

# “THE FIRST CHURCH CONFERENCE”

Acts 15:12-21

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## INTRODUCTION

Last week we saw how the early church responded to false teaching concerning salvation; they concluded as the result of Peter’s calming speech that all men—both Jews and Gentiles—are saved by the **grace of God**, and through **faith** their hearts had been cleansed (vv. 7-11). Peter warned the church of Jerusalem—and the legalistic believers from the Pharisees in particular—not to “put God to the test” by putting “a yoke on the necks” of Gentile believers that even Jewish believers had not been able to endure—keeping all the legalistic requirements of the Mosaic Law with the addition of all the Rabbinic regulations (v. 10).

Now it was the turn of the “Pastor” of the church of Jerusalem—James, the brother of the Lord—to present an official resolution before this church **business meeting**—Church Council, since Antioch was also involved and since they represented other believers in various churches.

We can see **three** key factors in this passage upon which we must reflect:

- 1) Listening to leadership—the church must not descend into chaos (12-14)
- 2) Understanding prophecy—James’ interpretation of a crucial passage from Amos 9:11-12 (15-18)
- 3) Maintaining peace—How will Gentile believers relate to Jewish believers and even unsaved Jews (19-21)

## WE MUST LEARN AND APPLY THE TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE TO OUR CHURCH TODAY

- I. LISTENING TO LEADERSHIP (12-14)
  - A. Accepting Peter’s Word (12)
  - B. Listening intently to Barnabas and Paul (12)
  - C. Listening to James (13-14)
- II. UNDERSTANDING PROPHECY (15-18)
  - A. Peter’s explanation is in harmony with OT prophets (15)
  - B. Amos’ prophecy in 9:11-12 is in agreement (16-18)

### Amos 9

<sup>11</sup> In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, *and close up the breaches thereof*; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: <sup>12</sup> **That they may possess the remnant of Edom**, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this.

James: Acts 15:16-18—Mostly from Septuagint Version (Not directly from the Hebrew)

<sup>16</sup> *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: <sup>17</sup> **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. <sup>18</sup> *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.* [Variant in Greek texts]

James **adds**: “After these things I will return.”

The Septuagint **reads differently**: “That they may possess the remnant of Edom.”

James stays with the Septuagint reading since it fits his purpose well in showing the conversion of Gentile people who in the future fulfillment will be part of the Messianic Kingdom. If that is the case then, how can the conversion of Gentiles now who become part of the Church be opposed by believers?

- III. MAINTAINING PEACE IN THE CHURCH (19-21)
  - A. Don't trouble Gentile Believers (19)
  - B. Gentiles Not to Agitate Jews (20-21)
    1. Abstain from things particularly offensive to Jews (20)
      - Things contaminated by association with idolatry
      - Fornication (Marriages to close relatives?)
      - Things strangled—blood not properly drained
      - Eating (drinking) of blood
    2. Live in Peace (21)
      - With Believing Jews
      - Don't deliberately agitate Unsaved Jews

## CONCLUSION

Far too many of us fail to apply these principles in a practical way:

- 1) Are we really submissive to our leadership—do we **really listen to correct Biblical teaching** and LIVE it?
- 2) Do we even make a serious attempt to learn, understand, and properly apply prophecy?
- 3) How hard do we work and genuine love for and unity with our fellow believers—especially in our own church , but also with believers in other churches of like faith?