



KINGDOM EMBASSY MINISTRIES

Remembering our Roots. Restoring Authority. Maturing Disciples. Advancing the Kingdom.

Portion:

SCRIPTURES

- Acts 15
- Matthew 19:10-26

Title:

A SCHISM IN THE MAKING

- Salvation by the Flesh?
- The First Church Split

Try this on for size! Your whole life you've been told that in order to have any chance of eternal life, you have to obey very specific rules and regulations, and not just obey, but to do so with bulls-eye exactitude. And, doing your very best will only prove that you will never be good enough to accomplish this daunting task.

Now... introducing the Gospel of Jesus Christ! In the presentation of Y'shua to the masses, one could come to the saving grace of Yahweh by simply believing in this Rabbi, Y'shua. Believe He willingly died on a cross after being beaten, mocked, spat upon, and having a crown of thorns placed on His head. Believe that after all that, He was buried in a cave with a massive two-ton stone placed to seal the entrance. Why? There is no way for an ordinary person to pass in or out without some plan to move a huge rock, unless of course you have access to an angel whom can roll away the stone. And, to add a few additional incredible details to the story, this dead Rabbi resurrected from the dead, walked out of the grave and mingled with His disciples and many others for forty days, and then He floated away into the clouds, while His disciples simply stared in amazement!

In Acts 15, certain men were not buying into this simplistic message of Christ crucified! They perverted the message of salvation by adding some dependency on a system of religious acts necessary to perform in conjunction with the work of Christ, in order to be born-again. It's likely they felt as if they got ripped off and had to previously work for something that now anyone could freely receive. They were not having it! And, they were making it known in no uncertain terms.

These, not so small dissensions, became a schism in the making. They marked the beginning of doctrinal differences that morphed themselves into all sorts of views throughout human history. These mutations have caused schisms, time and time again. Instead, why not just work harder at learning, believing, and trusting the simplistic message of the Gospel of Salvation, rather than, add to it or adjust it to our man-contorted ways, just because it sounds too good-to-be true?

PROPHETIC SEED:

*"And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, **you cannot be saved.**"*" Acts 15:1 NKJV

PROPHETIC FRUIT:

"Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had **no small dissension** and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should **go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.**" Acts 15:2 NKJV

CONTROVERSY

1. Salvation by the Flesh?

A. Presenting the Problem

(1) Conflict Over the Requirements for Redemption (Acts 15:1-5)

(a) Adding Something to Salvation

1. "And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, **"Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."** Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had **no small dissension and dispute** with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should **go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.** So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. **And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.** But **some of the sect of the Pharisees** who believed rose up, saying, **"It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."**" Acts 15:1-5 NKJV

B. Convene a Council (Division is a killjoy!)

(1) The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:6-21)

(a) They came together to consider the controversy...

1. "Now the apostles and elders **came together to consider this matter.** And when there had been **much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them:** "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that **by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.** So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by **giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.** Now therefore, **why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?** But **we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."** Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, **"Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the**

Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And **with this the words of the prophets agree**, just as it is written: 'After this I will return 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.' "Known to God from eternity are all His works. **Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God**, but that we write to them to **abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood**. For **Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.**" Acts 15:6-21 NKJV

(2) Yoke on the Neck vs. Grace of the Lord

(a) Testing God!

1. "Now therefore, **why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples** which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But **we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.**" Acts 15:10-11 NKJV
2. Paul reminds us— There is ***neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female***, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:28 ESV
3. Here ***there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.*** Col 3:11 ESV

(3) One is saved ONLY by God's grace!

(a) But ***we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.***

1. "For ***by grace you have been saved through faith***, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast."
2. Therefore be it known to you, men, brothers, that through this One the forgiveness of sins is announced to you. And by Him all who believe are justified from all things, from which ***you could not be justified by the Law of Moses.*** Acts 13:38-39 ESV
3. Paul states in Romans— ***because by the works of the Law none of all flesh will be justified*** in His sight; for through the Law is the knowledge of sin. Romans 3:20
4. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith ***without the works of the Law.*** Romans 3:20; 28

(b) If we read Matthew 19, we can get a perspective into what Paul had realized in his own time with the Lord.

1. And behold, one came and said to Him, Good Master, ***what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?*** And He said to him, Why do you call Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. ***But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.***

He said to Him, Which? Jesus said, You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, honor your father and mother, and, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. ***The young man said to Him, I have kept all these things from my youth up; what do I lack yet?*** Jesus said to him, If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in Heaven. And come, follow Me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples, Truly I say to you that a rich man will with great difficulty enter into the kingdom of Heaven. And again I say to you, ***It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*** When His disciples heard, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, ***Who then can be saved? But Jesus looked on them and said to them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.***

Matthew 19:10-26 ESV

2. The Bible would be the biggest blunder of all ages when in Ephesians 2:8-9 Paul wrote—***For by grace you are saved through faith***, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, ***not of works***, lest anyone should boast.

C. Put it in Writing!

- (1) The Jerusalem Decree in Writing (**Acts 15:22-29**)

- (a) So there is no confusion now or in the future...

1. “Then **it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church**, to send chosen men of their own company **to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas**, namely, **Judas** who was also named Barsabas, and **Silas**, leading men among the brethren. They **wrote this letter** by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. **Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law”**—to whom **we gave no such commandment**— it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For **it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these** necessary things: **that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.** If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” Acts 15:22-29 NKJV

D. Delivered

- (1) The Ruling is Delivered and the Ministry Continues in Syria (**Acts 15:30-35**)

- (a) This is good news...

1. "So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, **they delivered the letter**. When they had read it, **they rejoiced over its encouragement**. Now **Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets** also, **exhorted and strengthened** the brethren with many words. And after they had stayed there for a time, they were sent back with greetings from the brethren to the apostles. However, **it seemed good to Silas to remain there. Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch**, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also." Acts 15:30-35 NKJV

2. The First Church Split

A. Not Over Doctrine but Trust!

- (1) Paul and Barnabas Part Ways over John Mark (Acts 15:36-41)

- (a) Let's go back and check on the people...

1. "Then after some days **Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord**, and see how they are doing." Now **Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark**. But **Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia**, and had not gone with them to the work. Then **the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another**. And so **Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus**; but **Paul chose Silas and departed**, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. And **he went through Syria and Cilicia**, strengthening the churches." Acts 15:36-41 NKJV
 2. *"Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem."* Acts 13:13