

Acts 15:1-35

1. Housekeeping
2. Observation and exposition
3. The take-away for us?

Housekeeping

1. Eleven Sundays with Sunday school (June - 4, July - 3, August - 4)
 - a. No SS on June 23, July 7, or September 1

Observation and exposition

1. The four requirements - why these four?
 - a. Acts 15:19-20, 28-29
 - i. “Abstain from things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood.”
 - b. Bruce’s approach [SLIDES]
 - c. Stott proposes two possible solutions, and both solutions separate the ethical (or moral) form the ritual (or ceremonial).
 - i. All moral (ethical) requirements
 1. Why this approach? The meat of strangled animals cannot possibly be an ethical issue.
 2. So...follow the Western text and simply omit it.
 - a. Somewhere along the way in the transcription of the book of Acts, a scribe (copyist) added the Golden Rule in negative form:
 - i. “and not to do to others what one would not have done to oneself.”
 3. We are then left with three moral prohibitions:
 - a. Idolatry
 - b. Sexual immorality
 - c. Murder
 - d. In Jewish eyes, these were the primary moral offenses a person could commit.
 4. But...
 - a. The textual evidence is very weak.

- b. Interpreting “blood” as “murder” is far-fetched.
 - c. These three sins are so serious that an apostolic decree against them is unnecessary.
 - d. This also raises the question: Were Gentile Christians permitted to break the rest of the Ten Commandments [or the rest of the Law]?
 - ii. All ceremonial (ritual) requirements
 - 1. Matters of external purity
 - 2. If this is true:
 - a. The first prohibition doesn’t refer to idolatry but the eating of idol-meats
 - i. See **Romans 14** and **1 Corinthians 8**
 - ii. Explain idol temples and meat markets
 - b. The eating of blood was prohibited in **Leviticus 17** (and in **Genesis 9:4**) [SLIDE]
 - c. Strangled meat was also prohibited in **Leviticus 17**
 - d. Sexual immorality seems to be the moral exception in a ceremonial list.
 - i. At least one manuscript simply omitted the word (*porneia*) [not the best solution!]
 - ii. Alternatively, *porneia* is referring here to all the irregular marriages (relationships) listed in **Leviticus 18**
 - 3. If this solution is correct, all four requirements relate to ceremonial laws as specified in **Leviticus 17 and 18**, and three of those concern dietary matters which, if followed, would more easily allow Jewish-Gentile fellowship, especially the sharing of meals.
 - 4. So James would be recommending a “concession to the consciences of others,” in this case, Gentiles conceding to Jewish consciences.
 - d. Peterson, quoting Witherington and Stott [SLIDES]
 - e. Do these requirements still apply to Gentiles in today’s world?
2. Is the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 a pattern for churches today in resolving conflict or theological differences? Why or why not? How?
3. How does the Council’s decision affect our understanding of the Mosaic Law and its place in our lives? Should it?

4. Is the gospel (i.e. truth of salvation) still at risk today?
 - a. Are there groups/churches/cults in our world that add to or subtract from the gospel?
 - b. Do we ever do this, intentionally or unintentionally?

Resources

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, F. F. Bruce, 1990
2. *The Book of the Acts*, F. F. Bruce, 1988
3. *The Acts of the Apostles*, David G. Peterson
4. *The Message of Acts*, John Stott
5. *The Acts of the Apostles*, Ben Witherington III