

God Makes No Distinction

Key Verses: *“God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.”*
—Acts 15:8,9

Selected Scripture:
Acts 15:1-19

the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” These also received the Holy Spirit.—Acts 2:38

Since it was God’s will for all nations to understand and appreciate the offer of salvation provided through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, eventually this Gospel message was extended to heathen lands. After returning from a missionary tour, Paul and Barnabas shared the results of their efforts with the brethren at Antioch. While there, “Certain men which came . . . from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

ALTHOUGH THE OPPORTU-nity of becoming part of the body of Christ was offered to Israel first, as a nation they failed to accept our Lord as their king and he was crucified. Nevertheless, there was a remnant of Jews who believed he was their promised Messiah. Thus, commencing with the day of Pentecost, after Christ had ascended to his Father, the Holy Spirit descended upon his footstep followers. Subsequently, other Jews believed, repented, and received water baptism “in

When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.”—Acts 15:1,2

The Antioch brethren desired resolution of this matter and determined that Paul, Barnabas, and others of their number should meet with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem to clarify whether believers who formerly were Gentiles were required to observe the rite of circumcision, as well as various features of the Mosaic Law. Paul willingly went to Jerusalem along with others, believing if the brethren there would renounce the teaching that former Gentiles needed to be circumcised, it would silence the Judaizers.—vss. 3-6

Following a vigorous discussion of the matter, Peter addressed the attendees at this Jerusalem conference. He affirmed, as recorded in our Key Verses, that God did not differentiate among believers who were fully devoted to him and had received the Holy Spirit, regardless of their background or origin.

After discussing the matter thoroughly, the Apostles and elders determined that Gentile converts did not need to be circumcised, and only recommended and agreed that they abstain from blood, from sexual immorality, from eating things that had been strangled, and from partaking of meats that had been offered to idols. Additionally, a letter of greeting along with the result of the deliberations in Jerusalem was sent to the brethren in Antioch.—vss. 22-29

There is no Jerusalem conference today for brethren to have differences discussed and resolved in an open hearing which includes apostles. Nevertheless, an appreciation that all who have been baptized into Christ's death, regardless of background, language, ethnicity, or gender, are part of Abraham's seed should greatly assist in the resolution of differences among brethren if a spirit of seeking God's will prevails.—Gal. 3:27-29 ■