

SAVED THROUGH THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS V11!
ACTS CH15:1-21

INTRODUCTION!

Carefully use the large kitchen knife!

CUSTOM OF MOSES! V1-5

The need to highlight the speeches in Acts!

8 speeches by Peter - Ch1:15-22; 2:14-41; 3:6-26; 4:8-22; 5:29-42; 10:34-48; 11:4-18; 15:7-11

1 speech by Stephen Ch7:2-53

1 speech by James Ch15:13-21

9 speeches by Paul, **5 in sermons** Ch13:16-41; Ch14; Ch17; Ch20 + Ch28 + **4 in defence speeches** Ch22:1-21; Ch23:1-8; Ch24:10-21; Ch26:2-27

Paul and Barnabas have completed their first missionary journey, not knowing at that time that they will soon separate and that Paul will have two further missionary journey's. They settle back into Church life, until, a group of Jews belonging to those who had been circumcised travelled almost 300 miles from Jerusalem to Antioch, to preach a false gospel! They did not have the permission or authority of the Jerusalem Church (v24), and were troubling the minds of the believers at Antioch (v2 + v24). Barnabas and Paul (v2) enter into a debate and defend the true gospel, and the Church decides to send them and others (v2+3) to Jerusalem to have the matter resolved!

V4 – Paul now arrives in Jerusalem for a 3rd time (Ch9:26-30 – 1st; Ch11:27-30 – 2nd), welcomed and accepted by the Church, however, some Christians who still belonged to the Pharisee party, “kick off.” They feel that the custom of Moses is the only way a person can be truly saved!

CUSTOM OF CHRISTIANS! 6-12

The leaders of the Church gather to debate the issue. Do the Christian gentiles need to be circumcised to be true Christians! No doubt this was a raucous affair v7! Peter stands up and refers peoples minds back, approximately 10 years, to his time in Joppa and in Caesarea and the saving of the Centurion and his family! Peter emphasises, correctly, that salvation comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ v11 and in doing so, the debate ends and silence falls, until Barnabas and Paul tell all about the signs and wonders that God had done amongst the gentiles.

In hearing from Peter, Barnabas and Paul, the new custom of sharing the gospel amongst the Gentiles and the then work of God in showing signs, wonders and gentiles being saved!

CUSTOM OF GOD! 13-21

As this comes to an end, James, the Lord's half brother, speaks after everyone else, implying that he is also a pillar of the Church in Jerusalem and brings both the experience of the apostles (through Peter and Paul) and Scripture through using Amos Ch9:11-12 together, to show God's heart for the gentiles!

Sometime between 786 – 746 B.C. Israel had been separated for around two centuries having both a Northern and Southern Kingdom. Essentially after the death of king Solomon, the then kingdom split into two kingdoms. Numerous kings had sat on the thrones during that time, some good kings, but mostly ungodly kings, leaving both parts of

the different kingdoms facing God's judgement.

Amos comes from that large section of the Old Testament known as the "Writing Prophets" often referred to as the "Prophets". The section begins with what are commonly known as the "Major Prophets", because of the size of the book and then from Hosea to Malachi the 12 "Minor Prophets" because they are small, in terms of books! When the prophets are described in this way, that is "Major and Minor, **there is a danger that we don't give too much attention to the "minor" prophets, big mistake!** James Montgomery Boice in his commentary on Amos says "The Book of Amos is one of the most readable, relevant, and moving portions of the Word of God."

Amos was a shepherd from Tekoa (V1 Southern Judah about 10 miles from Jerusalem) and Ch7:14 reveals that he was "neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees." Amos is sent by God to declare specific future judgements upon particular nations. Amos is giving us in words what he saw in a vision from God. The message received in picture must be interpreted and applied. He intends his hearers and future readers to face the implication of their faith in a way that will leave no part of their hearts and minds unaffected. God sends Amos, the prophet from Tekoa in the South, to Bethel in the North (Ch7:10) to tell both men and women the truth about themselves! That truth consisting:

- A. Of their sin in rejecting God's revealed will for their lives.
- B. Of the justified anger of a holy God who cannot look upon their sin, without responding.
- C. Of the divine verdict on their decadent national life at the expense of the poor and their empty religion.
- D. Of impending destruction of their culture and national identity.
- E. Of the way of salvation and the restoration of the Israel of God

James uses the prophet Amos to continue to reveal God's heart for the gentiles!

Now in addition to resolving the issue around circumcision, James highlights 4 areas that the Church in Antioch are advised to abstain from (Freedoms in Christ verses Loving others over your freedoms).

APPLICATION

FIVE VITAL SIGNS OF A SPIRIT FILLED CHURCH FROM BOTH PASSAGES!

1. **GOSPEL** – is central from which everything else flows
2. **GROWTH** – personal ownership, a desire to grow in holiness
3. **GROUPS** – healthy discipleship groups, walking together
4. **GIFTS** – Christians using their gifts to build God's Church
5. **GIVING** – Christians using their time, talents and treasure