

THE FLORAL HEIGHTS INFORMER

www.floralheightschurchofchrist.org

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The Jerusalem Conference

The year was approximately 49 AD. The Apostle Paul and Barnabas had recently completed a very successful tour of preaching the gospel throughout Galatia. The church was experiencing rapid growth throughout Syria, Cilicia, Galatia, the island of Cyprus, and Judea. Paul and Barnabas return home to Antioch of Syria from their first tour of gospel preaching. Excitement is pulsating among the members of the church in Antioch and everywhere churches were being established. Some of the Christians “*of the circumcision;*” however, appear to be apprehensive about the manner in which the Gentiles were to be received into the church. Persecution of any man or woman who left off following the Mosaic Law was a source of pressure that the early church faced (see Gal. 6:12-13). A faction is formed and identified by believing circumcised Jews who made unlawful demands upon believing uncircumcised Gentiles. These believing Jews began to teach that if the Gentiles were going to be saved from eternal ruin they needed to be circumcised and obey the Mosaic Law (Acts 15:1-5). This false doctrine originated in Jerusalem (see Acts 15:24) and began infecting the church throughout Syria, Cilicia, and Galatia. Without a bold stand and the help of God the young churches would be destroyed.

Paul and Barnabas would not stand by idly while the precious Word of God was perverted by these Judaizing Christians (Gal. 1:7). “*No small dissension*” occurs between Paul, Barnabas, and the believing Pharisees in Antioch (Acts 15:1). Paul later writes the Galatian letter to combat the tireless efforts of these false teachers. Brethren were being “*bewitched*” (Gal. 3:1) with this “*different*” doctrine (Gal. 1:6). The church in Antioch sends Paul, Barnabas, Titus and others to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles and elders over this matter. The meeting between the brethren from Antioch and those of Jerusalem would come to be referenced as the “*Jerusalem Conference.*”

The conference was a success for the Kingdom of God. Peter, Paul, and James give three reasons why the erring doctrine espoused by those of the circumcision was to be rejected. First, the Apostle Peter reminds the Judaizing Christians of the conversion of Cornelius

Local News:

Welcome to all our visitors:

We pray that you will be edified by our service and that you will ask questions if things are not as you are accustomed to seeing. Please do come back at your every opportunity!

Take time to add our new converts and Cindy addresses to your directory (posted in the foyer).

Please keep the following members in your prayers:

Pat Robertson was admitted to the hospital this past Wednesday evening after Bible classes. She had an accelerated heart beat and very high blood pressure.

Pam Husak had surgery this past Tuesday and is home doing fine. She will spend the next two weeks healing and then the next four weeks on light duty around the house.

Women's Bible Study:

The next Bible class will be Friday April 10th at 12:30 PM. The class meets at the church building with Kasey Robertson doing the teaching.

Continue to pray for our shut-ins:

Stella Davidson
696-1030 (Home)

Calvin York
692-0489 (Home).

and his Gentile household. These Gentiles received the gift of the Holy Spirit just as the Jews who had believed. Cornelius' household was accepted by God without their circumcision or adherence to the Mosaic Law (Acts 15:7-9). Secondly, the Apostle Paul explains the conversion of Gentiles due to his efforts throughout Cilicia, Syria, and Galatia. Many of these converts were granted the gift of the Holy Spirit in that they were miraculously empowered to perform wonders and signs. How is it that the uncircumcised and non-Mosaic Law keeping Gentiles could do these things if God demanded this from them (see Acts 15:12)? Thirdly, James tells the conference that even the prophets; i.e., Amos, had foretold of the Gentiles acceptance by God to Salvation (Acts 15:16ff). These three reasons completely shut the mouths of the erring teachers. James composes a letter and sends it north to Antioch. Paul and Silas deliver the epistle to the Galatians (Acts 16:1-5). Though all may seem well it is far from it in the early church. The doctrines of men that "*subverts*" souls has no rest. Like a fire out of control this erring doctrine was widespread and eventually brought many Galatians into subjections (Gal. 5:4).

There are a few valuable points to consider from the Jerusalem Conference. First, let us note that those doctrines contrary to God's laws must be identified and exposed. When an erring doctrine meets no resistance its potential damage is great. Secondly, common sense ought to teach us that if we are having to append adjectives to Christians names, such as "*those of the circumcision*" (Acts 10:45) and "*believing Pharisees*" (Acts 15:5) something is certainly amiss. Christians are just that. We are the saints of God and we represent the Lord's teachings in all facets of life. Those "*of the circumcision*" did not represent Jesus when they confused liberties for matters of salvation. Those brethren of the circumcision who held their faith to themselves were certainly accepted of God (see Col. 4:10-11). Thirdly, we note that no church's autonomy was violated in sending out letters from one church to another. James was not telling the other churches that he did not believe they could handle the problems presented by the erring doctrine. James was rather delivering an epistle that admitted the church in Jerusalem's part in the current trouble. James addresses all the Lord's churches to express their disassociation with the erroneous teaching. Brethren would do well today to never conceal or protect those who teach erring doctrines (see Deut. 13:8). We must take a stand as Paul and Barnabas did against all error because souls are at stake. To conceal, sweep under the rug, pretend we have no differences, sympathize, or protect the erring teacher is to open the highways of the error into the churches. Let us resist and expose all doctrines that are not found in God's word. Let us put God's word and man's souls above our earthly friendships and families. Such is the attitude of the saint of God.

Give no place to Unclean Spirits

Matthew 12:38-45

Introduction:

Jesus expels a demon out of a man at Matthew 12:22. The event produced two reactions. Multitudes were amazed but the Pharisees associated Jesus' miracle to Satanic powers. Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and places the association with demons upon them as "evil" people (Matt. 12:34). While demons no longer possess men's souls as they did in the Lord's day they continue to work in the lives of men (see Matt. 25:41; I Tim. 4:1ff). Satan's work of walking to and fro throughout the earth to seek a soul to devour continues to this day (see Job 1:6-8; I Pet. 5:8). The Christian must thereby put on God's armor to wage warfare against this foe (see Eph. 6:10-12).

I. Pharisees crave a sign (Matt. 12:38-42):

- A. "Teacher, we would see a sign..."
- B. The sign of Jonah
- C. The Queen of the South

II. The travels of an unclean spirit (Matt. 12:43-45):

- A. The unclean spirit is restless until he finds a place to lodge.
- B. A house fit for unclean spirits.
- C. The unrepentant mind of lawlessness makes for a cozy home for unclean spirits.

III. Application:

- A. Satan tempts us (II Cor. 2:11; James 1:13ff).
 - 1. Lust (I Jn. 2:16).
 - 2. Vanity (I Jn. 2:16)
 - 3. Pride (I Jn. 2:16).
 - 4. Covetousness (I Jn. 2:16).
 - 5. False doctrines (II Thess. 2:9-10; I Cor. 4:6-13).
- B. When I give in to these temptations I give place to the devil's work of ruining my soul. As I continue in these sins I make the devil very comfortable in the house of my mind.

Conclusion:

The Christian is in a spiritual warfare. We are given a set time to live and then we will be at the mercy of God's judgment day. How will God see the days of our lives? Did we obey the gospel and take advantage of the saving blood of Jesus? Did we wage effective warfare against Satan and his angels? Did we pray to God in humility when we let the devil get the best of us? Did we provide cozy homes for unclean spirits due to a lack of desire, zeal, and conviction to repent? We are given only one life to live. Let us all make the most of our time here and never permit unclean spirits to take up residency in our minds (see James 4:7-10).

