

RELEARNING ANCIENT BIBLE STORIES IN A BRAND-NEW WAY

EPIC TALES

TOO

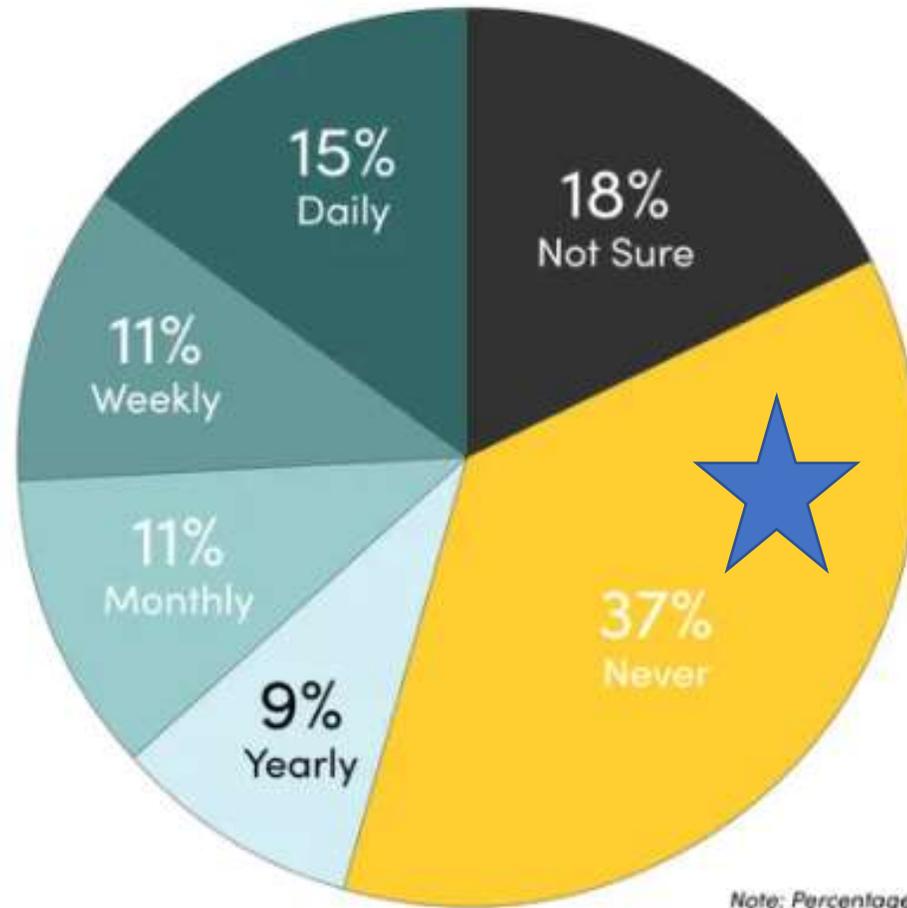


***How do people
get to heaven?***



"How often do you wonder: 'If I were to die today, do I know for sure that I would go to heaven?'"

Among American adults



Note: Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Jerusalem Council

Acts 15



Some men came down from Judea [Jewish believers in Jesus as Savior] and began teaching the brethren, “Unless you [Gentile believers in Jesus as Savior] are circumcised [brit milah מִילָה בְּרִית] according to the custom of Moses, **you cannot be saved.”**

Acts 15:1

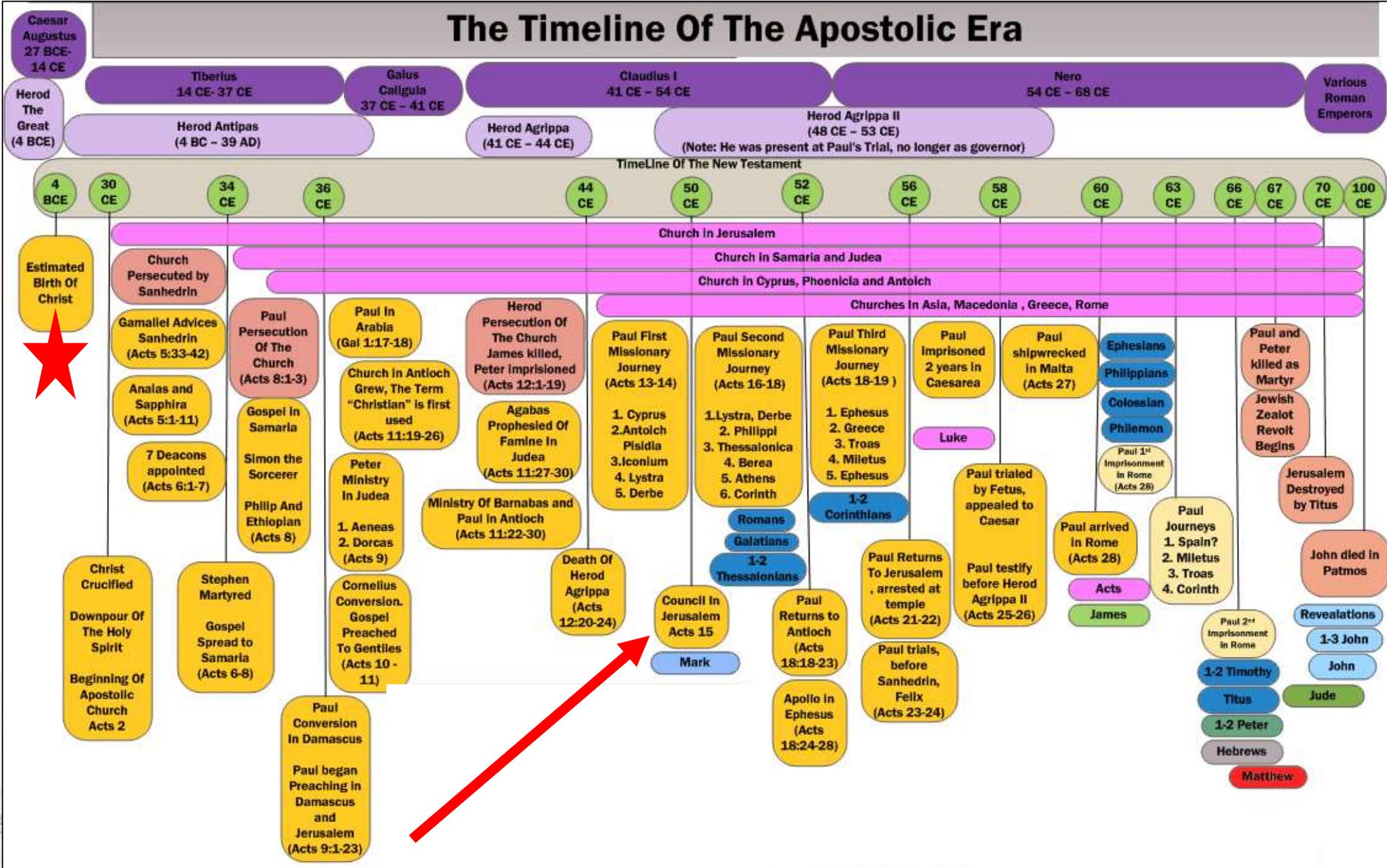
***Who can be saved? How?**



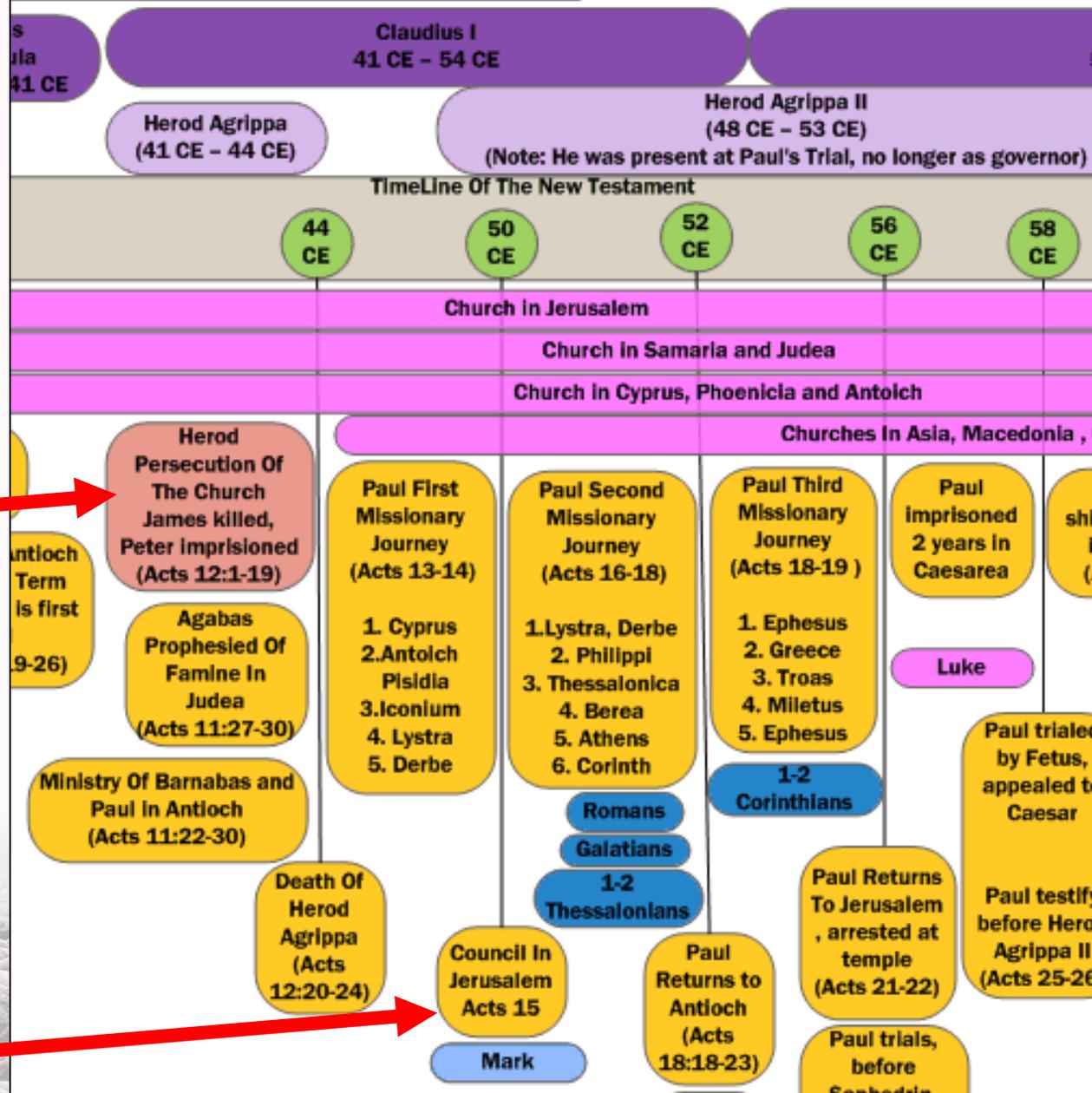
Antioch was a Greco-Roman city established in 300 BC by the Syrian king Seleucus I as his capital city. In Paul's day it was a bustling commercial center, the third largest city of the Roman Empire. It was a harbor city on the Mediterranean.

The city had been under Roman rule since 64 BC. Fortified by both inner and outer walls, it had a palace, a colonnaded forum, a theater, a splendid main street with polished stones and colonnades on both sides built by Herod the Great. It had an aqueduct that brought water from springs in the south of the city, a gymnasium, Roman-style public baths, an amphitheater, a theater, and an impressive temple dedicated to the Greek god Artemis.

The Timeline Of The Apostolic Era



The Timeline Of The Apostolic Era



Last week –
Peter in prison
Acts 12

This week –
Acts 15

Why Would They Teach This?

Those from Judea believed that the God of the Scriptures (there was of course no 'New Testament' yet) was the same God who sent Jesus. Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, the answer to Jewish questions, the fulfilment of the Jewish law and prophets, sent by the same God who sent those laws and prophets. How could a person claim to accept Jesus and the Father who sent Him, while refusing to listen to the other things that God had said and asked? It must have appeared, even to those Jewish Christians who were prepared to see 'even the Gentiles' (Acts 10:45; 11:18) become part of the spiritual family, that they should do so completely and become Jews before thinking they could become believing followers of Yeshua. – New Bible Commentary

Command of Circumcision

- **“But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.” Genesis 17:14**
- **“But if a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it. The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns among you.” Exodus 12:48-49**
- **“On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.” Leviticus 12:3**

And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. Therefore, being sent on their way by the church [in Antioch], they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren.

Acts 15:2-3

World of the New Testament, Around A.D. 50



When they arrived at Jerusalem [from Antioch], they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed [followers of Jesus as Messiah, such as Saul/Paul] stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.” The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.

Acts 15:4-6

The Church Throughout Later History

- **How many non-biblical or unbiblical commands have Christian leaders developed over the centuries?**
- **How many actions have been prohibited by the Church because they might be “barriers” to a person coming to faith in Jesus as Savior?**

After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, testified to them **giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them,** cleansing their hearts by faith.” Acts 15:7-9

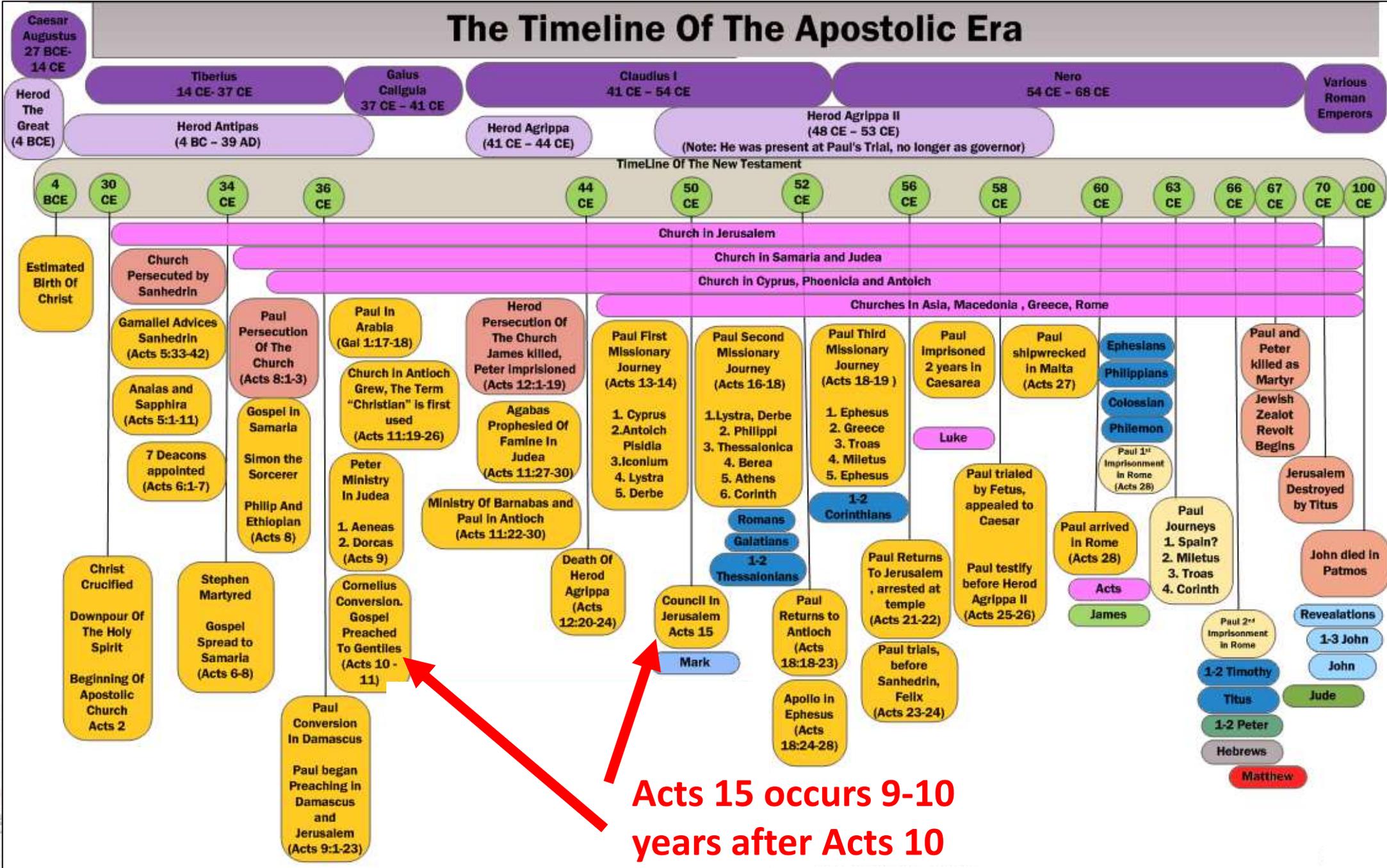
*Debate or discussion is from Greek word *zetesis* ζήτησις, meaning “inquiry, debate, questioning”; translated “debate” in Acts 15:2; “controversies” in 1 Timothy 6:4; “arguments” in 2 Timothy 2:23 and Titus 3:9

Peter and Cornelius

Acts 10



The Timeline Of The Apostolic Era



Acts 15 occurs 9-10 years after Acts 10

Now there was a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually. About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had just come in and said to him, “Cornelius!” And fixing his gaze on him and being much alarmed, he said, “What is it, Lord?” And he said to him, “Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God. Now dispatch some men to Joppa and send for a man named Simon, who is also called Peter; he is staying with a tanner named Simon, whose house is by the sea.” When the angel who was speaking to him had left, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were his personal attendants, and after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa. Acts 10:1-8

On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance; and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. A voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!" But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean." Again a voice came to him a second time, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy." This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky. Acts 10:9-16

Now while Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon's house, appeared at the gate; and calling out, they were asking whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there. While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself." Peter went down to the men and said, "Behold, I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for which you have come?" They said, "Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear da message from you." So he invited them in and gave them lodging. Acts 10:17-23a

And on the next day he got up and went away with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him. On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends. When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter raised him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am just a man." As he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled. Acts 10:23b-27



**Peter traveled
from Joppa to
Caesarea, a
journey of
about 38 miles**



And he said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean. That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me.” Cornelius said, “Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining garments, and he said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Therefore send to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon the tanner by the sea.’ So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.”

Acts 10:28-33

Opening his mouth, Peter said: “I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but **in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him**. The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. Acts 10:34-41

“And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name **everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.”**

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, “Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?”

And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days. Acts 10:42-48

(The men from Judea who initiated this requirement for Gentiles either did not know about Cornelius' conversion or did not accept it.)

After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. And **God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith."** Acts 15:7-9

“Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke [legalism] which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.” All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. Acts 15:10-12

After they had stopped speaking, James [Jesus' half brother and author of the Epistle of James] answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. Simeon [Simon Peter] has related how God **first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name." Acts 15:13-14**

***As Peter had already said (Acts 15:7–11) the question had actually been settled in principle (Acts 10–11) before Paul and Barnabas went on their first journey.** – Bible Knowledge Commentary

Quite properly the Jerusalem council desired more than the testimony of experience. They wanted to know how it corresponded with the witness of the Scriptures. This was the ultimate test. To prove that Gentile salvation apart from circumcision was an Old Testament doctrine, James quoted from Amos 9:11–12. – Bible Knowledge Commentary

“In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom and **all the nations who are called by My name,” declares the Lord who does this. Amos 9:11-12**

James said, “With this the words of the Prophets agree [Jeremiah 12:15-16, Isaiah 45:21-22], just as it is written, ‘After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and **all the Gentiles who are called by My name,’ says the Lord [quoting Amos 9:11-12], who makes these things known from long ago. Acts 15:15-18 (Amos was written about 750 BC)**

“Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from (1) things contaminated by idols and from (2) fornication and from (3) what is strangled and from (4) blood [meat from which the blood had not been drained]. For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.” Acts 15:19-21

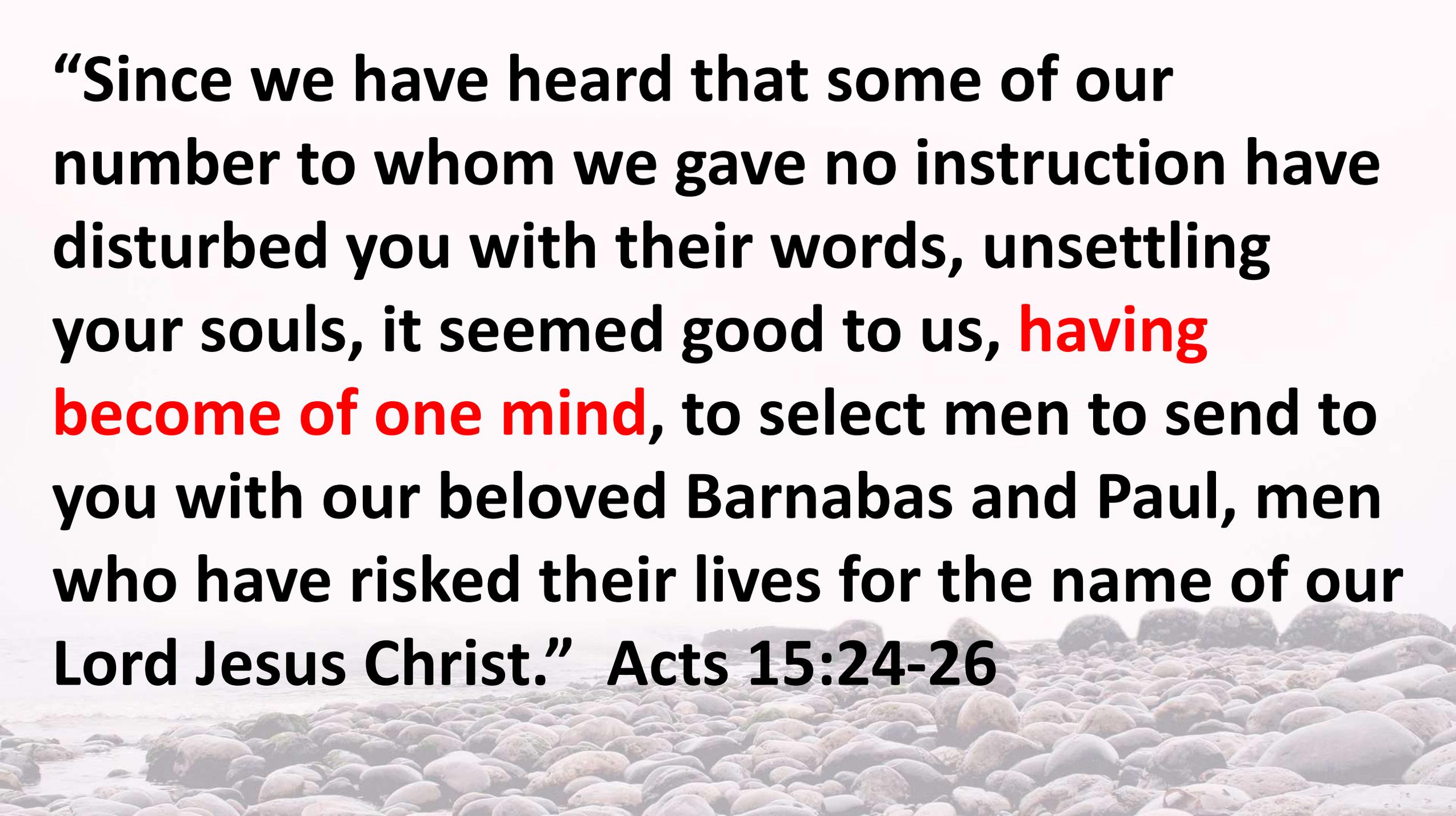
***The answer given by the council is thus twofold: Gentile Christians need not become Jews, but neither may they continue to act like typical Gentiles.** – New Bible Commentary

Like Peter and Paul, James did not feel that the Gentiles should be circumcised or have to live by the Jewish law. He realized, however, that there remained a problem of fellowship. Jewish Christians lived by the Jewish food laws and Gentile Christians did not. How could they sit together at the same table? James therefore proposed a solution which asked the Gentile Christians to abstain from certain food and to maintain sexual purity.

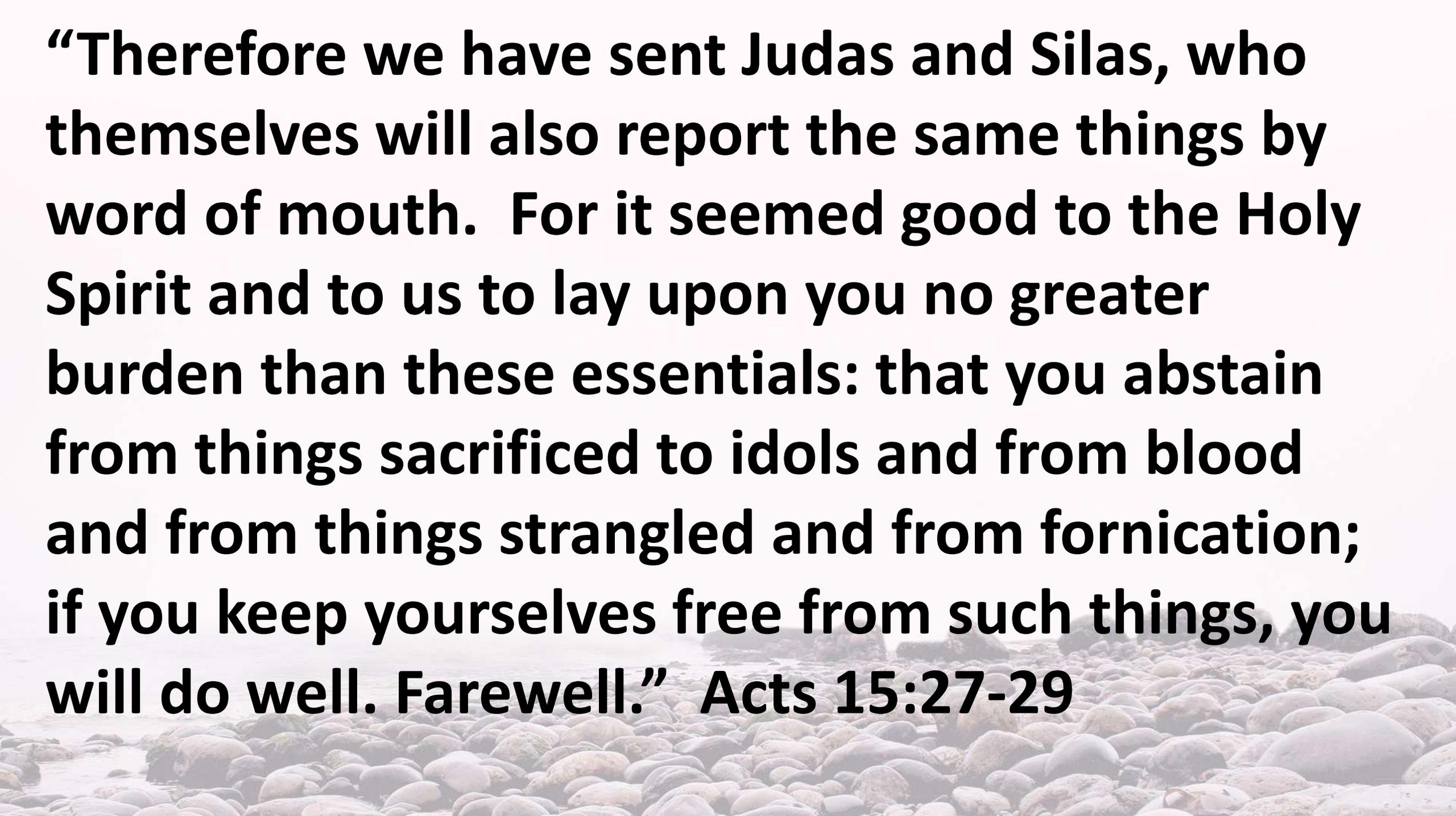
Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas—Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, and they sent this letter by them, “The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings.” Acts 15:22-23

***These two leaders, also “prophets” (v. 32), may have represented two groups in the Jerusalem church—Judas, probably a brother of Joseph (Acts 1:23), for the Hebrew section; and Silas, a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37), for the Hellenists (Greek-speaking).** – Bible Knowledge Commentary

“Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls, it seemed good to us, **having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Acts 15:24-26**



“Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves 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 essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell.” Acts 15:27-29



So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch [where this dispute started]; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. After they had spent time there, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out. (But it seemed good to Silas to remain there.) But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord. Acts 15:30-35

***Is it OK for Gentiles to celebrate
biblical feasts and holidays?***

**It is not required but is permitted
and welcomed by God**



7 FEASTS THAT POINT TO CHRIST

- 1. Passover — Leviticus 23:4-8**
- 2. Unleavened Bread — Leviticus 23:6**
- 3. First Fruits — Leviticus 23:10**
- 4. Feast of Weeks or Pentecost — Leviticus 23:16**
- 5. Feast of Trumpets — Leviticus 23:24**
- 6. Day of Atonement — Leviticus 16, 23:26-32**
- 7. Feast of Tabernacles or Booths — Leviticus 23:34**

Reminders for Christ-followers...

- **It should not surprise Christ-followers that the man Jesus, as a religious Jew, would have observed the biblical feasts and holidays**
- **It should not surprise Christ-followers that Jesus, the promised Messiah of God, would be worshipped and manifested in the biblical feasts and holidays**

How Do People Get To Heaven?

- **There are lots of beautiful “Jewish” actions**
- **There are lots of beautiful “Christian” actions**
- **They can be biblical and holy and God-honoring**
- **NONE of these earn my spiritual salvation**



How Do People Get To Heaven?

- For by grace you have been saved through **faith**; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8-9
- For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is **eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 6:23

How Now Shall I Live?

- **A Gentile who surrenders their heart and begins to follow Jesus as Savior does not stop being a Gentile**
- **A Jew who surrenders their heart and begins to follow Jesus as Savior does not stop being a Jew**
- **Do not add requirements for salvation that God did not add**
- **Faith in Messiah Jesus opens the door to salvation**