

ACTS

THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL
ACTS 14:1 - 15:35



WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHEN? WHY?

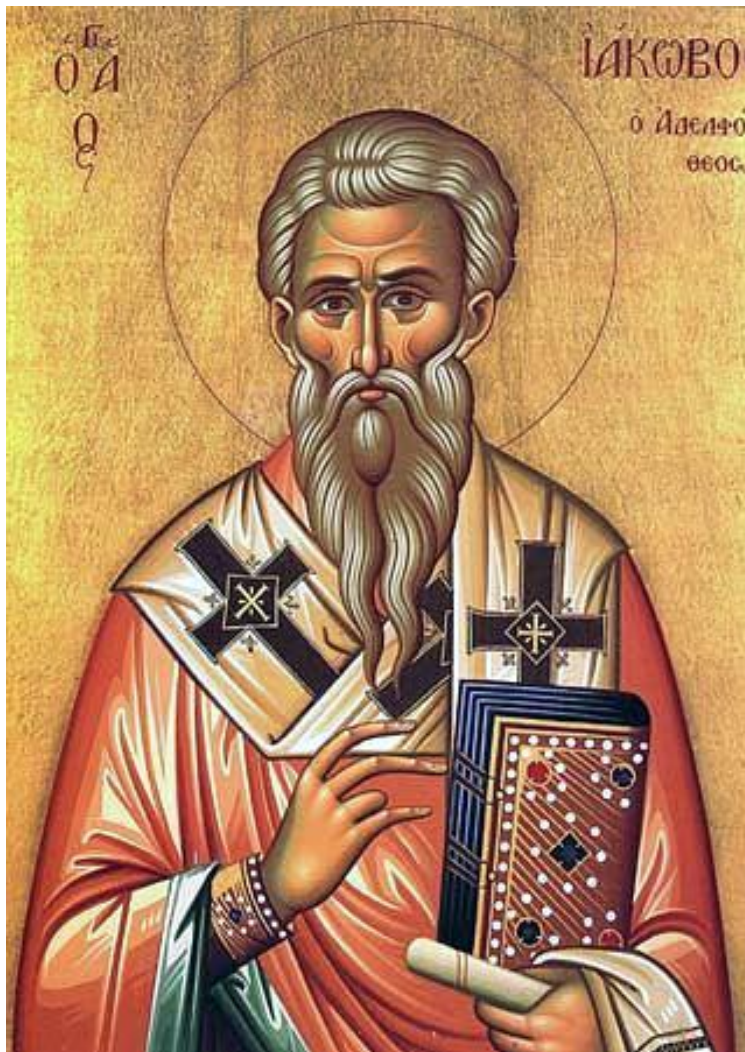
WHO? The historic group of apostles and elders of the first church in Jerusalem, also Barnabas and Paul were present

WHAT? Make decisions concerning the doctrines, interpretations, and direction of the early Church

WHERE? Met in Jerusalem

WHEN? 48 - 50 A.D.

JAMES



...and WHY?

Faced with growing number of complaints

The Apostolic Council decided to meet

**To demonstrate willingness of Apostolic leaders to
make compromises in certain secondary matters**

To maintain peace and unity in the Church

WHY BARNABAS AND PAUL WERE PRESENT?

Appointed by the church in Antioch (Syria)

Their missionary teachings were in question

WHERE, WHAT HAD THESE APOSTLES BEEN DOING?

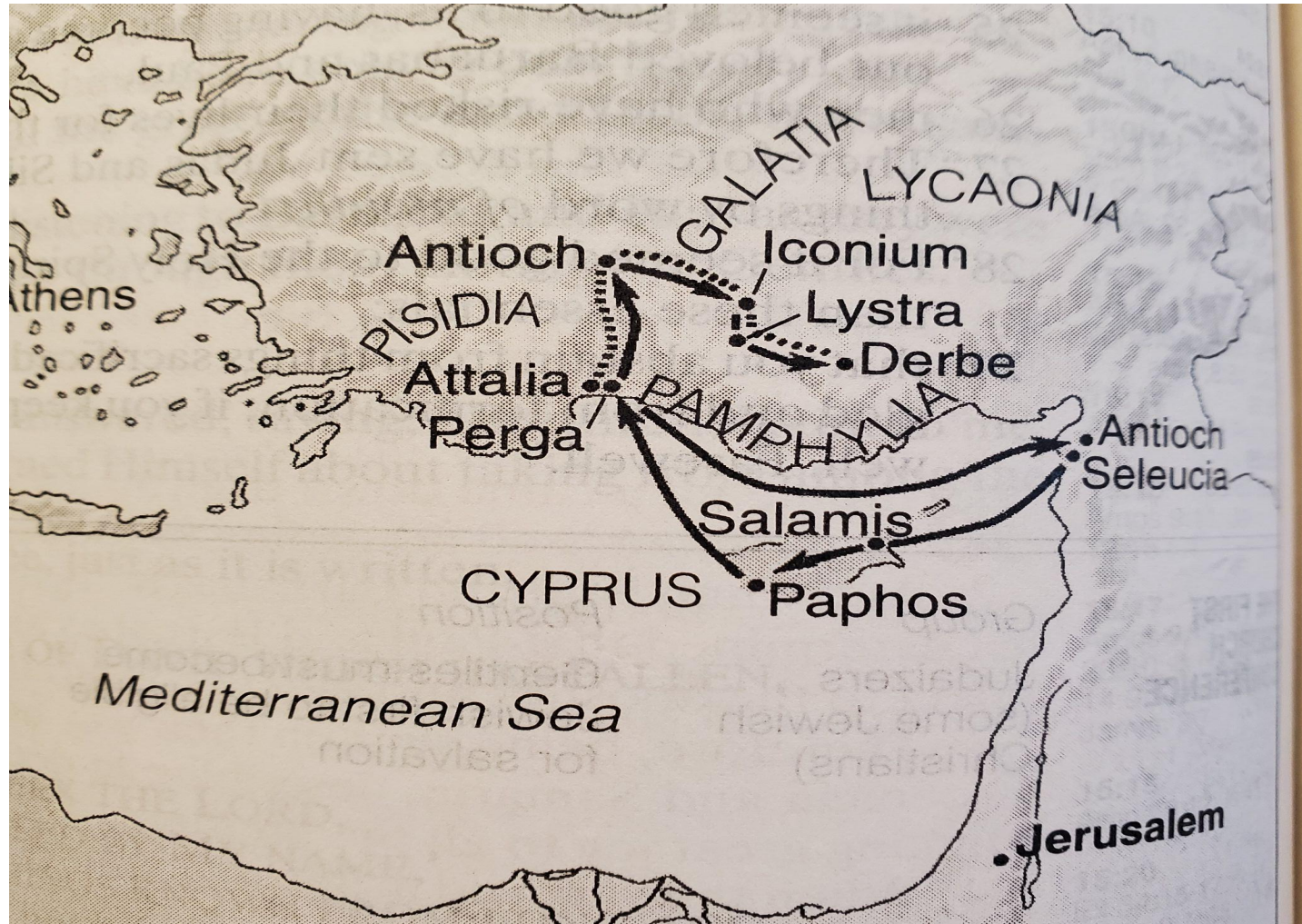
ICONIUM

LYSTRA

DERBE

ANTIOCH

LYCOANIA



BARNABAS AND PAUL IN ICONIUM

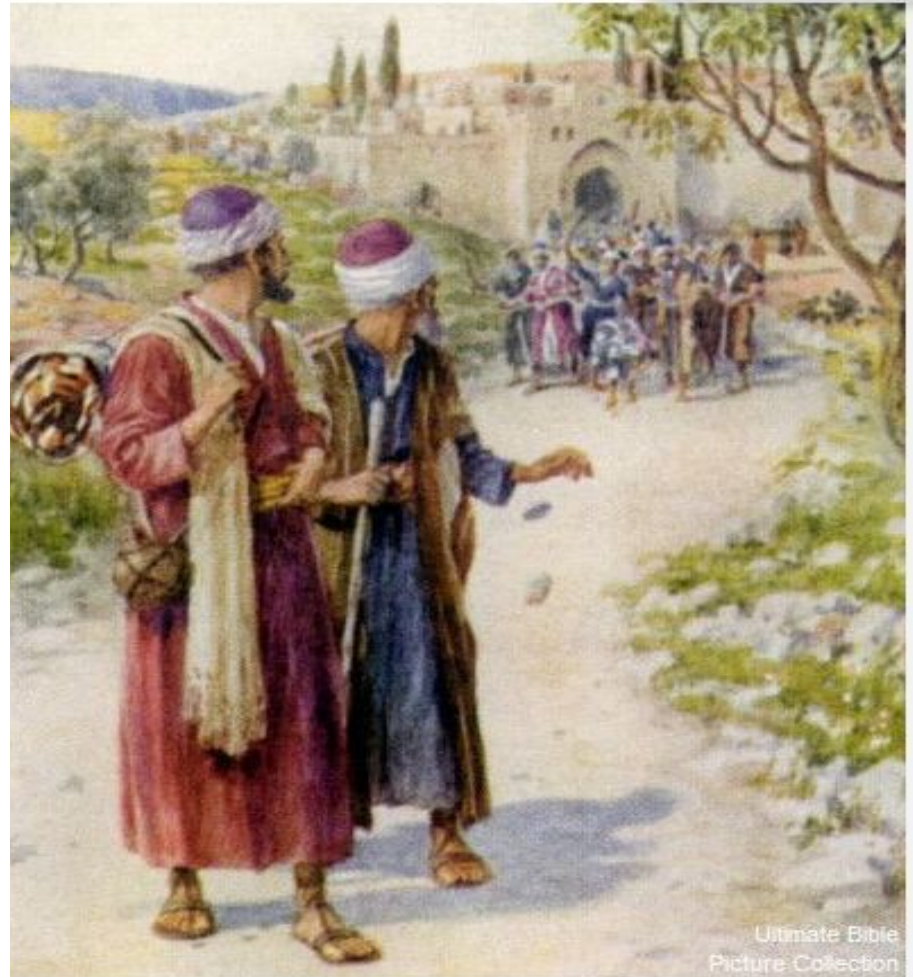
Success and Joy!

God was performing many miracles and wonders through these two faithful Apostles

They were converting many Gentiles

BUT...Paul and Barnabas began to face persecution

They fled from Iconium



THEY FLED TO LYSTRA and DERBE

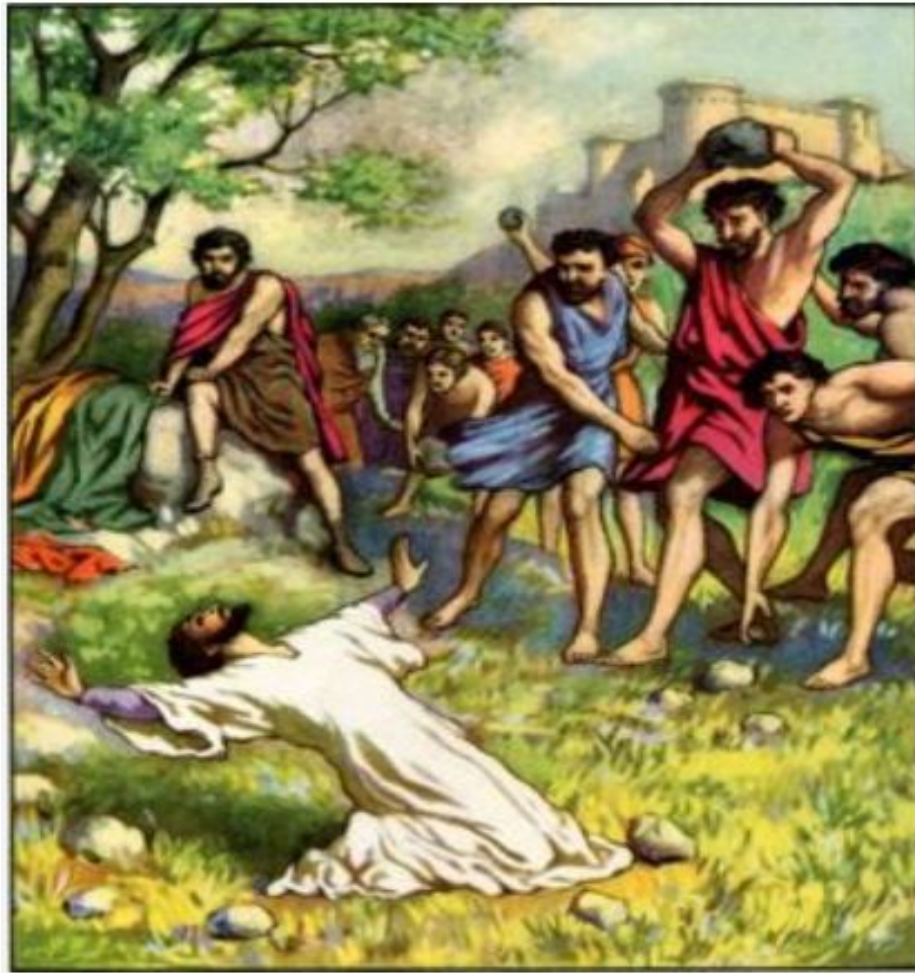
In Lystra, Paul heals a man who could not walk from birth

Amazed crowds began to call them gods and offered sacrifices

Paul and Barnabas were distressed;

“Men, why are you doing these things?...turn to the living God...he gave you witness of rains from heaven and fruitful seasons...” (ACTS 14:15-17)

Paul was left for dead...



But...he rose up and fled to Derbe with Barnabas

Paul and Barnabas, through God's grace, again preached the gospel and made many disciples

AMAZING NEXT MOVE...

Full of faith and mission of the Holy Spirit, they returned to the very places where they had been persecuted!

Trusting fully in God that He was with them. They appointed Elders for the fledgling churches to help ensure they would continue and grow.

THEY LEFT DERBE AND SAILED TO ANTIOCH (SYRIA)

BUT...faced a conundrum with the Gentile converts:

Need they become 'Jewish' before they could join the church?

Problematic: The main entrance to 'Jewishness' was circumcision.

TAKE THE ISSUE TO THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL

Specific question before the Council:

“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” (ACTS 15:1)

The Broader Debate...involved Mosaic Law, the O.T. covenants, Jewish traditions, and application to newly-converted Gentiles,

A MAJOR DECISION...ACTUALLY

IF...

**Gentiles were given freedom from most of the
Mosaic Laws...this would be**

**A major act of differentiation of the early church
from its Jewish roots!**

Plus, to Greco-Romans

.

Who historically revered the perfect human body,

The circumcision procedure itself was considered repulsive

WHAT DECISION PROCESS DID THE COUNCIL USE?

A Base for judgment: O.T. Mosaic Law, Noahide Covenants

The leaders discussed pros and cons

They listened to all sides: (3)

Decision made and communicated

All parties committed to adhere to the decision

A Note about the Proceedings:

Luke presents certain public facts in the book of
ACTS

Paul's epistle or letter to the Galatians gives
additional details of the proceedings

COUNCIL LISTENS TO OPPOSING SIDES...

First, PETER spoke

Second, PAUL and BARNABAS

Third to speak was JAMES

PETER'S TESTIMONIAL SPEECH

God knows the heart, and gave the Holy Spirit to Gentiles, just as to us, and He made no distinction between us, having cleansed their hearts by faith.

“Why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear?” (ACTS 15:7-11)

THE SECOND TO SPEAK—PAUL AND BARNABAS

The assembly became silent as they listened to the miraculous signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. (ACTS 15:12)

**They did not argue theology,
they told about the acts of God:**

“GOD IS WORKING. WHO ARE WE TO STAND AGAINST GOD?”

THE THIRD TO SPEAK—JAMES

Chairman of the Council, James was the most Jewish of the Jewish leaders.

James said virtually the same thing as Peter:

“It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.”

(ACTS 15:19)

DECISION and the LETTER TO THE GENTILES

To tell of the Decision of the Council, James proposed writing a letter to the Gentiles, to say:

“To abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals, and from blood. If you keep yourselves from these things, you will do well. Farewell.” (ACTS 15:20)

...no mention of circumcision!

REFERRED TO AS APOSTOLIC DECREE

The **JERUSALEM COUNCIL** did maintain four prohibitions.

They were remembering God's words in Genesis 9:3:

“Every living thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.”

Did the Decision of the Council...

Settle the debate?

YES!

...for the present.

Scholars long debated the purpose and origin of the four prohibitions. There were many subsequent councils.

THE COUNCIL ALSO DECIDED...

That...Gentile converts to Christianity were not obligated to keep most of the rules prescribed to the Jews by the Mosaic Law.

DEBATE: Was this a 'commonality' or a 'differential'?

DECISION



A “Commonality” or a “Differential”?

The Council gave the opinion that “The original intention of Jesus was to convert Gentiles to the covenants God made with Noah (in Genesis 9), and let the Jews follow thej Mosaic Laws.”

Note that the Council may again have looked to scripture...to what God had done in the past:

In Ephesians 2:11-22

Paul writes about how Jesus bought the Jews and Gentiles together because “He Himself is our peace...He brought [them together] by the blood of Christ...He has made us both one...and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility...through the Cross.”

THE DECISION ACCOMPLISHED 5 IMPORTANT THINGS

- 1. The gospel of divine grace was reaffirmed**
- 2. The unity of the church was safeguarded**
- 3. The evangelism of the Gentiles could proceed without hindrance**
- 4. The Gentile churches that had already been established were given encouragement**
- 5. The future of the church as a whole was guaranteed**

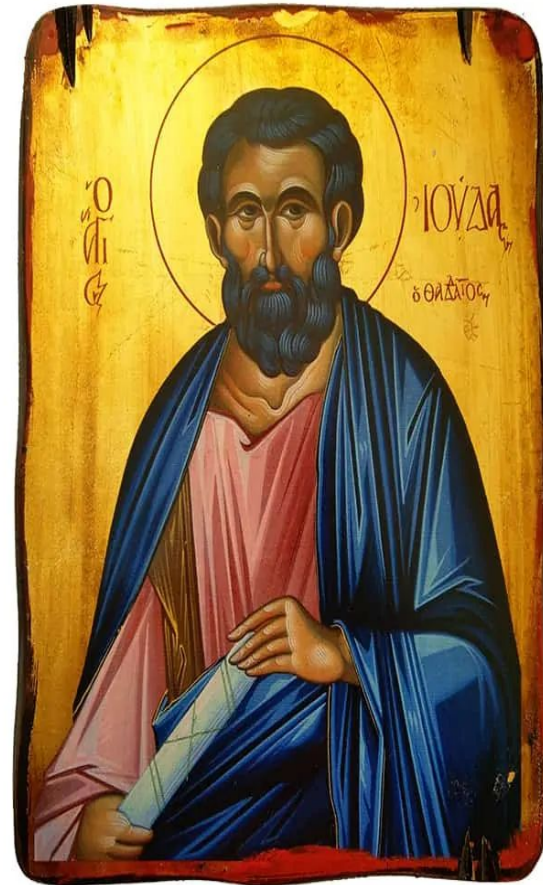
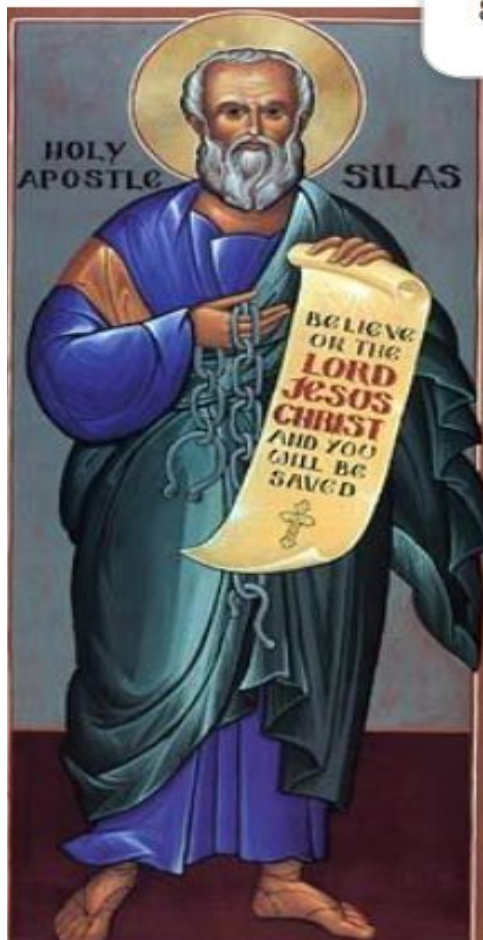
THE COUNCIL'S DECISION GETS DELIVERED

Paul and Barnabas...

Are accompanied by two witnesses,

Silas and Judas!

SILAS & JUDAS



APPLICATION FOR US TODAY...DECISIONS:

...Listen

.....Consider all perspectives

.....Lean on a solid base of God's Word

.....Be cognizant of history

.....Realize ramifications for all sides

.....Accept and commit to the decision...

And P R A Y E R !

THANK YOU...

LET US PRAY...