

We should not trouble those who turn to God.

What do we learn from Acts 15:12-22?

1- God has partially hardened Israel today and is now working largely with the Gentiles, but God is not done with Israel. He will finish His program with Israel in the future.

2 - God's salvation of the Gentiles apart from the law of Moses means Christians do not need to practice Judaism.

3 - Christians do need to live morally upright lives as godly witnesses before Israelites.

If I could today give a very key take-home lesson from this text, here's what I'd tell you.

GOD DOES NOT EXPECT CHRISTIANS TO LIVE UNDER RELIGIOUS LAW, BUT HE DOES EXPECT CHRISTIANS TO LIVE MORALLY UPRIGHT.

Today, we'll break these verses down in 6 parts.

Part #1 - Paul and Barnabas share how God's blessing of salvation is growing among the Gentiles. **15:12**

12 And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

Throughout the book of Acts, we see the door closing down to a small crack for the Jews as the door continues to open wide for the Gentiles. And that is exactly what Paul explains in Romans 11 and verse 25 - *I do not want you to be unaware of the mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.* Israel for the most part has a hard heart, but in the meantime, God is using this “downtime” for Israel to bring in Gentiles.

Part #2 - James declares that the prophets of the Old Testament support the idea that God can save Gentiles apart from Judaism. **15:13-17**

... James replied, “Brothers, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. And with this the words of

the prophets agree ... and all the Gentiles who are called by my name,

Part #3 - James quotes Amos to demonstrate that God will still fulfill his promises to Israel regarding the kingdom age. **15:16-18**

16 “ ‘After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it,

God said in the Old Testament and He said in the New Testament, “I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen. I will rebuild its ruins. I will restore it.” What does that refer to? The present-day Church? Or the future Kingdom of Israel? I believe it refers to the future Kingdom for Israel.

Why?

#1 - Jesus said He will build His church. He did not say I will rebuild my Church. I don't see how James in AD 49 could've been thinking that the Church was equivalent to rebuilding the tent of David.

#2 - Romans 11:25 and 26 say that the partial hardening of Israel has come until the fullness of the

Gentiles has come in. The hardening of Israel will one day be lifted when Christ returns and The Jews acknowledge Jesus is their deliverer.

Part #4 - James says that Gentile Christians have no obligation to practice Judaism. **15:19**

19 Therefore, my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God,

In Acts 15:5, the Pharisee believers began that argument saying they must order Gentiles to keep the law, but by the time the discussion is over, the leader of the Jerusalem church says, “no we should not.”

Part #5 - James advises Gentile Christians to live morally upright lives because that will be key for witnessing to the Israelites throughout the cities of the Roman Empire. **15:20-21**

20 but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood. 21 For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those

who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues.”

At first glance, this seems like James is putting Christian under legal regulations.

Why's he doing this?

#1 - Idolraty and sexual immorality are wrong. Both are sin, and it should not be characteristic of Christians.

#2 - For a Christian to win a Jew to Christ, The Christian must live godly to not offend a Jew with poor moral standards.

Part #6 - The apostles, the elders, and the entire church approve of James' decision. **15:22**

22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church..

It's as if they took a vote and the entire church unanimously said, "Yes. We agree."

As far as salvation goes, we all agree with Peter's declaration - Jew and Gentile alike - that we are only saved through the grace of Jesus by faith, not by law. We agree also that we should not make it difficult for

Gentiles who are turning to God, but remind them of the need to live godly.