

## *the remotest part of the earth*

#17, circumcision – Acts 15: 1-35

Scripture continues to speak of two groups. Those “born again” and those “born according to the flesh”. Our study proves that they are not the same.

Regarding circumcision, those born again were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, Colossians 2:11-13. And the others are “the so called circumcision performed in the flesh by human hands”, Ephesians 2:11.

Opening the door of faith to the Gentiles provided a brand new field for the teachers of the law. Out of Judea they came to Antioch, questioning the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice. Sure, it was OK to believe in Christ, but that’s not enough for salvation they reasoned! One more step was required of those born again. They needed to be circumcised, they argued! Not understanding all that Christ completed, their mission was to convince those born again (who were already circumcised with a circumcision made without hands.) that in order to be truly saved they needed the circumcision performed in the flesh by human hands.

1 Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” .

2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

[1.] v:1, Some men, From the list below select who these might be?

- a) Pagan Gentiles.
- b) Unserved Jews.
- c) Pantheists
- d) Born again men.
- e) none of the above.

[2.] v:2, great dissension, Write down what you feel are the two positions of the debate.

[3.] v:2 again, up to Jerusalem, How can we tell that an acceptable solution was not reached?

## *the remotest part of the earth*

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3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren.

[4.] v:2 again, “Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up . . .” (esv)  
“*the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up. .” (nasb)  
Who were *the brethren* that appointed Paul and Barnabas and some others?

[5.] v:3, Phoenicia and Samaria, On the map page 3, locate and label these two locations.

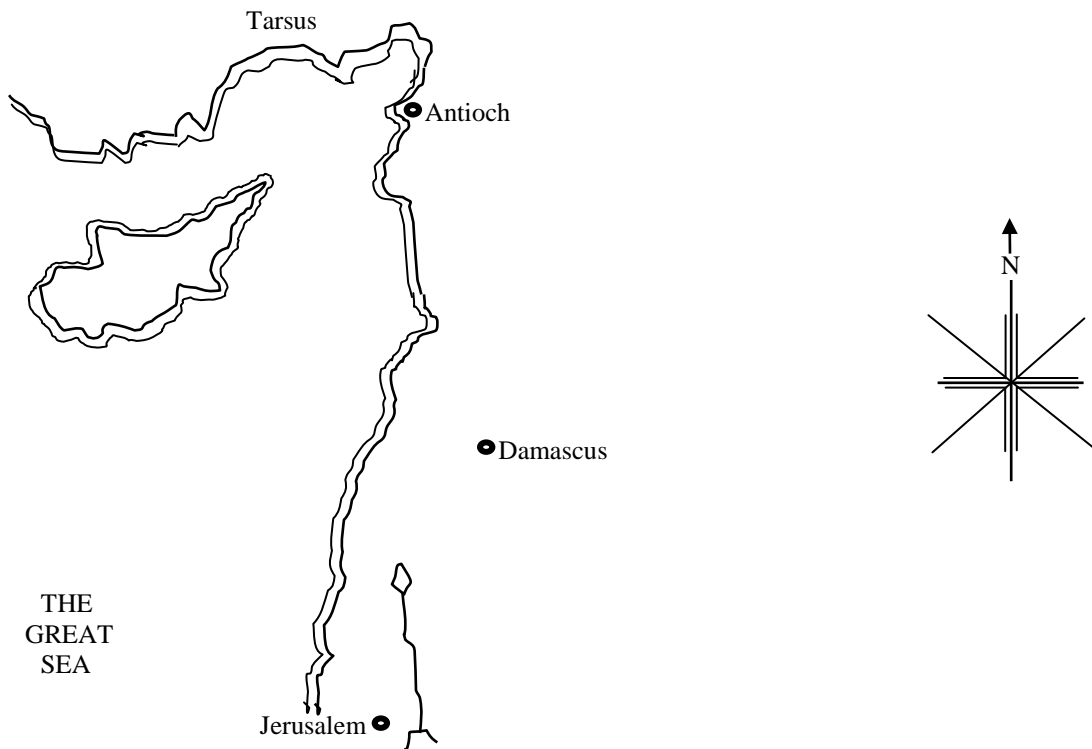
[6.] v:3 again, bringing great joy, From what you know about Phoenicia and John 4:19-24, why would these folks feel this “joy”?

Paul’s parallel account of these events, in Acts, was given in his letter to the Galatian churches. In lesson 15, we last read of him and Barnabas as they left Jerusalem and began the 1<sup>st</sup> journey into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. Again picking up his account we read:

Gal 2:1-5, Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. 2 It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. 3 But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. 4 But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. 5 But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.

## *the remotest part of the earth*

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4 When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. 5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

6 The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.

[7.] v:4-6 apostles and the elders, **Reviewing Acts 6:2**, how does God prepare men so that they can be ready for situations like this?

[8.] v:5, sect of the Pharisees who had believed, **Why might Paul have a good handle on how these guys thought?**

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7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11 "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

12 All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

13 After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. 14 " Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. 15 "With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written,

16' AFTER THESE THINGS I will return,  
AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH  
HAS FALLEN,  
AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS,  
AND I WILL RESTORE IT,  
17 SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD,  
AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,'  
18 SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN  
FROM LONG AGO.

[9.] v:7-11, the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel, Peter is referring to an event we previously studied in "the remotest part of the earth". Write down the lesson number and the Bible reference of that study.

[10.] v:12, signs and wonders God had done, Without peeking, can you name a wonder?

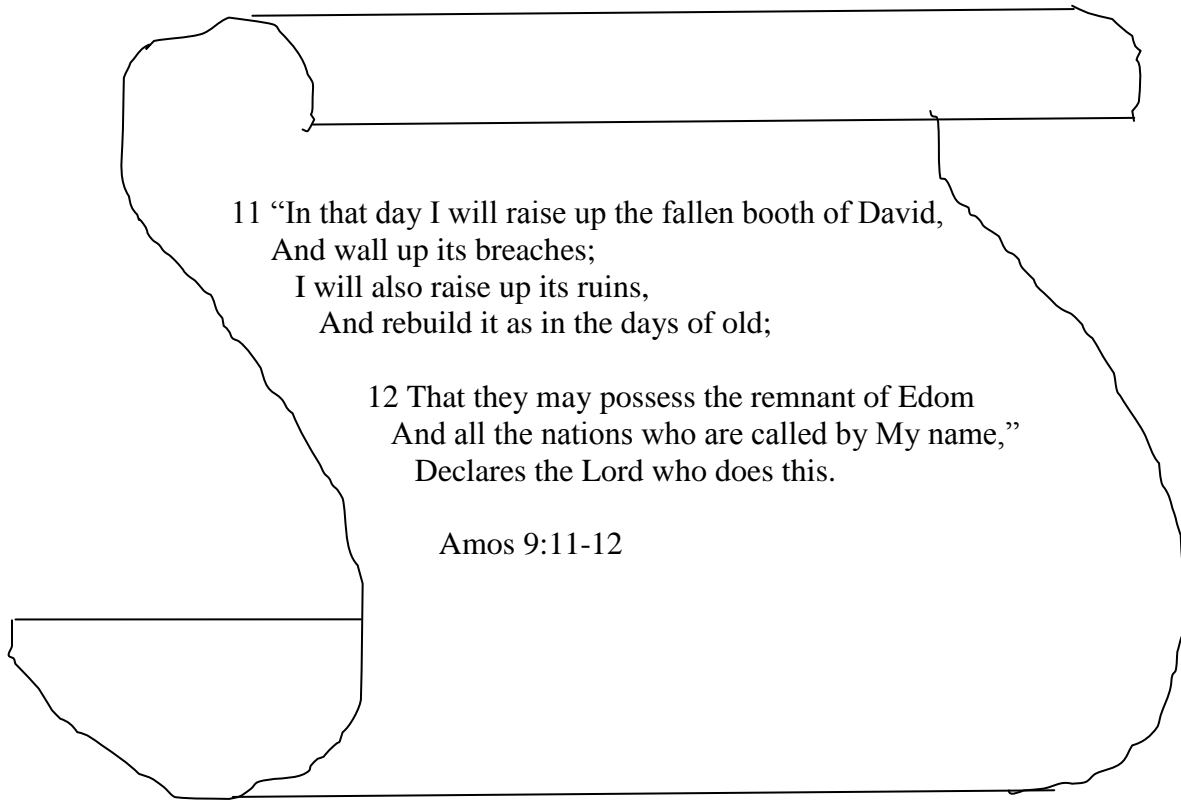
[11.] v:13-18 and Amos 9:11-12 (next page), REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID. James quoted the prophet Amos to prove the event. In both references, is the rebuilding accomplished by the hand of man or an unseen hand?

[12.] question [11.] and Ephesians 2:18-22. Born again Ephesians are fitted together into a holy temple (from a primary naio (to dwell); a fane, shrine). Why or why doesn't this refer to what James and Amos were talking about?

[13.] question [11.] and I Peter 2:4-5. The born again are built up as a spiritual house. Why or why doesn't this refer to what James and Amos were talking about?

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19 "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. 21 "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

[14.] v:17 and Amos 9:12, THE GENTILES (or nations) WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME, Who would these be?

[15.] v:19-20, What was James' conclusion regarding Gentile circumcision?

[16.] v:21, he (Moses) is read in the synagogues, James' sensitivity to the Jewish convert being offended by the "freedom in Christ" enjoyed by the Gentile convert, listed four items to be agreed upon by the Gentiles. Of the four which one is not a Christian liberty item? Scripture please.

## *the remotest part of the earth*

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22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas – Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, 23 and they sent this letter by them, " The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings.

24 "Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls, 25 it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 "Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth.

28 "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: 29 that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."

30 So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. 31 When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. 32 Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. 33 After they had spent time there, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out. 34 [But it seemed good to Silas to remain there.] 35 But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord.

[17.] v:22-23, to choose men from among them, **What seems to be the reason for sending Judas and Silas from Jerusalem?**

[18.] v:24, whom we gave no instruction, **Why or why don't you feel these would be ones to obey the elders?**

[19.] v:25-29, good to the Holy Spirit, **Here is an excellent example of listening to the Holy Spirit. What are some things that could hinder us from listening?**

[20.] v:30-33, encouraged and strengthened the brethren, **How did this ministry help the new Gentile converts see that they were brothers with those in Jerusalem?**

[21.] v:35, teaching and preaching, **We read of more proof that the study of God's Word solves some very difficult issues. What ideas might you have to instill in others the importance of Bible study?**

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**NOTES**