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THE APOSTLE PAUL – LESSON 12

THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL – PART 1

Paul had completed his first missionary journey with Barnabas. Now they were back at the home church of Antioch in Syria probably about 48 to 50 A.D. when a great ruckus occurred relating to the gentile believers.

The Jerusalem church, led by Peter and the Elder James (brother of Jesus) had several Pharisees among their number who had converted. These Pharisees believed the gentiles should follow the entire Mosaic Law. (Acts 15:5.) This included circumcision and everything else with it.

It is a known fact that whatever you were taught in values and beliefs with which you were raised in is very hard to change. We naturally are unwilling to accept new ideas and ways that run against what we grew up with. These Pharisees were a classic example. They had rigidly followed the Mosaic Law (Old Testament) all their life and they were convinced that any new convert to Christ must do the same, or else God would not accept them. After all, pagans who had previously converted to Judaism were always circumcised and taught the Jewish law and customs, so why should it be any different for these gentiles who now were Christ-followers?

Consequently, they sent certain men from Jerusalem to Antioch teaching that they all must be circumcised like the Jews. In fact, they taught that one could not even be saved unless they were circumcised. Faith in Jesus just was in no way sufficient by itself. (Acts 15:1.)

This smacked in the face everything that Paul and Barnabas had preached and taught. It caused a huge argument in Antioch which tomorrow we shall learn more about.