holy Ghost. In this chapter we truly find the difference between "grace" and "legality."

Three authors of scripture use the phrase "grace of God" in their writings: Luke, Paul and Peter. Luke learned the teaching of the "grace of God" from the Apostle Paul himself. Peter learned the teaching of the "grace of God" from the Lord Himself, from the Holy Ghost, and also from the Apostle Paul himself, of whom Peter even wrote: *"...even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood,..."* {2 PETER 3:15 & 16}. The Apostle Paul learned the teaching of the "grace of God" by "the revelation of Jesus Christ" as he noted in GALATIANS 1:12.

Before we move on let's define as best we can "legality," and "grace." "Legality" can be summed up by noting that it is a term applied to those who follow some kind of works, usually the works of the law of Moses. The law of Moses was given only to the children of Israel to follow, which is to say the law of Moses was only given to the Jews! Gentiles have no business trying to follow the law of Moses. If ever a man could follow every letter of the law it was Saul of Tarsus. Paul wrote about himself concerning the law this way in PHILIPPIANS 3:4-6: *Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.* Note that Paul said that concerning touching the righteousness which is in the law he was blameless. Paul spends several chapters explaining facts concerning the law. In ROMANS 3:19 & 20 we read: *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.* Often times in his writing Paul references the law of Moses by calling it "the letter." Saul of Tarsus knew and followed every letter of the law, but all this ever did for him was to make him chiefest of sinners, as he noted in 1 TIMOTHY 1:15. In 2 CORINTHIANS 3:6 Paul notes that the law (the letter) killeth, and he stated it like this: *Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.* And so we note that the legalist who follow some kind of works in order to be saved, or keep saved really frustrates the grace of God. Paul again wrote in GALATIANS 2:21 *I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

Now to define "grace." "Grace" is a gift of God. A gift that is freely given apart from any works a man can do. ROMANS 11:6 explains: *And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.* Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD GENESIS 6:8 tells us, and any person who ever got saved also found grace in the eyes of

the LORD. The Apostle Paul writes in EPHESIANS 2:8 & 9: *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. Again: And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.* (ROMANS 11:6).

So having somewhat defined the concepts of "legality," and "grace," we find the two on a collision course here in ACTS 15. To properly and fully understand ACTS 15, one must also be familiar with, and compare what is said in GALATIANS 2. These two chapters deal with the same events, but are written by two different people: Luke wrote ACTS, and Paul wrote GALATIANS. ACTS 15 and GALATIANS 2 cover the same time frame.

After the conclusion of Paul and Barnabas missionary journey in ACTS 14 they returned to Antioch, Syria, and we read in ACTS 14:28 *And there they abode long time with the disciples.* Next in ACTS 15:1 & 2 we read: *And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. 2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.* So we find that while Paul and Barnabas were once again at the church in Antioch, Syria that certain men, legalist, from Jerusalem visited the church at Antioch, Syria and began to teach their legality. They stated *"Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved."* In GALATIANS 2 we find further details of this journey, and that Paul and Barnabas took Titus (a Gentile) with them. GALATIANS 2:1 *Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.* (The "fourteen years after" references Paul's first visit to Jerusalem after he was saved; after he escaped Damascus by being let down by the wall in a basket. {See again ACTS 9:25 and 2 CORINTHIANS 11:32 & 33}.

This would be Paul's third visit back to Jerusalem after being saved, and as noted above in GALATIANS 2:1 this was fourteen years after his first visit to Jerusalem when he stayed with Peter fifteen days, (see GALATIANS 1:18). Kind of hidden in the background here is the fact that Paul now felt comfortable with the brethren at Jerusalem, and more importantly they had accepted him as the man of God he was, and not the former destroyer known as Saul of Tarsus.

Here is what precipitated this third visit of Paul's to Jerusalem after being saved. When certain Jews from Jerusalem arrived in Antioch, Syria and began to teach *"Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved,"* {ACTS 15:1} Paul and Barnabas both *"...had no small dissension and disputation with them."* {ACTS 15:2}. The term Paul uses in GALATIANS 2:4 to describe these certain Jews from Jerusalem is "false brethren." GALATIANS 2:4 *And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:...* "False brethren" means pretenders or fake brothers in Christ. These "false brethren" were not really Christians, but pretended to be believers in Christ Jesus. These "false brethren" were trying to bring the believers at Antioch into the bondage of law keeping. These "false brethren" from Judaea (Jerusalem) must have also indicated that this kind of teaching, *"Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved,"* was what was being taught in Jerusalem. Barnabas and Paul suspected that this also was not being taught in Jerusalem, at least by the apostles, and knowing full well that this was false doctrine we read in ACTS 15:2 that Paul and Barnabas both *"...had no small dissension and disputation with them."*

I want to discuss this *"dissension and disputation"* for a moment, for it gives us great insight into the character of the Apostle Paul, and his treatment of people, which he also wrote much about. After all we are studying about the life of the Apostle Paul, and any time we can get insight into his personal character it is well worth the time spent. Paul and Barnabas had by this time spent several years together, at the least three. They had in their journeys many *"dissension's and disputations"* with others along the way.

For example in ACTS 13:6-12, when Paul and Barnabas were in the early stages of their first missionary journey, they came upon a certain Jew who just happened to be a sorcerer and a false prophet. His name, or the name that he was using, was Barjesus, which means son of Jesus. Now we know that there are Sons of God, which all believers

are, but there are not sons of Jesus. There are co-heirs (joint heirs with Jesus), but not sons of Jesus, so we see the total false nature of Barjesus in just the mention of his name. Barjesus was influential with the deputy or governor of the country, whose name was Sergius Paulus. Sergius Paulus had heard of Paul and Barnabas being in his country and preaching the word of God. Sergius Paulus wanted to hear the word of God for himself from the mouths of Paul and Barnabas, and so in ACTS 13:7 we find Paul and Barnabas going before Sergius Paulus. Opposing Paul and Barnabas in their preaching to Sergius Paulus was this Jewish sorcerer Barjesus, who really got his influence from Satan. In earlier studies we found it rather common in scripture for the leaders to be influenced by the magicians (sorcerers), such as the Pharaoh of Moses day. While Paul and Barnabas were preaching to the deputy or governor of the country, Barjesus ...*withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith* (ACTS 13:8). ACTS 13:9 reveals the kind of heart attitude Paul had, and where he was coming from when he dealt with people. The first part of ACTS 13:9 states: *Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost,...* . The Holy Ghost really inspired this scripture. Here we find Saul of Tarsus name changed in scripture to Paul. The name "Saul" means "asked for" or "desired," coming from Israel's much desired and asked for first king Saul. Saul of Tarsus' Greek name was "Paul," which means "little." What the Holy Ghost draws our attention to, and wants us to see here is that the big and important desired leader of a man that Saul of Tarsus used to be, is now the humble little follower of Jesus Christ, who now is full of the Holy Ghost and yields to His divine leading. So we note that Paul listened to, and followed the leading of the Holy Ghost when he dealt with people. And don't you know he spoke with a powerful, yet loving voice as he yielded unto the leading of the Holy Ghost. This is how Paul spoke unto Barjesus: ACTS 13:9 *Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, 10 And said, C full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert (turn aside) the right ways of the Lord? 11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.* Thus ended the disputation with Barjesus, and as a result of this powerful demonstration of the Holy Ghost we read: ACTS 13:12 *Then the deputy, (Sergius Paulus)when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.* Satan had sent his best man available to resist the Apostles, but he was no match for the power of the Holy Ghost, and in the end Sergius Paulus got saved!

What we have just witnessed in this portion of scripture is how Paul dealt with people, and how he handled "*dissension's and disputations*" with people. Paul wrote a little about this in 1 CORINTHIANS 9. 1 CORINTHIANS 9:19 *For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. 20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. 22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.* We see that always Paul's objective in these "*dissension's and disputations*" was to win souls for Jesus Christ's' sake. Paul also knew that the secret to winning souls was to have the love of God in his heart, and it was with this thought in mind that he wrote 1 CORINTHIANS 13 (the love chapter).

Here are some more insight into the heart attitude of Paul found in the following scriptures he penned. ROMANS 12:9 *Let love be without dissimulation. (sincere love) Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; 11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; 12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; 13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. 14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.* EPHESIANS 4:29 *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away*

from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. 1 THESSALONIANS 4:9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. COLOSSIANS 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; 13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. 14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. It is with this kind of focus on the Lord that the Apostle Paul could sing at midnight praises unto the Lord, even though he was held fast in the stocks, (ACTS 16:24 & 25). We could say much more here, but for now I think we get the idea that the Apostle Paul had learned the love of God, and this Godly love manifested itself even when faced with *"dissension's and disputations."*

Having noted a little concerning Paul's heart attitude toward others we return to ACTS 13 and 14 where we find other instances when Paul and Barnabas had *"dissension's and disputations"* with unbelievers along their missionary journey. Note what is said in ACTS 13:44-49. ACTS 13:44 *And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.* 45 *But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.* 46 *Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.* 47 *For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.* We know that Paul and Barnabas responded to this *"dissension and disputation"* in a loving manner, for the next couple of verses tells us: 48 *And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.* 49 *And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.* As you read on in ACTS 13 & 14 you will also see many other instances where Paul and Barnabas were faced with *"dissension's and disputations"* especially from the unbelieving Jews, who also stirred up the Gentiles. {See ACTS 13:50; 14:2, 5, and 19}. The end result of ACTS 14:19 was that Paul was stoned and left for dead! How did Paul and Barnabas react to these *"dissension's and disputations?"* After being raised from the dead we find Paul preaching the gospel again in all of the very same cities where he had the previous *"dissension's and disputations."* To those who became believers under his ministry Paul exhorted ...*them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.* (ACTS 14:22).

This brings us back to ACTS 15:2 where we once again find Paul and Barnabas back in their home church of Antioch, Syria having a *"dissension and disputation"* with the false brethren from Jerusalem, who were teaching: *"Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved."* (ACTS 15:1). Paul writes in GALATIANS 2:5 how he and Barnabas reacted to this error that was being taught: *To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.* ACTS 15:2 tells us: *When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.*

Paul's version of this *"dissension and disputation"* in Antioch, Syria during this time reads like this: GALATIANS 2:1 *Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. ...3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: 4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: 5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*

So we see that this *"dissension and disputation"* didn't end in Antioch, Syria, but rather continued down unto Jerusalem where there was held a conference with the

apostles and elders. The non-circumcision of Titus was the main subject of the conference at Jerusalem that took place in ACTS 15. Titus is not mentioned by name in the book of ACTS, yet we know from scripture that he was a traveling companion with Paul on his later missionary journeys from Antioch, Syria. Titus was one of the disciples from the church at Antioch, Syria, and a convert of the Apostle Paul as noted in TITUS 1:4, which reads: *To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

Paul and Barnabas and Titus journey from Antioch, Syria down to Jerusalem was a long journey of about 320 miles, which took some time in Paul's day. For example if they could travel twenty miles a day, which would be a considerable amount if they traveled by foot, then this journey would take two and a half weeks. It probably took longer than that, but that point isn't really important. In ACTS 15:3 we find that they took this journey over land passing through the countries of Phenice and Samaria on their way to Jerusalem, Judaea.

ACTS 15:3 *And being brought on their way by the church, (at Antioch, Syria) they passed through Phenice and Samaria, (traveling on an overland route), declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.* We also see here in ACTS 15:3 Paul and Barnabas still preaching as they travelled *...declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.* Not once did they bring up the law of Moses as a condition of salvation.

After this fairly long overland journey we find Paul and Barnabas and Titus arriving at Jerusalem. ACTS 15:4 tells of their meeting with the church at Jerusalem. One part of this meeting is left out of the text in ACTS 15, but is brought forth by Paul in GALATIANS 2:2, and that is the fact apparently before Paul and Barnabas and Titus were received of the church there at Jerusalem, they had a private meeting with the apostles and elders of the church at Jerusalem. GALATIANS 2:2 Conybeare's translation of this verse reads: "At that time I went up in obedience to a revelation, and I communicated to the brethren in Jerusalem the Glad-tidings which I proclaimed among the Gentiles; but to the chief brethren I communicated it privately, lest perchance my labours, either past or present, might be fruitless." Hidden in the background some what here is the wisdom of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost revealed unto Paul that he and Barnabas and Titus should first have a private meeting with the apostles and elders, and tell them why they had come to Jerusalem in the first place on this visit. Obviously during this private meeting Paul and Barnabas went over facts of their missionary journey, and how God had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles (ACTS 14:27). Furthermore they discussed the false brethren from Jerusalem who had come to Antioch and taught "*Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.*" (ACTS 15:1). This was not the last private meeting Paul and Barnabas had with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem either. But as we move on further evidence will be brought forth on what else they discussed.

Next we read in ACTS 15:4 *And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.* All things that God had done with them included all the events of Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey, which is explained in ACTS 13 and 14. Hundred of Gentiles had been saved on this journey, and new churches were established everywhere they went. In ACTS 13:43 we find that Paul and Barnabas all along the way persuaded the believers, whether Jew or Gentile, *...to continue in the grace of God.* In other words we find that Paul and Barnabas taught and practiced the grace of God, and encouraged the believers to do the same. Not once did they bring up the law of Moses as a condition of salvation.

Paul and Barnabas' declaration on what had taken place in their ministry brought a quick reaction from the Jerusalem Pharisees which believed.

The fact that there was a sect of Pharisees which believed in Jerusalem is a wonderful point to consider in itself. Recall that the word Pharisee comes from an Aramaic word meaning "separated." This means that the Pharisee chose a manner of life different from the general Jewish public. They stood for the strict rigid observances of the letter and forms of the law of Moses. The Pharisee's were a society of men zealous for religion, who were further resolved not to eat any unclean thing,

choosing rather to die, that they might not be defiled. In choosing this kind of separated life style they felt like they were on a higher plane than everyone else. The Pharisee sought for distinction and praise of men for their perceived rituals and so called good works. Josephus notes that there were a little more than 6000 Pharisee's. The fact that any of these strict law abiding Pharisees could latch on to the concept that "*ye must be born again* " (JOHN 3:7) is marvelous to begin with. We know in JOHN 3 that Jesus tenderly spent a lot of time explaining to that Pharisee leader Nicodemus the facts of being born again. Jesus also told Nicodemus in JOHN 3:14-17: *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.* Literally millions of people have gotten saved, (been born again), by believing these words of everlasting life spoken by Jesus unto Nicodemus, and yet we are not told specifically if Nicodemus himself believed these words. However we do find Nicodemus' name five times in the book of JOHN. Five is the number of GRACE. That great Pharisee of Pharisees, Paul, wrote in EPHESIANS 2:8 & 9: *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.* What a hard concept this was for any Pharisee to grasp. So we marvel and praise God for the fact that there were Pharisees which believed.

We read of certain of these Pharisees which believed in ACTS 15:5. ACTS 15:5 *But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, (the Gentiles) and to command them to keep the law of Moses.* It is wonderful to note that there was a sect of Pharisees at Jerusalem who believed, but their doctrine was wrong, for they believed, and taught that it was needful to circumcise the Gentile converts and to direct them also to observe the law of Moses. Of course it was this same kind of teaching that had brought Paul and Barnabas and Titus to Jerusalem at this particular time.

So we read in ACTS 15:6 *And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.* Now as the apostles and elders of Jerusalem come together to consider this matter we must realize that the assembly at Jerusalem was totally void of Paul's doctrine. The teaching they of Jerusalem knew was the kingdom teaching of Jesus, and this same message was preached by the kingdom apostles. However in the years leading up to this conference in Jerusalem many things had happened away from Jerusalem concerning the Gentiles. We have already noted that Paul and Barnabas had a missionary journey in which untold multitudes of Gentiles had got saved, and even established grace assemblies. Those of Jerusalem also had some limited exposure to the fact that Gentiles too were granted repentance unto everlasting life. Their accepting this truth in Jerusalem didn't come easy, but once again the Holy Ghost made it very plain that God is no respecter of persons when it comes to salvation, and this truth was driven home to the Jews at Jerusalem especially because of Peter's ministry. Peter himself needed some Divine convincing that God is no respecter of persons when it comes to salvation, and this happened in ACTS 10. ACTS 10 records for us one of the high water marks of Peter's ministry concerning the Gentiles.

Before we review the highlights of ACTS 10, let's consider the importance and place Peter had in Jerusalem at the time of the conference found in ACTS 15.

Of the twelve kingdom apostles, Peter and John were the two prominent ones. Peter was probably older than John, thus his name gets mentioned first. We find Peter mentioned in more scriptures than John. On the day of Pentecost in ACTS 2 it was Peter standing up with the eleven (ACTS 2:14) who boldly spoke out, manifesting the power of the Holy Ghost, and three thousand souls were saved that day. In ACTS 3 when Peter and John came together unto the temple and found the lame man, it was Peter who spoke up and said: "*Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.*" {ACTS 3:6}. After that miracle it was again Peter who spoke to the multitude that had gathered wondering in amazement as to what had happened unto the lame man, and 5000 believed. In ACTS 4 when Peter and John

were brought before the Sanhedrin and asked: "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" It was again Peter full of the Holy Ghost who spoke up and said: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." {ACTS 4:10-12}. In ACTS 5 we read of many signs and wonders wrought among the people by the hands of the apostles, and verse 15 reads: *Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.* When the apostles got arrested for the second time in ACTS 5 it was Peter who again waxed bold in the power of the Holy Ghost and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." {ACTS 5:29-32}. So we see the prominence that Peter had among the kingdom apostles.

This brings us to ACTS 10. The events of ACTS 10 truly drive a wedge in the old traditional ways of Jewish thinking. In ACTS 10 Peter is Divinely lead to the house of Cornelius, an Italian centurion. Cornelius was a believer, and a devout man who always prayed to God. {Study ACTS 10:2}. It took much convincing by the Holy Ghost that Peter was to go unto the house of Cornelius, a Gentile. {Study ACTS 10:1-22}. However after realizing that it was indeed the will of God, Peter goes unto the house of Cornelius, a Gentile. Let's then read this amazing story starting in ACTS 10:24.

ACTS 10:24 ...And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. 25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. (Why was there such a response from Cornelius? Because he too had heard of the fame of Peter). 26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. 27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. 28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; (This then was the attitude of the Jew toward the Gentiles, and this was the heart attitude of Peter before this day. This was still the heart attitude of a majority of Jews at the time of the conference in ACTS 15, which will become apparent as we read on.) but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. 29 Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? 30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, 31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. 33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God. (Obviously by what we read next, this statement of Cornelius took Peter by great surprise. And yet we know too that Peter was a man full of the Holy Ghost. And with the Holy Ghost as his teacher and guide, Peter was about to learn some long lasting truths concerning the Gentiles). 34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. 36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) 37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; 38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. 39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: 40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; 41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us,

who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. 43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. 44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Now well mark in your mind these events of ACTS 10:44-46 where is recorded the fact that upon the Gentiles was also poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. Those Jews that were there with Peter were astonished at this event, and the word spread quickly unto the Jews at Jerusalem that the Gentiles had also received the Holy Ghost. Next we find the first eighteen verses of ACTS 11 explains how Peter had to contend with the Jews of Jerusalem about his preaching unto the Gentiles. And you can well imagine that there was no small dissension and disputation that took place here at this time also.

ACTS 11:1 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, 3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. 4 But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying, 5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: 6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. 8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. 9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. 10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. 11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. 12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: 13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; 14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. 16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. 17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? 18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

So what we have learned in this brief review of Peter, and some of the things that took place in his life, is that Peter was the prominent apostle of the kingdom apostles there in Jerusalem. Of the twelve apostles we have found it was Peter who became their main spokesman. It was Peter that had the ear of the believing Jews at Jerusalem. It was first to Peter that the Lord had revealed to those of Jerusalem this fact concerning the Gentiles: *God is no respecter of persons.*

Now returning to ACTS 15 armed with all of this background information, we find Paul and Barnabas and Titus going before the apostles, and the assembly here at Jerusalem considering the matter of whether or not Gentiles were to follow the works of the law or not. So we read starting in ACTS 15:7 -- And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. 8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; 9 And put no difference

between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

Looking at this portion of scripture we get a better glimpse of who attended this conference in Jerusalem. Peter was there, and as he looked over this congregation he realized that there were faces in the crowd he hadn't seen before. We too should realize that every time we assemble as a congregation, if a roll call should be made, there are never the same exact people in attendance. It also seems that we always have some new faces in the crowd, and thank the Lord for that. So here in Jerusalem as Peter looks over this congregation and sees new faces, he begins his speech by addressing the assembly as "Men and brethren." "Men and brethren" means in general terms: those of you in attendance, (men), and fellow brothers in Christ, (brethren). Peter wasn't having too much trouble with the fellow brothers in Christ, and neither was Paul and Barnabas, but rather it was "false brethren" who created problems for those of Antioch in Syria as noted in GALATIANS 2:4, just like it was "*they that were of the circumcision*" who created problems for Peter in ACTS 11:2. So Peter addresses everyone in attendance, both Jew and Gentile, both believer and unbeliever, when he says: "Men and brethren." For the time being the disputing slows down, and the whole congregation begins to listen to what Peter has to say, for he now has their attention somewhat, and among this crowd at least Peter is well respected. Peter then lays out indisputable facts of what has taken place in his ministry, and how Gentiles had heard and believed the word of the gospel spoken by his own mouth, and had further received the gift of the Holy Ghost. Peter then notes that God "*put no difference between us (the Jew) and them, (the Gentile) purifying their hearts by faith.*" {ACTS 15:9}. This part of Peter's speech was specifically made unto the believing Jews.

Peter then addresses the legalist and the unbelieving Jews in verse 10 -- *Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?* Brother Copley has quiet a bit to say concerning this verse, which can be summed up by looking at two words found in this verse: tempt, and yoke. The word "tempt" is the Greek word *peirazo*, number 3985 in the Strong's Greek Concordance, and is a verb here used in a bad sense of challenging God, much like the Devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Of course the author of this kind of temptation is none other than the Tempter himself, which is Satan. The word "yoke" (number 2218 in the Strong's Greek Concordance) references the yoke of bondage to the Law of Moses as a means of salvation. We find this same Greek word translated yoke in five scriptures. Two of these five times are found in the following passage found in MATTHEW 11:28-30, where we find Jesus saying: *Come unto me, all ye that labour (working for salvation) and are heavy laden, (with law keeping), and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke (faith) upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke (grace) is easy, and my burden (faith) is light.* The Apostle Paul uses this same word "yoke" in 1 TIMOTHY 6:1, and GALATIANS 5:1, where he writes: *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.* The Apostle John wrote in JOHN 1:17 *For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ...*, and it was to Jesus Christ whom Peter was here pointing. So Peter states to all who were listening here in ACTS 15:11 *But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.* The phrase "shall be saved" here in verse 11 is found twenty-five times in scripture. Twenty-five is the number that has to do with THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. Twenty-five is the product of 5 times 5: GRACE multiplied by GRACE in other words. Thus Peter makes it known to all the hearers at this conference...*that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.*

Recall in ACTS 4:10-12 that it was Peter full of the Holy Ghost who spoke up and addressed the unbelieving Sanhedrin, stating: *Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. 11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. 12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name*

under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. Recall also way before that time while Jesus was still here on earth it was Peter who spoke up in JOHN 6 proclaiming his faith in Jesus. In JOHN 6 we find Jesus giving His great discourse on the bread of life, after which Jesus addresses his disciples, his many followers. Jesus is talking here in JOHN 6:64 *But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.* 65 *And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.* 66 *From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.* 67 *Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?* 68 *Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.* 69 *And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.* Note especially here in verse 69 how Peter answers Jesus: *...we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.* Now compare this statement to the one Peter makes in ACTS 15:11: *But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.* Again ACTS 4:12 *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

So we see that Peter believed and preached *...that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved...* {ACTS 15:11}. After these introductory words spoken by Peter we then read in ACTS 15:12 -- *Then all the multitude kept silence,...* . They could not argue with the brilliance of the inspired words of the Holy Ghost spoken by Peter. We then see that the much disputing noted in verse 7 had ceased, and this crowd was now ready to listen to Paul and Barnabas, or were they?

Let's read some more facts from ACTS 15:12: *Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul,...* . They gave audience to Barnabas first of all, and then later Paul. As Gentiles we have been given Paul as our Apostle. {See ROMANS 11:13}. If you go back and study ACTS 14:12 you will see that Paul was the chief speaker between Barnabas and Paul: *And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.* As Gentiles we expect to hear the Apostle Paul speak first, because he is the chief speaker unto the Gentiles. However few Gentiles are present at this conference of ACTS 15. Also in Jerusalem the Jews never really ever did want to hear what the Apostle Paul had to say, and when they did hear him speak, they did not accept or receive his gospel. We learned in ACTS 9 that the Apostles accepted Paul as a brother in Christ only after Barnabas convinced them that Paul was really a believer. On his second journey to Jerusalem after being saved it was again Barnabas whose name is mentioned before Paul's (Saul's). {See again ACTS 11:30 & 12:25}. The reason Barnabas is mentioned before Paul in all the instances where the two of them visited Jerusalem together, is because those disciples of Jerusalem were way more familiar with Barnabas than they were with Paul. The record of Barnabas goes back to ACTS 4:36 during which time Peter and John's ministry was going on real strong there at Jerusalem. John Mark was a close relative (nephew) of Barnabas' also there at Jerusalem, his mother being Barnabas' sister. {See COLOSSIANS 4:10}. So we would expect Barnabas to be received and heard in Jerusalem way before we should expect Paul to be heard.

However as time went on it becomes even more apparent that those of Jerusalem, who were mostly Jews, never really accepted Paul as an Apostle, nor did they want to hear his gospel message. That is why the general consensus of those of Jerusalem is expressed like it is later in ACTS. In ACTS 21:36 the out cry of the multitude in Jerusalem against Paul was *"Away with him."* {ACTS 21:36}. And in ACTS 22:22 we read that they further said: *Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.* Even James, the pastor at Jerusalem, was only mildly interested in hearing what Paul had to say. Notice what we read in ACTS 21:17-21 on Paul's last visit to Jerusalem after his third missionary journey. As we read this keep in mind that Barnabas and Paul have been separated for a number of years by this time, so Paul was speaking on his own as we read ACTS 21:17 *And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.* 18 *And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.* 19 *And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.* 20 *And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews*

there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: 21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. Notice the tone here. First they politely listened to Paul, who particularly expounded unto them the marvelous things that God had wrought among the Gentiles because of his ministry. Then they glorified the Lord because of this, and in the same sentence turn their attention to the Jews of Jerusalem, and said: *Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.* In other words we could say that James and the elders of Jerusalem, (most, if not all of these men were also present at this conference of ACTS 15), didn't really accept the fact that one is saved by grace wholly apart from any works of the law, and any works of righteousness. Of course we are not surprised by this fact because it is Paul's gospel that teaches us these truths, and like we said before, those of Jerusalem were basically void of Paul's gospel. Those of Jerusalem held fast to the old traditions and customs of Moses. Still these nearly two thousand years later we can say the same thing, those of Jerusalem, and the Jews in general are basically void of Paul's gospel. In Jewish synagogues today is still preached the law of Moses. They have rejected Jesus, and they have rejected Paul.

So let's go back and read ACTS 15:12. ACTS 15:12 *Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.* Again note that the multitude present at this conference in Jerusalem, who were mostly Jews, kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas, a man that they all well respected, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles through Paul and Barnabas' ministry. Oh yea, and by the way they also tolerated Paul speaking a little here because of his association with Barnabas. What kind of reaction did this cause at this conference? Not much. We don't read of any real rejoicing among the brethren like we found in ACTS 11:18 where they *...glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.* ACTS 15:13 next tells us that this assembly of mainly Jews remained silent, probably pondering the facts that they had just heard, and who they had heard it from.

ACTS 15:13 *And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:...* . You can bet that these Jews in attendance at this conference will listen to what their pastor James has to say in this matter, for his words will carry a lot of weight in this assembly.

Before we get to what James has to say, let's review some important fact about James himself. We went over these same points some time ago, however it never hurts to review. The Apostle Paul wrote this about the first time he went to Jerusalem after being saved. GALATIANS 1:18 *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.* This brings up the question, when did James the Lord's brother become an Apostle? To properly answer this, let's go back and see when James the Lord's brother became a believer. In MATTHEW 13:55 and 56 we read of Jesus brothers and sisters, that is children of the same mother: 55 *Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? 56 And his sisters, are they not all with us?* So we see that Jesus had brothers and sisters, and that he had a brother named James, the next oldest. In JOHN 7:5 we find that during the time of Jesus ministry here on earth, his brothers did not believe in him; JOHN 7:5 *For neither did his brethren believe in him.* (The word brethren here means: children of the same Mother). That is why we pointed out in previous lessons that while Jesus was dying on the cross he entrusted the care of his mother Mary to the disciple whom He loved, whom we know was the Apostle John. Jesse read this same scripture this last Easter morning. JOHN 19:25 *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the [wife] of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! 27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own [home].* So we see here in verse

27 that John was entrusted the care of Jesus Mother. No doubt this was a low blow to Jesus brothers who should of had the care of their Mother, but at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus they were not yet believers in Him. So when did James the Lord's brother become a believer? It was after the resurrection of Jesus. *1 CORINTHIANS 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.* How did the Apostle Paul know that Jesus appeared unto James the Lord's brother after His resurrection? By interviewing James during this first visit to Jerusalem after he was saved here in *GALATIANS 1:19*. So we see that after His resurrection Jesus appeared unto James his brother, and James became a believer in Jesus much the same way the Apostle Paul did. Furthermore Jesus other brothers became believers also, and *ACTS 1:14* helps point this out. Starting in *ACTS 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. 12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. 13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James [the son] of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas [the brother] of James. (the afore mentioned apostles) 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.* (Again brethren here means: children of the same Mother). So Jesus brothers may not have been believers at the time of His crucifixion, but they certainly were by the time of Pentecost some fifty days later. By the time Paul first gets aquatinted with James the Lord's brother in *GALATIANS 1:19*, which we read above, he is referred to as an apostle. When James the Lord's brother became an Apostle is not told us in scripture. Was he chosen as a replacement Apostle for James the brother of John who was killed in *ACTS 12:2*? Scripture doesn't so state. The only conclusion that we can draw is that somewhere along the line James the Lord's brother became an Apostle, for the apostle Paul refers to him as such. And he was an Apostle to the Jews, *ACTS 15* and *21* plainly point this out. Further the Apostle Paul refers to James as one "...who seemed to be pillars..." (*GALATIANS 2:9*) in the church at Jerusalem. Obviously this could not be James the brother of John for he was killed in *ACTS 12:2*, and the events of *GALATIANS 2* refer to the same events which took place during the time frame of *ACTS 15*. Then in *JAMES 1:1* we read: *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.* Thus we see James the Lord's brother was an Apostle to the Jews, in other words a kingdom Apostle.

Now James, the Pastor at Jerusalem addresses this conference: *ACTS 15:13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:...* Consider the audience he is addressing. The majority in attendance are Jews, Jewish Christians. The only Gentile we know for sure that was in attendance was Titus, and his name isn't mentioned at all in the book of *ACTS*, but rather we know this from *GALATIANS 2:1*. As Jews all of them at this conference would be familiar with Moses words of *DEUTERONOMY 7*, so let's look at them for a moment.

DEUTERONOMY 7:6 For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. 7 The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: 8 But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and

mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; 10 And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face. 11 Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.

So we get a better glimpse of the heart attitude of the Jew that was attending this conference. They knew they are the special people unto the LORD their God, above all the people that are upon the face of the earth. These same Christian Jews had just again heard Peter tell of how Gentiles had heard him preach, and believed and also received the gift of the Holy Ghost. The same Christian Jews at this conference had just heard Barnabas, and Paul tell countless stories on how their ministry had also reached the Gentiles by the hundreds, who also believed and received Christ as their Saviour by the hundreds. Paul may have been given a moment to speak his gospel to these very same Jews at this conference. We know the kind of words he would have said, for he recorded them in ROMANS 10. In ROMANS 10:4 Paul writes: *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* Again in ROMANS 10:12 & 13 Paul writes: *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

Having heard such facts the Jews at this conference hearts were now open to receive the words of their Pastor James, who then said: ACTS 15:14 *Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. 18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.* These few words inspired of the Holy Ghost, and probably really not even realized by James who spoke them, define this present day parenthetical church age we are currently living in. More on this aspect in a little bit.

Remember how Brother Hill often told the story of George Washington Carver, and how he asked God to show him some things, and the Lord told him he would show him some of the mysteries just hidden in a peanut? George Washington Carver with the Lords help then discovered over forty things that now come from a peanut, including plastic! That is kind of the way I am finding this portion of scripture we just read in ACTS 15:14-18. There is a bunch of stuff hidden here if we will only allow the Holy Spirit to reveal it unto us.

In ACTS 15:14 we find James mentioning Simeon. This word Simeon is the Hebrew for the Greek word Simon. The reference is of course to Simon Peter. Interestingly this is the last mention of Peter in the book of ACTS. Of course this in itself is no accident, for the Holy Ghost puts the emphasis on Paul's gospel from this point forward in the book of ACTS, which is immediately followed in our Bible by the fourteen books that Paul wrote. Paul's gospel is given to fill up, or fulfil the word of God, and is especially for those of us Gentiles living in this church age. COLOSSIANS 1 records it like this: 25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; 26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: 27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: 28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: 29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. So we note that Peter and his ministry really was not to the Gentiles of this church age, but Paul's ministry was.

I want to go back and cover something about Peter that has come across my pathway twice in the last two months. I think Brother Hill also wanted to cover this same thing, at least he indicated it to the board in our last board meeting with him, and in listening to his last sermon, he did touch on it.

To see what I am referencing, let's turn to MATTHEW 16. Here we find Jesus talking to his disciples. MATTHEW 16:13 *When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? 14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. 15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.*

I want us to notice that phrase in verse 18 "...upon this rock.... ." The Baptist man I flew with last month didn't understand this phrase any better than the Catholics. The Roman church has built it's foundation upon the above portion of scripture from MATTHEW. The Roman church understands (falsely) that Christ said unto Peter, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock (Peter) I will build my church." Some how the Roman church also accuses Peter of being the first Pope. This is no surprise, for there are a lot of false statement made by the false church. Let me clarify MATTHEW 16:18. Jesus tell Peter, "Peter your name means a pebble, a little stone, a little rock, and Peter, little rock, upon this Rock, (Jesus Christ Himself) I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Brother Hill explained it like this in his last sermon of March 6, 2005: "Peter you have just confessed me as you personal Saviour. On that testimony, on that statement I am going to build my church." Peter understood what Jesus said, and what Jesus meant, and on the day of Pentecost began building that church, for after Peter's sermon pointing the hearers to Christ the solid Rock, about three thousand souls were saved. {ACTS 2:41}.

Let me give you two examples of Peters understanding of the fact that Jesus is the Rock. First turn to ACTS 4, a portion of scripture we have read many times in this study. ACTS 4:10-12: *Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. 11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. 12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. Note that Peter is referring to Jesus the foundation Rock or stone. Now turn to 1 PETER 2. 1 PETER 2:4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. 7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.*

MALACHI 3:6 *For I am the LORD, I change not;... . HEBREWS 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. JAMES 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

So obviously Peter understood the type in scripture that forever holds true, which is that Jesus is the Rock, and the Rock of our salvation; the solid foundation and chief corner stone of our faith. Peter himself heard Jesus speak these words found in Luke 6. LUKE 6:46 *And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? 47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: 48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. 49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that*

house was great. Paul also wrote: 1 CORINTHIANS 3:11 *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* EPHESIANS 2:20 in part tells us: *...Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;...*

We find the word "Rock" capitalized seven times in scripture. Seven again is the number that points us to SPIRITUAL PERFECTION or SPIRITUAL COMPLETION, and, of course, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the epitome of SPIRITUAL PERFECTION, to whom Pilate even acknowledged three times: *I find in him no fault at all.* {See JOHN 18:38; 19:4; and 19:6; also LUKE 23:4 and 14}. The seven times in scripture we find the word "Rock" capitalized are as follows: DEUTERONOMY 32:4 *He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.* DEUTERONOMY 32:18 *Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.* DEUTERONOMY 32:30 *How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?* DEUTERONOMY 32:31 *For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.* 2 SAMUEL 23:3 *The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.* And twice in 1 CORINTHIANS 10:4 we find the word "Rock:" *And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.* Here we find plainly stated: *...that Rock was Christ.*

King David being that Old Testament overcomer that he was, and a man after God's own heart, (see ACTS 13:22), knew Jesus as his Lord and Saviour, and the Rock of his salvation, and sung these facts in a song, which are recorded for us in 2 SAMUEL 22 and PSALMS 18. Here is some of what he sang: 2 SAMUEL 22:2 also PSALMS 18:2: *And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;...* 2 SAMUEL 22:3 *The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.* 2 SAMUEL 22:32 and PSALMS 18:46: *The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation.*

Now we will get back to our text of ACTS 15, and our study of the life of the Apostle Paul. What we have shown in the previous studies on this portion is that the Jews of Jerusalem didn't want to hear Paul's gospel, especially from Paul, nor have the Gentiles as a whole received Paul's gospel. The Roman church has falsely built their church upon the foundation of Peter. In the Catholic system Jesus Christ Himself has been give a second or third place of importance, maybe even less than that, and in that system the gospel of the Apostle Paul is scarcely mentioned, and certainly not known. But the Holy Ghost inspired the Word of God, and mentions Peter for the last time in the book of ACTS in ACTS 15:14. Thus from this point forward the emphasis is placed on Paul and his gospel, facts missed by the Jews, and facts missed by the Roman church.

So we now come again to ACTS 15:14-18 and read again the Holy Ghost inspired words of James. ACTS 15:14 *Simeon (Peter) hath declared how God at the first (for the first time in ACTS 10) did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.* 15 *And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,* 16 *After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:* 17 *That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.* 18 *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.*

I am sure that James, nor any in attendance at this conference, had the remotest inkling of the time frame he was defining in this statement. As we previously briefly mentioned, these verses really define this present day parenthetical church age we are currently living in, which time frame is fast approaching two thousand years since this conference. The mind set of all that were in attendance at this conference was that Jesus was coming again soon to set up His Kingdom. "Soon" didn't mean two thousand years down the road to them. Notice these facts in their writings: Paul wrote in 1 CORINTHIANS 1:4-9 these timeless words: *I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; 5 That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; 6 Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: 7 So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: 8 Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless*

in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Paul didn't expect those of Corinth to wait two thousand years for Jesus return, but rather he also expected Jesus to return at any time. Perhaps the urgency of the Lord's soon coming is better expressed by Paul when he writes in 1 THESSALONIANS 4:15 *For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.* When he stated "we which are alive and remain" he was speaking of himself looking forward to the fact that Jesus could come again at anytime, even during his lifetime.

James himself expressed this same urgency when he wrote: JAMES 5:7 *Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.* 8 *Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*

Peter also wrote a whole chapter about the soon coming of the Lord, and on your own you can read what he had to say in 2 PETER 3. Here is a part of what Peter wrote in 2 PETER 3:8-14: *But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.* 9 *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* 10 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.* 11 *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,* 12 *Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?* 13 *Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.* 14 *Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.*

We know that the Apostle John was also at this conference in Jerusalem, being one of the apostles referenced in ACTS 15:2 & 4, and here is one scripture that the Apostle John wrote concerning the soon coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: 1 JOHN 2:28 *And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.* Also in REVELATION 22 John wrote: REVELATION 22:7 *Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.* REVELATION 22:12 *And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.* REVELATION 22:20 *He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

Jesus Himself had warned his disciples of His soon return, stating in MATTHEW 24:44 *Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.* Brother Copley who went to be with the Lord in 1945 was constantly looking for the Lord's soon appearing, and asked Brother Hill many times, "do you think He will come today?" Brother Hill in every service reminded us that Jesus is coming soon, maybe even today! We too with eager anticipation are looking for Jesus to come at any moment, and there is no reason He couldn't come and catch us away today!

So until our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ returns the words of James expressed in ACTS 15:14 are still valid: *Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.* Let's look at this word "visit" for a moment. "Visit" as used here in verse 14 comes from the Greek word episkeptomai {ep-ee-skep'-tom-ah-ee}, number 1980 in the Strong's Greek Concordance, and in part means; to inspect, to examine with the eyes. Who of the God-head visited us, that is examined us with His eyes? Jesus. In LUKE 1:68 we read: *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,...* . These words were spoken of Jesus by Zacharias the father of John the Baptist. As were these words of LUKE 1:78 *Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,...* . Also Jesus is referenced in HEBREWS 2:6, where we read: *But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?* So

we see that James in ACTS 15:14 is making a reference to Jesus Christ, whom Simon Peter preached, and whose preaching was familiar to those in attendance at this conference.

Peter preached salvation in the name of Jesus, as the following verses from the book of ACTS illustrates: ACTS 2:21 *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.* ACTS 2:38 *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* Besides salvation, Peter also preached healing in the name of Jesus, as the following verses from ACTS also illustrate: ACTS 3:6 *Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.* ACTS 3:16 *And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.* ACTS 4:10 *Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.* And then Peter again emphasized salvation in the name of Jesus in the following verses from ACTS: ACTS 4:12 *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.* This next verse was spoken by Peter unto the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius: ACTS 10:43 *To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*

Again ACTS 15:14 states: *Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.* "A people for His name" can most simply be defined as Christians. Christians properly defined are believers in Jesus Christ as their own personal Saviour. Such believers are termed by many other names also, such as Sons of God, children of God, brethren, disciples, Saints, all of these are scriptural terms. One commentator expounded this verse like this: "to take out of them a people for his name; for Himself, for His own glory, to call upon His name, to bear His name, and support His Gospel, His cause, and His interest." In these nearly two thousand years since James spoke these words of ACTS 15, millions upon millions of Gentiles have become believers, having accepted Jesus Christ as their own personal Saviour. None of this conference could have fathomed the far reaches of this statement: *Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.*

By believing in Jesus millions of Gentiles have become "his people," "a people for His name," even "a peculiar people." Recall that Titus, a Gentile associate of the Apostle Paul was the main Gentile subject of this conference of ACTS 15. Later in life the Apostle Paul wrote the following to Titus: TITUS 2:11 *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, {all men includes both Jew and Gentile} 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* A people for his name we see then also means a peculiar people.

At the time of the birth of Christ the angel of the Lord appeared unto shepherds outside of Bethlehem: *And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.* For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. {LUKE 2:10 & 11}. All people means both Jew and Gentile. All people who believe also means His people, ...a people for his name.. Note the following scriptures written unto His people. 1 SAMUEL 12:22 *For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.* PSALMS 94:14 *For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.* PSALMS 100:3 *Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.* PSALMS 149:4 *For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.* MATTHEW 1:21 *And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.* REVELATION 21:3 *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and*

he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

What we have broadly just defined is the church of this church age. When Jesus spoke to Peter in MATTHEW 16:18...*thou art Peter, and upon this rock (the rock references Jesus Himself as we have previously pointed out) I will build my church...*, when did this building of “my church” start? It started on the day of Pentecost in ACTS 2 when Peter now full of the Holy Ghost preached his first sermon. Turning to ACTS 2 we read these concluding words of Peter’s first sermon, and the results of his preaching. ACTS 2:36 *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.* 37 *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?* 38 *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* 39 *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* 40 *And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.* 41 *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.* This then was the beginning of “my church” which Jesus referenced way back in MATTHEW 16:18, Jesus Christ being the foundation stone. On your own you can study out in the rest of ACTS chapter 2 and see that these first believers became a part of the church Jesus called “my church,” and in ACTS 2:47 we read: *And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

In ACTS 3 Peter and John prayed for the lame man at the temple, who was immediately healed, then Peter preached another sermon. ACTS 4:1-4 tell what happened at the conclusion of this sermon. ACTS 4:1 *And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,* 2 *Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.* 3 *And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.* 4 *Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.* These five thousand that believed also became a part of “my church” that Jesus referenced in MATTHEW 16:18, as have all believers during this church age.

In ACTS 5 we read: 12 *And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch.* 13 *And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.* 14 *And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)* All of these new believers also became a part of “my church” that Jesus referenced in MATTHEW 16:18, as have all believers during this church age.

The church grew and the believers multiplied during Peter’s ministry, and we read in ACTS 10 how, after much persuasion from the Lord, that Peter preached a sermon to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius. The concluding words of Peter’s sermon, and what happened next are recorded for us in ACTS 10:43-45. Peter speaking of Jesus said: ACTS 10:43 *To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.* 44 *While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.* 45 *And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.* All of these new Gentile believers also became a part of “my church” that Jesus referenced in MATTHEW 16:18, as have all believers during this church age.

Kind of hidden in the background in ACTS 11:25 & 26 is the roots of Paul’s ministry at Antioch, Syria, which became his home church as we have discussed in previous studies. ACTS 11:25 *Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:* 26 *And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.* Antioch was a melting pot of different cultures as we have mentioned before, and the citizens of Antioch were some what unique in that they were given by the Roman Empire the privilege of worship in their own way without

fear of repercussion or persecution. There got to be so many believers there that the scripture we just read records: *And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.* No doubt this is why so many of the formerly persecuted Jews of Jerusalem ended up here, and why Christianity proliferated here. Antioch was a church with a lot of Gentiles, and from Antioch Paul and Barnabas were sent on a missionary journey. This journey is recorded for us in ACTS 13 and 14, which we have previously studied. In ACTS 13:16-41 we find a record of one of Paul's complete sermons. The end result of Paul's preaching this sermon, and one other the next week is recorded for us like this in ACTS 13:46-48. ACTS 13:46 *Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.* 47 *For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.* 48 *And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.* All of these new Gentile believers also became a part of "my church" that Jesus referenced in MATTHEW 16:18, as have all believers during this church age.

Everywhere Paul and Barnabas went there were new believers added unto the church, both Jew and Gentile. Each and every believer in this church age has become a part of what Jesus called "my church" back there in MATTHEW 16:18.

Enter the teaching of the Apostle Paul to enlarge upon this subject. In EPHESIANS 5:23 we read this statement: *...Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.* That is a very simple statement *...Christ is the head of the church,* not a Pope, not some other man, but *...Christ is the head of the church.* Essentially Paul is restating here what he made note of earlier in this same epistle to the EPHESIANS. EPHESIANS 1:22 *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,* 23 *Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.* So we see that *...Christ is the head of the church... ...Which is his body.* This is the mystical body of Christ. "This Body is viewed as an organism of which we are all members, having one Head and one life." (Quoted from Sister Bodie). Again in COLOSSIANS 1:18 the Apostle Paul speaking of Jesus writes: *And he is the head of the body, the church:...* . In 1 CORINTHIANS 12:27 we read this statement made unto believers: *Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.* Then in ROMANS 12 Paul wrote: 4 *For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:* 5 *So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.* Again in 1 CORINTHIANS 12 we read: 12 *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.* 13 *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.* 14 *For the body is not one member, but many.*

What we have just covered describes and defines "my church" that Jesus referenced in MATTHEW 16:18, which is the mystical body of Christ that all believers from this church age are a part of. This mystical body of Christ is called by James in ACTS 15:14 *...a people for his name.* ACTS 15:14 *Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.* Once again "a people for His name" can most simply be defined as Christians. Christians are believers in Jesus Christ as their own personal Saviour. Such believers are termed by many other names also, such as Sons of God, children of God, brethren, disciples, Saints, all of these are scriptural terms. One commentator expounded this verse like this: "to take out of them a people for his name; for Himself, for His own glory, to call upon His name, to bear His name, and support His Gospel, His cause, and His interest." In these nearly two thousand years since James spoke these words of ACTS 15, millions upon millions of Gentiles have become believers, having accepted Jesus Christ as their own personal Saviour, and have become a part of what Jesus called "my church" back there in MATTHEW 16:18.

Let me briefly show you something else here that James never saw when he made this statement in ACTS 15:14 *Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.* The Apostle Paul had revealed unto him by the Lord several mysteries that had before time been hidden. These mysteries

were revealed unto Paul to pass on to those of us during this church age. One of these mysteries was the mystery of the Bride of Christ. Paul notes in 1 CORINTHIANS 15:45 that *...The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.* In ROMANS 5:14 we read that the first man Adam *...is the figure of him that was to come.* That is to say Adam was a type of Christ, and one of many such types found in scripture. The whole Bible really from cover to cover pictures to us Jesus Christ and His Divine love for us. The Bible is a big love letter written to you, if you will, and there are many types and pictures and figures of Christ found there in. Adam is just one of these many types. In GENESIS 2 we read the story of a bride for Adam. GENESIS 2:18 *And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. 19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. 20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. 21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; 22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. 23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. 24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.* What we see here in GENESIS 2 is that out of the body of Adam came a small rib portion, which the Lord used to make a woman. This woman called Eve became Adam's wife, his one and only wife.

Now let's solve one of the mysteries revealed in Paul's gospel. The first man Adam *...the figure of him that was to come...* had a rib taken from his body, from which God formed his beautiful wife. The second man Adam, which is Christ from heaven, has a mystical body of which He is the head. At the present time this mystical body is having a rib prepared from His body, what Jesus calls "my church" back in MATTHEW 16:18, who will become that beautiful Bride of Christ! GENESIS 2:23 *And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. 24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.* EPHESIANS 5:30 *For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.* (Verse 31 here is quoted from GENESIS 2:24). 32 *This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

ACTS 15:14 *Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.* "A people for His name" can most simply be defined as Christians, as we have stated before. Out of this "people for His name" comes also a rib portion of people who will be called "Mrs. Jesus," "The Bride of Christ," "The Lamb's wife." In REVELATION 19:7 we read: *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*

This rib portion of people called the Lamb's wife you will notice in REVELATION 19:7 *...hath made herself ready.* How did she make herself ready? By being saved? The Bride of Christ doesn't make herself ready by being saved only, for that is just the first step. All people that are born again are not in the Bride of Christ as is erroneously being taught in so many churches today. Being born again is a prerequisite to being in the mystical body of Christ in the first place. Being in the rib portion requires more than just being saved. The rib portion you may note is the closest to His heart! How does the Bride of Christ make herself ready? We answered this question three different times in our study on GENESIS 24. This is how we summed it up. The Bride of Christ makes herself ready by yielding her life unto the cunning workmanship of the Master who long ago (on the day of Pentecost) sent us the Holy Spirit of promise to dwell in us for the express purpose of teaching us all things, and to guide us into all truth, and to give us an inheritance among all them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus! ACTS 20:32 *And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is*

able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

During the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness in the book of EXODUS we read in several places of workman given guidance by the Holy Spirit in all manner of workmanship. We learned that the one of the main workman on the tabernacle was Bezaleel, whose name means "in God's shade," or "in the shadow (i.e. protection) of God." Bezaleel's qualifications for making the different parts of the tabernacle are listed in EXODUS 31. EXODUS 31:1 *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: 3 And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, 4 To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, 5 And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.* Note what Moses says of Bezaleel in EXODUS 35. EXODUS 35:30 *And Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the LORD hath called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; 31 And he hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; 32 And to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, 33 And in the cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work. 34 And he hath put in his heart that he may teach,...* . In our day who is our teacher, our guide into all the truth, the same one that filled Bezaleel with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship? The Holy Spirit. Bezaleel too is representative of the Holy Spirit. Out of a single solid piece of pure gold Bezaleel fashioned the mercy seat with a cherub on each end. This was in accordance with the instructions given of God in EXODUS 25:18 *And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat.* Gold is an emblem of purity, a metal least tarnished, and speaks to us of deity (the divine nature of God), divine life, and Godly perfection. The beaten gold is representative of the suffering of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, of whom Paul said this before King Agrippa in ACTS 26:23 -- *That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.* In HEBREWS 2:9 Paul writes again: *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.* The joint-heirs with Christ, His bride, those that will rule and reign with Him, have learned that the only way they can be joint heirs with Him is to also suffer with Him. ROMANS 8:17 *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 2 TIMOTHY 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. 2 TIMOTHY 2:12 If we suffer, (with Him), we shall also reign with him:...* .

EXODUS 37:9 states that *...the cherubims spread out their wings on high, and covered with their wings over the mercy seat, with their faces one to another...* . The wings speak of heaven, and heavenly beings. The cherubim facing each other shows that their focus is always upon Him in the center. Their facing each other with wings lifted heavenward also pictures that the cherubim are in total agreement with the will of God. The Bride of Christ has made herself ready we are told in REVELATION 19:7, and a part of this getting ready is being in agreement with the will of God. We read in EXODUS 35:31 & 35: *And he hath filled him (Bezaleel) with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; ...35 Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work.* The work of the *...embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver...* was just as important as his workmanship in the silver and gold mentioned above. All of this workmanship is symbolic of the work that is taking place in the hearts of those who will qualify to be in the Bride of Christ. EPHESIANS 2:10 -- *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* His Masterpiece will be the Bride of Christ. She will be *...arrayed in fine linen.* She will be the rib portion of

the mystical body of Christ, which is just a small part of what Jesus called "my church" back there in MATTHEW 16:18.

Very few at this conference of ACTS 15 ever really knew anything about being in the Bride of Christ. Paul knew it, Titus knew it, and I am sure Barnabas had been taught it by Paul, but beyond that this Bridal message was still a mystery. Aren't you glad that this mystery has been revealed too you?

ACTS 15:14 Simeon (Peter) hath declared how God at the first (for the first time in ACTS 10) did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. 18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

We have already spent a lot of time discussing some of the various thoughts contained in this portion of scripture, having mainly covered verse 14. We have noted that the time frame defined by James in verse 14, yet of unknown length of time to him, and us, really defines the present church age that we are currently living in. Note now the first two words of verse 16: "After this." "After this" means after this church age. In REVELATION chapters 2 and 3 we find the seven letters written unto seven representative churches of this church age, which we covered at length in our hearing study. Then in REVELATION 4:1 we read the same two words which start out ACTS 15:16: "After this." The meaning is the same in both places: "After this" in both places means: after this church age.

Let's recall a statement recorded back in ACTS 1 that was made before this church age was defined for us here in scripture. As we read these words keep in mind that they were spoken to Jews, disciples of Jesus. ACTS 1:3 *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: 4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. 6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. 9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

Two points I want to note here from this portion of scripture of ACTS 1. First in ACTS 1:7 we see that God the Father only knows the times and the length of the season of this church age, for *...It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.* Secondly, now that we do know there is a church age in which we are currently living, ACTS 15:16 in part tells us that the Lord has noted *...After this I will return.* The manner of His return is expressed here in ACTS 1:11, which states: *...this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.* Combining then these thoughts from ACTS 1 and ACTS 15 we see that *...After this (church age) I will return,...* and *...this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner.*

This same theme of the Lord's return after this church age was emphasized by the Apostle Paul in his teaching, which Luke learned and knew so well. And so we read in Paul's first epistle that we have a record of this statement, which coincides with theme of Jesus return after this church age: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:14 *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15*

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

So if we take nothing more out of this portion of scripture than this, let us remember and comfort one another with these words from ACTS 15:16: *After this (church age) I will return,...*

Now the under lying theme and emphasis of the Kingdom Apostles teaching and preaching was the gospel of the Kingdom, and the restoring the kingdom to Israel. Brother Copley spends six pages explaining this fact at the end of his study book on ACTS. He notes that Jesus also "preached the gospel of the Kingdom," not the gospel of the Church. We find this fact in the following three verses: MATTHEW 4:23 *And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.* MATTHEW 9:35 *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.* MARK 1:14 *Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,...* Brother Copley goes on to note that the gospel of the Church was given unto the Apostle Paul to preach the heavenly calling that we have in Christ Jesus. That is why only the Apostle Paul writes such statements as found in PHILIPPIANS 3:14 *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* The high calling of God in Christ Jesus is not part of Kingdom teaching.

James the pastor of the church at Jerusalem, and the Kingdom Apostles were all a part of those group of Jews that asked Jesus back in ACTS 1:6 *...Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?* This question was in response to Jesus having just spent forty days with them *...speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.* {ACTS 1:3}. The Kingdom Apostle's teaching reflected such a theme of the kingdom of God and His relationship with Israel. Thus we do not find it odd that James too emphasized these same points here in ACTS 15 especially in verses 15 & 16 when he states: *And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:... .* The prophet that James was quoting or paraphrasing from was AMOS. AMOS 9:11 *In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: 12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this.*

The heathen is another reference to the Gentiles. AMOS writes in verse 12: *...all the heathen, which are called by my name....* We have said much in this study about the Gentiles that are called by my name. James himself too makes a further note of this same fact in verse 17. ACTS 15:17 *That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.* Earlier we made note that in REVELATION chapters 2 and 3 we find the seven letters written unto seven representative churches of this church age. Jesus addresses some in these two chapters with reference to His name. To the church at Ephesus Jesus writes in REVELATION 2:3 *...and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.* To the church at Pergamos Jesus writes in REVELATION 2:13 *...and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith....* To the church at Philadelphia in REVELATION 3:8 Jesus writes: *I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.* The in verse 12 Jesus writes: *Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.*

ACTS 15:14 *Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. 18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.*

Those of you who have an old Scofield Bible with the original notes can reference his comments on this portion of scripture starting at the bottom of page 1169 of his notes. Those who don't have an old Scofield Bible to reference, probably can not get one now for they are out of print. However I will quote from and expound upon his notes from this portion of scripture, for he brings out some excellent points. Scofield starts out referencing the statement made by James in ACTS 15:14, which we spent a great deal of time covering in these notes. ACTS 15:14 *Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.* Scofield comments: "Dispensationally, this is the most important passage in the New Testament." Getting away from Scofield's comments for a moment, I recall Brother Hill often quoting this same verse many, many different times, and in different sermons. Brother Hill too agreed with Scofield that "Dispensationally, this is the most important passage in the New Testament." Scofield continues: "It gives the divine purpose for this age, and for the beginning of the next. (1) The taking out from among the Gentiles of a people for His name, the distinctive work of the present, or church-age. The church is the *ecclesia*-- the "called-out assembly." Precisely this has been in progress since Pentecost. The Gospel has never anywhere converted all, but everywhere has called out some. (2) "After this [viz. the out-calling] I will return." James quotes from AMOS 9:11 & 12. The verses which follow in AMOS describe the final regathering of Israel, which the other prophets invariably connect with the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant (e.g. ISAIAH 11:1, 10-12; JEREMIAH 23:5-8)."

For a moment let me expound upon these two portions of scripture. ISAIAH 11:1 *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: ...* (This of course is a reference to Jesus Himself). ISAIAH 11:10 *And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.* (The ensign is also a reference to Jesus, the standard to whom the Gentiles seek). 11 *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. 12 And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.*

JEREMIAH 23:5 *Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.* ("A righteous Branch" is another reference to Jesus Christ. Note how Branch is capitalized). 6 *In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; 8 But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.*

Continuing with our quote from Scofield: "(3) "And will build again the tabernacle of David," i.e. re-establish the Davidic rule over Israel (2 SAMUEL 7:8-17; LUKE 1:31-33)."

Again let's read, and expound a little on these two portions of scripture. 2 SAMUEL 7:8 *Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: 9 And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. 10 Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more;*

neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, 11 And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. 12 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. 14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: 15 But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. 16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. 17 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

LUKE 1:31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. (Brother Hawkins is usually quick to point out that the kingdom of David that shall be established forever came from the union of David and Bathsheba, but not through Solomon, one of David's famous sons, whose mother was Bathsheba, but rather the kingdom of David came through the family line of Nathan, another son of David by Bathsheba. Study 1 CHRONICLES 3:5 along with LUKE 3:31).

Continuing again with our quote from Scofield: "(4) 'That the residue of men [Israelites] may seek after the Lord' (cf. ZECHARIAH 12:7,8; 13:1,2)."

These verses from ZECHARIAH follow. ZECHARIAH 12:7 The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. 8 In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them. ZECHARIAH 13:1 In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. 2 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.

Continuing once again with our quote from Scofield: (5) "And all the Gentiles," etc. (cf. MICAH 4:2; ZECHARIAH 8:21,22). This is also the order of ROMANS 11:24-27." End of quote from Scofield.

MICAH 4:1 But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. 2 And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

ZECHARIAH 8:21 And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. 22 Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.

ROMANS 11 speaks of Israel's future. ROMANS 11:24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? 25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. 26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: 27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

ACTS 15:19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: 20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from

blood. 21 *For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.*

Recall that the words “therefore” and “wherefore” are cause for pause, to reflect on what has just been said, and then to direct ones focus, like a spot light, on what is stated next. As we too reflect on what has just been said up to this point in the conference at Jerusalem, we see that this predominately Jewish assembly has once again been made aware that God has also granted repentance unto everlasting life to the Gentiles, and furthermore also has poured upon the Gentile believers the gift of the Holy Ghost, that is unto all believers who would receive this wonderful gift. This salvation, and subsequent gift of the Holy Ghost was given independent of the law of Moses. The Apostle Paul later stated these very same points like this in ROMANS 10:4. *ROMANS 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* Peter, while at the house of Cornelius stated in ACTS 10:34 *Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.* Now James, the pastor at Jerusalem, and the speaker on stage, has agreed with these facts that Peter stated, and found Old Testament scripture is also in agreement with these very same truths, *...that God is no respecter of persons,...* and that God has also granted repentance unto everlasting life to the Gentiles. {ACTS 11:18}. The purpose of this visit by God unto the Gentiles James has already stated; *...to take out of them a people for his name.*

Now James has the undivided attention of all in attendance at this conference, and he now directs the spotlight upon these words: *my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God; But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.* {ACTS 15:19-20}.

At first glance it seems that these were James own words, and indeed they were James own words, but with this difference: these words were inspired words of the Holy Ghost. ACTS 15:28 pretty much reinforces this very fact. {ACTS 15:28 *For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;*}. If you think about it, it was the Holy Ghost who gave James, and all of the speakers at this assembly their words to speak. It was the Holy Ghost who inspired James to say what he said in the previous verses we just studied found in ACTS 15:14-18. It was the Holy Ghost who brought to James memory the Old Testament scriptures he quoted from in ACTS 15:15-18. And now it is the Holy Ghost inspiring these words voiced by James: *my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God; But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.* {ACTS 15:19-21}.

Let's first look at this word “trouble” in verse 19. As we look at this word “trouble” realize that there was a collision course between two dispensations, the dispensation of the law, and the dispensation of grace, which was being resolved at this conference in Jerusalem. The majority in attendance at this conference were Jews, who had been brought up under the dispensation of the law. But when Jesus died for our sins on the cross the age of the law ceased, and the age of grace was born. Again ROMANS 10:4 *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* Gentiles again were included in a dispensation, and an age was being ushered in where the Gentiles would be predominate. Those in attendance at this conference didn't know this, but looking back we know that this age of grace, known also as the church age, has brought with it a majority of Gentile believers that have been added unto the body of Christ. In other words the Christians of this church age are primarily Gentile. The majority of Jews have still refused to accept Jesus as their own personal saviour. However back at this conference in Jerusalem, the majority in attendance that day were believing Jews. And they were in reality hearing about a change in their line of thinking; a change that went against their tradition teaching. Never before were Gentiles included their thinking. These Jews were realizing that since Jesus came a lot of things have changed, and now another change was manifesting itself. This change can be summed up fairly simply: while we were yet sinners, and knowing all had sinned and come short of the glory of God, Christ died for the ungodly, whether Jew or Gentile.

{Study ROMANS 3:9, 10, 23; ROMANS 5:6 & 8}. The Jews were to understand that Gentiles were now becoming believers, and that by the score both near and far. A change in understanding of this magnitude does not come easy, and for the majority of the Jews this change was hard to accept. In the mean time there would be "trouble." The "trouble" being discussed at this conference was caused when some law abiding Jews came unto Antioch and made the statement directed unto the believing Gentiles founded in old Jewish tradition that except a man be circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved. Somewhat ironically these kinds of words we being said by the unbelieving Jews. Study GALATIANS 2:4 again to see this fact. It was with this kind of trouble in mind that Paul wrote the Epistle to the GALATIANS. Paul wrote in GALATIANS 1:6 & 7: *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.* In GALATIANS 5 we read these words: *1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. 2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. 3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. 4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. ...12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.* Here again we find that little word "trouble."

There are fourteen different Greek words that translate into our English as "trouble." The Greek word translated "trouble" here in verse 19 is only found this one time in New Testament scripture, and means: to cause trouble in a matter, to trouble, to annoy. However if you will look at this word "trouble" in it's context you will notice that the thought expressed here by James is not to cause trouble in a matter; not to trouble; not to annoy. ACTS 15:19 *Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:...* I imagine there were several "amen's" said after this particular sentence of James, and probably the loudest "amen" came from Titus, and his traveling companions Paul and Barnabas. The reason that they had traveled from Antioch to Jerusalem in the first place was because this was a troubling matter, and this was a big deal. It took a revelation by Jesus Christ unto the Apostle Paul, probably one of the greatest legalists that ever lived before being saved, for him to realize *...For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.* EPHESIANS 2:8 & 9.

Essentially the rest of this conference at Jerusalem is devoted to how the Jews can keep from troubling the Gentiles, and in return how the Gentiles can keep from troubling the Jews. We will cover James advice to the Gentiles in verse 20 here in a moment, but I want to briefly examine why James gives the advice he does. The reason is chiefly because of James concern for the Jews. James knows his congregation of believers is made up chiefly of Jews zealous of the law. A quick study of ACTS 21:20 will prove that true. James also knows beyond his reach are many other Jewish synagogues where believers also congregate. To these assemblies also comes Gentiles, as Paul and Barnabas had attested to in ACTS 13 and 14. James was not interested in troubling the Gentiles that came to these meetings, nor was James wanting to see a conflict between Jew and Gentile, especially among believers. James was interested in keeping peace among the brethren, even when the brethren were both Jew and Gentile. James suggested four things that Gentile believers could do to aid in keeping the peace between fellow Jewish believers. These four things are first found listed in ACTS 15:20, then later repeated more than one time. James suggest in ACTS 15:20 *...that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.* If adopted by the conference at Jerusalem these four items would go a long way toward the peace and the mutual good understanding of both Jew and Gentile believers who assembled in one place.

Note that these four items have nothing to do with ones salvation. If a believing Gentile chooses to not follow any of these four suggestions, he is still saved. James signs on to this agreement out of concern for the Jews. Paul signs on to this agreement out of concern for the Gentiles. Paul realizes that these four items have nothing to do with ones salvation, but if followed these four items are a good testimony to others. If a

Gentile believer chooses not to follow these guidelines, it probably is because he is not seeking God's absolute best.

Lets look at these four items. Item (1)...*that they abstain from pollutions of idols.* ACTS 15:29 expounds further this statement stating: *abstain from meats offered to idols.* An idol as referenced here was a heathen image of reprobate man's vain imaginations with the likeness of corruptible man, or four footed beast, or birds, or, fish, or even creeping things. The children of Israel, the Jews in other words, were instructed of Moses in EXODUS 20:4 *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.* Often times the heathen would eat whatever was offered in sacrifice unto the idol as a part of idol worship. Obviously this did not set well with the Jew. Let's read here what is stated in 1 CORINTHIANS 8 to start our commentary on this first item.

1 CORINTHIANS 8:1 *Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.* 2 *And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.* 3 *But if any man love God, the same is known of him.* 4 *As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.* 5 *For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)* 6 *But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.* 7 *Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.* 8 *But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.* 9 *But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.* 10 *For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;* 11 *And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?* 12 *But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.* 13 *Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend. (to entice to sin).*

We see here in this portion of scripture Paul's underlying concern for the good of others. The focus was not on how right or how wrong it may be to eat these meats sacrificed unto idols, but rather the impact that it would have on others. Our focus shouldn't be on ourselves, but upon Jesus, and how others see Jesus in our lives. Before we do such things that may offend others we should in the language of today stop and ask ourselves, what would Jesus do?

The Apostle Paul had many things to write about this very same subject, and goes on to write in 1 CORINTHIANS 10 these words: 19 *What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?* 20 *But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.* 21 *Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.*

Again in ROMANS 14 we read further instructions from Paul. ROMANS 14:13 *Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.* 14 *I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.* 15 *But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.* 16 *Let not then your good be evil spoken of:* 17 *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* 18 *For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.* 19 *Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.* 20 *For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is*

evil for that man who eateth with offence. 21 It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

These three portions of scripture were written in the spirit and intent of what James was expressing back in our text of ACTS 15:20 ...that they abstain from pollutions of idols. An underlying theme from these texts emphasizes that we follow these instructions to the end that we keep peace and unity with the brethren with our eyes always focused upon Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for all sinners. These same sinners then should see in our lives a reflection of Jesus. Do they? Not if we live and act like the heathen world. That is one reason Paul writes in ROMANS 12 these words: *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* Again in 1 THESSALONIANS 5:22 Paul emphasizes: *Abstain from all appearance of evil.*

Item (2) listed by James in ACTS 15:20 is ...that they abstain from fornication,... . Fornication is defined in Strong's Concordance as illicit sexual intercourse, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals etc. JUDE verse 7 tells us that this kind of activity has been going on since early in GENESIS. JUDE 7 *Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.* Fornication is a billion dollar industry called Hollywood in this country, and for that very same reason we all know way too much about it. We can see it on TV even when we are only trying to watch the news. Fornication is also a part in the worship of idols. The Apostle Paul wrote much on this subject, more than any other author in scripture. Here is just a little of what he wrote.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:13 (b) *Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. 14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. 15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. 16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. 17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. 18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1 *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. {Study NUMBERS 25, also REVELATION 2:14}. 9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. {NUMBERS 21:6}. 10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. {NUMBERS 14:2, 29; 16:41; DEUTERONOMY 1:27}. 11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. 12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. 13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. 14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.*

EPHESIANS 5:3 *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.*

Obviously James advice in ACTS 15:20 to ...abstain from fornication,... is worthwhile advice, especially if one wishes to become a full overcomer and have God's

best. 1 THESSALONIANS 4:3 *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:...*

We have been speaking mainly of physical fornication. In REVELATION 2, and in REVELATION 17, 18 & 19 we read of spiritual fornication. In our "Hearing" study we went over this topic a little, and here is some of what we had to say.

What is spiritual adultery or spiritual fornication? Simply put this refers to spiritual unfaithfulness. The marriage relationship is inferred here. We understand the marriage relationship from the natural perspective. HEBREWS 13:4 tells us: *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled:...* HEBREWS 13:4 also goes on to state: *...but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.* We see this fact stated again also to the church in Thyatira. God Himself instituted the marriage relationship with the first man Adam and Eve back in GENESIS 2. GENESIS 2:24 *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.* We read of Adam only having one wife; Eve. Adam is a figure also to us of Christ. {Study ROMANS 5:14}. Jesus too will have one wife. Isaac also had one wife back in the days when men had more than one wife. Isaac too is a type of Jesus, who will have one wife. We covered this fact in our study of GENESIS 24. The Apostle Paul writes in 2 CORINTHIANS 11:2 *For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.* Paul is speaking of our close personal spiritual relationship with Christ. The Apostle Paul further contrasts the natural marriage, and the spiritual relationship with Jesus in EPHESIANS 5. EPHESIANS 5:23 *For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. ...31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.* Again in 1 CORINTHIANS 6, which we also read above, the Apostle Paul uses the natural physical things to illustrate and contrast the spiritual things. 1 CORINTHIANS 6:15 *Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. 16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. 17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. 18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.* Then in ROMANS 7 the Apostle Paul uses the facts of the law and the marriage relationship to further illustrate the spiritual view of Christ, and the fact that He will have a bride. ROMANS 7:1 *Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? 2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. 4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.* Spiritual adultery or spiritual fornication then is allowing something or someone else to have that headship that belongs to Christ. In other words spiritual adultery or spiritual fornication is having close unlawful intercourse with the world, and even sinking unto the depths of what Satan has to offer as spoken of in REVELATION 2:24. COLOSSIANS 2:8 tells us: *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.* Here is how JAMES 4:4 states it: *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.* John writes in 1 JOHN 2:15 *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 1 JOHN 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

Again 1 CORINTHIANS 6:18 *Flee fornication.* This is good scriptural advice.

Item (3) listed by James in ACTS 15:20 is *...that they abstain from things strangled,...* To properly understand this statement is to first recognize that things strangled still contain their blood within. Way before the law of Moses was given, God spoke these words unto Noah in GENESIS 9. GENESIS 9:1 *And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. 2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. 3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. 4 But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.* In other words God commanded Noah not to eat flesh that was strangled, because life was represented by the blood. This brings up the point James emphasized in item (4) listed in ACTS 15:20 *...that they abstain from blood.* To the Jew Moses stated in DEUTERONOMY 12:23 *Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh. 24 Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water. 25 Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD.* Here we see a little of what blood represented: *...for the blood is the life.* 1 PETER 1:18 & 19 tells us that we were redeemed with the precious shed blood of Jesus Christ. To this agree the words of Moses, who in LEVITICUS 17 explained what the blood represented, explaining that the life of the flesh is in the blood, and it is the blood, actually the shedding of the blood, that maketh atonement for the soul. LEVITICUS 17:10-14 explains it like this: LEVITICUS 17:10 *And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. 11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. 12 Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood. 13 And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust. 14 For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.* Again in LEVITICUS 19:26 we read: *Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood:...* The shedding of blood here pointed toward Calvary, where Jesus Christ willingly shed His precious life's blood for the remission of our sins. The Apostle Paul stated it like this in HEBREWS 9:22 *And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.* The Apostle Paul made several other commentaries on this same subject many times in his epistles.

For example ROMANS 3:22-26 (from Conybeare's translation): *God's righteousness (I say) which comes by faith in Jesus Christ, for all and upon all, who have faith; for there is no difference [between Jew and Gentile], 23 since all have sinned, and none have attained the glorious likeness of God. 24 But they are justified freely by His grace through the ransom which is paid in Christ Jesus. 25 For Him hath God set forth, in His blood to be a propitiatory sacrifice by means of Faith, thereby to manifest the righteousness of God; because in His forbearance God had passed over the former sins of men in the times that are gone by. 26 [Him (I say) hath God set forth] in this present time to manifest His righteousness, the He might be just, and [yet] might justify the children of Faith.*

ROMANS 5:8 *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. 11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

In EPHESIANS 1 we read: God -- 5 *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,* 6 *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.* 7 *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;...* In COLOSSIANS 1:14 we read a similar statement speaking of Jesus: *In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:....*

Having now examined these four suggestions by James we can now see how the Gentiles can keep from troubling the Jews. Keep in mind that James heart as a pastor was concerned mainly for the Jews, especially for the Jews which assembled by the thousands there in Jerusalem. Jews from all over the world came as often as they could to Jerusalem, like Jesus parents did in LUKE 2:41-52. The Jews who didn't live in Jerusalem had assemblies, called synagogues, in every city. To these very same synagogues came also a limited number of Gentiles to worship. Thus James concludes his advice with this statement found in ACTS 15:21 *For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.* In today's world we still have Jewish synagogues in nearly every city, however believing Gentiles for the most part meet in their own churches. The believing Jew is the minority, thus these four suggestions given by James, though worthwhile, are not heeded as much as they were in Paul's day. The full overcomer however heeds such advice, having seen the spiritual value in these instructions.

ACTS 15:22 *Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:* 23 *And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:* 24 *Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:* 25 *It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,* 26 *Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 27 *We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.* 28 *For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;* 29 *That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.*

This 15th chapter of ACTS is the last time we read of the Apostles and elders being assembled together. When Paul returns to Jerusalem in ACTS 21:17-20 no mention is made of the Apostles. Apparently by that time what was left of the Kingdom Apostles had finally left Jerusalem where they had stayed up until the time of ACTS 15. Jesus had spoken to His Apostles in ACTS 1:8 *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* Yet a close study of scripture shows that Peter and the rest of the Kingdom Apostles had not ventured out more than 100 miles from Jerusalem since the day of Pentecost. All of that would change after this conference of ACTS 15. It wasn't long after the Apostles and elders sent chosen men of their own company to travel back to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas that we find Peter himself in Antioch. GALATIANS 2:11 plainly tells us that.

ACTS 15:22 tells us that the two men chosen by the Apostles and elders were ...*Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren.* Judas surnamed Barsabas is only found mentioned in this 15th chapter of ACTS in verses 22, 27, and 32. In verse 33 Judas returns to Jerusalem. Barsabas means: "son of the host," so no doubt Judas surnamed Barsabas was a very hospitable man, and no doubt a man full of the Holy Ghost, with a good and proper understanding of the grace of God, and the spirit and intent of letter that was being sent unto the Gentiles.

Silas we know a little more about than Judas surnamed Barsabas. We studied him back in our Church Apostles study. Silas continued with Paul on Paul's second missionary journey, and in the process became a Church Apostle himself. We find this

fact out by comparing two scriptures in 1 THESSALONIANS, which, by the way, was written about two years after this conference at Jerusalem. Two years after this conference at Jerusalem, Silas was still traveling with the Apostle Paul. 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1 *Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. ...2:6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.* The apostles plural in 2 THESSALONIANS 2:6 is referring to Paul, Silas, and Timothy of 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1.

Silas is found by two names in scripture, Silas and Silvanus. Luke calls him Silas, and Paul and Peter address him as Silvanus. Silvanus is the Latin for Silas, and Silas is the name we have for him 13 times in ACTS. Four times we find Silas in scripture as Silvanus, which means his name is found in scripture 17 times. 17 is the number that has to do with VICTORY IN CHRIST JESUS, and certainly Silas many times demonstrated that fact in his life. You don't sing praises unto God at midnight while wrongly strung up as a prisoner without having complete VICTORY IN CHRIST JESUS, which is exactly what Silas did in ACTS 16:25, but we are getting a little ahead of ourselves here. Silas and the Latin Silvanus derives a meaning of "a wood" or "woody," coming from the Latin *sylva*. ACTS 16:37 indicates that Silas was a Roman citizen, just like Paul. ACTS 15:22 tells us that Silas, like Judas surnamed Barsabas, were chosen men from the assembly at Jerusalem, and considered chief men among the brethren. In other words Silas and Judas surnamed Barsabas were leaders from the church at Jerusalem. Obviously we will talk much about Silas as we progress through this study. For now just keep in mind that when Silas was chosen to go with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch with this letter from this conference, that he chose to stay with the Apostle Paul, and learn his teaching first hand, and didn't return unto Jerusalem until years later. After that time Peter makes mention of Silvanus in 1 PETER 5:12, again confirming that he was closely associated with those of the church at Jerusalem, and a long time acquaintance of Peter.

Having introduced Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, we find that Luke makes special mention of the letter of agreement that was sent out on the behalf of the Jerusalem assembly unto the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia. ACTS 15:22 *Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: 23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:...* . On the surface the mention of these three places may not mean much, but it gives great deal of insight to some of the behind the scenes as to what else took place at Jerusalem during the time of this conference.

Our story in ACTS 15 has Paul and Barnabas coming from Antioch in Syria, through Phenice and Samaria, to Jerusalem. Phenice and Samaria were regions north of Jerusalem, which were on the way to Jerusalem from Antioch. After coming from Antioch a city in Syria, we can see why a letter was addressed unto the Gentiles of this region. But Cilicia, why was a letter also addressed unto them? To answer this question we first must know what Cilicia was, a city or a country. In ACTS 23:34 we find that Paul was brought before the governor Felix, accused by the Jews of a crime. The chief Roman captain wrote a letter to governor Felix concerning Paul, and ACTS 23:34 tells us: *And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia;...* Furthermore ACTS 21:39 tells us: *But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia,...* . So we see that Cilicia was a province, and history tells us that the city Tarsus was the capital of Cilicia.

This still doesn't answer the question why a letter from this conference at Jerusalem was addressed to the Gentiles of Cilicia. This is where some statements from GALATIANS 1 & 2 help fill in the blanks, and also helps explain not only why the Gentiles of Cilicia were addressed in this letter, but why also this statement was made in ACTS 15:25 and 26: *It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

In GALATIANS 1 and the first part of GALATIANS 2 we find the Apostle Paul giving his time table as to what he was doing since being saved on the road to Damascus. After escaping Damascus he tells of returning to Jerusalem. This was three years after being saved. Let's pick up Paul's chronology starting in GALATIANS 1:18. *GALATIANS 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. 20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. 21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; 22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: 23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. 24 And they glorified God in me. GALATIANS 2:1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. 2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.*

Part of what we find out here is that fourteen years have passed since Paul first met Peter. Paul and Barnabas were probably in Jerusalem during the time Peter was held prisoner in ACTS 12, so probably Paul never got a chance to see Peter on that visit. However at this conference in Jerusalem in ACTS 15 Paul once again had a meeting with Peter. GALATIANS 2:2 tells us that at that time Paul, and Barnabas, and Titus had a private meeting with those of reputation in Jerusalem. Those of reputation in Jerusalem would include James the pastor of the church at Jerusalem, Peter and the rest of the Apostles, and some the elders of the church at Jerusalem, and maybe even Judas surnamed Barsabas and Silas. ACTS 15:4 Indicates as much, but doesn't tell of this private meeting per se. ACTS 15:4 *And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.* During this private meeting that GALATIANS 2:2 describes, Paul gives his testimony as to what has taken place in his life since he last saw Peter, fourteen years worth.

Recall that after Paul left Jerusalem, and Peter on his first visit there after being saved, ACTS 9:30 tells of how Paul was sent to Tarsus, his home town in the province of Cilicia. Paul confirms this in GALATIANS 1:21 *Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia:...* . We pointed out that these were not silent years for Paul. {Review these notes from the bottom of page 78 to see what we said there.} Everywhere that Paul went after being saved he preached, and he preached almost immediately. He first preached in Damascus shortly after being saved, and even though he didn't know much of the truth of the gospel that was later revealed unto him, he did preach the truth, and *...he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.* {ACTS 9:20}. So Paul preached in *...the regions of Syria and Cilicia:...* about five years, this was before Barnabas went to seek him out in ACTS 11:25. Conybeare and Howson note that a majority of the sufferings of Paul found listed in 2 CORINTHIANS 11:23-33 occurred during these so called five silent years. Paul and Barnabas together on their first missionary journey of ACTS 13 & 14 time frame also suffered many other hardships and trials, as are noted in those two chapters. Sometime on your own read again ACTS 13 & 14, and see again for yourself how Paul and Barnabas had *...hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* No doubt at this private meeting mentioned in GALATIANS 2:2 these trying facts were also brought up, which was the inspiration for these words of ACTS 15:26 *Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

So we note at this private meeting of GALATIANS 2:2, and ACTS 15:4 time frame, we see that after Paul gave his testimony a reason for those of Jerusalem to write also a letter unto the *...Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia.* Recall also {see page 278 of these notes} how we noted the fact that during this conference at Jerusalem, Barnabas was allowed to speak in ACTS 15:12, and then they heard a little from Paul. However the Jews of Jerusalem, as a whole, never even to this day have received Paul's gospel. Paul writes an epistle specifically addressed to the HEBREWS, but doesn't sign it with his name, for fear that the Jews won't even read it. However James, and Peter, and John during this private meeting in Jerusalem before this conference acknowledged the important place Paul had, especially in the ministry unto the Gentiles. Paul even indicates this in GALATIANS 2:9: *And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be*

pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, (the Gentiles) and they unto the circumcision (the Jew).

Having noted all of this, perhaps now the following portion of scripture is more meaningful to each one of us. ACTS 15:22 *Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: 23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: 24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: 25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; 29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.*

One very important point that was covered during this visit to Jerusalem, but not addressed in this conference, and not noted by Luke, is an agreement made in private between Paul and Barnabas, and the Kingdom Apostles in Jerusalem. This agreement is addressed in GALATIANS 2:9 & 10. GALATIANS 2:9 *And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. 10 Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.*

James we know was the pastor at Jerusalem. Cephas is another name for Peter. {Study JOHN 1:40-42}. John is the Apostle John. During the time of this conference at Jerusalem is the last time we read of the Apostle John until late in life when he writes First, Second, and Third JOHN and REVELATION.

These Kingdom Apostles gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, and acknowledged the fact that Paul and Barnabas should continue to go preach unto the Gentiles, and that they themselves were to continue to preach unto the Jews. Their one request of Paul and Barnabas was that they should remember the poor. The poor was in reference to the poor Saints in Jerusalem. Recall a statement made in ACTS 4:32-37, which explains the state of the church at Jerusalem.

ACTS 4:32 *And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. 33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. 36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, 37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

After reading this portion of scripture we see that Barnabas already was of a mind to remember the poor, for he long before this time of ACTS 15 had sold land and brought the money unto the apostles to distribute among the poor as the Lord laid it on their hearts. Now Paul writes in GALATIANS 2:10 *Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.*

The following portions of scripture show how Paul remembered the poor at Jerusalem. Actually even before this time Paul and Barnabas had made a missionary trip to Jerusalem for this very same reason, which was to remember the poor at Jerusalem. ACTS 11:27 *And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.*

29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

In ROMANS 15:25 & 26 Paul writes: *But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.* 2 CORINTHIANS 8 and 9 further explain how this collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem took place, which you can read and study on your own. Again in 1 CORINTHIANS 16:1-3 we read: *Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. 3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.*

In ACTS 24:17 Paul makes note of one of the reasons he came to Jerusalem during the time frame of his last visit there. ACTS 24:17 *Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.*

So we see as a result of this meeting at Jerusalem during the time frame of ACTS 15 that the Apostle Paul took up a collection for the poor Saints at Jerusalem, as had been privately suggested by James, Peter in John in GALATIANS 2:10 *Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.* The bringing of this collection to the Saints at Jerusalem was an underlying reason why the Apostle Paul endeavored to return there.

Paul and company return to Antioch

ACTS 15:30 *So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: 31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. 32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. 33 And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. 34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still. 35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.*

These six verses cover a several months time span. Let's examine these verses a little closer.

In ACTS 15:30 we find the word "dismissed." "Dismissed" carries with it the thought of being set free from bondage, and given liberty. The Apostle Paul was set forever free from the bondage of sin on the road to Damascus. Having grown up a strict observer of the law, Paul never realized until the day he was saved how much bondage the law put him under. And how thankful Paul was for being set free from the bondage of sin, and how he enjoyed the liberty, this new found freedom that he had in Christ Jesus. For that very reason no other author in scripture writes as much about bondage and liberty as the Apostle Paul. The very purpose of this conference at Jerusalem was to point out that Jesus came into this world *...to preach deliverance to the captives...*, and *...to set at liberty them that are bruised...* LUKE 4:18 tells us. And this being set free from bondage, and given liberty wasn't exclusive just to the Jew, but also was a gift freely given unto the Gentiles also. This feeling of bondage was brought upon the Gentiles in Antioch by *...false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage...* GALATIANS 2:4 tells us. This conference at Jerusalem forever settled the question between the bondage of sin and the law, and the liberty that all Christians have in Christ Jesus. This became the main subject of Paul's epistle unto the GALATIANS, to whom he wrote in GALATIANS 5:1 *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*

It is with this renewed sense of freedom and liberty that Paul and Barnabas and company leave Jerusalem, and come once again unto Antioch. ACTS 15:30 *So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: 31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the*