

# acts

PART 3

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deep roots

BIBLE STUDIES

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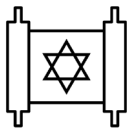
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# ACTS CHART

CHAPTER	DESCRIPTION
Chapter 15	
Chapter 16	
Chapter 17	
Chapter 18	

48 - 49 A.D.

51 - 52 A.D.

54 A.D.

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council at Jerusalem (A 15)</li> <li>• Second Missionary Journey Begins</li> <li>• Paul in Philippi (A 16)</li> <li>• Paul in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens (A 17)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing of I Thessalonians</li> <li>• Third Missionary Journey Begins</li> <li>• Paul in Corinth (A 18)</li> <li>• Writing of II Thessalonians</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paul in Ephesus (A 19)</li> </ul> |
|--|--|--|

(It is nearly impossible to know the exact dates and even years of the events in Acts, so these are approximate times determined by Bible scholars.)



# & TIMELINE

CHAPTER	DESCRIPTION
Chapter 19	
Chapter 20	
Chapter 21	

57 A.D.

- Paul in Macedonia and Greece (A 20)
- Writing of I Corinthians
- Writing of Galatians

58 - 59 A.D.

- Writing of II Corinthians
- Writing of Romans
- Paul Returns to Jerusalem (A 21)
- Paul's Arrest at Jerusalem (A 21 - 23)

61 - 64 A.D.

- Luke writes the book of Acts



# MAJOR & MINOR FIGURES

**Agabus:** A prophet who predicted a famine (A 11) and Paul's imprisonment (A 21)



**Peter, Apostle**  
Spokesperson of early church

**Alexander:** A high priest of Jerusalem (A 4:6, 19:33)

**Apollos:** A Jew of Alexandria, with knowledge of the Scriptures. (A 18-19)

**Aquila:** Lives in Corinth with wife Priscilla, mentors Apollos (A 18)

**Aristarchus:** One of Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia (A 19:29, 20:4)

**Crispus:** The synagogue leader of Corinth whom Paul baptized (A 18:8)

**Damaris:** Athenian woman, becomes a believer after hearing Paul preach (A 17:34)

**Demetrius:** Silversmith of shrines of Artemis, leads revolt against Paul (A 19)

**Dionysius:** Athenian, a member of the Areopagus, becomes a believer (A 17:34)

**Erastus:** One of Paul's helpers who is sent to Macedonia with Timothy (A 19:22)

**Eutychus:** Young man who fell out of window and died, raised from the dead (A 20)



**Paul, Missionary**  
Preaches to the Gentiles  
Plants several churches



**Gallio:** Proconsul of Achaia, dismissed the Corinthians' arguments (A 18)

**Gaius:** One of Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia (A 19:29, 20:4)

**James:** Brother of Jesus, lives in Jerusalem (A 21)

**Jason:** Believer in Thessalonica, seized when mob could not find Paul or Silas (A 17)

**Judas (Barsabbas):** Chosen to bring epistle to Antioch, a prophet (A 15)

**Lydia:** From Thyatira, a dealer in purple cloth, worshiper of God (A 16:14-15)

**Mark:** Left 1st missionary journey, joins Barnabas, wrote the gospel "Mark" (A 15:39)

**Mnason:** From Cyprus, one of the early disciples, Paul stays at his house (A 21:16)

**Philip:** Evangelist, one of the overseers of Jerusalem, lives in Caesarea (A 21:8)

**Priscilla:** Lives in Corinth with husband Aquila, mentors Apollos (A 18)

**Sceva:** Jewish chief priest whose seven sons practiced exorcism (A 19:14)

**Secundus:** Thessalonican, accompanies Paul and waits at Troas (A 20:3-5)

**Silas:** Brings epistle to Antioch, a prophet, Paul's new travel companion (A 15-18)

**Sopater:** Son of Pyrrhus from Berea, accompanies Paul and waits at Troas (A 20:3-5)

**Timothy:** Jewish and Greek, Joins Paul and Silas on missionary journeys (A 16-20)

**Titius Justus:** Worshiper of God who Paul visits in Corinth (A 18:7)

**Trophimus:** From the province of Asia, accompanies Paul & waits at Troas (A 20:3-5)

**Tychicus:** From the province of Asia, accompanies Paul and waits at Troas (A 20:3-5)

**Sosthenes:** Synagogue leader in Corinth who is beat up by the crowd (A 18:17)



# Chapter 15

## THE BOOK OF ACTS

### Goals For This Week:

- See how the early church resolved major issues within their community, and learn from their methods
- Understand that even when the Holy Spirit is moving and God's growing the Church, man's own pride and philosophies can cause problems
- Realize that interpersonal conflicts can break friendships and ministries when both parties are not willing to compromise

### DAY ONE: DIVISION IN THE CHURCH

Welcome to the third part of Acts! Up until now, the early church has been spreading throughout the Middle East as persecution has begun. Meanwhile, Paul and Barnabas just finished their first missionary journey (chapters 13 to 14), but have settled back in Antioch. Although there has been some disputes amongst these early Christians already, this is the first time where there is intense, even heated debate, about issues in the church.

Read Acts 15 in its entirety. As you do so, underline every location in a special color (you already began doing this in the last part of Acts, so continue to use whatever color you used then). Also pay







We will dive into this chapter more tomorrow. For now, notice how no one told the Pharisees to basically sit down and be quiet. Oftentimes, pastors resist church members who bring forth criticism, and use excuses like, "You need to humble yourself before the Lord and figure out why this thing about our church bothers you." Instead, the leaders in Jerusalem were willing to discuss, and even debate, these issues. Other churches, like Antioch, even sent representatives to take part in this discussion. So, what can we, as modern Christians, takeaway from these early Christians' example?

Is it good or bad for Christians to have discussions regarding disagreements? Why?

Think of something in your own church, ministry, friends group, business, etc. that people cannot agree on. What is it, and how is this dispute affecting people? How can this dispute be solved?



# PHARISEES

The idea that Pharisees were involved in the Council of Jerusalem may seem strange initially. Weren't these the same guys who had Jesus Christ crucified? However, because Pharisees believed in the possibility of a resurrection, unlike their Sadducees counterparts, it is probable that Pharisees would eventually have believed in Jesus Christ. I. Howard Marshall, though, explains that it would not have been easy for Pharisees to become Christians who embraced Jesus' grace. It says we "underestimate what a colossal step it was for dyed-in-the-wool Jewish legalism to adopt a new way of thinking." The Pharisees had been raised on keeping the Law perfectly. Now, they must release the bonds of the Law in order to accept Jesus' grace.

Further, J. Vernon McGee explains that the Pharisees involved in the Council were not denying Christ. There had been too many witnesses of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection to pull off that argument then. Instead, there was a contention over the facts of Christ's salvation and how to attain it.

Yet, J. Vernon McGee warns us, "[The Pharisees] wanted to add something to the Gospel. Friend, whenever you add something to the Gospel, you no longer have the Gospel but you have a religion. You no longer have the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The only approach that you can make to Jesus Christ is by faith." Let this be a warning to us! So often the Christian community gets stuck in legalism, because that is what we have been raised with like the Pharisees. Instead, we are to embrace Jesus' grace and our faith in Him. This doesn't mean we do not observe the Law, like the 10 Commandments, but this does mean we are no longer slaves to it! (Romans 6:14, 7:4-6)



## DAY TWO: CHURCH GROWING PAINS

The entire issue in Acts 15 is whether or not Gentiles need to be circumcised or not to be fully saved. Remember that this argument was introduced by Pharisees who had been saved. These men whose lives have been about studying Old Testament Law.

Why would these Pharisees think it was necessary to be circumcised? Read Genesis 17:10-13, where the Lord first introduced the concept of circumcision. List His instructions:

What was the law regarding Gentiles who recognized Jewish feasts and customs? (Exodus 12:48)

Do you remember how this issue was already raised in Acts 11? You have already studied this chapter in full, so just take another look at verses 16 to 18, and summarize Peter's argument then:

Let's look at one last passage. Read Romans 3:21-30, and summarize what is Paul's argument on this matter:



## DAY THREE: THE EPISTLE

In Acts 15, the council at Jerusalem decides to send a letter to the believers at Antioch, as well as the regions of Syria and Cilicia. Re-read the letter in verses 23 to 29, then summarize what was decided in verses 28-29:

What was these believers reaction to the letter? (Verse 31)

What did Judas and Silas do? (Verse 32)

Who went where after this event? (Verses 33 - 35)

Remember how on Day 1, we looked at how these early believers handled such a big dispute in the church? Now, we see that they wrote down their decision, and distributed it amongst the believers of other cities. How can we apply that to disputes in our churches, ministries, or friends groups today?



## GALATIANS 2

There is an on-going dispute amongst commentators on whether Acts 15 refers to the same event as Galatians 2:1-10 or not. As we see here in Acts 15 already, the Council of Jerusalem is deliberating on whether Gentiles should be held to the Law to become Christians. In Galatians 2, Paul recounts an incident with Peter, who wouldn't eat with Gentiles much to Paul's chagrin. However, if we observe the facts, it is unlikely that these two situations were the same. Here's why:

1. Galatians 2 appears to have been a private conversation, whereas Acts 15 was a public forum.
2. Galatians 2 doesn't mention the measures imposed on the Gentiles in Acts 15's distributed letter. It also doesn't appear that any action was taken in Galatians 2.
3. According to I. Howard Marshall, it is unlikely that Paul would have approved of the decided compromise placed on the Christian community in Acts 15.
4. Galatians 2:1-10 was during Paul's second visit to Jerusalem, whereas Acts 15 was clearly his third visit. (The first was Acts 9:26-29; the second was Acts 11:30)



Due to these reasons, it is more likely that these two passages are describing different events. However, there are still commentators who believe the passages are one and the same. For example, Warren Wiersbe solves the dilemma by shuffling the events together: “(1) a public welcome to Paul and his associates, Acts 15:4; (2) a private meeting of Paul and the key leaders, Galatians 2:2; (3) a second public meeting at which the Judaizers presented their case, Acts 15:5-6 and Galatians 2:3-5; and (4) the public discussion described in Acts 15:6ff. In this public discussion, four key leaders presented the case for keeping the doors of grace open to the lost Gentiles.” The problem with this theory is that it is cutting up parts of Scripture to fit into a particular theory, while also creating a timeline that isn’t implied in the text.



## DAY FOUR: THE 2ND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

In Acts 14, we concluded Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey. You may recall that John Mark left them at some point during that first journey. Now, we see that issue return as Paul and Barnabas get ready to begin a second journey.

Let's review: Where is Paul and Barnabas at this point? What were they both doing? (Verse 35)

What does Paul propose? (Verse 36)

What does Barnabas propose? What is Paul's response? (Verse 37-38)

What is the result? Where do they go? (Verse 39-41)

Earlier in Acts 14, we saw a collective dispute in the church. Now, we see interpersonal conflict between Paul and Barnabas. Does this remind you of anyone else in the Bible? Look at Genesis 13:2-13, and record who was fighting, and what the result was:





## DAY FIVE: PAUL'S ANGER WITH MARK

Paul refused to let John Mark join he and Barnabas on their second missionary journey. This caused such an issue between Paul and Barnabas that they separated from one another and encouraged the cities they had previously been to without each other. Yikes! Take a look at these verses, and then we'll think about how this issue could have been avoided.

What does Scripture say about working together? (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

What does Scripture say about stubbornness, and doing things on your own? (Proverbs 18:1-2)

What was Jesus' instruction to His disciples about disputes amongst believers? (Luke 17:3-4, Matthew 18:21-35)

From what you just studied above, what should have Paul done in this situation? Why?



It is interesting to see Barnabas stand up for John Mark, because this isn't the first time he's stood up for someone. Look up Acts 9:26-27, which you have already studied, and note who is being judged, for why, and how does Barnabas stand up for this person:

Fascinating! How is this similar to the parable you read in Matthew 18?

Take a moment today to think of someone who has hurt, maligned, or betrayed you. Ask the Lord to soften your heart towards this person and help you forgive him/her. Of course, when we are bitter against another person, the last thing we want to do is forgive him. We feel so justified in our anger, that there is just no way we will let that person off easy! Unfortunately, we see here in Acts 15 that bitterness causes separation amongst believers, which can hurt and weaken ministries. If you have no desire to forgive that person, then tell God! You don't have to fake it. Be honest with where you are at right now, but do ask the Lord to help you through this issue. Don't steep in your bitterness like Paul did.



Now, maybe you are a Barnabas right now, and feel torn between two friends who are at odds. If you get involved in their dispute, then it's assumed you're taking sides as Barnabas did. If you don't get involved, then your friends might assume you don't care about them (or something as silly as that). Ask the Lord to give you the wisdom you need to face this issue, and to stand firm in the truth.

Or maybe you are a John Mark, who gave up at some point but now wants a second chance. If that's you today, ask the Lord to forgive you. He is a God of second chances! Ask Him for another shot at whatever it is (ministry, a career, a relationship, etc.). If someone won't forgive you, ask the Lord to help that person's heart be softened towards you.

**Write a one-line summary of chapter 15 in your Acts chart.**

After Paul and Barnabas' dispute, we don't hear any more of Barnabas. He went to Cyprus and there he had a great ministry. J. Vernon McGee writes, "At this point Barnabas sails off the pages of

the Scriptures. The Bible does not give us information about his ministry. From here on we are going to follow Paul. J. Vernon McGee



“God often guides through interpersonal difficulties. Is it the best way? I don't think so. I think it's much better to hear a word of wisdom, to learn from a teaching, to receive counsel and understanding from a gifted brother or sister. But a lot of times I'm just too dull of hearing and hard of heart to receive a word of wisdom or to make personal application from a Bible study. I have to bump heads with someone for God to get me going in the right direction. I wish I could say, “My spiritual sensitivity is at such a level that I never have conflict with anyone at any time. I hear the voice of the Lord whispering in my ear in every situation. Consequently, I never have to go through contention or difficulty” – but I'm not there, folks. I find great comfort, however, knowing that even Paul the apostle, at the high point of his ministry, was directed through interpersonal difficulty.”

– Jon Courson



