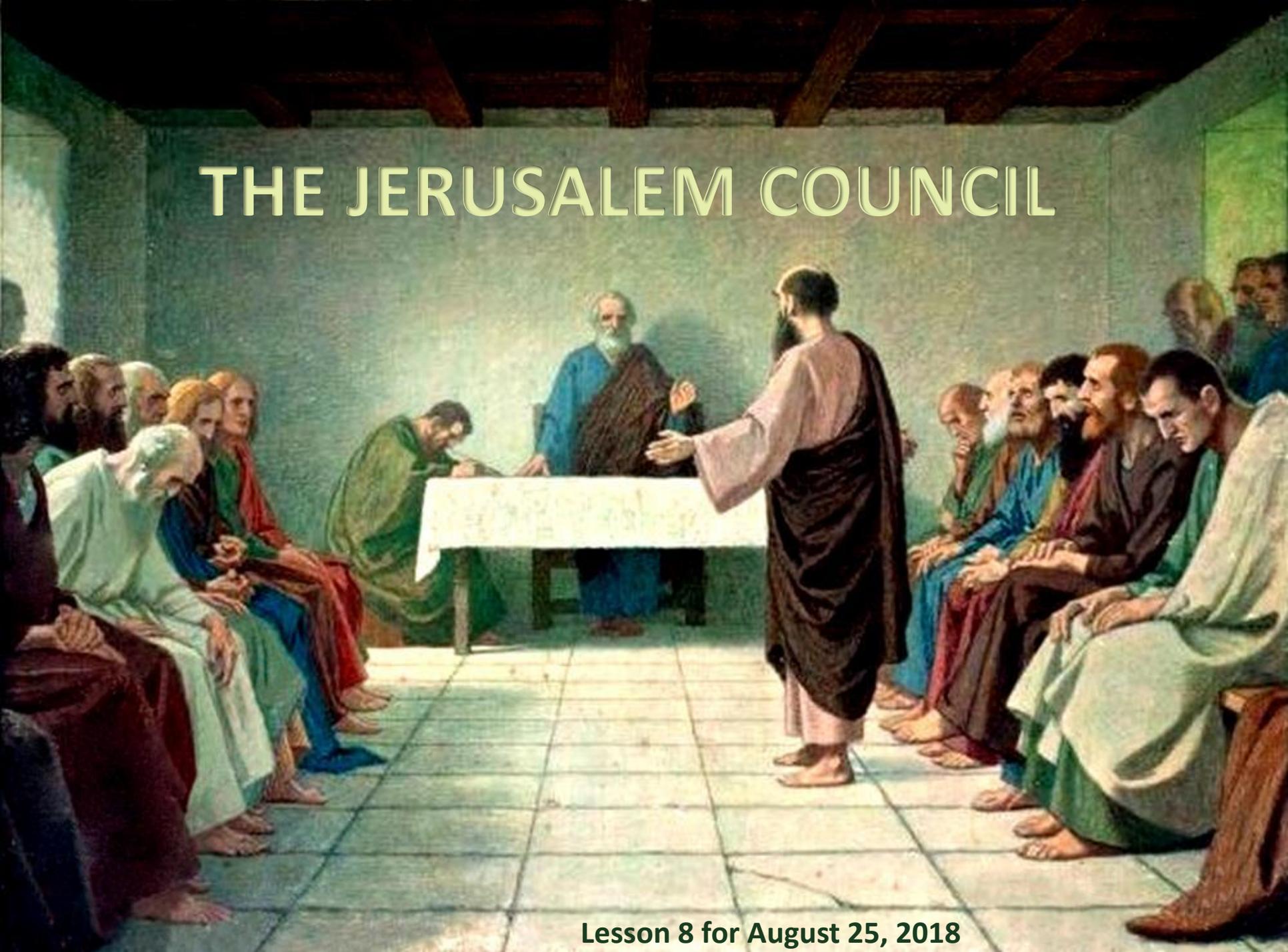


# THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL



The Gentiles were accepting the Gospel, and that was a problem for some Jews. Shouldn't the Gentiles live under the same rules they did? Why did the Jews get circumcised, but the Gentiles didn't?

This was an issue on the means of salvation: by works (by keeping the law) or by faith (by the blood of Christ)

- 💡 **The point at issue. Acts 15:1-5**
  - ≈ Keeping the law of Moses
  - ≈ The rite of circumcision
- 💡 **The debate. Acts 15:6-18**
  - ≈ The comments of Peter and James
- 💡 **The solution. Acts 15:19-35**
  - ≈ The necessary things
  - ≈ The letter to the churches



# KEEPING THE LAW OF MOSES

**"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 15:5)**



The Pharisees who were converted saw that the Christian Gentiles were not told to keep the Jewish rites, so they went to Antioch. They preached that the Gentiles had to become Jews and to keep the law to be saved.

That went against the gospel Paul and Barnabas were preaching, that salvation is by faith only, without the works of the law.

This heated debate was threatening the unity of the Church. The leaders in Antioch decided to ask for the advice of the apostles and the elders to solve this question.

# THE RITE OF CIRCUMCISION

“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)

This was not a question of “commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9), but a divine command: “And when a stranger dwells with you [...] let all his males be circumcised.” (Exodus 12:48)

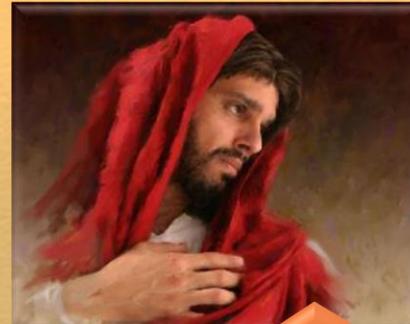
They misunderstood a sign of belonging to God’s people, because they thought it was a sign of salvation. If that was the case:



**The Gospel  
would be  
distorted  
(Gal. 1:7; 2:3-5)**



**Grace would be  
annulled  
(Gal. 2:21)**

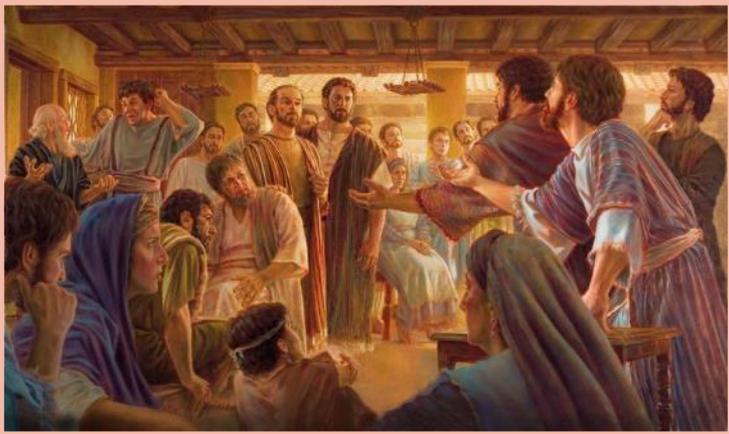


**Jesus wouldn’t  
be needed  
(Gal. 5:2)**



**The universal  
character of  
salvation would  
be denied (Col.  
3:11; Titus 2:11)**

# THE COMMENTS OF PETER AND JAMES

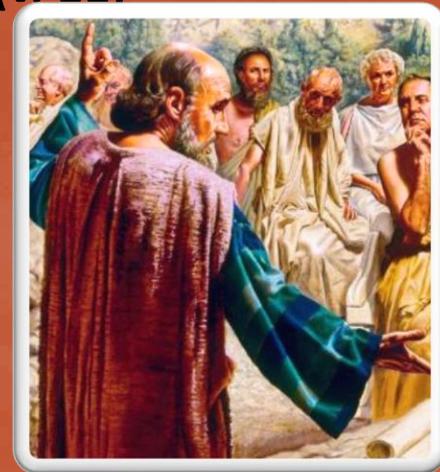
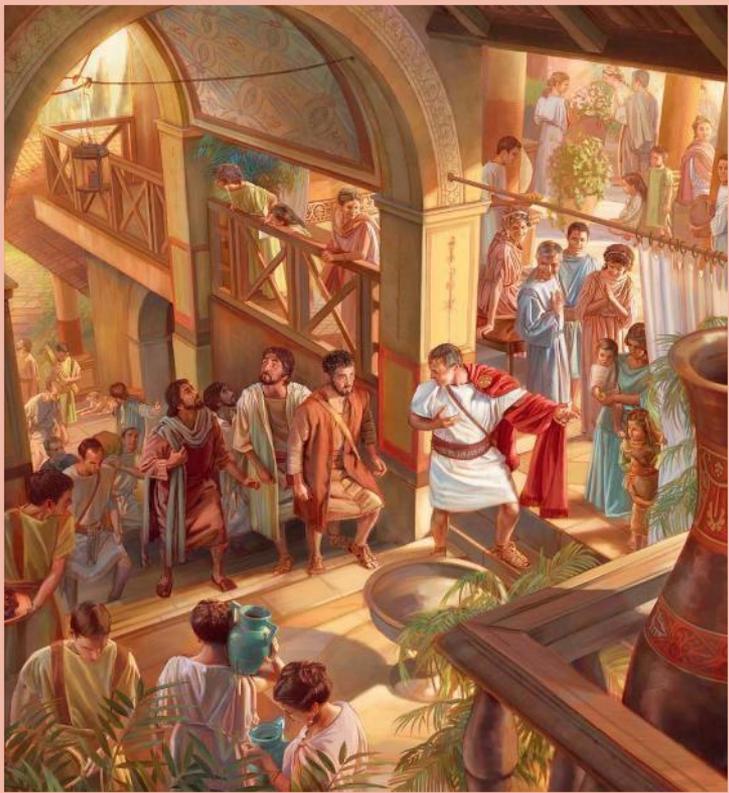


“Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.” (Acts 15:6)

In Jerusalem, the Pharisees explained their argument, and Paul and Barnabas explained theirs.

Peter told them that God had accepted the Gentiles in the past and they had received the Holy Spirit without having to be circumcised. He ended by saying, “we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.” (v. 11)

James was considered an authority in the Church (Galatians 1:19; 2:9). He quoted Amos 9:11-12 to explain that God had foretold that the Gentiles would be included in the plan of salvation.



# THE NECESSARY THINGS

“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:” (Acts 15:28)

The Holy Spirit confirmed the agreement. It included four “necessary things” that the Gentiles should fulfill:



**Don't eat meat offered to idols**



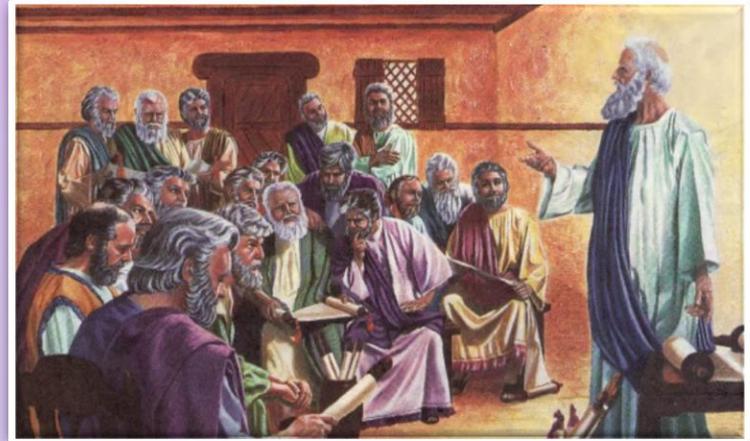
**Don't consume blood**



**Don't eat strangled animals**

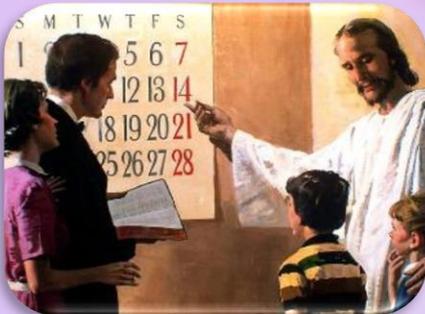


**Avoid sexual immorality**

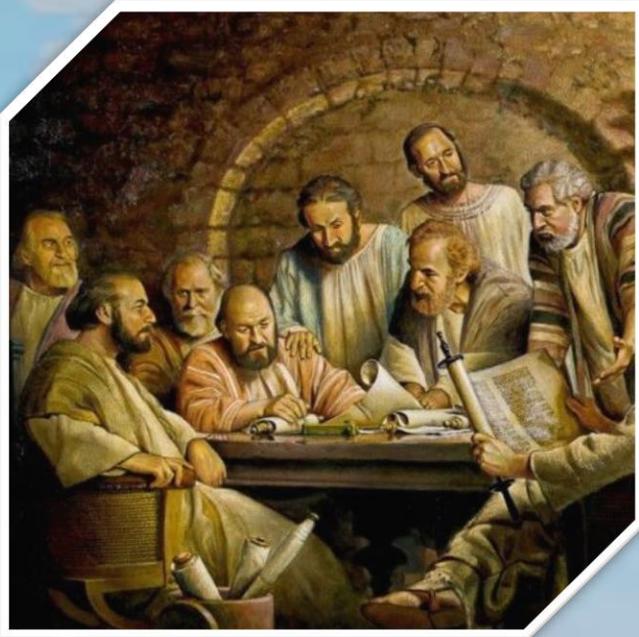


Those rules were set against paganism. They were based on the rules from Leviticus 17 and 18 about the foreigners living in Israel.

This exempted the Gentiles from keeping the rest of the ceremonial laws, but not the laws prior to Abraham's covenant (e.g. the Moral Law)



# THE LETTER TO THE CHURCHES



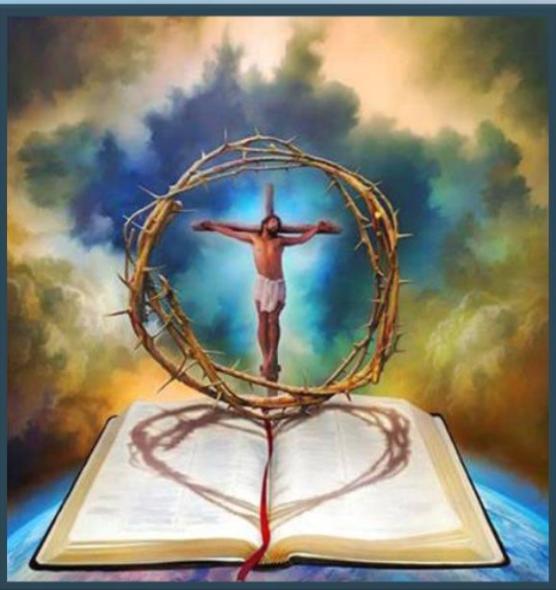
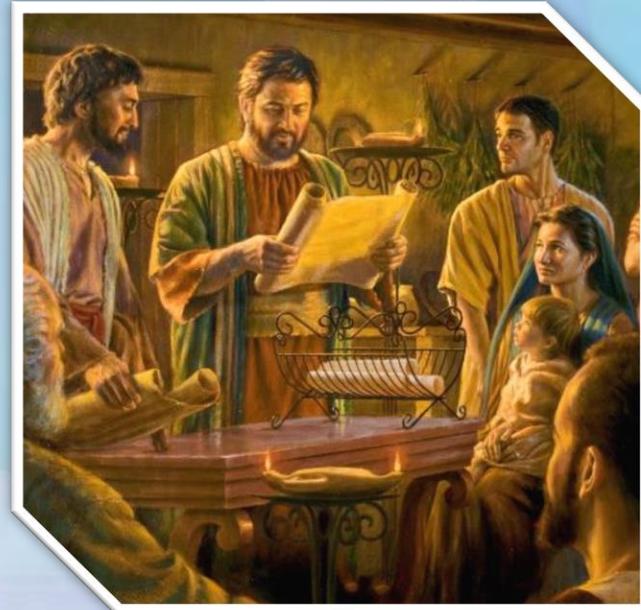
“They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings.” (Acts 15:23)

The decision of the council was redacted in the first official document of the Church. This letter was written around year 49 AD. Judas and Silas delivered this letter to the local churches.

When the church in Antioch read the letter, “they rejoiced over its encouragement.” (v. 31)

The unity of the Church was strengthened thanks to this decision, but not everyone accepted it willingly.

The Church accepted the doctrine of salvation by faith that Paul was preaching as the only true Gospel (see Galatians 1:8)



**“The Jews had prided themselves upon their divinely appointed services; and they concluded that as God once specified the Hebrew manner of worship, it was impossible that He should ever authorize a change in any of its specifications. They decided that Christianity must connect itself with the Jewish laws and ceremonies...**

**The question thus brought under the consideration of the council seemed to present insurmountable difficulties, viewed in whatever light. But the Holy Ghost had, in reality, already settled this problem, upon the decision of which depended the prosperity, and even the existence, of the Christian church. Grace, wisdom, and sanctified judgment were given to the apostles to decide the vexed question.”**