



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

God's Word is the Final Authority

MAY 31-JUNE 2, 2017

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**Acts 15:13-21** *“And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, ‘Men and brethren, listen to me: 14) Simeon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. 15) And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 16) “After this I will return and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; 17) So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things.” 18) Known to God from eternity are all His works. 19) Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, 20) but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. 21) For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.” (NKJV)*

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*“AND AGAIN ISAIAH SAYS: ‘THERE SHALL BE A ROOT OF JESSE; AND HE WHO SHALL RISE TO REIGN OVER THE GENTILES, IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES SHALL HOPE.”*  
(ROMANS 15:12 QUOTING ISAIAH 11:10)

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What did the silence mean? What is the significance of James referring to Peter by his name Simeon? Why does James mention Peter’s arguments rather than those of Barnabas & Paul? Was James handling this situation in the nicest way possible? Is there a significant difference between James saying that the prophets “agree” rather than “it is fulfilled?” What did the four things to abstain from have in common? How did Moses preached in the cities make a difference? Why did no one even mention circumcision in their arguments against it?

**FOCUS ON FUTURE SATELLITE BIBLE STUDIES:**

- JUNE 7-9: ACTS 15:22-29 **LEADERSHIP IN A LETTER**
- JUNE 14-16: ACTS 15:30-35 **LEADERSHIP STRENGTHENED IN THE MISSION CHURCH**

Paul and Barnabas had been so effective in their evangelization of the Gentiles that they had stirred up a hornet’s nest. They had not only won leaders in the capital cities, on more than one occasion they seem to have won at least half of the city to Christ! Probably Paul and Barnabas had been much more effective in winning the Gentiles than even the Jews. The Jews had always required circumcision and all the requirements of the Law of Moses to be observed by Gentiles who wanted to be proselytes into Judaism and the synagogue. Now that Paul and Barnabas were preaching that salvation was by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and thousands of Gentiles were believing, the Pharisaical believers had come to Antioch, acting as if sent by the mother church in Jerusalem and requiring circumcision for salvation (Acts 15:1). Thus the meeting of the Jerusalem Council, in which Peter, Barnabas and Paul had related God’s salvation given to the Gentiles without the necessity of circumcision, was lacking one thing which was necessary to convince the entire church.

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*“THE GENTILES SHALL COME TO YOUR LIGHT, AND KINGS TO THE BRIGHTNESS OF YOUR RISING.” (ISAIAH 60:4)*

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**I. REQUIRED BY CHRIST’S WORD ACTS 15:13-14**

James, whom almost everyone agrees is the brother of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:19, 2:9, 12), was likely presiding over the council as the primary pastor of the Jerusalem church and he had waited patiently again for anyone to question either Peter’s powerful arguments as well as the presentation by Barnabas and Paul. After this time of silence, pointing to agreement on the part of the

**BIBLE STUDIES**

- WEDNESDAY @ 7:30AM –BIBLE STUDY – FREDERICKSBURG – BOB EVANS ON RT. 3 & 11:00 – WOODBRIDGE – BOB EVANS, 14490 SMOKETOWN RD.**
- THURSDAY @ 7:00AM –BIBLE STUDY – CHESTER – SHONEY’S AT RT. 10 (IRON BRIDGE ROAD) & 301(12531 JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGHWAY)**
- FRIDAY @ 7:00 AM –BIBLE STUDY – NORFOLK – GOLDEN CORRAL, 6103 N. MILITARY HWY, NEAR THE NORFOLK AIRPORT**

# Virginia

## God's Word is the Final Authority

believing Pharisees in the church who had required the circumcision of the Gentiles, James brings the council to a conclusion by first re-stating Peter's argument. He begins by using Peter's Hebrew name, *Simeon*, to address particularly the Pharisees, of strict Hebrew observance, to ponder again the reality that this issue had already been settled "*first*" in relation to Peter many years ago when he had won Cornelius and his company to Christ. In fact, Christ had required Peter to go by a three-fold vision. But notice that James summarizes it all with a perspective of bringing the greatest glory to God: "*God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.*"

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*"AND OTHER SHEEP I HAVE WHICH ARE NOT OF THIS FOLD; THEM ALSO I MUST BRING, AND THEY WILL HEAR MY VOICE; AND THERE WILL BE ONE FLOCK AND ONE SHEPHERD."*  
JOHN 10:16

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### II. RESOLVED BY GOD'S WORD ACTS 15:15-18

James now moves to the foundation that they have all been unknowingly waiting for, the confirmation of the Scriptures. "*And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it has been written.*" James uses the plural "prophets" to show us that though he is primarily quoting one prophet, there are others he is quoting also. "*After this I will return*" is most likely from Jeremiah 12:15 and is speaking of the same circumstances as the primary quote from Amos 9:11-12. This passage speaks of the restoration of Israel in the future by God through the Messiah, "*And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; so that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the LORD who does all these things.*" The point that is being made by James in quoting this passage is that there is no requirement upon "*the rest of mankind*" or the "*Gentiles*" except that they "*seek the LORD*" and "*are called by My name.*" There is no circumcision, no law of Moses, no need to become Jews as proselytes—there

is no further necessary work or obligation upon these who obviously are not Jews, yet they are unquestionably blessed with them. If there is nothing more required of the Gentiles in the future, why should there be anything more required now? The final phrase, "*Known to God from eternity are all His works.*" is inferred from Isaiah 45:21 and verse 22 states, "*Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God and there is no other.*"

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**"JAMES'S POINT IS THAT THE PROPHET SAID GENTILES WILL BE IN THE KINGDOM WITHOUT BECOMING JEWISH PROSELYTES ... PETER BEGAN BY STRESSING THAT GENTILES IN THE PAST WERE SAVED BY GRACE ALONE; JAMES CONCLUDED BY SHOWING THAT THAT WILL ALSO BE THE CASE IN THE FUTURE. THEREFORE, GENTILE SALVATION IN THE PRESENT MUST ALSO BE BY GRACE ALONE." JOHN MACARTHUR**

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### III. RESPONSE BY MAN'S WORD ACTS 15:19-21

James finally provides the verdict of the entire council: "*Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God.*" Could James have stated it in a kinder way to the Pharisaical believers who had been dead wrong, especially regarding the Gospel? He only requires that they no longer "*trouble*" the Gentiles. Then James moves from salvation doctrine to that of table fellowship, making sure that the Gentiles are not offending Jewish believers or even those who might believe in the future by continuing anything associated with idolatry. "*But that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled and from blood.*" Meats that had been offered to idols or prepared without draining the blood would offend the kosher Jews as well as the flagrant sexual perversion associated with idol worship. Finally, the Gentiles are reminded that such abstinence is important to all Jews.

#### Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Are you partnering with God in being a witness to others so that they may be honorably called by His name?
- 2) Is your dependence and confidence in the Word of God for your own salvation and decisions of life and state?
- 3) Are you kind to those whom you must correct and careful to not let offenses from you keep others from Christ?