

EDITOR NOTE: The original file for this class was corrupted. The full text had been recovered, but there may be some odd formatting.

GOSNELL'S SPECIAL EFFORT - 1996

JAMES THE JUST

Speaker: Bro. Roger Lewis

Study4: Mediator of Peace

Reading: Acts 15:1-20

Thank you brother chairman, and my dear brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ and my dear young people.

Well, you'll remember that by way of exhortation this morning, we covered those years of history of the Jerusalem ecclesia, from AD.42 to AD.47, whereby firstly we saw the elevating of James to a position of responsibility over the ecclesia as a whole, and then followed very shortly after by the visit of the apostle Paul, and that occasion when the apostle had a private meeting with James, in order that they might reach an accord on that doctrine, that gospel, that method of justification that was to be preached, not only to the Gentiles, but which was to be the basis of faith for the Jews also, in the age that lay ahead of them.

You'll remember how that Paul as he recounts these circumstances in Galatians 2, has these bitter sweet memories; on the one side the warm accord that he had with James, and on the other side the great bitterness that was occasioned by the aggressive work and the aggressive spirit of the circumcision party, who had agitated whilst he was there in the Jerusalem ecclesia. That shortly after that, we believe, James wrote his epistle. Actually, it's interesting because isn't James the one who spends quite a deal of time in

his epistle on the power of the tongue? for good or for evil. In fact, if you go through the epistle of James, you'll find that in every single chapter, there are references to the power of the tongue, and amongst them, of course, we read these words of the apostle James, 'the tongue can no man tame, it is an unruly evil full of deadly poison; therewith bless we God and curse we men. Brethren these things ought not so to be!' It had been James' experience, you see, in his own ecclesia, of those who were very pious in blessing God and yet almost in the same breath, would not hesitate to criticize anybody in the ecclesia that did not support their cause or promote their views.

Well, what we're going to see, God willing, in our study this evening as we advance through time, is we're going to see now the next few years of history and to see how that controversy that was begun, unfortunately was extended further in the next few years of history. So we're going to come across AD.48 to AD.53, in the course of our study tonight, and we believe that it was around about that time, about two or three years after Paul's last visit, that controversy erupted yet again with the circumcision party, as recorded in Acts 15 that we're going to look at this evening. We're going to see how we believe, that as the apostle Paul made his way from Antioch in the north down to Jerusalem, in order to attend the Jerusalem conference, we believe, that that was the moment of time that he wrote to the Gentile believers in Galatia. Of course, in the intervening years, the two years before this AD.46 and 47, he had just been to Galatia and had established the ecclesias in that area. Now he writes to warn them of the dangers of the circumcision party, before attending the Jerusalem conference. That's interesting because if that is correct, then Galatians gives us, the spirit and the thinking of the apostle Paul just before he went to attend that conference. Having got down to Jerusalem around about AD.50, we believe, that on that occasion, Paul was to be there and to make his own presentations, his own submissions, on the matter of the acceptance of the Gentiles, but James was to have a far weightier burden. That whilst

Paul was to be a speaker in concert with Peter and John, James was going to be the chairman of the conference, the president of the assembly; and the man who would have the great difficult responsibility of trying to weigh up a judgment in the matter, and coming to a conclusion, on behalf of the ecclesia as a whole. We're going to trace through the great wisdom of James on this occasion in Acts 15, as he presides over this tumultuous conference.

Well, we pick up the story then in Acts 15 verse 1, which sets the scene then for our study this evening. Verse 1 tells us that 'certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved'. So you see, what we've got here is the fact that the circumcision party had now spread their wings; you see, they weren't content to disrupt merely the Jerusalem ecclesia, they now wish to widen the controversy to other areas, to other ecclesias, to other parts of the ecclesial world. Now it's never a good thing to do that, b&s, I've had personal experience of people ringing from afar saying, 'what's this we hear about what's going on in your ecclesia? what are you doing about such and such and so and so?' And you say, 'well, where did you hear that from? Oh, so in so told us! Really! well, what's it actually got to do with you?' There are great many difficulties in ecclesial life that ought not to be spread abroad, every ecclesia has them and sometimes they are very unwisely spread abroad, by people gossiping and talking about things they ought not to talk about, to other people in other ecclesias, and it's decidedly unhealthy! The circumcision party, oh, they were very skilful at doing that, 'let's take a controversy and let's widen it out through the whole length and breadth of the brotherhood.

Do you see the spirit of these men, verse 1, 'certain men which came down from

Judea', I don't know if you know your geography but you'll find that Antioch is well to the north of Jerusalem, one would have thought if you're going from Jerusalem to Antioch, that you would go up to Antioch! Oh, no, not these brethren! they came down because they were coming from the Jerusalem ecclesia, and where ever you went in the ecclesial world, if you were coming from Jerusalem, you were always going down! and they came down and taught the brethren. Oh how helpful these were! and what was their spirit and their manner? Well, as unchanged as always, their spirit was 'except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved'. That normal spirit of dogmatic assertion, so characteristic of this group, was to be seen as they now widen their controversy to other parts of the ecclesial world. You see, what they saw was the growth of the Antioch ecclesia, a tremendous ecclesia, full of Gentiles, and what the circumcision party from the Jerusalem ecclesia saw and feared, was that this Gentile ecclesia could well usurp the privileged position of the Jerusalem ecclesia. They were alarmed at the tremendous growth of this particular ecclesia, there was a great deal of human pride in their actions you see, the danger of Judaism lies in the fact that it's able to be cloaked with the apparently spiritual motives. But these brethren weren't spiritual at all! do you know what the issue was in Acts 15 verse 1, the issue was really quite simple, if they gave way on circumcision, then why should any of the Law be kept? and if it wasn't necessary for the Gentiles to keep the Law then surely they could come before God on a basis and footing that would rank them as equal to the Jews. Instead of being an adjunct who were joining a Jewish faith, the Gentiles if they didn't have to keep the Law, why, they could come before God on an equal basis with the Jews, and all their Jewish prejudice told them, that that was impossible. That just could not be! and they said, 'look, circumcision it's the thin edge of the wedge; if we give way on this, then we give way on everything; the purity of the truth is at stake! we've got to make a stand for that which is right!' But really, b&s, it had nothing to do with that which is right, it had to do with personal pride and personal prejudice; secret pride, not a desire to do that which was truly best for the truth.

Now there are 3 accounts in the scriptural record of this controversy. The first one is Acts 15 verse 1, (do you realize that this is actually Luke's account of the controversy), he says, 'certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren and said, except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved'. But Luke is not the only person who writes a story of this controversy, there are 3 different accounts; here is the second one, in Acts 15 verse 24. Now Acts 15 verse 24 is James' account of the same issue, and James says, 'Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the Law: to whom we gave no such commandment'. By the way, I want you to take notice of that, because you see what the implication of this verse is, why does James say, to whom gave we no such commandment, unless the implication of these brethren was that James had given them such a commandment? James says they came out from us, he acknowledges that! you see, Luke is actually quite discreet, isn't he? he simply says certain which came from Judea, don't you think that Luke knew they came from the Jerusalem ecclesia? and not only that, but don't you think that Luke knew that they came implying that they had the authority of James behind them? But Luke doesn't say that, he simply says certain men came from Judea because you see, Luke knew that these did not represent the Jerusalem ecclesia, nor did they represent the spirit of James. But James does acknowledge that they did come from Jerusalem in that 'they came from us' says James. There's a third record of the same controversy, because Paul writes up the same story in Galatians 2, and in Galatians 2 when Paul writes the controversy up, he says in Galatians 2 verses 12 and 13, 'For before that certain came from James, Peter did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision', and Paul says they came from James, but not from Jerusalem, 'from James'. They implied, you see, that they had the authority of James to do and to say what they were going to say. That's what caused all this controversy! it shows you, by

the way, the tremendous authority that James had, that when people went elsewhere and claimed to have the sanction of James, brethren listened, if you said you had the support of James, oh, that counted for something in the ecclesial world in those days, and these brethren did, you see!

Now what I'd like to do is to reconstruct Acts 15 verse 1 for you! I want you to imagine the moment of time when these brethren arrived in the Antioch ecclesia, I want you to see how it was that they could create such difficulties in the ecclesia at that time. So you see, they came down from Judea and one day in the ecclesial hall at Antioch, there comes a knock on the door. 'Hello, hello, we're from the Jerusalem ecclesia' and they pull out of their pocket a letter of introduction signed by the recording brother of the Jerusalem ecclesia, signed by James, the leader of the ecclesia. 'We're from the Jerusalem ecclesia, they said, we're from James; do you know James? the Lord's brother, leader of the Jerusalem ecclesia, we're from him, alright? and we've come to teach you. Now brethren it's a wonderful thing to see all these Gentiles that are here, that have come to the truth, it's a marvellous things because you see, we all want to be in the truth, and we all want to be saved, and God wants us to be saved as well. Down through time God has given us the key to salvation, hasn't He, brethren? and that key, of course, is to be found in His holy Law. Of course, now the Law, you know, brethren, came from Moses. Do you know of Moses? yes, he'll be in the kingdom, won't he? Moses? yes, well, Moses was the one who gave the Law and he taught circumcision as being absolutely essential to salvation. You see, it's God special requirement, it's really, you see, a special sign that we are truly God's people, you see! You know what Christ said, you know what the teaching of Christ was? why, Christ said, 'think not that I'm come to destroy the Law, I'm come not to destroy, but to fulfil', and He did, didn't He, b&s? Did Christ ever break the Law? of course not, He kept the Law in every particular, actually you know, Christ was circumcised! You do realize that, don't you? and if it was

good enough for the Lord then I'm sure it's good enough for us as well, isn't it, brethren? Now this is such an important matter that James has sent us to talk to you about this, and James, of course, you know what he's called back in Jerusalem? he's known as James the Just. Do you know why he's called James the Just? because he's such an meticulous observer of the Law himself, scrupulous in every detail. Well, that's whom we're from'.

It wouldn't take long, would it ? to unsettle people would it? just a few choice words and all of a sudden you'd have Gentile brethren and sisters anxious to do the right thing, anxious to be right before their God, who would be distinctly unsettled by all of this sort of talk and they wouldn't know what to do, and before you knew it, there was a controversy in the ecclesia courtesy of the circumcision party. In fact, do you see what verse 2 says, it says, 'When therefore when 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'. Do you see the word 'dissension' there in verse 2, it's the same word translated in Acts 19 verse 40 'uproar'(4714), and it's the word used of the riot in Ephesus. These people brought a riot into the ecclesia! that was their spirit, that was their style, that was their way! Paul and Barnabas, it says, 'had no small disputation with them' because you see, they understood the great danger of the teaching of the circumcision party, because do you see what they would have done, this party had they been successful? You see, what they would have done, is that they would have effectively made the ecclesia, a branch of Judaism; simply a branch of Judaism and they would be little more than Jewish proselytes, it would be a form of Judaism with Christ tacked on at the end. If the Gentiles had agreed with the circumcision party, that 'yes, they ought to be circumcised, guess what that party would have done then? Oh, you can just see it happening! then they would have said, 'well, of course, it's wonderful to see that you're circumcised, brethren, but the Law did say you

know, that it ought to be on the 8th day!' So, now we have fine upstanding Jewish brethren, who were all circumcised on the 8th day and a number of Gentile adherents, who had all been circumcised but on some other day, and they would be second class Christadelphians, which is exactly what the circumcision party would have liked. No, this was not the truth and this party had yet again, agitated in the ecclesia and caused controversy. Their approach reveals really their true motive, which was not to serve the Father but to promote their own secret ambitions.

Well, we believe it was about that time, as we're told in verse 2 that it was decided of the Antioch ecclesia that Paul and Barnabas and certain others, 'should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question'. We believe, it was at that time, shortly before the apostle left that he wrote the Galatian epistle. He wrote it in haste because he was aware that that spirit, the spirit of the circumcision party, had already reached the Galatian ecclesia; they had only been formed for just 2 years, and already inroads were being made into the very areas which the apostle Paul had laboured. Come and have a look at one passage in Galatians 5 because it gives us the spirit of the apostle, as he's about to come down to Jerusalem to attend this conference. Remember how we said in our study this morning, that we believe that James and Paul were very much at one on the doctrine of justification; and whereas one did stress works and the other stressed justification by faith, that the only real reason for the difference was because they were writing to different people with different needs and different circumstances. But really they were one and the same, now what was Paul's view?

Galatians 5 verse 1, just before he goes down to the Jerusalem conference, here's the

spirit of Paul, 'Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage (the Law). Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again, to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole Law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the Law; ye are fallen from grace'. Then he says and notice this, 'For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which works by love'. So Paul believed in the doctrine of the justification by works, didn't he? as long as they were works of faith; he said, we believe in that faith which worketh or has the works of love behind it! That's exactly what James teaches in his epistle! these two men, b&s, the great apostle to the Hebrews and the great apostle to the Gentiles are one before this conference begins! I'll show you another thing that's interesting, you see, what we're saying is this, I believe, the epistle of James was written about AD.46, the first of all the epistles of the New Testament, and I believe, the epistle to the Galatians was written by Paul only about 3 years later, just before he went down to the Jerusalem conference; do you know what? I think that Paul was mightily impressed with the teaching of James! I'll show you why!

Just have a look at this! Here is the first thing, one of the key aspects of the epistle of James is, that the true spirit of the Law is to manifest love, and James puts it this way in James 2 verse 10 when he says, 'If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well'. James says that's the very essence of the Law in its practical outworking in daily life is to fulfil this precept that, we love our neighbour as ourselves'. Do you know what Paul says in Galatians? he says, 'For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' Galatians 5 verse 14, and he taught the same principle, didn't he? that the true spirit of the Law was seen in the manifestation of love towards others!

James in his epistle teaches, the beneficial effect of spiritual wisdom. Of course, he puts it this way when in James 3 verse 17 he says, 'But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy', and James says there's a wonderful benefit to true wisdom. Do you know what Paul says in Galatians? He says, 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no Law' Galatians 3 verses 17 and 18, says the apostle and he teaches the same lesson that James does that true spiritual wisdom, the fruit of the Spirit, has a beneficial influence upon all that come within the scope of its power.

James concludes his epistle by commenting on the fact that the truth is revealed in service to others, and James puts it this way when he says in James 5 verses 19 and 20, 'Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, he which converteth the sinner from the error of his ways, shall save his soul'. The teaching of James was therefore that that spirit of loving service to others is the essence of the truth. Do you know how Paul begins his last chapter in Galatians? He says, 'Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness', Galatians 6 verse 1. Isn't that the spirit of James, b&s? Oh, I think you'll find the epistle to the Galatians, is very much a reflection of the epistle of James; and the distilled essence, the wisdom of James, is to be found in the book of Galatians. Oh yes, these two brethren were at one, no doubt about that!

Well, they're going to come down to the Jerusalem conference and we're going to see how effectively now they work together in Acts 15, to resolve this particular problem. So let's get down to the Jerusalem conference and see what occurs there! In Acts 15 we've got two sides to the argument, haven't we? Quite simple really, on the one side we have the apostle Paul and those that are with him, verse 4, 'When they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the ecclesia, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them'. This group, these are the ones who are going to argue the case for the doctrine of justification by faith, the apostle Paul and those who are with him. Now that's one side, (and I'm going to try and remember to do this tonight; so we're going to have the apostle Paul on this side, we're not going to make any deductions as to whether that's left or right, just this side). So here's the apostle Paul and his company here!

On the other side, we have those of verse 5 of Acts 15, 'But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the Law of Moses'. Actually, the AV sounds a bit tame really, that doesn't sound like the circumcision party, but the Jerusalem bible makes it sound like them because it says, 'Certain members of the Pharisees' party who had become believers objected, insisting that the pagans should be circumcised'. Yes, here they are! the circumcision party, those that are going to argue, 'justification by works'. So we've got the two groups here now gathered together and the conference is about to begin.

Well, of course, you know what that conference would have been like, as we said the

other day, 'you get 3 Jews together and you've got 5 opinions', and here we've got a conference of literally thousands of Jews, all passionate men, with passionate views, and we're going to hear these passionate views in the course of this conference.

They're all going to stand up and they're going to argue and debate their cause, and James is going to try and reconcile all that and come to some conclusion. You wouldn't want to be in his shoes that day, would you, b&s? Well, what did he decide?

Before we get to that, we're actually going to jump over all the arguments and come straight to James' conclusions by the way, because there's such a lot to what James says, that we're going to need the rest of the night to talk about what James says, let alone what everyone else says, and he's the man that we're really interested in, so we're going to come to verse 13. But before we do that, I just want to raise 2 points, 2 important points I think about this conference and that's this: now remember we have the apostle Paul here and we have the circumcision party there. So 2 things - was there a right side to this argument? and the answer is, yes, of course. Paul was absolutely right, wasn't he? justification by faith, the Gentiles are not obligated to keep the Law of Moses, it was a yoke which neither we nor our fathers could bear, and they're going to come to God on the basis of grace and justification by faith. Paul's absolutely right in his doctrine and in his teaching. So why doesn't James in this chapter, therefore, simply stand up at the end and say, 'this group is right and that group is wrong, and that's the end of the matter'. Because James knew he couldn't do that, not this day, not with this group. You see, sometimes we think life in the truth is so very easy, all we've got to do is stand for the truth; it's not as simple as that, b&s, what we've got to do is what's best for the truth. What's best for the truth is not always as simple as it sounds; you see, there is such a thing as having the right thing at the wrong time! Now what do you think would have happened if James had said, this group is right, that group is wrong; you're going to have to change your minds and knuckle down to this teaching because

that's what we're going to run with from now on. Do you know what would have happened that day? the circumcision party would have said, 'that's us, we're off' and they would have walked out of the ecclesia that very day. The ecclesia would have been divided and you might say, 'well, what's the problem? fantastic, let them go, problem solved, they've left, it's terrible but it's wonderful, they're gone!' It's not really wonderful, b&s, because it wasn't just the circumcision party that would leave; there would be a lot of other 'little ones of the flock' that wouldn't be sure what to do. It would be all those members of every ecclesia, that aren't quite clear amongst themselves as to what the right or the wrong of the matter is! They would be listening to this group, Peter, and Paul, and to that group over there, and then this group says 'we're off', because James has said this group is right and that group are off; and all the little ones in the middle will be saying, 'well, I, I, I I'm not sure, this group is pretty strong for the truth, you know, they're strong for the truth, I think I'll go with them!' Also a lot of other brethren and sisters would have walked out of the ecclesia that day, and been lost for good!. How would you like to be James on that day? and he knew that if he didn't handle this issue carefully, he might well divide the ecclesia that very day. It's not as simple as it sounds, b&s, to just say to agree to what's right and just promote that and all will follow from there. NO! it's not quite as simple as that! There were a lot in the ecclesia that didn't understand what was right, and didn't have proper knowledge of the principles at that time; so there's problem #1 at this time.

So here's problem #2. Hands up those who think that the issue of the Jerusalem conference was whether the Gentiles were allowed to be accepted into the truth? Don't be bashful! Well, anyone who didn't put their hands up, is wrong! You see, that issue has already been decided, there's no argument, even the circumcision party had already given ground on this; even the circumcision party agreed that the Gentiles are allowed into the truth, but the great issue of this conference is, on what basis are they to

be accepted? and what do they have to do in coming to the truth? Ah, that's the question! It wasn't as to whether the Gentiles ought to come, everybody agreed on that, the question was, what do they need to conform to or not conform to, in order to be accepted of God. James now is going to have to give a story that going to satisfy that particular issue; that's what he's got to deal with, what was incumbent upon the Gentiles in coming to the truth?

Well, let's have a look at what he says, shall we? James the Just, verse 13, 'And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me', oh, I tell you what, b&s, this is a marvellous start to this story! Now you see what's happened: we have a passionate group of believers here of different persuasions. Now just listen to these words and tell me where they come from, because I think this is the spirit with which James began his words, 'Wherefore my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath', well, who said that? Well that's James in James 1 verse 19, and you see, James always practices what he preaches, and that's exactly what he does in Acts 15 verse 13, he's swift to hear, he's slow to speak and he's slow to wrath! Now do you see what he does? it says, after they had held their peace, he waited for everyone to say their thing and they talked it up and they talked it down, they talked it upside down and back to front until everyone had exhausted themselves, and then finally when everyone had said everything that they could possibly think of to say, then James stood up! after they had held their peace. He was swift to hear and slow to speak and when he spoke he had full control of his emotions, he was slow to wrath; he wasn't heated, he didn't get emotional, he was calm and he was wise!

He says, verse 13, 'Men and brethren, hearken unto me', James answered, says the record, you see, everyone else was busy arguing, James didn't argue, he answered. This is what he said in his answer, verse 14, he says, 'Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name'. Oh, that's interesting! Simeon, who's Simeon, b&s? well, that's Peter, but James doesn't call him Peter, he calls him Shimon and Shimon (8095) is his Hebrew name, and not only that but the phrasing in the Greek is the most like the Hebrew form of the word itself. Now you can just imagine this group over here as James answers and he starts be saying, 'Shimon hath declared', you can imagine them all pricking up their ears, 'oh, Hebrew! he's with us!' But then he said, and this is what he did say, 'Shimon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written', and now he's actually going to bring together the scriptural evidence for that which he is about to bring down as a judgment. This was the most essential thing of all! you see, everyone's been arguing all day on this matter, but there's been very little scripture being passed in the course of this debate, and what was the essential to both parties was that whatever decision was made that we had to get down to the scriptural basis; and I tell you what, b&s, that's a really good foundation for any controversy that we might experience in ecclesial life. We all get passionate about things at times, the first thing we've got to do always is, to say, 'well wait a minute, and before we all get heated, let's all get back to what the scriptures say on this matter. Let's find our scriptural foundation, if you can't find a scriptural foundation you'll never sort it out, b&s. You've got to get back to the scriptural basis of the issue itself. That's what James does, he says, let's get back to the Word, shall we, brethren, and see what the scriptures say about this particular matter'! Absolutely essential to the solution of this conference!

Now what does he say that the scriptures had to say on the matter? Well, this is what

he says, verse 16, 'After this I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the LORD, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called, saith the LORD, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world'. So here's James' scripture, his scriptural answer to the problem. I doubt if you realize this but, in fact, what James does here, is he brings forth 3 scriptural passages to prove his point; and they are just brilliant passages.

Passage #1, Jeremiah 12 verses 14 to 16 which promise that those of the Gentiles in verse 14 of that chapter, would eventually be the recipients of God's compassion, verse 15, and that by espousing themselves to Yahweh, verse 16, would be included in the hope of Israel, verse 16. That's the teaching of Jeremiah 12 verses 14 to 16 and that's taken from the phrase in Acts 15 verse 16, 'after this I will return', that's Jeremiah. 'After this I will return' that's an allusion to Jeremiah 12, and I think that's where James begins his reasoning; so the first thing he says is, 'well, let's just establish that the Gentiles do have the opportunity to be included in the hope of Israel. Alright! he says, we've established that, then let's move on!

Passage #2 was, and remember this was the great issue of the conference, what do they have to do in order to be accepted? and he says, the answer is, Amos 9. Now what Amos 9 taught was, that the revival of the tabernacle of David (and these references, of course, are the references to Amos, not to Acts 15), the revival of the tabernacle of David, verse 11, would be associated with the Gentiles seeking after the truth, verse 12, and receiving the sanction and approval of Yahweh Himself in verse 12 of that chapter. Then finally he says in Acts 15 verse 18, 'Known unto God are all His

works, from the beginning of the world', which is an allusion to Isaiah 45; and Isaiah 45 was going to teach that the drawing near of the Gentiles, verse 20, was a matter always known to God, verse 21, and that that salvation was going to extend to all mankind, verse 22, that they might submit, verse 23, and acknowledge Yahweh alone, verse 24, and that God had known of that from the very beginning of time. Now there is James' argument is summary from the scriptures concerning the Gentiles being included in the hope of Israel.

Now, does anybody know whether Acts 15 verses 16 and 17, does anybody know if that is a quotation from Amos 9 and from the Hebrew? Now have a look at Amos 9 and tell me whether James is quoting the Hebrew? Yes or No? When you think you have an answer then please speak forth: Is James quoting the Hebrew of Amos 9 verses 11 and 12? Well, the 'NO's' have it: do you know what he's quoting from? He's quoting from the Septuagint version; I don't know if you know a great deal about the Septuagint version but the Septuagint version, of course, is a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek about BC.250 by Alexandrian Jews, known as the seventy, the 70 scholars, hence the term Septuagint often translated LXX in different books and publications. Now you see, the Hellenistic Jews, the Jews from all over the Greek speaking world that spoke Greek, they read from the Septuagint bible, but the Aramean Jews read from the Chaldean bible or the Aramaic version rather of the bible. So, at this conference were both sides: there were Hebrews, there were Hebrew Jews as it were, and there were Greek speaking Jews. Now I want you to see how careful James is in what he does, in handling the two groups.

He starts by saying, 'Simon hath declared (and he quotes Peter's Hebrew name) and

then says, 'and to this agree the words of the prophets', and proceeds to move to the prophets of the Hebrews, but when he gets to Amos 9, he doesn't quote from the Hebrew of the text at all, he quotes from the Greek version of the text, which is what the Hellenistic Jews would have quoted from, in fact, he bases his very argument on the Greek text not the Hebrew. The very force of his argument rests on the Septuagint translation. Do you know what happened when the Septuagint translation was completed? the Greek speaking Jews ordained a special feast to celebrate the translation of the bible into their own Greek tongue. Do you know what the Hebrew Jews in Jerusalem did when the Septuagint version was launched? They ordained a fast to lament that the Hebrew scriptures had been translated into the Greek tongue! Oh, you've got different passions in this conference, and you see, James is being very careful in the fact, that he's dealing with two sides, two groups, two views, two languages, two types of Jews; he makes reference to the Hebrew he quotes from the Septuagint, he's exceedingly careful what he does! Now, I want to show you the sheer brilliance, by the way, the absolute brilliance of James' allusion to Amos 9.

Are you in Amos or Acts 15? Well, we can do it from both, but let's do it from Acts 15! We'll stay in Acts 15 because it makes it a little bit easier. Now you see, this is why I think that James used Amos 9: he says that Amos 9 predicts that when the tabernacle of David (verse 16) which is fallen down is built again, the residue of men who might seek after the LORD, all the Gentiles (verse 17), they are going to become associated with the truth under the era of the revived tabernacle of David, says James. Now, do you know where was the tabernacle of David? the tabernacle of David was in Jerusalem; what was in the tabernacle of David? the answer is the ark of the covenant symbolizing Yahweh's presence amongst His people, the place where those who worshipped Yahweh could come before Him, the tabernacle of David. But you see, at the same time that there was a tabernacle of David in Jerusalem, there was another

tabernacle somewhere else; where was the other tabernacle? Two tabernacles existed side by side, the tent of David with the ark, and another tabernacle somewhere else; now where was the other tabernacle? It was in Gibeon (1 Chronicles 16 verse 39), and what was in the tabernacle at Gibeon? the answer is, every other item of the Mosaic system. All the rest of the tabernacle coverings, all the rest of the tabernacle furniture, everything associated with the Law of Moses was in the tabernacle at Gibeon. James' point in quoting Amos 9 is that when the Gentiles come to the truth, he says, they come into the truth under the auspices of the tabernacle of David, not the tabernacle of Gibeon, so they don't come in under the Mosaic system. What's the tabernacle of David? well, there's only one other place that I know of in the bible where the tabernacle of David is even quoted in the scriptures, anyone even know where it is? It's in Isaiah 16, I think this is the only other place in the bible where the phrase 'the tabernacle of David' is even found in the scriptures. What's the tabernacle of David? if the tabernacle of Gibeon is the Mosaic system of things, but the Gentiles are going to come in under the tabernacle of David where the ark of the Presence of Yahweh is, what's that tabernacle? the answer is, Isaiah 16 verse 5, 'And in mercy shall the throne be established, and He shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David judging and seeking judgment and hastening righteousness', and the tabernacle of David, b&s, are those things that relate to the Law of Christ, not the Law of Moses. I think that's why James quoted from Amos 9 to say and to answer the burning issue of the day, which was, of course, on what basis were the Gentiles to be accepted?

So, let's just summarize that then, and see what it was that James has said. So James, as the president of the assembly, not only summarized the arguments of the conference, but he also expounded the scriptural foundation for the inclusion of the Gentiles in the hope of salvation. He then proposed a motion to settle the issue. At the heart of his argument was the fact that the scriptures he had adduced, clearly taught

that the calling of the Gentiles had been directly and specifically initiated by God Himself (Acts 15 verse 14). They had not received the truth by association with Judaism nor under the Mosaic dispensation, but they belonged instead to the dispensation of the tabernacle of David. The central code of this new dispensation was not the Law of Moses, but the Law of Christ, and under that Law would God directly accept those from among the heathen who sought Him (verses 15 to 17). The Gentiles had therefore been called as Christians under grace not as Jews under law, and they were therefore, not subject to the code of the old covenant . The involvement of the Gentiles had always been known by God, whose determined purpose was to cause all nations to bow before Him, and to acknowledge that He alone had the power to give salvation; and not only to give salvation but to give it, b&s, to whomsoever He will! Oh, this was a splendid argument from scripture by a man who knew his bible, and he knew the arguments of the prophets inside out and back to front! He answers with a superb quotation that settled once and for all, the question of not whether the Gentiles ought to be accepted, but under what dispensation they were to come into association with the truth.

Then, in Acts 15 he says, and you'll notice these words therefore in verse 19, he says finally therefore, 'Wherefore my sentence is' (and now what he's going to do, he's going to propose a motion for the assembly; he's going to suggest a settlement to the argument). Remember what we said, that James is aware of the delicacy of that which faces him because of the feeling of the group that are assembled on that occasion. He has to be very careful what he does! Now just as the argument that he has raised, has been careful to acknowledge both the Hebrew and the Greek components of the ecclesia now assembled before him, so in the motion that he's going to propose, he is, as it were, careful to balance the feelings of both sides, now just see what he says! Verse 19, 'Wherefore, my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God' (and this group over here would say, 'this sounds good').

Then he says verse 20, 'BUT that we do write to them on certain particulars (and this group would say, 'well thank goodness for that!). Do you see how careful he was? Oh, he was ever so careful bearing in mind the group that was in front of him. So what does he propose? Well, what he proposes is this! on the basis of his scriptural testimony, James proposed a resolution to the dispute, a statement was clear and decisive, verse 19, 'my sentence is' 'emou krino' (1700+ 2919) 'I judge' or idiomatically, this is my vote, and the vote that he gave or the motion he proposed was that the Jewish believers should stop troubling the Gentile believers who had turned he says (note this, verse 19) 'who had turned not to the Law but simply to God, says James. But nevertheless, verse 20, he would write concerning certain abstentions that would be enjoined upon the Gentiles, and they were designed as a transitional measure to facilitate social intercourse between Jewish and Gentile believers. Now do you see what verse 20 says, 'That we write unto them that they abstain from pollutions of idols, from fornication, and from things strangled and from blood', now 3 of those 4 items relate to dietary laws, that have to do with the intimacy of fellowshiping one another in the ecclesial hall at an ecclesial meal. At the heart of what James is proposing here, is something that's very fundamental and very basic. He says, 'if the brethren and sisters can't even have a meal together, we've got problems. So let's at least sort out a basis by which the two groups can at least fellowship one another over the basic essentials of life'. So he proposes what he's going to do as a practical expedient, not a moral necessity. Of course, when he says that they 'abstain from fornication', that, of course, was a moral necessity, but the dietary laws weren't, they were simply a transitional measure only and the observance of these few precepts was requested by James, simply to show sensitivity to Jewish scruple because of a deeply ingrained custom and belief, which had been practised for generations.

Do you see what verse 21 says, you see, this is why he asks them to do it, he says,

'because, verse 21, 'because Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day', and I believe that the basis of James' argument here was, he says, 'look, you've got to appreciate that the scruples of the Jewish believers are deeply ingrained, and wherever they come to the truth, they will have the same prejudices that they've got to learn to overcome, and it's going to take time, brethren. Now I want to show you what he says, in effect, I believe, in this episode, because you see, he doesn't come down in favour of Paul, but of course, he doesn't come down in favour of the circumcision party either. I think this is what James says, this is wonderful, brethren and sisters, because you bear in mind, the ecclesias that were waiting for his decision at this time. Here's the essence of what he proposes! I think this is marvellous! He says, 'I think what needs to be shown here, brethren, is a bit of forbearance'. Forbearance was asked of the Gentile believers in submitting to these few conditions and forbearance was expected of the Jewish believers in exacting no more. That was a very wise decision, because it kept that ecclesia together in order that they might yet grow in further understanding of the principles that were involved. What was a controversy that could have eventually divided this ecclesia on this day, was avoided because of the wisdom of the chairman who said, 'I think what really needs to happen here brethren, is that both sides ought to show a bit of forbearance; he says, I think that's the best thing for the truth'!

So, there are some who could say that James compromised, he ought to have come down on Paul's side! What? and split the ecclesia? I think it would be a brave person that would suggest that! Was James right? did he do the right thing? was this the right decision? Well, I want you to see how Acts 15 writes up this decision in terms of whether James had made the correct decision or not! Just turn over the page, I think this is really important, I think it's important that people go away with the understanding that what James did was the correct thing to do. Now look at how the decision is written

up and look at the result that this decision brings in terms of the assembled multitude, James having brought down his argument; verse 22, 'Then it pleased the apostles and the elders with the whole ecclesia'. So the first thing is that the whole multitude were pleased with the decision, that's important, isn't it? that's the first thing that's noted about the result of James' judgment in the matter. 'And they decided to send chosen men of their own company, and to write letters to the other ecclesias', verse 25, James says who's writing the letter, 'it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord', now either he's a liar, b&s, or this truly was the result of the meeting, and I think it was the result of the meeting. For the moment, for the time being, there was one accord in the Jerusalem conference, they all listened to James and they said, 'that's absolutely right, that's what we ought to do!', and they were pleased with the decision.

Verse 28, (Now look at this one carefully), 'For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us'. James' claim in verse 28, is that this was a Spirit inspired decision at the conference, endorsed as it were by the divine hand itself, as being the wisest course of action that served the best interests of the truth. With what spirit then does he write? verse 28, 'It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well' says James. Fare ye well!' There was a lovely brotherly tone, wasn't there, to the spirit of the letter that was then going to be written, and what was the result of the letter? the result of the decision as it now went abroad into the ecclesia world? Verse 30, 'So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation'. So that was the effect of the decision, they rejoiced for the consolation. I think there's no doubt, b&s, that the decision made by James on this occasion was absolutely the right one, that kept an

ecclesia together and his recommendation was, he says, 'I'm not here to compromise the truth, I'm here to seek the best interests of the truth; I'm here to be a mediator of peace, and I seek forbearance from both sides, so that we can all grow in spiritual principles. And it was the right thing to do!

James chapter 3, so the very last paragraph here says, the spirit of the motion showed care for both groups and James thereby showed the beneficial influence of the wisdom that is from above. Now just read James 3 starting at verse 13 and read to verse 18, and can you just see James at the Jerusalem conference as the perfect exhibition of these principles: verse 13, 'Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?' Well, of course, the answer was James himself on this very day in this very place, at this very conference, was the wise man that they all needed. 'Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation, his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. BUT, says James, 'the wisdom that is from above is first pure' (he drew his arguments from the purity of scripture itself). 'Then peaceable (he sought to reconcile; he didn't thunder judgments against either side. 'Easy to be entreated (he heard everyone through and their appeals), 'full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality (he condemned neither one side or the other) and without hypocrisy' (the words he spoke were quiet and sincere), 'and the fruits of righteousness, says James, is sown in peace of them that make peace'. Now b&s, the peace of this conference was not the peace of compromise; it was the peace of true wisdom, the wisdom that comes from above, and for a while, for a time, there was peace in Jerusalem and peace in the ecclesia.

One would hope, b&s, that after this matter, after this judgment so wisely delivered, that there would be peace in the ecclesia thereafter. How one would have hoped that that would be the case; but it wasn't to be, and ere long the spirit of the circumcision party would be seen yet again, threatening James and threatening the ecclesia. The story of how that happened and what James next did, is the next study.