

The Jerusalem Council: The Church Resolves Division and Seeks Unity

As the church grew, Jewish believers disagreed about integrating new Gentile believers into the church. Must they become Jews first? Should they abide by all the laws and traditions of Jewish culture? What about the practice of circumcision? Paul discussed important theological implications with the other apostles, including Peter and James, to guide the growing church. Together, they sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit to resolve their division and seek unity. This Jerusalem Council reached pivotal conclusions that set the pattern for Paul's subsequent missionary journeys and shaped the church's future. What they discovered about grace, unity, and God's plan for his people guides the church to this day.

AWARENESS Before listening reflect on what you already know or understand about topics we'll cover in the episode.

- How do you resolve disagreements? What skills do you find helpful in that process?
- What qualities or qualifications make a person an authority in a given area?



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE: [*The Jerusalem Council: The Church Resolves Division and Seeks Unity*](#)

READ [Acts 15:1-38](#)

REFLECTION After listening, consider the following questions:

- At the end of segment 1, host Scott Hoezee says that Jewish believers in the early church put up “roadblocks” for new Gentile believers when they insisted that Gentiles must follow the external requirements of Judaism and be circumcised. Do you think Christians still put up these kinds of roadblocks today? If so, what are some examples?
- What gave Peter, Paul, and James the authority to lead the church in navigating this theological discussion?
- In segment 2, Scott points out that the apostles concluded that the new Gentile believers would not need to be circumcised or observe strict dietary laws. However, the leaders mentioned specific Jewish laws and customs that the Gentile believers should follow. In doing so, they differentiated between the “root” and “fruit” of one's salvation. Why do you think it is so easy to confuse “root and fruit” when we think about faithful behavior?
- Have you witnessed legalism at work in the church? What was the outcome? How might the example of the Jerusalem Council have better resolved those issues?

RELATED PASSAGES for further study

[Genesis 17](#), [1 Corinthians 14:26-40](#), [Acts 10](#), [Amos 9:11-12](#), [Genesis 12:1-3](#), [1 Corinthians 8](#), [Matthew 22:34-40](#), [Ephesians 2:11-22](#), [John 14:15-17](#), [Romans 5:6-8](#)

CONCLUSION

Scott and host Darrell Delaney observe that the apostles demonstrated much humility as they listened to each other and wrote letters to the churches. Do you think humility is difficult or easy for most people? What about you? Why do you think that is?

Darrell demonstrated what humility looks like when he said, “It is a beautiful thing when we think: Okay, it is not just about...what I have a right to do; it is about [asking] how can I love others well and build up the body of Christ in the same way?” Pray for the Holy Spirit to cultivate humility in you and the church so that, like the Jerusalem Council, we can continue to pursue unity.

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Printed on June 24, 2026