



Acts Chapter 15 Part 3 A Jewish Document

And so here we are in part 3 of our study on the book of Acts chapter 15, and I hope that you've been with us through out our study on this particular chapter because it is with in this chapter that most of today's modern day denominational charters have concocted their different man made, man created, man fabricated doctrines and theologies.

Acts chapter 15 is vitally important for every Christian to understand.. and the reason that it's vitally important for every Christian to understand is because it is from Acts chapter 15 that most of today's theological understanding goes haywire.

Today's modern day version of Christianity and it's academic understanding of Acts chapter 15 comes from the understanding that Acts chapter 15 was written from a modern day Christian mind set, and that everything in Acts chapter 15 has to do with today's modern “New Testament Church”. I assure you my friends... it does not.

Acts chapter 15 is a Jewish document, that was written back in a time when Judaism was widely understood, and practiced. Acts chapter 15 was written back in a time when things were much different from what they are today and unless we understand the culture, and the traditions, and the mindset of the people that existed back in that time... we're not going to understand what the Physician Luke is trying to convey to us in the book of Acts.

Once again it's imperative for any Christian reading the book of Acts to understand that there is no such thing as a “New Testament Church”. And we must understand this vitally important historical fact if we're going to understand what we're reading in the book of Acts and especially in Acts chapter 15.

We've already proven that our Father in Heaven was already grafting the Gentiles into the “House of Israel” clear back from the beginning of the “House of Israel” and just to refresh our memories, and for any new viewers that may have wondered into this study here today, lets go back and just re-visit those scriptures very quickly:

Exo 12:48 If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it.

Exo 12:49 **There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you."**

Num 15:14 **And if a stranger is sojourning with you, or anyone is living permanently among you, and he wishes to offer a food offering, with a pleasing aroma to the LORD, he shall do as you do.**

Num 15:15 **For the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you, a statute forever throughout your generations. You and the sojourner shall be alike before the LORD.**

Num 15:16 **One law and one rule shall be for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you."**

So it's clear and evident that our Father began grafting the Gentiles into the House of Israel from the very beginning. In fact... the very purpose of the House of Israel was to be a light on a hill that would draw all of the other nations to themselves, so that all nations would come and worship the one true God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob.

***Isa 49:6* he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."**

***Isa 42:6* "I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations,**

***Isa 42:7* to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.**

And just as it was from the beginning... we are to be the salt of the Earth and the light that cuts through the darkness that draws the nations to our Father in Heaven:

***Mat 5:14* "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.**

***Mat 5:15* Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.**

***Mat 5:16* In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**

So I say all of that to try and help us understand that the book of Acts is not about the establishment of some kind of "New Testament Church" but it is rather an extension of what our Father intended from the very beginning.

If we don't get anything else from our study on the book of Acts and the 15th chapter of the book of Acts... I want us to understand this fundamental truth.

If we don't understand these biblically fundamental things from the very beginning.. we're going to get the rest of the "New Testament" writings of Paul wrong as well.. and this is why we're taking our time in moving through this teaching on the book of Acts and especially on the 15th chapter of the book of Acts.

Acts chapter 15 is all about the topic of circumcision. It's not about anything else, and once we understand the truth about Paul and James and the elders at Jerusalem and what they were teaching about circumcision.. and what the letter said that was being delivered to the churches from James and the elders of the Jerusalem council... then and only then.. will we be able to correctly understand the rest of the scriptures and exactly what Paul was teaching.

If we look at the book of Acts from a 21st century Roman Greco Christian perspective.. we're going to be just as lost as today's modern day Christendom is.. because this is how they try to interpret the book of Acts... and this is exactly why they wrongly interpret so many of the other scriptures as well.

And so once again... this is why it's so important to slow down and understand the truth of what is being taught here in chapter 15 of the book of Acts.. this is a major pivot point, and a critical chapter to understand if we're going to truly understand what the "New Testament" writers were trying to tell us.

Once again... the story that our Bibles tell us... is one story.. not two, and we need to understand that if we're going to understand the truth of what we find between it's pages. Our Messiah, and the grafting in of the Gentiles into the House of Israel was prophesied all throughout the Bible, not just in the back half of the book:

*Isa 16:4 let the outcasts of Moab sojourn among you; **be a shelter to them from the destroyer.** When the oppressor is no more, and destruction has ceased, and he who tramples underfoot has vanished from the land,*

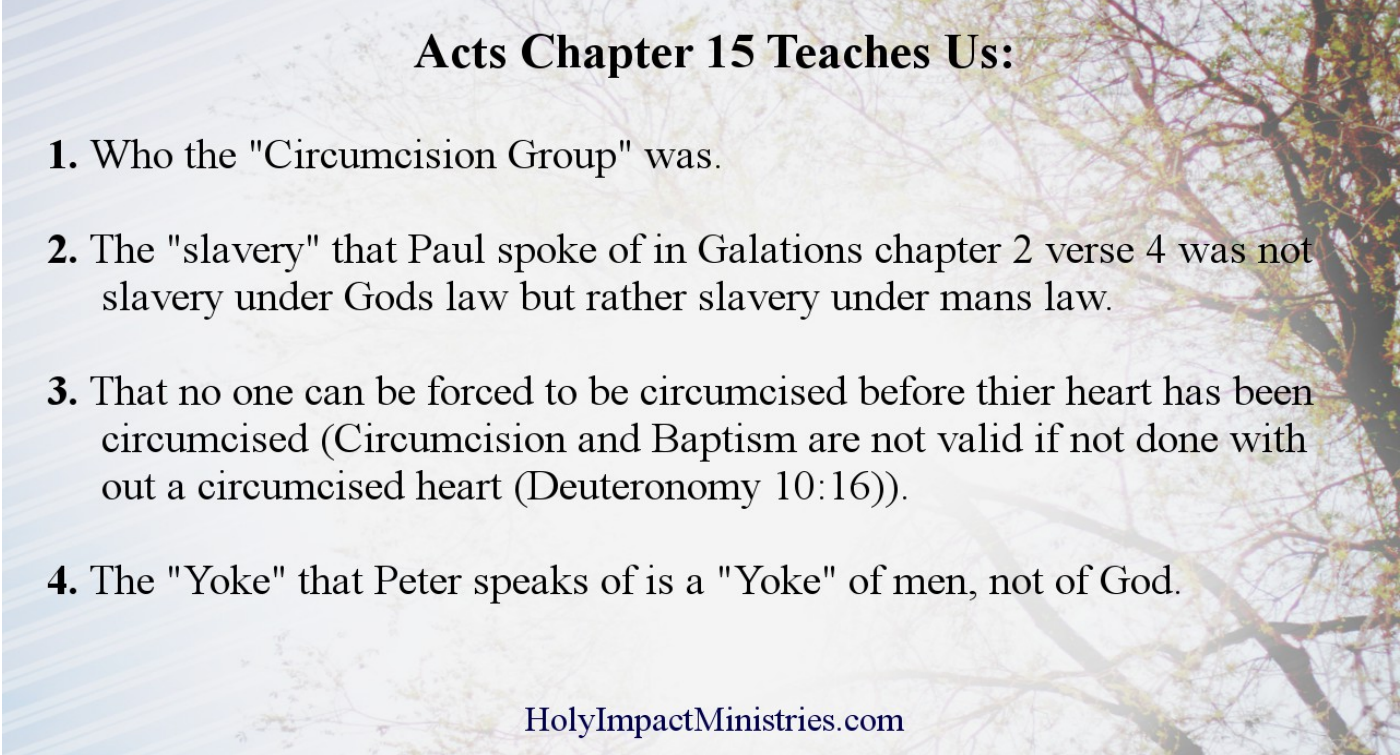
*Isa 16:5 then a throne will be established in steadfast love, and on it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David **one who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness.**"*

How many times have we turned back to the Old Testament writings just with in our study on the book of Acts alone..in order to be able to better understand what the Apostles in the book of Acts were trying to tell us?

And this is my point... we simply can not ignore the first half of the book.. and then try to proclaim that we understand what the Bible says.. because if we ignore the first half of the book, then we only have half of the story... and even that... is going to be misunderstood without having the knowledge of what is found in the first half of the book, and the history of our people.

A Recap Of What Acts Chapter 15 Has Taught Us:

So before we move out of the book of Acts I want to go back and just make some notes about what we've learned in the 15th chapter of the book of Acts.



Acts Chapter 15 Teaches Us:

1. Who the "Circumcision Group" was.
2. The "slavery" that Paul spoke of in Galatians chapter 2 verse 4 was not slavery under Gods law but rather slavery under mans law.
3. That no one can be forced to be circumcised before thier heart has been circumcised (Circumcision and Baptism are not valid if not done with out a circumcised heart (Deuteronomy 10:16)).
4. The "Yoke" that Peter speaks of is a "Yoke" of men, not of God.

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1. The first thing we need to remember is who the “Circumcision Group” was. The “Circumcision Group” are first introduced in Acts chapter 15 verse 1. Before anything else is introduced in Acts chapter 15 we hear about this Circumcision group and they're going to become even more prevalent in the rest of the New Testament writings as we move forward so we need to remember who they are.

Act 15:1 *But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."*

Paul says that this “Circumcision Group” were “false brothers who were secretly brought in to spy out their freedom that they had in the Messiah so that they might bring them back into slavery.. and this brings us to the 2nd thing that we learned in Acts Chapter 15.

Gal 2:4 *Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy*

out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—

Gal 2:5 to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

2. The second thing that we learned was.. what this “Slavery” that Paul speaks about in Galatians chapter 2 verse 4 was all about.

The “slavery” that Paul was talking about was not the “slavery” of Gods burdensome law. The “Slavery” that Paul was talking about was the hybrid man made, man created, man fabricated religion of Judaism.

Remember our Messiah absolutely hated what the Pharisees and the Scribes were preaching and teaching because they were preaching and teaching their own man made, man created, man fabricated laws, commandments, and precepts that they had heaped on top of Gods laws, commandments, and precepts.. and this is why our Messiah chastised them for making void the word of God in order to hold onto their own traditions in Mark 7:9.

And for more evidence of just how much our Messiah hated the Pharisees and the Scribes were teaching all we have to do is to turn to Matthew chapter 23 where he opens up the chapter telling us to do and observe the Torah and the writings of Moses in the first three verses... and then goes on to call the leaders of the Synagogues “blind guides, a brood of vipers, white washed tombs beautiful on the outside but full of dead mens bones on the inside, and two fold children of hell”.

The Jewish Halakah.. and their hybrid religion was the bondage that this “Circumcision Group” were trying to put Paul and his new Gentile converts back under and Paul was doing all he could to stop this “Circumcision Group” from trying to force his new Gentile converts to be circumcised before they even knew why they needed to be circumcised, or where in the law of Moses that it was even written that they needed to be circumcised.

Once again they were trying to put the cart before the horse. No one can be forced to circumcised any more than someone can be forced to be baptized.

3. The third thing that we learned was that there is no point in being either circumcised or baptized unless that person has undergone the circumcision of the heart that we read about in Deuteronomy 10:16. Both circumcision and baptism are both done in the physical, but only because of what has happened in a persons spiritual being.

Deu 10:16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.

Rom 2:28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.

Rom 2:29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

You see they will try to teach you that Paul was preaching against circumcision in Romans chapter 2, but he clearly was not. Paul was simply saying the exact thing that his Father in Heaven was saying, and that was that you first needed to circumcise the foreskin of your heart so that you would no longer be stubborn.. and then.. and only then can someone be obedient to the things of God the Father or his son.

Just because both circumcision and baptism are a matter of the heart... does not mean that you should not be.. circumcised or baptized.. both of these are commandments from our Father in Heaven.. and I know what a lot of you are thinking... your thinking that God did not command us to be baptized his son did.. but what did his son say about who's word he came to preach?

Joh 14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

4. The fourth thing that we learned in Acts chapter 15 is that the “Yoke” that Peter is talking about in verse 10 of Acts chapter 15 is once again the slavery that Paul was speaking about in Galatians chapter 2 verse 4. He was talking about the “Yoke” or the “burden” of men... not the “Yoke” or the burden of God the Father.

The “Circumcision Group” were trying to force the new Gentile Converts to be circumcised before their hearts were ready to lead them to be circumcised because they believed that it was circumcision itself that saved a person, and once again just as we've stated several times throughout this study... neither circumcision nor baptism saves a person.

But this in no way negates the obligation that a true born again Christian has to be both circumcised and baptized according to the commandments of our Father in Heaven.

1Jn 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.

1Jn 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

When Paul or the Apostles speak of burdensome things like being under a “Yoke” or “slavery” they're not talking about our Fathers laws, commandments, precepts, and appointments... their talking about mans laws, commandments, precepts, and appointments that they have heaped upon and over our Fathers laws, commandments, precepts, and appointments.

Once again what does our Messiah say about his “Yoke”?

Mat 11:28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Mat 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Mat 11:30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

What “Labor” is our Messiah talking about that causes men to be heavy laden? He's talking about the “Labor” of men.. not the labor of his Father... he's not talking about Gods laws being labor or heavy laden.. he's talking about mans laws being a burden and heavy laden.

Let me ask you this my friends.. how many laws are there that men have written in your country? No matter where you live in the world.. how many laws are there in your country? I want you to take a moment and think about this question.

Here in the United States of America we can't even count how many laws there are in this country did you know that? We have village and township laws, city laws, state laws, government laws, tax laws, driving laws, residential laws, building zone laws, traffic laws.. and on and on and on it goes.

If you were to ask any politician including the President of the Untied States of America how many laws there are in the Untied States... he wouldn't be able to give you and answer because no one really knows.

And all day every day we have people in our government who do nothing more than write more laws each and every day.. so now with that being said... how many laws does our Father in Heaven ask us to keep? I want you to ponder that question for just a moment.

How many Mitzvot are there in the “Old Testament” that we are commanded to keep.. do you know?

There are 613 Mitzvot (or laws) that our Father asks us to keep... thats it. So who is it that is putting Gods people under bondage? Is it God or is it man? And Judaism has even more laws that they have heaped upon Gods laws that they claim that you need to keep.

The problem with Judaism and their Halikah and their man made, man created, man fabricated laws and commandments is that our Messiah says that you don't have to keep any of the laws of Judaism!

Our Messiah says the only laws that are binding on earth are his Fathers law that he did not come to abolish or do away with by the way according to his own red letter words in Matthew chapter 5:17 through 20!

And yes we are commanded to keep the laws of men.. but only if they do not over ride the laws of God. If man writes, or creates a law that opposes our Fathers law then we are not obligated to keep it.

So I ask you once again my friends... who is it that puts men under a “Burdensome Yoke” is it our Father in Heaven, and his son who came to preach his Fathers “Perfect Law” (according to Psalms 19 verse 7 through 11).. or is it man?

And for those of you are new... According to David and to what some call the “Old Testament” yes Gods laws are “Perfect”

Psa 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

Psa 19:8 the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;

Psa 19:9 the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.

Psa 19:10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

Psa 19:11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

So was Paul and the Apostles preaching directly against David? Was our Messiah who came out of the house of David and out of the Tribe of Judah preaching against David? Does that even make any sense?

Mat 5:18 For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

Luk 16:17 But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void.

*Mat 23:2 "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat,
Mat 23:3 so do and observe whatever they tell you,*

Joh 14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

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The Disagreements:

As we bring our study of Acts chapter 15 to a close it's important to also notice Judas and Silas in verse 32:

Act 15:32 And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words.

Act 15:33 And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brothers to those who had sent them.

We're told that Judas and Silas were also themselves prophets.. and that they encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words for a period of time.

Now we're not told if Judas and Silas were part of the Jerusalem council or not, but I think that it was very possible that they most likely were. And even though they were prayed for and were encouraged through the Ruach Hakodesh.. Paul and Barnabas still had their disagreements and I think this is important to understand as well.

The Apostles didn't always see things eye to eye, and sometimes they flat out disagreed with each other.

Act 15:36 And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are."

Act 15:37 Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark.

Act 15:38 But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

*Act 15:39 **And there arose a sharp disagreement**, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus,*

Act 15:40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

Act 15:41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Time and time again we'll see the Apostles not agreeing with each other, but what's important to understand is that in the end.. they always agreed on what the gospel said. The things that they disagreed on were not questions about what the Gospel message was that they were bringing to Gods people, as much as it was about logistical things like who would travel with who and why.

We often times see the Apostles bringing each other back in line with the Gospel message that they were delivering... for example:

Gal 2:11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

Gal 2:12 For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.

Gal 2:13 And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

Gal 2:14 But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

So here one again we see Paul upset with Timothy and he has to straighten him out because he's

playing buddy buddy with the circumcision party... now remember... I told you that you would hear more and more about this “circumcision group” through out the writings of Paul.. and here they are again causing trouble for Paul by trying to lead Timothy and Barnabas astray right in front of his new Gentile converts.

And what about Paul? Did James not have to straighten Paul out and help him stay on track according to the gospel?

Act 21:18 On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.

Act 21:19 After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

Act 21:20 And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed. They are all zealous for the law,

Act 21:21 and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs.

Act 21:22 What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.

Act 21:23 Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow;

Act 21:24 take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law.

And so it was that Paul took the four men down to the Temple and paid for their sacrificial offerings so that all would know that there was nothing in what they had been told about Paul and that Paul himself also lived in observance of the law.. according to James and the elders of the Jerusalem council.

So my point is my fiends.. that we also see in Acts chapter 15... that the Apostles were flesh and bone men just like you and I. They were human beings who had to deal with all of this new information, and they had. And they too had to make choices, and decisions as to how to best get this Gospel message out to the people.

Much like the choices and decisions we have to make today in how we get this Gospel message out to Gods people.

So in the end what I want us to see clearly is that it was not the voice of one single man that got the Gospel message of our Messiah out to Gods people. No single man was responsible for spreading the Gospel message. It took all twelve Apostles and even more than that as they went along establishing these new home fellowships and gatherings of believers together.

So never be afraid to ask for help, or to lend an ear... but always and I mean always test

everything through the fire of prayer.

And so now all you have to do is to take the things that you've heard here today to your prayer closet and bow your head, and bend your knees and face the holy promised land of Jerusalem and ask in the name of Yahshua Hamashiach if these things you've heard here today are true... or not.

And if you will ask, seek, and knock with an earnest heart... I can guarantee you he will open the door to you.