

*Gentiles.* The Greek word translated “rehearsed” here is *anaggello* {an-ang-el'-lo}, number 312 in The Strong’s Greek Concordance, which sounds to me like an angel. We learn in HEBREWS 1:14 that angels are ministering spirits, and by following the leading of the Holy Ghost the Apostles Paul and Barnabas too were ministers announcing the word of God everywhere they went. *Anaggello* {an-ang-el'-lo} means: to tell, to show, to declare, to rehearse, to speak, a report to announce, to make known, to report, or to bring back tidings. The good tidings was *...all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.* Did they highlight all that went wrong, and all the opposition they faced? Probably not, for what we find here is a highlight of *...all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.* How long did it take Paul and Barnabas to declare in their report all that the Lord had accomplished in this work that the Holy Ghost had sent them to? Probably this was an all day, and well into the evening event, and the subject of many Bible studies in future days. I am sure they didn’t get it all out in one session, but perhaps they did. For us ACTS 13 & 14 is our introduction to the teachings and preaching of the Apostle Paul, and how it was that the gospel of **the grace of God** and the door of faith was, in the beginning of his ministry, opened up, especially unto the Gentiles. The assembly at Antioch in Syria now was primarily an assembly of Gentiles as indicated in ACTS 13:1; GALATIANS 2:11 & 12; and ACTS 15.

ACTS 14:28 *And there they abode long time with the disciples.* We are not told how much time a “long time” was here in Antioch, Syria that Paul and Barnabas continued strengthening the Christians. We can be assured that they were not idle during this period of a “long time,” and also got some much needed rest, and Godly fellowship in this friendly environment.

### **A quick review of Paul’s first missionary journey**

Before we get into chapter 15, let’s spend a moment reflecting back on Paul’s first missionary journey, and view a few things we may not have noted before. We know Paul took this journey with Barnabas, and both were Jews, thus they went first to the Jewish synagogues to preach in every town, where they presented the gospel message. There was opposition from Satan everywhere they went. When the governor of Cyprus wanted to hear the word of God in ACTS 13, it was a Jew, a sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-jesus, surnamed Elymas, who opposed Paul and Barnabas. The power of the Holy Ghost came upon Paul, and the hand of the Lord came upon Elymas leaving him blind for a season. The governor, Sergius Paulus, witnessed all of this. Elymas was trying to turn the governor away from the faith, but after Paul confronted Elymas, the Gentile governor believed upon the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour becoming the first recorded Gentile convert on this missionary journey! No doubt there were many other Gentile converts along the way. Here Satan had used a Jew to oppose Paul’s gospel message, but the Lord gave a tremendous victory, and the word of God spread, and the word of God prevailed. The number for THE WORD OF GOD is thirty-seven, and thirty-seven times in scripture we find the word “prevailed.”

Secondly we noted in ACTS 13:16-41 Paul’s first recorded sermon in scripture, but did you notice whom it was addressed to? ACTS 13:16 gives the answer: *...Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.* Peter never addressed any of his congregations that way, for Peter was always speaking unto an assembly of Jews, thus Peter addressed his audiences as *...Men of Israel...* because Peter was sent unto the Jews, but Paul was sent mainly to the Gentiles. One time in ACTS 10, after much persuasion from the Holy Ghost, Peter did preach a sermon at the house of a Gentile named Cornelius, where he announced *...Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him...* ACTS 10:34 & 35. It took a long time for this fact to register in the hearts, and minds of the Jews, and some Jews didn’t embrace this until ACTS 15! Paul quickly learned on the day he was saved on the road to Damascus this fact, *...that God is no respecter of persons...* and that he was being sent forth to preach unto the Gentiles. Paul embraced this calling, and was not disobedient to the heavenly appearance of the Lord to him on the road to Damascus. That is why Barnabas took Paul to Antioch, Syria in

ACTS 11, to preach the grace of God unto the many Gentiles already in that assembly. Back in ACTS 13:16 in his sermon Paul also addressed the Gentiles in attendance with this statement *...Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.* And they all did give audience as Paul recounted the history of Israel from the time of Moses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead Paul emphasized four times in this short sermon. For a moment recall Paul's own words from 1 CORINTHIANS 15 as to the foundation of Paul's gospel message. 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3 *...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.* Now back to ACTS 13. Near the conclusion of this sermon all of those present, both Jew and Gentile, heard Paul announce in ACTS 13:38 & 39 -- *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.* That message was well received by the Gentiles in attendance that day, and they request that the next Sabbath day Paul preach unto them again these words. As you know when the next Sabbath day came *...almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the Word of the Lord...* ACTS 13:44, and we know that "almost the whole city" was Gentiles.

The heart attitude of the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia is revealed in ACTS 13:45 *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.* Here again Satan had used the Jew's to oppose Paul's gospel message, but the Lord gave a tremendous victory, and the word of God spread. ACTS 13:49 records: *And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.*

In ACTS 13:50 Paul and Barnabas were expelled from Antioch in Pisidia, but not until after *...as many as were ordained to eternal life believed...* ACTS 13:48.

This kind of opposition orchestrated by Satan continued in every city Paul and Barnabas went on this missionary journey, but according to ACTS 14:1 in Iconium *...a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.* And we find in ACTS 14:3 that Paul and Barnabas were there a long time, and spoke boldly in the Lord, who in turn granted untold signs and wonders to be done by the Apostles hands, a fact that will be again brought up in ACTS 15:12. As this happened Satan turned up the pressure, and an assault was made by both Jews and Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas, who were made aware of this attack, and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia of the Province of Galatia, where the preaching of the grace of God continued, as did the miracles from God. Prominent in ACTS 14 was the lame man being healed, and later Paul himself being raised from the dead after being stoned!

(When Paul writes his letter to the GALATIANS, he is addressing all the assemblies he visited on this first missionary journey.)

Paul and Barnabas continued preaching after Paul's stoning, exhorting the disciples in all of these cities to continue in the grace of God, teaching that *...we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God...* ACTS 14:22. Who was the "we" Paul and Barnabas were referring to? The answer is all believers, and since Luke wrote this I think we should appreciate the fact that Luke was highlighting the overcoming path that all full overcomers must face. The Holy Ghost didn't just leave this gem in scripture to inform us about the believers preached to in ACTS 13 & 14, but to encourage us also that *...we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God...* ACTS 14:22.

I find it most interesting that the word "**tribulation**" is only found this one time in Luke's writings. In total we find the word "**tribulation**" twenty-two times in scripture; twenty-two being the number of LIGHT. The true LIGHT of the world is Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, *...the light of the world...* JOHN 8:12 & 9:5. The Apostle Paul wrote the word "**tribulation**" eight times in his epistles, eight again being a number associated with the BRIDE of Christ. Where does she get her LIGHT? Study REVELATION 21 and 1 CORINTHIANS 15 to find the answer, which is sun glory light (1 CORINTHIANS 15:41).

As we continue our studies in ACTS we find that we are only half way through the writings of Luke in the book of ACTS. We have fourteen more “**tribulation**” filled chapters to go as Luke explains what took place in the life of our beloved Apostle Paul these next twelve or so years of his life. By the time Luke penned this book of ACTS we know that Luke knew full well Paul’s gospel message, and that it went far beyond ...*Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures...* 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3 & 4.

One may wonder how much of Paul’s gospel message did Paul preach here at Antioch in Pisidia? I believe Luke reveals that nothing was held back of Paul’s gospel message. One of the more important statements Paul made in his initial sermon concerned the heart attitude of the full overcomer, which was found in David. Paul mentions David four times in his sermon of ACTS 13, noting that David was a man after God’s own heart. ACTS 13:22 records that God ...*gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.* Paul here was referencing 1 SAMUEL 13:14 ...*the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart,...* . When Paul mentions that David too would ...*fulfill all my will,...* meaning God’s will, he was incorporating what David wrote in PSALMS 20. PSALMS 20 is a psalm of David, which in part says: 4 *Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.* 5 *We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions.* ACTS 13:22 is Holy Ghost inspired Pauline teaching! All New Testament full overcomers will have this same heart, a heart that seeks God’s best. We know from studying what Paul later wrote about David, that David was an Old Testament hero of faith, a full overcomer. So we find Paul here pointing out a quality of a full overcomer, and all the full overcomers from this Church Age will be in that company known as the Bride of Christ. Paul would later write in EPHESIANS 5:17 *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.* Luke knew Paul’s gospel message.

Did Paul teach about the in filling of the Holy Ghost on this first missionary journey? Again Luke answers this question in ACTS 13:52 noting: *And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.* Obviously Paul taught them about the Holy Ghost, because Paul taught them also about the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. This was all a part of Paul’s gospel message. Furthermore the Gospel of the Church was given unto the Apostle Paul to preach; to preach about 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, which the Kingdom Apostle taught. The Apostle Paul ...*expounded and testified the kingdom of God,...* ...*Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence,...* as ACTS 28:23 and 31 plainly tell us. But Paul’s gospel message went way beyond preaching the kingdom of God on earth, for Paul also preached the of ...*His heavenly kingdom...* in 2 TIMOTHY 4:18, and of ...*the high calling of God in Christ Jesus...* in PHILIPPIANS 3:14, and he preached about the gospel of His glory in 2 CORINTHIANS 4:4, and 1 TIMOTHY 1:11. Paul preached about meeting the Lord in the air in 1 THESSALONIANS 4:17, and reigning with Him in 2 TIMOTHY 2:12; reigning as a sugkleronomos joint-heir with Christ in ROMANS 8:17. What we are pointing out here in ACTS 13 & 14 is that the Apostle Paul was sent forth by the Holy Ghost to preach the gospel message he was given in Arabia to preach according to GALATIANS 1:17. Even though we don’t read these exact statements in ACTS 13 & 14, realize that Paul taught his full gospel message everywhere he went. As to the depths of what Paul taught we are not told by Luke, but know for a fact that those who embraced Paul’s gospel message on this first missionary journey were taught these truths as Paul was led of the Holy Ghost to teach them. As we read in ACTS 14:23 when Paul and Barnabas left each church they had been privileged to establish, they did so after ...*they commended (entrusted) them to the Lord, on whom they believed.*

As we begin exploring ACTS 15 and beyond realized that our beloved Apostle Paul has not yet written one epistle; not one of his one hundred chapters! Neither do we find mentioned thus far in Luke’s writings any mention of Paul being in prison, for those times of testing, and “**tribulation**” had

not yet happened in Paul's life. Some of the events that have happened thus far (through ACTS 14) in Paul's life, Paul will again mention in his epistles, but had it not been for our brother in the Lord, Luke documenting these events, we wouldn't have the whole story. Thank God for our brother Luke.

### **Covenant of Circumcision**

Before we begin studying ACTS 15 we need to appreciate the important foundation the Holy Ghost inspired Luke to write concerning the "**covenant of circumcision**," and he did so in recording Stephen's sermon of ACTS 7. Stephen starts his sermon speaking about Abraham, and says in ACTS 7:8 *And he (God) gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.* And it was by the teaching of the Apostle Paul that our Gentile brother in the Lord, Luke, understood both the meaning of the words "**covenant**," and "**circumcision**," and the meaning of the "**covenant of circumcision**." And if we too understand these two words, the teaching found in ACTS 15 will be perhaps more clear, and meaningful. So as an introduction to ACTS 15, let's first define, and discuss these two words, and their meaning: "**covenant**," and "**circumcision**." This will be a rather lengthy discussion.

The word "**covenant**" in the New Testament is only found in the writings of the Apostle Paul, and Luke. Luke writes it three times, and the Apostle Paul seventeen times. The word "**covenant**" according to Webster's Dictionary is "a binding and solemn agreement made by two or more individuals, parties, etc. to do or keep from doing a specific thing." Unger's Bible Dictionary further explains that the term "**covenant**" is applied to various transactions between God and man, or man and fellow-man, and comes from the Hebrew word ber-eeth' (number 01285 in The Strong's Hebrew Concordance), which means: cutting. If the "**covenant**" is between God and man, it is an alliance (of friendship), and/or a **covenant** (divine ordinance with signs or pledges).

The first example of a "**covenant**" that we will discuss is the "**covenant**" between God and Noah found in GENESIS 9. GENESIS 9:8 *And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, 9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; 10 And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. 11 And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. 12 And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: 13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. 14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: 15 And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. 17 And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.*

The "**covenant**" between God and Noah found here in GENESIS 9 concerns the rainbow. In these verses we just read you find the word "**covenant**" seven times, the number of SPIRITUAL PERFECTION, whom God is. The first mention of a "**covenant**" between God and Noah is in GENESIS 6:18, which reads: *But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.* Thus we find in total here in GENESIS concerning the story of Noah, the word "**covenant**" mentioned eight times. Of the five different meanings we have studied of the number eight, which meaning applies here to the word "**covenant**" between God and Noah? This "**covenant**" between God and Noah, and all flesh found in GENESIS 9 given after the flood points to the NEW BEGINNING for perpetual generations as noted in GENESIS 9:12. Thus we are all descendant of Noah. This "**covenant**" between God and Noah, and all flesh has the sign of a rainbow to remind us that God made this "**covenant**" with us!

Before we move on in our discussion of the word “**covenant**,” let’s briefly discuss for a moment the meaning of the word “**token**,” which is found three times in the text we just read in GENESIS 9. The Hebrew word translated “**token**” here is number 0226 in The Strong’s Hebrew Concordance, the Hebrew word 'owth {oth}, (sounds like our English word “oath”), and simply means: a sign; or a distinguishing mark. The Holy Ghost inspired the word “**token**” to be written exactly fourteen times in scripture; fourteen being the number associated with DELIVERANCE or SALVATION! Ten of the fourteen times that we find the word “**token**” is in The Old Testament, and “**token**” is always the Hebrew word 'owth {oth}. Recall for a moment that ten is the number of RESPONSIBILITY ACCORDING TO ABILITY, thus the **token**, the sign of the rainbow, is God’s responsibility according to His endless ability to do exceeding abundantly above all we could ever ask or think, (see EPHESIANS 3:20). None of us are ever asked to provide the **token** of the rainbow because that is God’s promise between Him and all flesh as we just read in GENESIS 9.

This binding and solemn agreement, this “**covenant**” between God and Noah, God said in GENESIS 9:15 *...is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.* We have all seen a rainbow, which is God’s sign of this binding and solemn agreement God made with us back in the days of Noah. This “**covenant**” is not dependent on you doing anything is it? Paul wrote in 2 CORINTHIANS 1:20 *For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen...* . When we see a rainbow we are to be reminded of this binding and solemn agreement God made with us back in the days of Noah, and thank Him for this “**covenant**,” His unbreakable promise.

Kawen Harrell gave a short study on rainbows at a men’s dinner last year where he mentioned some interesting facts concerning the rainbow. Let me mention some points Kawen discovered as he shared his notes with me. The rainbow is created by white light, and water. Kawen pointed out that white represents righteousness, light Jesus, and water the word of God. In order to see a rainbow we have to see the light dispersed at a 42 degree angle. Forty-two is the number associated with a HEAVENLY APPEARANCE. The rainbow is a HEAVENLY APPEARANCE. There are six colors found in a rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. Red is found as the outer color of a rainbow, and reminds us Christ’s precious blood that He shed for us upon Calvary. Kawen mentioned that the orange color reminded him of fire, and the fiery trials we must face in pursuing God’s best in our lives. The next prominent color seen in the rainbow is yellow/gold which symbolizes deity, or divine life. JOHN 3:15 tells us: *That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* Next on the interior of the rainbow you will see the color green, which pictures resurrection. Blue is the next color, which pictures heaven. On the inner most part of the rainbow we find the color purple, the color of royalty. One thing I didn’t know about the rainbow until Kawen pointed it out was the difference in the shade of light between the outer part of the rainbow, and the inner part of the rainbow. The inner portion is always brighter to remind us that Jesus the Light of the world! Now the next time you see a rainbow you will see a visual sermon, and a reminder of this “**covenant**” between God and the earth, (GENESIS 9:13), and between God *...and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh....* GENESIS 9:15. According to EZEKIEL 1:28 we find the appearance of a rainbow akin to the glory of the LORD. EZEKIEL 1:28 *As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.* I guarantee that you now will look at a rainbow with more knowledge, and appreciation of this **everlasting covenant** God made with Noah after the flood! And each rainbow that you see in the future should preach a sermon to your heart.

We have now defined what a “**covenant**” is, and have given an example of how this works. In GENESIS 12:1-3 we read of a “**covenant**” God made with Abram in Ur of the Chaldees, before he was called Abraham. GENESIS 12:1 *Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: 2 And I*

*will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* The condition of this **covenant** was that Abram was to leave his country, leave all of his kindred, leave his father's house, and to follow the leading of the Lord into the land which the Lord would show him. Obviously these are great steps of faith. In return the Lord promised Abram the following seven things in this **covenant**: (1) that the Lord would make Abram increase into a great nation; (2) that the Lord would bless Abram spiritually, and materially; (3) that the Lord would make Abram's name great; (4) that the Lord would make Abram a blessing, (5) that the Lord would bless those that blessed Abram, (6) that the Lord would curse those who cursed Abram, and (7) that the Lord would make Abram to be a blessing to all the families of the earth! In GENESIS 12:7 Abram has arrived in the land that the Lord sent him into, and we read: *And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.* Here we find the eighth promise of the Lord in this "**covenant**" God made with Abram, before he was called Abraham, and that being: (8) *...Unto thy seed will I give this land.* These last two promises, that the Lord would make Abram to be a blessing to all the families of the earth, and *...Unto thy seed will I give this land...* are fulfilled in Abraham's seed meaning Jesus Christ, which is clearly explained in GALATIANS 3:16. GALATIANS 3:16 *Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.* The phrase "thy seed" is found seventy times in scripture, seventy being the number associated with RULERSHIP. GENESIS 12:4 tells us that this Abrahamic **covenant** was made when Abram was seventy-five years old.

What we call this **Abrahamic covenant** was confirmed by the Lord to Abraham four more times: GENESIS 13:14-17; GENESIS 15; GENESIS 17:1-8 when Abram was ninety-nine years old, and GENESIS 22:15-18 after offering Isaac upon the altar. In GENESIS 13:14-17 The Lord gave Abram some more details concerning this **covenant**. GENESIS 13:14 *And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: 15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. 16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. 17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.*

In GENESIS 15 we find the first vision mentioned in the Bible, where God conveyed some additional information concerning this **covenant** to Abram in the following verses. GENESIS 15:1 *After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. 2 And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? (Abram was asking God for a sign with this line of questioning wasn't he?) 3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. 4 And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. 5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. (Did Abram here believe God? In other words did Abram here believe that he was going to have an heir, even though at this point in time he was childless? Our next verse answers these questions.) 6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness. GENESIS 15:6 is a foundational verse of scripture that is also referenced in ROMANS 4:3, 4:9, 4:22; GALATIANS 3:6; and JAMES 2:23. Paul quoted this verse in ROMANS 4:3 writing: *For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. And please note that ...Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness... years before he was circumcised.* GENESIS 15:7 *And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. ...18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: 19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, 20 And the Hittites, and**

*the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, 21 And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.*

In GENESIS 16 Ishmael was born of the bondwoman Hagar, a product of the flesh as is explained in GALATIANS 4:23. GALATIANS 4:23 *But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh;... .* Ishmael was born when Abram was eighty-six years old according to GENESIS 16:16.

We are going to now spend some time in GENESIS 17, which lays the foundation of the “**covenant of circumcision**,” which Stephen referenced in ACTS 7:8. GENESIS 17:1 *And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. 2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. 3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, 4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. 5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. (Abram means: “father of elevation,” “exalted father,” “father is exalted,” or “high father.” Abraham means: “father of a multitude,” or as we read here in GENESIS 17:5 “father of many nations.”) 6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. 8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.* These verses again confirm the **covenant** God made with Abraham when he was seventy-five years old in GENESIS 12, and now here in GENESIS 17 Abraham is ninety-nine.

Then God gave Abraham the “**covenant of circumcision**” in the following verses of Holy scripture. GENESIS 17:9 *And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. 10 This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be **circumcised**. 11 And ye shall **circumcise** the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a **token** of the covenant betwixt me and you. 12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. 13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not **circumcised**, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.*

Was Abraham saved before he was **circumcised**? The answer is yes, for we read earlier in GENESIS 15:6 *And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.* Understand this point, that Abraham believed God, and was saved years before he was **circumcised**. **Circumcision** has nothing to do with salvation. So why then was this **covenant of circumcision** given? The answer is found in our text in GENESIS 17:11 *And ye shall **circumcise** the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a **token** of the covenant betwixt me and you.* **Circumcision** was a **token** of the **covenant** between God and Abraham. Remember in GENESIS 15:2 & 3 Abram was asked God *...what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless,... ...to me thou hast given no seed:... ?* God didn’t there give Abram a sign, even so GENESIS 15:6 tells us that Abram *...believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.* Abraham was a man of faith! And now here all these years later in GENESIS 17 God gave Abraham this “**token**,” a sign. The Hebrew word translated “**token**” here again is number 0226 in The Strong’s Hebrew Concordance, the Hebrew word 'owth {oth}, (sounds like our English word “oath), and simply means: a sign; or a distinguishing mark. Remember the distinguishing mark, or sign God gave Noah in the “**covenant**” between God and Noah found in GENESIS 9? The distinguishing sign God gave Noah in the “**covenant**” between God and Noah is the rainbow. God called the rainbow a “**token**” in the following verses of GENESIS 9. GENESIS 9:12 *And God said, This is the **token** of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: 13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it*

*shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. ...17 And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth. When we see a rainbow we are witnessing the token of the “covenant” between God and Noah, and all flesh. In like manner **circumcision** was a token, the distinguishing sign, the distinguishing mark of the covenant between God and Abraham that ...in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed... GENESIS 12:3. The Holy Ghost inspired the word “token” to be written exactly fourteen times in scripture; fourteen being the number associated with DELIVERANCE or SALVATION!*

God gave Abraham the “**covenant of circumcision**” when Abraham was ninety-nine years old. GENESIS 17:23 *And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s house; and **circumcised** the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him. 24 And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was **circumcised** in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was **circumcised** in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 In the selfsame day was Abraham **circumcised**, and Ishmael his son. 27 And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were **circumcised** with him.*

Also in GENESIS 17:15-19 God told Abraham that his ninety year old wife would have a son. GENESIS 17:19 *And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.* This is the first mention of Isaac in scripture.

Now let’s read GENESIS 21:1 *And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. 2 For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3 And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. 4 And Abraham **circumcised** his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him.* Now let’s read the last part of GENESIS 21:12 where God said to Abraham *...for in Isaac shall **thy seed** be called.* Recall the reference here to “**thy seed**” is a reference to Christ. Again we read this in GALATIANS 3:16 *Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to **thy seed**, which is Christ.*

So we see that **circumcision** was a token, the distinguishing sign of the covenant between God and Abraham that ...in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed... GENESIS 12:3. The word “**circumcision**” is found in thirty-two verses of scripture. What I find interesting about this fact is that the number thirty-two, which we learned in our study decades ago of the meaning of the Bible numbers, means COVENANT. Paul writes the word “**circumcision**” in twenty-six of these thirty-two verses. Twenty-six is the number associated with the GOSPEL, or the GOOD NEWS of the GOSPEL. The Apostle Paul then is the New Testament Apostle that explains the spiritual application of what “**circumcision**” truly means. “**Circumcision**” thus speaks to the new creation, the cutting off of the flesh speaks to the old creation.

The Apostle Paul explains the spiritual application of what “**circumcision**” means in the following scriptures. ROMANS 4:1 *What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? ... 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. ...5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. ...7 ...Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. 9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the **circumcision** only, or upon the **uncircumcision** also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in **circumcision**, or in **uncircumcision**? Not in **circumcision**, but in **uncircumcision**. 11 And he received the sign of **circumcision**, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being **uncircumcised**: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not **circumcised**; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: 12 And the father of **circumcision** to them who are not of the **circumcision** only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham,*

which he had being yet **uncircumcised**. 13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. ...16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, 17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. 18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. 19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: 20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. 22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

As a quick review, God gave Abram some promises before he was called Abraham, starting in GENESIS 12, when Abram was still in Ur of the Chaldees. GENESIS 12:1 *Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* These promises made by God, who can not lie, to Abraham are called the **Abrahamic covenant**, and were confirmed by the Lord to Abraham four more times: GENESIS 13:14-17; GENESIS 15; GENESIS 17:1-8 when Abraham was ninety-nine years old, and GENESIS 22:15-18 after offering Isaac upon the altar. Additionally as a token, or a sign of this **Abrahamic covenant**, God gave Abraham the "**covenant of circumcision**" in GENESIS 17:9-14, which is summarized in GENESIS 17:11. GENESIS 17:11 *And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.* **Circumcision** then was this sign, or a **token** of the **covenant** between God and Abraham. In GENESIS 17:23-27 we find Abraham and all the men of his household were **circumcised** on the selfsame day God gave Abraham the "**covenant of circumcision**." Thus we see that **circumcision** was a **token**, the distinguishing sign of the **covenant** between God and Abraham that ...in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed... GENESIS 12:3.

The **covenant** between God and Abraham was confirmed to Abraham for a fifth time after the offering of Isaac in GENESIS 22. GENESIS 22:15 *And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, 16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: 17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; 18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.* The reference in verse 18 to "**thy seed**" is a again reference to Christ in whom ...shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

The **covenant** between God and Abraham, the **Abrahamic covenant**, was confirmed unto Isaac, Abraham's son, in GENESIS 26 after Rebekah bare him the twins Esau and Jacob. GENESIS 26:2 *And the LORD appeared unto him, (Isaac) and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: 3 Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father; 4 And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; 5 Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.*

The **covenant** between God and Abraham was confirmed yet again unto Isaac's son Jacob in GENESIS 28, whose name was later changed to Israel in GENESIS 32:28. GENESIS 28:10 *And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. 11 And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. 12 And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set*

up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. 13 And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; 14 And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. One more time let's read again GALATIANS 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel) are often referred to in the scriptures as “**the fathers,**” meaning “**the fathers**” of the children of Israel, which they are. ROMANS 9:4 & 5 explains: *Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; 5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.* The **covenant of circumcision** was God's mark of death upon all mankind, and was taken of Israel of that outward **covenant** with God, that their fathers had made with God concerning **the promises** God made with them. GALATIANS 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were **the promises** made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Brother Copley in his PHILIPPIANS study book wrote: “**Circumcision** refers to the cutting off of the old creation thru Christ's death on the cross. **Circumcision** under the old **covenant** had the cross in view. By being **circumcised**, Abraham acknowledged that he had no strength to be useful and fruitful, but that God had to intervene for him supernaturally. That was the fact exactly. Not till Abraham and Sarah were past the reproductive age was Isaac born, a type of the new creation, which is wholly supernatural and spiritual. COLOSSIANS 2:11 is a clear and invincible explanation of **circumcision**. “*In whom (Christ) also ye were (past tense, note) **circumcised** (cut off) with a **circumcision** (a cutting off) not made by a hand, in the putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh in the **circumcision** (cutting off) of Christ.*” This must mean the death of Christ; for the next verse declares boldly that “*God raised Him from the dead,*” and raised us up with Him. When Jesus died, we all died with Him. When He was **circumcised** (or cut off) for us, we were cut off too. The real **circumcision** was the cutting off of the old creation thru Christ's death on the cross.” {End of quoting Brother Copley.}

Sister Bodie wrote the following in her GENESIS study notes: “We have put off the body of the flesh, by the **circumcision** of Christ; for the Cross was where the antitypical **circumcision** was carried out. This was where the old creation was cut off in the purpose of God. The axe was laid at the root of the bad tree and it fell with all its boasted pomp and power - all the glory of the old Adamic race passed away. Christians are not counted as being in the flesh by God's reckoning. We are counted to be in Christ. As we have received Him by faith, so we should walk in Him, even as Abram was admonished to walk before God and be perfect. God Almighty promised to back him up. As Abraham took a step of faith, God was right behind him to strengthen him to take another step. To be weak practically is to be strong practically. Paul tells us the result of the faith of such a weak fellow. “*Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude and as the sand of the seashore innumerable.*” HEBREWS 11:12. Abram and his sentence of death is but a foreshadowing of Christ's death on the cross, which is the basis of the **covenant of promise.**” {End of quoting Sister Bodie.}

God's “**covenant of circumcision**” that he made with Abraham said: GENESIS 17:12 *And he that is eight days old shall be **circumcised** among you,...* . In GENESIS 21:4 we read: *And Abraham **circumcised** his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him.* Stephen repeated this fact in ACTS 7:8 in his sermon before the Sanhedrin. ACTS 7:8 *And he (God) gave him (Abraham) the **covenant of circumcision**: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and **circumcised** him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.* LUKE 1:59 informs us that John the Baptist was **circumcised** on the eighth day: *And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to **circumcise** the child;...* (John the Baptist). Jesus was **circumcised** on the eighth day: LUKE 2:21

And when eight days were accomplished for the **circumcising** of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And the Apostle Paul records in PHILIPPIANS 3:5 that he too was: **Circumcised the eighth day**...

To finish our discussion on the “**covenant of circumcision**” let’s review some of what the Apostle Paul wrote us in New Testament scripture. 1 CORINTHIANS 7:19 **Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.** GALATIANS 3:6 **Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. 7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. 8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. ...13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: 14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. 15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. 16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. 17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, (make of none effect; to make void) that it should make the promise of none effect. 18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.** We read in ROMANS 10:4 **For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.** Thus we are not under the law. GALATIANS 5:6 **For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.** Paul repeats this thought in GALATIANS 6:15 **For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.** Believers are a NEW CREATION (new creature) in Christ Jesus. Recall also that NEW CREATION is one of the five meanings associated with the number eight! Jesus was **circumcised** on the eighth day symbolizing NEW CREATION. 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 states the thought of NEW CREATION like this: **Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: (NEW CREATION) old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.** PHILIPPIANS 3:3 **For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.** COLOSSIANS 2:11 **In whom (in Christ) also ye ~~are~~ (were) circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.**

A couple more final thoughts concerning the “**covenant of circumcision**” that God made with Abraham, and what was said in GENESIS 17:12 **And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you**... . This has both a symbolic, and a physical application. The eighth day is symbolic of the NEW CREATION that we have in Christ Jesus; a NEW BEGINNING. But there also was a physical reason as to why God proclaimed the eighth day as to when the baby boys were to be **circumcised**. That reason is explained in a book entitled “None of These Diseases” written by S. I. McMillen, M.D. first published in 1967. The title comes from EXODUS 15:26, which reads: **And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.** Doctor McMillen explained in his book that **circumcision** has medical benefits unknown to man prior to the 1900’s, and medical studies showed two common forms of cancer were virtually nonexistent because of **circumcision**. Furthermore studies done in the 1940’s revealed that the safest day to do a **circumcision** on a newborn is the eighth day. The medical reason why the safest day to do a **circumcision** on a newborn is the eighth day is because a newborn infant has peculiar susceptibility to bleeding between the second and fifth days of life due to the fact that the important blood clotting element of vitamin K is not formed in the normal amount until the fifth to seventh day of life according to studies done by L. Emmett Holt, and Rustin McIntosh. Thus, medically speaking, the first safe day to do a **circumcision** is the eighth day. Secondly another element that is also

necessary for the clotting of blood is prothrombin, a protein present in blood plasma, which in a newborn skyrockets on the eighth day of life to a level 110% of normal. Thus again the safest day to perform a **circumcision** is the eighth day of life.

Four thousand years before these medical discoveries were made God already knew, and foreordained from before the foundation of the earth, that medically speaking the safest day to perform a **circumcision** on a newborn is the eighth day of life.

As we read earlier in LUKE 2:21 Jesus was **circumcised** on the eighth day of His life. LUKE 2:21 *And when eight days were accomplished for the **circumcising** of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.* The first time Jesus uncorrupt, and precious blood was shed was on the eighth day of His life when He was **circumcised**, foreshadowing that day some thirty-three years later when His life in the flesh would be cut off upon the cross of Calvary. LEVITICUS 17:11 tells us: *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.* Upon the cross of Calvary Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and rose again three days later upon the first day of the week, which is also the eighth day, the NEW BEGINNING of a new week. Eight is also a number of RESURRECTION because Jesus arose from the dead upon the eighth day, the first day of the week! In JOHN 11:25 & 26 Jesus says: *I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.* HEBREWS 10:4 tells us: *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.* But we read in 1 JOHN 1:7 that *...the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* Concerning Jesus Christ, and His blood, we read in COLOSSIANS 1:14 *In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.* Again we find this same thing stated in EPHESIANS 1:7 *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.* During His earthly ministry Jesus, who is before all things, and by whom all things consist, had no problem forgiving sins, healing the sick, making the lame walk, causing the blind to see, and even raising the dead.

## ACTS 15

Paul and Barnabas were back preaching and teaching for a long time in Antioch, Syria after their missionary journey according to ACTS 14:28. Then the events of ACTS 15 happened, which Brother Copley wrote: "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 quoting Brother Copley.}

ACTS 15:1 *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.* (The reason scripture says that they *...came down from Judaea...* (Jerusalem) is because Jerusalem is 2400 feet above sea level, and Antioch, Syria is around 200 feet above sea level. Thus Antioch, Syria is down in elevation from Jerusalem, but as we view it on a map, Antioch, Syria is 300 plus miles up from Jerusalem, if that make more sense.) One thing we should have learned from our discussion above on the "**covenant of circumcision**" that God made with Abraham is that **circumcision** has nothing to do with salvation. GENESIS 15:6 tells us that *...Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness...* and the Holy Ghost saw to it that this fact was repeated in five New Testament scriptures: ROMANS 4:3, 4:9, 4:22; GALATIANS 3:6; and JAMES 2:23. EPHESIANS 2:8 & 9 emphatically tells us: *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.* Paul and Barnabas had been preaching and teaching for a long time in Antioch *...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...* as EPHESIANS 2:8 & 9 states. Abraham was saved the very same way, by believing God. Abraham believed God years before he was circumcised. Here in ACTS 15:1 "certain men," who are called "false brethren" in

GALATIANS 2:4, came from Jerusalem up to Antioch, Syria ...and said, *Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.* In ACTS 15:5 we read that certain Pharisees that believed in Jerusalem were teaching: ...*That it was needful to circumcise them, (the Gentiles) and to command them to keep the law of Moses.*

Was this the common teaching of the church at Jerusalem, that one had to be circumcised before they could be saved? The short answer is no, and recall in ACTS 11 after Peter returned from visiting the Gentile house of Cornelius, that Peter made it clear that the Gentiles present in Cornelius' house were not only saved, but filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake in other tongues during Peter's short visit to Cornelius' house. And after explaining these events to the Saints at Jerusalem the conclusion was stated in ACTS 11:18. ACTS 11:18 *When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.* The time frame of this statement was six to ten years before ACTS 15:1. Again we repeat ROMANS 10:4 *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* Let me give you one more scripture here to further prove that **circumcision** has nothing to do with salvation. GALATIANS 2:16 tells us: *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.* So again we see that **circumcision** has nothing to do with salvation, and that salvation is a free gift given to all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. {Study ACTS 16:30 & 31.} The Apostle Paul teaches in ROMANS 10:9-13 the following: *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12 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.* One of the reason Paul wrote what he did here in ROMANS 10 is because of what took place in our lesson of ACTS 15.

This false teaching that one had to be circumcised after manner of Moses before they could be saved had to be addressed, which as done here in ACTS 15. And just what was this circumcision after manner of Moses? We read in JOHN 1:17 *For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* The law that Moses gave concerning circumcision was a repetition of what God gave Abraham some four hundred and thirty years earlier in GENESIS 17:9-14, which is summarized in LEVITICUS 12:3 in this statement concerning a newborn man child: *And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.* Moses gave this law during the time frame when they were first wandering in the wilderness. So how diligently did the children of Israel follow this law Moses gave them? JOSHUA 5:4-7 gives the answer. JOSHUA 5:4 *And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt. 5 Now all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised. 6 For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD sware that he would not shew them the land, which the LORD sware unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey. 7 And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way.* Obviously the people born in the wilderness during those forty years that the children of Israel wandered therein were not circumcised, because they did not follow the law Moses gave them in LEVITICUS 12:3.

PROVERBS 6:16-19 lists seven things that the Lord hates, and the last two found in PROVERBS 6:19 are: *A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.* ACTS 15:1 & 2 prove this point. ACTS 15:1 *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.* GALATIANS 2:4 informs us that these men from Judaea were “false brethren” that spoke these lies, and sowed discord among the brethren at Antioch, Syria. Luke records here in ACTS 15:2 ...that Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them... . The Greek word translated “dissension” is stasis {stas'-is}, number 4714 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, meaning: sedition; an uproar; an insurrection; strife; and dissension. Nine times in New Testament scripture we find the word stasis {stas'-is}, but only Luke uses the word “dissension.” The Greek word translated “disputation” here in ACTS 15:2 is suzetesis {sood-zay'-tay-sis}, number 4803 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, meaning: mutual questioning, disputation, discussion, and Luke is the only one in New Testament scripture to use this word, and he does so here in ACTS 15:2 (disputation); ACTS 15:7 (disputing); and ACTS 28:29 (reasoning). If you think about it, Paul and Barnabas had already spent the better part of two years on their recently completed missionary journey dealing with ...*dissension and disputation*... from the Jews in most of the cities they had presented the gospel message, thus the Holy Ghost had already well prepared them for this current encounter. This time however Paul and Barnabas had the backing of that now well established church at Antioch, Syria who ...*determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.*

So Paul and Barnabas are going back to Jerusalem together again like they did in ACTS 11:26, but this time their mission was to settle once and for all why this question if circumcision was necessary for ones salvation was being taught. And as we just read Paul and Barnabas are going to take with them ...*certain other of them*... from the church at Antioch. Our brother in the Lord, Luke, doesn't mention who this ...*certain other of them*... was, but the Holy Ghost instead had our Apostle Paul tell us who this brother was, and he does so in GALATIANS 2. In fact GALATIANS 2 pretty much fills in all the details that Luke left out in writing ACTS 15. We are not faulting Luke because the Holy Ghost inspired Luke to document sixty-five years of early church history in chronological order in his writing The Gospel According to LUKE, and THE ACTS, and address both of these letters to a guy named Theophilus, a prominent man in the church at Antioch. The Holy Ghost inspired the Apostle Paul to write in his epistles the distinguishing doctrines that Paul taught in his one hundred chapters of New Testament scripture. Luke, being a star pupil of the Apostle Paul, and a close follower of Paul, also recorded Paul's teachings, as we have already seen in our studies of what Luke has written up to this point in ACTS.

This mystery person who Luke calls ...*certain other of them*... in ACTS 15:2 was Titus. Why Luke never mentions Titus in his writings is a mystery to me, for certainly Luke knew Titus. We have mentioned previously that both Luke, and Titus, it seems, got to know the Apostle Paul during the time he was teaching at Antioch, Syria. No doubt Luke and Titus were both star students of Paul's teaching, and very well learned Paul's gospel message. Also we know that both Titus and Luke were close followers of the Apostle Paul, and are both also mentioned in Paul's last written words of 2 TIMOTHY 4. Paul writes Timothy in 2 TIMOTHY 4:9 *Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: 10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.* Thus we see that both Luke, and Titus were indeed close followers of the Apostle Paul, and by the time of this writing in 2 TIMOTHY had traveled far and wide with the Apostle Paul. We have been studying the testimony of Luke in the fifty-two chapters of New Testament scripture he wrote us, but now for a moment let's learn a little of the testimony of Titus, who here in ACTS 15:2 Luke calls ...*certain other of them*... .

GALATIANS 2:3 explains that Titus was a Greek, a Gentile, and that he ...*was compelled to be circumcised*... by these ...*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*... ACTS 15:1.

Titus name means: nurse, or rearer. Titus was one of two nurses mentioned in New Testament scripture. The Apostle Paul was the other, who writes in 1 THESSALONIANS 2:7 & 8 --

*But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: 8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.* Thus we find the Apostle Paul, and Titus too were the two nurses mentioned in the New Testament spiritually akin to Rebekah's nurse Deborah, the worker bee who cared for Rebekah, and instructed her the word. Titus also became one of the Church Apostles, meaning he was one sent forth with orders from the Lord to teach Paul's gospel message. Brother Copley notes that "the word "apostle" is from "apo," meaning "away," and from "stello," which means "to set in order, or arrange, to furnish, equip, get ready." Hence, "apostello," or apostle, literally means to arrange for, to furnish and send away on service." {End of quoting Brother Copley.} In TITUS 1:5 we find that Titus was sent to Crete to set in order, or arrange, to furnish, equip, get ready the church at Crete, thus doing the work of an Apostle. TITUS 1:5 *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.* Also 2 CORINTHIANS 8:16-23 further explains Titus status as a Church Apostle, who was sent to Corinth as a fellow helper to Paul, and the service of the Lord. 2 CORINTHIANS 8:23 reads: *Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.* The word "messenger" here comes from the Greek word apostolos {ap-os'-tol-os} translated 78 times in the New Testament apostle. Titus was a Church Apostle in the time frame of 2 CORINTHIANS. A Church Apostle taught Paul's gospel message.

Let's now review where we are in our studies of ACTS 15, and incorporate some more of what we learn in GALATIANS 2 that sheds light on what we read here in ACTS 15. ACTS 15:1 *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.* We learn from GALATIANS 2 that Titus went with Paul and Barnabas on this journey to Jerusalem, which would be the third visit Paul made to Jerusalem since being saved. (Paul's first visit back to Jerusalem after being saved is recorded in ACTS 9:25, and repeated in 2 CORINTHIANS 11:32 & 33, and in GALATIANS 1:17-19; the second was in ACTS 11:29 & 30 when Paul and Barnabas sent relief from the church at Antioch, Syria to the poor Saints at Jerusalem. Paul's third visit to Jerusalem after being saved is recorded here in ACTS 15, and also detailed in GALATIANS 2.) GALATIANS 2:1 *Then fourteen years after (after Paul's first visit to Jerusalem after being saved) 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: (bondage means to enslave one's self) 5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*

ACTS 15:3 *And being brought on their way by the church, (at Antioch, Syria) they (Paul, Barnabas, and Titus) 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.* The margin of your Bible properly notes this to be the region of Phoenicia, which is about 100 miles from Jerusalem. Recall in ACTS 11:19 Phenice (Phoenicia) was one of the places the disciples had scattered to after the stoning of Stephen. ACTS 11:19 *Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, (Phoenicia) and Cyprus, and Antioch, (Syria) preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.* Samaria is about 30 miles from Jerusalem, and is where Philip the evangelist preached in ACTS 8. Paul and Barnabas gave testimony here in ACTS 15:3 both in Phenice (Phoenicia) and Samaria *...declaring the conversion of the Gentiles...* and they had with them Titus a Gentile as a representative example of a converted Gentile, and of what had taken place everywhere they went. Hundreds were saved on Paul and Barnabas' missionary journey, and it seems the majority of them were Gentiles. Furthermore Paul and Barnabas gave testimony to the miracles and wonders God had performed through them, a point

further noted in ACTS 15:12. We know that Luke gave us some highlights of these facts in ACTS 13 & 14, but we know much more happened on their missionary journey than could ever be recorded in two chapters. Paul and Barnabas daily lives were full from dawn to late in the evening every day teaching, and preaching, and attending upon the Lord without distraction. {See 1 CORINTHIANS 7:35.} So Paul and Barnabas could spend hours rehearsing what that Lord had done for them, and through them, on their missionary journey. We read here in ACTS 15:3 that their testimony *...caused great joy unto all the brethren.* What had happened since the stoning of Stephen in the adding to the church the multiplied hundreds who had been saved certainly was remarkable, and *...caused great joy unto all the brethren...* at Phenice (Phoenicia) and Samaria.

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 because Paul preached what he wrote us in GALATIANS 2:16 *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.* This 320 mile journey with stops at Phenice (Phoenicia) and Samaria would take the better part of two weeks.

All this time Titus would be getting more one-on-one teaching from the Apostle Paul, as would Barnabas. Perhaps this was the first time we find three Church Apostles traveling together. The next time we find three Church Apostles traveling together will be on Paul's second missionary journey when Silas and Timothy get to spend months traveling with Paul, and themselves getting more one-on-one teaching from the Apostle Paul before they became Church Apostles. Paul and Barnabas in ACTS 15:3 were rehearsing their testimony on *...all God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles...* (ACTS 14:27). As we read here in ACTS 15:3 this testimony of what had been accomplished among the Gentiles Paul and Barnabas had preached to on their missionary journey to Galatia *...caused great joy unto all the brethren.* No doubt they all marveled at the wonderful works of God, and the number of Gentiles who had been saved.

ACTS 15:4 *And when they (Paul, Barnabas and Titus) 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.*

Remember we are studying what Luke wrote us in scripture as he was inspired by the Holy Ghost, and Luke wrote much of what he wrote from eyewitness accounts, and what he learned by interviewing ministers. {Study LUKE 1:1-4.} By the time Luke wrote of Paul and Barnabas going to Jerusalem here in ACTS 15, Luke would have interviewed Paul, Barnabas, perhaps Titus also, (even though Luke never mentions Titus in ACTS), Peter, James (the Lord's brother), Silas, and Judas surnamed Barsabas. What Luke writes here in ACTS 15:4 truly happened, but not exactly in the precise order Luke mentions it. When Paul and Barnabas, along with Titus, return to Jerusalem, one would have to realize that they didn't just pop in on a church service. Most probably when they arrived in Jerusalem they looked up the Apostles, and elders first, and told them that they wished to have a meeting with the whole church there in Jerusalem about the question Luke wrote about in ACTS 15:1 concerning circumcision being a condition of salvation. But before having this meeting with the whole assembly, which we now call the conference in Jerusalem, a private meeting was held, which the Apostle Paul writes about in GALATIANS 2:1-5 filling in the details Luke couldn't write in ACTS 15.

GALATIANS 2:1 *Then fourteen years after (Paul's first visit back to Jerusalem after being saved) 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, (Paul is speaking of Peter, James the Lord's brother, and John {see GALATIANS 2:9}) lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. 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, (to the assembly at Antioch, Syria) 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 find in this private meeting that Paul and Barnabas introduce Titus to the Jerusalem Apostles and elders, and explain to them why they had come to Jerusalem on this visit. 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 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. We need to mention that even though Luke doesn't highlight the Apostle John here in ACTS 15, we should note that the Apostle John was prominent here in the church at Jerusalem, and just as much to the forefront as was Peter. The Apostle Paul most likely got to know the Apostle John back in the timeframe of ACTS 11:29 & 30 when Paul and Barnabas were first sent to Jerusalem with relief from the church at Antioch, Syria. That was Paul's second visit back to Jerusalem after being saved. Now back in Jerusalem during this private meeting with the Apostles here in ACTS 15, 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). As we move on further evidence will be brought forth on what else they discussed.

After this private meeting with the kingdom Apostles, Paul, Barnabas, and Titus *...were received of the church, (at Jerusalem) and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them...* ACTS 15:4. This was not a brief meeting at the Jerusalem church, and no doubt they repeated their testimony that they had given in Phenice (Phoenicia) and Samaria (ACTS 15:3), and Titus was right there with them.

We don't read here like we did in ACTS 15:3 in Phenice (Phoenicia) and Samaria that *...they caused great joy unto all the brethren.* In fact ACTS 15:5 informs us: *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 also believed, and taught that it was needful to circumcise the Gentile converts, and to direct them to observe the law of Moses. This was the teaching that had brought Paul, Barnabas, and Titus to Jerusalem at this particular time to question their false teaching. Also one has to wonder if our beloved Apostle Paul previously knew any of these Pharisees prior to his own conversion. The scripture doesn't inform us one way or the other, except to say that these particular Pharisees said *...That it was needful to circumcise them, (the Gentiles) and to command them to keep the law of Moses.*

Then we read in ACTS 15:6 *And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.* Apostles Paul, Barnabas, and Gentile Titus (future Church Apostle) were in attendance also. It would seem from reading ACTS 15:12, 22 and 23 that the whole church was present as *...the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.* Realize too as the they came together to consider this matter that the whole 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. Luke has documented, and we have already noted that Paul and Barnabas had a missionary journey in which untold multitudes of Gentiles 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, yet we don't read of any Gentiles in the Jerusalem assembly, though there very well may have been a few. Their accepting this truth concerning the Gentiles 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 to the house of Cornelius in ACTS 10 some six years earlier. What Peter, and those few with him, learned in ACTS 10 was God's introduction to what would take place here in ACTS 15 during this conference, which would conclude with the fact that circumcision was not necessary for one's salvation, nor had it ever been a condition for anyone's salvation. Jesus never taught this either.

The false doctrine that prevailed here in the church at Jerusalem, and had since been brought to the church at Antioch, Syria was expressed in ACTS 15:1, and reaffirmed in ACTS 15:5 in these statements: ACTS 15:1 *...Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.* And ACTS 15:5 *...That it was needful to circumcise them, (the Gentiles) and to command them to keep the law of Moses.* We use the term "legality" to define those who wish to conform to the law of Moses. Paul wrote in ROMANS 6:14 *...for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* ROMANS 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.* Legality has been a tool in Satan's arsenal since Christ made us free from the law at Calvary. Legality is one of the wiles of the devil, and wiles means ways of persuading someone that trick them into doing something; thus wiles means trickery, or deceit. In today's language wiles is another name for a scam. Jesus told us in JOHN 8:44 that Satan, the devil, is the father of lies. In other words Satan is a scammer. Paul wrote us in EPHESIANS 6:11 *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* Furthermore Paul wrote Timothy in 1 TIMOTHY 6:12 *Fight the good fight of faith.* Faith is a fight; a fight against the wiles of the devil. Thus we find that the following statements are lies, or wiles of the devil: ACTS 15:1 *...Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.* ACTS 15:5 *...That it was needful to circumcise them, (the Gentiles) and to command them to keep the law of Moses.* So the Holy Ghost inspired Luke to set the record straight here in ACTS 15, and the Holy Ghost inspired the Apostle Paul to further expound upon this in GALATIANS, and in many other of his epistles. Again Paul summarized all of this in GALATIANS 2:16 *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

With this background, we now find here in ACTS 15 the whole church of Jerusalem assembled to hear this matter discussed by this unusual collection of leaders such like was never assembled together before, nor would ever be together again this side of heaven! Let's realize something here before we move on, it seems that every writer of New Testament scripture, except Luke, was present at this conference! I can't prove this, nor can you disprove this, but potentially the Apostle Matthew was here, as was John Mark the writer of the gospel of Mark, who went back to Antioch, Syria with Paul and Barnabas after this conference; the Apostle John was here, James the Lord's brother was also here, and he spoke at this conference; no doubt Jesus brother Jude also was at this conference, and of course the Apostle Paul was present, and was also one of the speakers in ACTS 15:12. And it would be only fitting that the last words of Peter recorded in ACTS would be found in these next verses of ACTS 15.

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.*

The audience that Peter was addressing here in Jerusalem was mostly Jewish, and Gentile's, like Titus, probably stuck out like a sore thumb. Peter here in ACTS 15:7, and James in ACTS 15:13 address this assembly in the same manner: "Men and brethren." The term "brethren" here should mean fellow believers in Jesus Christ, but could also mean men of Israel. "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 back in ACTS 11:2 when he returned from visiting the house of Cornelius. Thus 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 the 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 back in ACTS 10 at the house of Cornelius. Peter then reemphasized 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.

It is interesting to note that the phrase "by faith" is first expressed here at this conference, and it is Peter who uses it first. The phrase "by faith" is found thirty-seven times in the Bible, and thirty-seven is the number associated with THE WORD OF GOD. Years later our beloved Apostle Paul will write a letter addressed to his fellow Jews, and he calls this epistle HEBREWS. In HEBREWS Paul uses the phrase "by faith" seventeen times, the number pointing to VICTORY IN CHRIST JESUS. Study HEBREWS 11 to view a partial list of the Old Testament worthies of faith, who lived their lives "by faith," and in placing their faith and trust solely in God they obtained VICTORY IN CHRIST JESUS! The phrase "the just shall live by faith" is repeated three times by the Apostle Paul: (1) ROMANS 1:17; (2) GALATIANS 3:11; and (3) HEBREWS 10:38.

Back in this conference in Jerusalem in ACTS 15 we find that 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" is number 2218 in the Strong's Greek Concordance, *zugos* {dzoo-gos'}, and references the yoke of bondage to the Law of Moses as a means of salvation. "To put a yoke" speaks to that which would be burdensome and oppressive; something that would infringe on one's freedom as a child of God. Peter quickly points out here in ACTS 15:10 that putting a *...yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?* We further appreciate what the Apostle 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.* These words Paul wrote in EPHESIANS 2 were no doubt influenced by this conference in Jerusalem here in ACTS 15. Back to the word "yoke." 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 in 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,...*

It was to Jesus Christ whom Peter was here pointing to 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 back 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.* And now here in ACTS 15:11 Peter speaks his final words recorded in ACTS, which are just as important, and powerful as his words of ACTS 4:12. ACTS 15:11 *But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.* So we see that Peter believed and preached *...that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved..* ACTS 15:11 with no mention of having to be circumcised. Peter never preached, or taught that it was necessary to be circumcised in order to be saved, for that was false doctrine. 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 carefully 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 they also listened to Paul. As Gentiles we have been given Paul as our Apostle as ROMANS 11:13 states these words of Paul: *...I am the apostle of the Gentiles.* 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, for some remembered him as Saul of Tarsus the guy who persecuted the church of God, and wasted it (GALATIANS 1:13). Some remembered Saul of Tarsus being the reason so many had scattered abroad after the stoning of Stephen. {Study ACTS 8:1-3, and ACTS 11:19.} So some of the Jews present at this conference in Jerusalem didn’t want to hear Paul speak, nor did they want to hear, accept, or receive Paul’s gospel. We learned in ACTS 9:27 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 prominent at Jerusalem. John Mark, a nephew of Barnabas, was also there at Jerusalem, his mother being Barnabas’ sister. {Study COLOSSIANS 4:10.} So we would expect Barnabas to be received and heard in Jerusalem way before we should expect Paul to be heard, because they knew Barnabas first.

Now let’s read the whole verse of 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.* It seems that Barnabas testified first, and then turned the floor over to the Apostle Paul, and as a team Barnabas first, and then Paul declared *...what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.* This one verse is all that is recorded of Paul and Barnabas speaking here at this conference in Jerusalem. They probably spoke for quite a while, for their ministry together, including their time at Antioch, Syria, would have been about five years, and it would take some time to testify of five years worth of Gentiles getting saved, multitudes getting delivered, churches being established, etc. Their words were impactful, and in ACTS 15:22

we find at the conclusion of this conference, for the first time in Jerusalem, that the Jews of Jerusalem mentioned Paul first: *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.* At long last Paul was recognized here in Jerusalem as *...the apostle of the Gentiles...* spoken of in ROMANS 11:13. Paul records why this was in GALATIANS 2:6-10 where he later writes of a private discussion he had with Peter, James the Lord's brother, and John. GALATIANS 2:6 *But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: 7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; 8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) 9 And when James, Cephas (another name for Peter), 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. 10 Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.*

Let's discuss this a little further before we move on here in ACTS 15, because Luke never mentions that Paul and Barnabas had this private meeting with James the Lord's brother, Peter, and John that Paul wrote of in GALATIANS 2:6-10. James we know at this time 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 The Gospel According to the Apostle JOHN, 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, a 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.* Here 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. Recall also in ACTS 11:27-30 that Barnabas and Paul (then called Saul) had made a famine relief journey from Antioch, Syria to Jerusalem. 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.*

After this conference was over in ACTS 15 we find that Luke writes in ACTS chapters 16-21 two more missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul, and Barnabas didn't go on either of these. But Paul records in several of his writings the facts of this private meeting he and Barnabas had in Jerusalem in ACTS 15 with James, Peter, and John, and how he promised them that he would remember the poor Saints at Jerusalem. 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 & 9 further explains how this collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem took place, which you can read and study on your own. 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.* Finally years later in ACTS 24:17 Luke tells us that Paul makes a 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 everywhere he went as had been privately suggested by James, Peter and 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 first to Jerusalem before going up to Antioch, Syria at the conclusion of each of his missionary journeys.

Back to 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.* We are not told how long Barnabas and Paul spoke here about all that God had done with them, and through them, and how God by their hands had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. At the end of their speaking, and giving their testimony, we don't read of an exuberance, or joy being expressed, or glory being given to God here in the Jerusalem assembly, that unto the Gentiles also eternal life had also been granted, and this gospel message had been received with joy and gladness. It seems between the verses of ACTS 15:12 and ACTS 15:13 Paul and Barnabas testimony caused a stir, thus we read in ACTS 15:13 *And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:...*

Before we discuss James' very important words, we need to be clear in our minds who this James was. Recall James the brother of John had been killed in ACTS 12:2 by Herod the king. This James who speaks here in ACTS 13 is indeed James the Lord's half brother! We know his testimony by piecing together what the gospel writers Matthew, Luke, and John wrote, and by what the Apostle Paul wrote us in GALATIANS and 1 CORINTHIANS. Let's discuss this.

James the Lord's half brother is first mentioned in MATTHEW 13:55. MATTHEW 13:55 *Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?* The definition of "brethren" here is "children of the same mother." The subject of MATTHEW 13:55 is Jesus, and this James mentioned here is James the Lord's half brother, whose mother obviously was Mary, for James was a child of the same mother as Jesus! In MATTHEW 13:55 we find James mentioned before Joses, Simon, and Judas (Jude) indicating that James was the oldest of these half brothers of Jesus. In JOHN 7:5 we find that during the time of Jesus ministry here on earth, Jesus half brothers did not believe in Him! JOHN 7:5 *For neither did his brethren believe in him.* Isn't that an amazing statement? While living here on earth Jesus half brothers didn't believe on Him, which means James the Lord's half brother didn't accept Jesus as his Saviour, or recognize Him as the Messiah until sometime after His death, and subsequent resurrection. For that reason while on the cross Jesus entrusted the care of His mother Mary into the hands of the Apostle John instead unto His own half brother James. 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, (John) he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! 27 Then saith he to the disciple, (John) Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.* No doubt this was a low blow to Jesus half 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 this begs the question: When did James the Lord's half brother become a believer? The Apostle Paul, and Luke are the one's who point out that it was after Jesus resurrection when James the Lord's half brother became a believer. Paul writes in 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, (Peter) 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;* (the Lord's half brother) *then of all the apostles.* How did the Apostle Paul know that Jesus appeared unto James the Lord's half brother after His resurrection? Paul, three years after he was saved, found this out by interviewing James the Lord's half brother during this first visit back to Jerusalem. Paul wrote about this visit to Jerusalem in GALATIANS 1:18 & 19. 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.* Thus we learn after Jesus resurrection that Christ Himself appeared unto James His half brother, and that is when James became a believer in Jesus, much the same way the Apostle Paul did. Furthermore Jesus other half brothers became believers also, and Luke help points this out in ACTS 1:14. 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 three James' mentioned in verse 13 were the eleven remaining 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.* The definition of "brethren" here is "children of the same mother." So Jesus half brothers may not have been believers at the time of His crucifixion, but they certainly were by the day of Pentecost some fifty days later. And Jesus half brothers, and His half sisters too, were among the hundred and twenty who got filled with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. After being filled with the Holy Ghost, Jesus then became the focal point, the very center of their lives too. Then they understood why when Jesus was alive that their mother Mary spent her time paying the closest attention to Jesus. And Jesus half brothers and sisters went on to become prominent in the early church founded upon the day of Pentecost.

Paul first gets aquatinted with James the Lord's half brother in GALATIANS 1:19, which we read above, and there James is referred to as an Apostle. When James the Lord's half brother became an Apostle is not told us in scripture. By the time the Apostle Paul wrote GALATIANS in about 57 A.D. James the Lord's half brother was called by Paul an Apostle, and he was an Apostle to the Jews as ACTS 15 and 21 plainly points out. Was James the Lord's half brother chosen as a replacement Apostle for James the brother of John, who was slain in ACTS 12:2? Scripture doesn't so state. Furthermore 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 the same 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. This same James, the half brother of the Lord, became the Pastor of the church in Jerusalem seemingly before the time frame of ACTS 12, for he is also referenced in ACTS 12:17. It was James the Lord's half brother who by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost wrote the book of JAMES, and it was James youngest brother Judas, (Jude) who wrote the book of JUDE.

{Many commentaries fail to acknowledge that the author of the book of JAMES was indeed the same James who was the Lord's half brother. Halley's Bible Handbook, and Unger's Bible Dictionary, and many other sources also acknowledge that the epistle of JAMES in the scripture was indeed written by *...James the Lord's brother...* as he is called in GALATIANS 1:19. Furthermore Josephus in his Antiquities of the Jews book wrote of the death of James "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ," and how he was called before the Sanhedrin council. Hegesippus, a second century Christian historian, added that James the Lord's half brother was told by the Sanhedrin

council “to proclaim from one of the galleries of the Temple that Jesus Was Not the Messiah. But, instead, James cried out that Jesus Was the Son of God, and Judge of the World.” The enraged enemies of James, by order of the Sanhedrin council, then hurled James to be stoned, and one “charitable fuller ended his sufferings with a club, while” James “was on his knees praying, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” Apparently this took place about 66 A.D. following the pattern Herod Agrippa I started back in 44 A.D. with the killing of ...*James the brother of John with the sword...* ACTS 12:2.}

Having now established that James the Lord’s half brother is now the pastor of the church at Jerusalem, we need to consider his most important words recorded in ACTS 15, which are found in verses 13-21. Scofield in his notes here writes: “...dispensationally, this is the most important passage in the New Testament. It gives the divine purpose for this age, and for the beginning of the next.” {End of quoting Scofield.} I see James’ speech at this conference divided into two parts. In part one, verses 13-18, James reveals God’s plan for this yet present Church Age we are still living in. In part two, verses 19-21, James expresses his own judgment in this matter that the Apostles Paul, and Barnabas had come to Jerusalem to discuss, which was if circumcision was necessary for one’s salvation. And the answer again is no. Let’s now read the first part of James speech. ACTS 15:13 *And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: 14 Simeon (Peter) 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.*

Now a little closer look at these verses. ACTS 15:13 *And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: 14 Simeon (another name for Peter) hath declared how God at the first (for the first time, since the Church Age started on the day of Pentecost) did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.* (Look at this closely. God during this yet present Church Age is visiting the Gentiles, to take out of them a rib portion company from that mystical body of Christ that will forever be known as Mrs. Jesus, The Bride of Christ, The Lamb’s Wife!!! The mystical body of Christ has a head, who is Jesus, for EPHESIANS 5:23 tells us ...*Christ is the head of the church.* This mystical body of Christ, like the body of Adam, has a wife in it, who is the rib portion. Truly this is ...*a people for his name.* Pray that the Holy Ghost will reveal this to you own heart!) *15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this (after He builds His church during this Church Age; after this Church Age is over, and the Bride of Christ is taken away) I will return, (to restore again the kingdom to Israel as is mentioned in ACTS 1:6) 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: (This will happen during the Millennium.) 17 That the residue of men (Israel) might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, (this speaks to Gentiles nationally, not literally to every individual) 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.*

Let me quote from Brother Copley’s study book here: “Study closely Verses 14-18. People talk of converting the whole world today. They claim very religiously, a whole city for Christ. Despite all the headlines that the whole city turned to the Lord, there is no record of any entire city being saved. The nearest to such a victory was in Paul’s time, when “...*almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the Word of the Lord...*” ACTS 13:44. But, did all these people who were there believe? If they did, why did they expel the apostles from their midst a few weeks later? Bear in mind that God is only making a visit to the earth during this age, to gather out a Body of people and build a Bride for His Son. Men look in vain for a world-wide revival in view of ushering in a democratic millennium, and that, without Christ!”

“ACTS 15:16-17 *“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: 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.*” James quoted AMOS 9:11-12. The personal return and presence of the Lord, not simply as a visitor, but as a permanent resident, is the promise of God and the hope of believers. Only this can bring in the Millennium. Jesus must come and rebuild the tabernacle of David. Then Israel will be restored and then the long-for world-wide revival will come, even the millennial day. Jesus must be sitting upon the throne of universal dominion and His lovely Bride with Him for these things to be accomplished. It will not be popular evangelism, but Christ and His people will convert the world during their honeymoon. Hallelujah! ACTS 15:18 “Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.” {End of quoting Brother Copley.}

The second part of James speech at this council in Jerusalem is found in ACTS 15:19-21. 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.*

These words of James, the pastor of the Jerusalem church, were indeed inspired by the Holy Ghost, and ACTS 15:28 reinforces this fact: *For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.* Furthermore we must also realize that James now has the undivided attention of this mostly Jewish assembly as he announces his Holy Ghost inspired sentence. Brother Copley here also notes that both Peter and James’ words carried “weight with both Jewish and Gentile believers, curbing the former, and comforting the latter.”

Now let’s examine these words a little closer, starting in ACTS 15:19 *Wherefore my sentence is, that we **trouble** not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God.* Let’s first examine this word “**trouble**” realizing 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 as ROMANS 10:4 states. 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 we are still living in, known also as the Church Age, has brought with it a majority of Gentile believers that have been added unto the body of Christ. The majority of Jews during this Church Age still have 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 traditional teaching. Never before were Gentiles included their thinking, at least in a positive way. 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 by the score both near and far. Stated another way, the Gentiles, by the hundreds all over the known world, were accepting this Jewish Jesus as their own personal Saviour. Jesus Himself had said in MATTHEW 18:11 *For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.* This statement applies to all, both Jew and Gentile. Peter had already told them in this conference in ACTS 15:8 & 9 -- *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.* 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 word “**trouble**” is found 110 times in scripture. The Greek word for “**trouble**” here in ACTS 15:19 is unique in that it is only used this one time in scripture, and is the Greek verb *parenchleo* {par-en-okh-leh'-o}, number 3926 in The Strong’s Greek Concordance, meaning: to

cause **trouble** in a matter, to **trouble**, to annoy concerning anything. I found it interesting that there are fourteen Greek words that translate into our English as “**trouble**,” and fourteen is the number associated with DELIVERANCE or SALVATION. Thirty-nine times we find the word “**trouble**” in PSALMS, and the majority of the following verses from PSALMS are written by David, a man very much familiar with “**trouble**.” PSALMS 32:7 *Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.* PSALMS 34:6 *This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.* PSALMS 34:17 *The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.* PSALMS 37:39 *But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble.* PSALMS 41:1 *Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.* PSALMS 46:1 *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.* PSALMS 50:15 *And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.* PSALMS 54:7 *For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.* PSALMS 107:6 *Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. ...13 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. ...19 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. ...26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. ...28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.*

Let’s read our text again, and put in context what James was saying here in ACTS 15:19. ACTS 15:19 *Wherefore my sentence is, that we **trouble not** them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God.* An expounded translation of this verse reads like this: *Therefore it is my opinion that we should not put irksome obstacles in the way and annoy and disturb those Gentiles who have found their way to God.* The thought being expressed here by James is not to cause **trouble** in this matter; not to annoy the Gentiles who have turned to God. The reason that Paul, Barnabas, and Titus 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. Thus we find that the rest of this conference in Jerusalem is devoted to two main points: (1) how the Jews can keep from **troubling** the Gentiles, and (2) how the Gentiles can keep from **troubling** the Jews.

We will cover James advice to the Gentiles in ACTS 15:20 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, since he is the pastor there in Jerusalem whose majority is Jewish. Furthermore 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 when he says: *...Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law.* 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 the believing Jews, and the believing Gentiles in these assemblies from this point forward.

James continues in ACTS 15:20 *But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.* James here suggested four things that Gentile believers could do to aid in keeping the peace between fellow Jewish believers. These four things are that the Gentiles: (1) *...abstain from pollutions of idols,* (2) *...from fornication,* (3) *...from things strangled,* (4) *...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 Jewish and Gentile believers who assembled in one place.

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 &

29 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; 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.* 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.*

Let's look at these four items in a little more detail. 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, 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 Jews. The Apostle Paul had much to say about this topic, and wrote about it in 1 CORINTHIANS chapters 8 and 10, which you can study in depth further on your own. Paul's concluding thoughts on this subject are found in 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31-33, which reads: *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: 33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.* Paul, in ROMANS 14, adds the following advice: 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.*

Item (2) listed by James in ACTS 15:20 is *...that they abstain from fornication,...* . Fornication has been going on since early in GENESIS, and was one reason Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by God GENESIS 19. 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 also wrote much on this subject, more than any other author in scripture, which you can also look further into with your own studies if you need to. Let's just summarize what Paul wrote by reading a couple portions of the scripture Paul wrote. 1 CORINTHIANS 6:18 *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.* EPHESIANS 5:3 *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.* 1 THESSALONIANS 4:3 *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:...* . 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.

Item (3) listed by James in ACTS 15:20 is *...that they abstain from things strangled*,... . 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 9:4 *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.

Item (4) listed by James further explains the reasoning behind item (3), and 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.* LEVITICUS 17 explains 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 17:11 *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. ...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 towards 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.*

Note that these four items James mentions in ACTS 15:20 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, and later in his epistles writes much concerning these four items as to why they are not profitable to ones spiritual growth. Paul also 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. 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 also had 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.* James Holy Ghost inspired advice here was to the Gentile of that day, who happened to attend Jewish synagogue services. The Gentiles had not the law of Moses to follow, nor had never been given instructions in a Jewish synagogue service on how to behave. The above four points *...that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood...* were to be presented to the Christian Gentiles in order to maintain peace with their fellow brethren, that being the Christian Jews. 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:...* . 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. Recall that

Jesus had told 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.* A close study of the scriptures Luke wrote us in ACTS up to this point in time 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 some 320 miles from Jerusalem. GALATIANS 2:11 plainly tells us that.

ACTS 15:22 informs 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 by name in ACTS 15 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. 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, was written about two years after this conference at Jerusalem, and at that time 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 1 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 a total of 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. Silas, and the Latin Silvanus derives a meaning of "a wood" or "woody," coming from the Latin sylvia. 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. When Silas was chosen to go with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch with this letter from this conference, he chose to stay with the Apostle Paul, and learn his teaching first hand, and didn't return unto Jerusalem until years later. Years after this 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.

ACTS 15:23 *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.* Here we find that the letters the Apostles and elders of Jerusalem wrote was addressed to *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. We know by reading ACTS 14:26 – ACTS 15:1 that Paul and Barnabas had returned for their missionary journey, and had been *"...long time with the disciples..."* there at Antioch, Syria. Furthermore we know that Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch Syria when *...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...* ACTS 15:1. Shortly after that was when Paul, Barnabas, and Titus went from Antioch in Syria, through Phenice and Samaria, to

Jerusalem. None of these places were in Cilicia, but the Apostle Paul was from Cilicia as ACTS 21:39 explains: *But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia,...* . Furthermore we find in ACTS 15:41 that the Apostle Paul on his second missionary journey, which would take place after this conference at Jerusalem, would begin his journey by passing through *...Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches...* which he had previously visited, or established. Apparently, behind the scenes, the Apostle Paul had told the Kingdom Apostles of his plan to revisit these places, furthermore GALATIANS 2:7-10 informs us that Paul had a private meeting with James, Peter, and John concerning his travel plans, which was why they requested of Paul that he would remember the poor Saints of Jerusalem in his travels, which we know that Paul did. So the letter that was written in Jerusalem after this conference *...unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia...* explained why the Christian Jews were writing the Christian Gentiles certain suggested rules that, if followed, would bring peace between these two groups of fellow Christians.

Here is what the body of the Letter said: ACTS 15:24 *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.*

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.* (Consolation means comfort, or encouragement. The word “consolation” is found fourteen times in scripture, fourteen being the number associated with DELIVERANCE or SALVATION.) *32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.* (The Greek word translated “confirmed” here is episterizo {ep-ee-stay-rid'-zo}, number 1991 in The Strong’s Greek Concordance, meaning to confirm, or strengthen, to make for firm, or to lean upon. This Greek word is found seven times in New Testament scripture, seven being the number that points to SPIRITUAL PERFECTION, or SPIRITUAL COMPLETION. These words spoken by Judas and Silas strengthened the disciples in Antioch, Syria.) *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 several months time span, which we wouldn’t know nothing more about had not the Apostle Paul written to us what he did in GALATIANS 2:11-21. As we read GALATIANS 2:11-21 keep in mind that most likely Luke was there in Antioch, Syria at that time, and if Luke was indeed there, then he also witnessed the following. GALATIANS 2:11 *But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.* (Paul here acknowledges that Peter came to Antioch, Syria after the conference in Jerusalem, and that Paul had a great confrontation with Peter, and the reason why is explained in the following verses. Keep in mind as we read this that the Apostle Peter was well known by the Jews at Antioch, for many of them had come to know the Lord as their personal Saviour because of the ministry of Peter. And the church at Antioch, Syria began after the Jews of Jerusalem were scattered abroad after the persecution of Stephen, as is told us in ACTS 11:19. Now all these years later we find for the first time Peter himself coming to Antioch, Syria. So Peter’s old acquaintances would be excited to see him, and Peter did, at the first, take the time to also meet, and eat with the Gentiles at Antioch, Syria also. Then we read in GALATIANS 2:12 that certain other Jews also came up to Antioch, Syria sent by James, when the following happened.) *12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which*

were of the circumcision. (Peter, fearing the Jews, withdrew, and separated himself from the Gentiles of Antioch, Syria. This was not a good testimony, and in his GALATIANS study book, Brother Copley gives a two page commentary expounding upon twelve points of blame, or censure against Peter for turning from grace to law here. Paul then wrote the following conclusion.) GALATIANS 2:13 *And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. (hypocrisy) 14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? 15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. 17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. 18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. 19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. 21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

So we find here in Antioch, Syria after the conference that was held in Jerusalem, the Apostle Peter paying a visit to Antioch, and behaving in a puzzling manner to the Gentiles, who were following the letter crafted by James, Peter, and the Apostles of Jerusalem. Paul had to deal with Peter about his display of legality here in Antioch. I know that the Apostle Paul dealt with Peter in firmness, and in love. Imagine how hard it would be in the natural to point out to the famous Apostle Peter that he was in error and acting like a hypocrite, but that is just what the Apostle Paul did. Perhaps that is one reason why the Apostle Paul tarried a while longer here in Antioch at this time, to make sure that legality didn't creep in any further. Notice in GALATIANS 2:13 that Barnabas ...*also was carried away with their dissimulation...* (hypocrisy). How did Peter, and how did Barnabas receive this correction? Peter years later writes in 2 PETER 3 these words: 14 *...be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. 15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; 16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood,...* . Note that Peter acknowledges at that time, that the Apostle Paul is a beloved brother in the Lord, who has given him wisdom concerning some things that are hard to be understood. Obviously Peter accepted what Paul had to say, even though it may have been hard for him to fully understand all that Paul had to say. Notice as we continue to study what Luke wrote us in scripture, that Luke wrote noting more about Peter from ACTS 15 on.

As for Barnabas, ACTS 15:36 tells us: *And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.* Obviously Paul and Barnabas got along famously, and the differences they had in GALATIANS 2:13 had been resolved. Remember that Paul and Barnabas had been preaching together for several years now. Coneybeare and Howson have Paul and Barnabas being together constantly for six years at this point in time. We find in the remaining verses of ACTS 15 that Paul, and Barnabas time together was about to end, and like Peter, Barnabas is not mentioned again by Luke after ACTS 15.

ACTS 15:36 *And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. 37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. 38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. 39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus.*

In ACTS 15:36 we find that Paul was wanting to do a second missionary journey with Barnabas, and pay a return visit to the brethren they had left on their first missionary journey, and see how they were doing, and also pass the information along from the epistle that was written at this conference in Jerusalem. Barnabas too was willing to make this trip again, however this time, once again, Barnabas was determined to take John Mark along. Recall when Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem from Antioch in ACTS 11:27-29, that when they returned to Antioch in ACTS 12:25 they had taken John Mark with them. COLOSSIANS 4:10 tells us that John Mark was Barnabas' sister's son. ACTS 12:12 tells us that John Mark's mother's name was Mary. It was to John Mark's mother's house that Peter had come to after escaping Herod's prison. After leaving Jerusalem in ACTS 12:25, Barnabas and Paul take John Mark with them, and John Mark also tags along on Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey for a while. However we read in ACTS 13:13 that John Mark didn't last long on that first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas, but rather when the going got tough John Mark left the Apostles and returned to Jerusalem. Since this visit back to Jerusalem in ACTS 15, John Mark has returned to Antioch with his uncle Barnabas even though no real mention has been made of this fact up until ACTS 15:37, where we again read: *And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.*

Luke is noting here that Paul was beginning to have some trouble with Barnabas. First of all Barnabas had been carried away with Peter's dissimulation (hypocrisy) here at Antioch, as noted in GALATIANS 2:13. No doubt, Paul had words with Barnabas over this situation, but had resolved the matter. Now right on the heels of this event Barnabas insists upon taking John Mark on this second missionary journey. ACTS 15:38 records Paul's thinking on this subject: *But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.* So Luke records that Paul and Barnabas were in disagreement, something that we haven't read of them having in their six years together.

The severity of this disagreement isn't really apparent until we read ACTS 15:39, which states: *And the contention (provocation or incitement) was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other... .*

I would imagine that all serious Bible students have their own opinion on this split between Paul and Barnabas. Brother Copley spent over a page of notes in his ACTS study book writing his views on this sharp contention between Barnabas and Paul. I heard Brother Hill express his opinion on this split between Paul and Barnabas too. I would like to spend a few moments viewing this defining moment in these three men's lives, (Paul, Barnabas, and Mark) from a point in time fifteen plus years later, and also nearly two-thousand years later. In other words, rather than throwing Barnabas under the bus, or Mark and Barnabas under the bus, or Paul, let's view this foreordained event from the Lord's point of view. We read in ISAIAH 46:9 & 10 the Lord's point of view: *Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.* Now consider this, which of these three men, the Apostle Paul, the Apostle Barnabas, or John whose surname was Mark; which of these three wanted God's best? Obviously we don't know what is in the heart of a man, but the Lord does. We read in JEREMIAH 17:10 *I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.* Now let's suppose that all three were diligently seeking God's best in their lives, then ACTS 15:39 happens: *And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus.* Who comes out a full overcomer here? Realize at this moment in time when Paul and Barnabas *...departed asunder one from the other...* that the Lord was not yet finished with either one of them, nor was He through working in John Mark's life.

Consider this also, that not one verse of scripture has been written by Paul, or John Mark by this time-frame of ACTS 15:39. Yet we now know that the Apostle Paul wrote 14 epistles that became scripture before he went home to be with the Lord, and that John Mark too penned The Gospel According to MARK before he too went home to be with the Lord. Would we now have any

of these fifteen books of New Testament scripture without this sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas? Would we ourselves know ROMANS 8:28 had not Paul and Barnabas split up? ROMANS 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* This is such a powerful verse of scripture that we hear it quoted all the time. And we should all realize that in each of our lives there is going to be monumental events, orchestrated by God, that will challenge our resolve on whether we truly want God's best, or not. Did Paul know ROMANS 8:28 by this time-frame of ACTS 15:39? Probably not to the depth that he knew it by the time he wrote his epistles to the ROMANS, which according to Conybeare and Howson was seven years after this time.

I wrote the following in my notes when we did the study on the life of the Apostle Paul, which is appropriate for us to hear again. No doubt the Apostle Paul thought long and hard after this break up between him and Barnabas of things that could have been handled differently. Was it really necessary for him to have had such a sharp contention with his good friend Barnabas? Who was the overcomer here? Perhaps as Paul thought on these things the genesis of what he later wrote in ROMANS 8:28 came into his mind. ROMANS 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* Perhaps also the 13th chapter of 1 CORINTHIANS began to take place in his thinking on how he could better express himself with words, and in deeds by allowing the love of God to properly flow out of his life. Maybe Paul began to realize the words he later penned in EPHESIANS 4:26 *Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.* Quite possibly Paul may have begin to fully think more about the unsearchable riches of Christ Jesus that he writes about in EPHESIANS 3:8. Perhaps the Lord began to emphasize in Paul's heart the fact that he needed to be more patient toward all men, which he later wrote about in 1 THESSALONIANS 5:14. And how he should *...with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbear one another in love...* as he later wrote about in EPHESIANS 4:2. And how he should be more *...kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you,*... which he later penned in EPHESIANS 4:32. Similar words were also later penned in COLOSSIANS 3:13 *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.* And so as not to beat himself up so bad with what was said between Barnabas and himself, perhaps Paul begin to think like he later wrote in PHILIPPIANS 3:13 & 14: *...but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Paul may have even realized that his speech may have been a little harsh with Barnabas, and if so, he later wrote in COLOSSIANS 4:6 *Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.* Perhaps the Apostle Paul begin to think like he finally wrote in PHILIPPIANS 4:8 *...brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

So let's answer this question we asked earlier as we consider the split between Barnabas and Paul: Who comes out a full overcomer here? I am going to say that there is evidence in scripture that they all came out victorious. We know that Paul in his last epistle, 2 TIMOTHY, written about eighteen years after this point in time, wrote this instruction to Timothy: 2 TIMOTHY 4:11 *...Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.* How is it that Paul can now write these eighteen or so years later that John Mark is now *...profitable to me for the ministry?* How is this possible? Recall that ACTS 14:14 records that both Paul, and Barnabas were Church Apostles. And it was the Apostle Paul, who taught the Apostle Barnabas Paul's gospel message. In ACTS 15:39 *...Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus,*... Barnabas' home country, and we never read of either one of them again in the book of ACTS. Truly only the Lord knows where Barnabas went from there and how long Mark stayed with him.

John Mark, it seems, spent much time with his uncle Barnabas, and in the process learned Paul's gospel, which Barnabas taught him. Barnabas told John Mark of the six years Paul and him

travelled together, and how the Lord had blessed the two of them, and especially how Paul was blessed and gifted with the ministry unto the Gentiles. Barnabas was being patient with John Mark much like he had been very patient with the Apostle Paul. How do we know this?

First because Paul mentions John Mark three times in later writings, and refers to John Mark at that time as being a fellowlabourer with Paul in PHILEMON 1:24, and COLOSSIANS 4:11 when Paul was a prisoner at Rome. How John Mark came to the Apostle Paul at that time is not told us in scripture. In 2 TIMOTHY 4:11 Paul writes that John Mark was ...*profitable to me for the ministry*. Obviously by that point in time, some eighteen years after ACTS 15, John Mark had spent some time with the Apostle Paul. No doubt Barnabas patiently taught John Mark the gospel of Paul, then years later, how or when or by what manner we are not told, Paul and John Mark come together again, this time as a team, and working in conjunction with the Holy Ghost, and being profitable to Paul in his later ministry. We can only thank Barnabas, and the Holy Spirit for that. John Mark ironically becomes the connecting link in later years between Barnabas and Paul.

Secondly, we know that Barnabas was patient with John Mark because we have a gospel record left us from John Mark, entitled The Gospel According to St. MARK, where we find Jesus pictured as the servant, a position in life that John Mark could relate to have been a "servant" in the gospel to both Barnabas, and Paul. Interestingly we find John Mark's name mentioned as Mark five (GRACE) times in scripture. Do you suppose he was a GRACE minister? Sure he was, having received the best teaching from the best teachers, which were before him Apostles of Jesus Christ. So, no doubt, uncle Barnabas to John Mark, was a good influence to John Mark concerning the things of God. Possibly somewhere along the way Barnabas, as he got older and maybe to old to travel, encouraged John Mark to seek out the Apostle Paul, we don't know because scripture doesn't say. We do know this, Barnabas was known as the man of encouragement, for that was one of the meanings of his name. Barnabas first encouraged the Apostle Paul in the many years he spent with him, and secondly Barnabas encouraged John Mark in the many years he also spent with him. Some ministries seem to be more on a one to one basis than on a group basis, and it seems that this was the way it was with Barnabas the majority of the time. So in the end we find that Barnabas too encouraged John Mark to be a follower of the Apostle Paul as Paul was a follower of Jesus Christ. {Study 1 CORINTHIANS 4:16; 11:1; PHILIPPIANS 3:17; and 1 THESSALONIANS 1:6, and we will read some these verses shortly.} Barnabas encouraged both Paul and John Mark to be faithful ministers of the word of God.

Even though we read no more of Barnabas in ACTS, we do read of Barnabas again in scripture. The Apostle Paul makes reference to Barnabas five times in his future writings. {1 CORINTHIANS 9:6; GALATIANS 2:1; 2:9; 2:13; and COLOSSIANS 4:10}. Not once does Paul ever mention the sharp contention he had with Barnabas over John Mark. In the end Paul, in a round about way, pays a great tribute and compliment to Barnabas when he writes in his last epistle: 2 TIMOTHY 4:11 *Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry*. No doubt first of all John Mark had become profitable to Barnabas in the ministry also. Also we find in COLOSSIANS 4:10 & 11 that John Mark was listed as one of the few fellow workers in the ministry of the Apostle Paul who were a comfort unto him. Barnabas in Paul's early ministry had been a comfort to Paul also, so this trait of being a comfort to others that John Mark possessed was no doubt taught by Barnabas himself, and perfected by the Holy Ghost.

One more point to notice here in ACTS 15:39 as Barnabas separated from Paul, and took Mark with him, was that most likely our beloved brother in the Lord, Luke, witnessed this. As close as Paul and Barnabas were, and as close as Paul and Luke were later on, it seems most probable that our brother Luke must have also got acquainted with John Mark here at Antioch, Syria. Study COLOSSIANS 4 and we find the Apostle Paul mentioning both Luke and John Mark (Marcus), so Luke and Mark did get to know each other. When Paul was taken prisoner at Jerusalem in ACTS 21, and then remained in Roman custody until the end of the book of ACTS, Luke was nearby spending much of his time researching information on his gospel of LUKE while in Jerusalem. Certainly Luke