

# Loosing and Binding in Acts 15

The early Assembly's activities.

The success of the jubilant apostles in converting many gentiles to the Messiah was not popular with everyone in the Jewish community. Some felt gentiles who had converted to the Messiah were not being taught in the ways of Judaism. The problem comes to light in this fifteenth chapter of Acts. Simply stated, the gentiles became disciples of the Savior and were immersed without the encumbrance of Judaistic adult circumcision.

The Apostle Peter had taught since that notable Pentecost in Acts, chapter 2, that, "Whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Master shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). Nothing was declared here, about one becoming an initiate of Judaism. The Apostle Paul taught in Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians the equality of Jew and gentile before Yahweh without observance of the Talmud and the imposition of Mosaic custom and tradition.

For nearly 20 years following Yahshua's ascension (Acts 1:9-11), a growing number of gentile converts had come into the faith without the requirement of circumcision after the manner of Moses but now, *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,"* Acts 15:1. ("Certain men" are identified in Verse 5 as "of the sect of the Pharisees which believed.") "Certain men" today, are also propagating standards that not even they are able to bear, and yet would they impose a yoke upon others with the outcome that neither they nor their proselytes could enter into the Kingdom of Yahweh (Acts 15:10; Matt. 23:13).

Thus, from Antioch where this matter had come to a head, Paul and Barnabas were dispatched to Jerusalem to confer with the council of apostles and elders about this concern.

## The Jerusalem Assembly's Influence

Jerusalem was regarded as the center of influence in "this way." Here, the apostles who had sat under the tutelage of the Master, giving witness to His Words and to His works, resided. It was from Jerusalem that Peter and John were sent to Samaria to confirm the newly immersed by the Deacon and Evangelist, Philip (Acts 8:5-17). It was here where Peter gave his defense for the accession of the gentiles into the *ekklesia* (Acts 11). It was here where accusations against the Apostle Paul were redressed (Acts 21). It was here, in Jerusalem, in Acts 2:38, where Peter had opened the Kingdom of Heaven with the "keys" committed to his trust by Yahshua, saying, *And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven,* Matthew 16:19. Parenthetically, we note a word of clarification. The Roman Church alleges that with Yahshua's pronouncement of these words, He appointed Peter as the visible head (the pope) of His Body. But Yahshua Himself, and not Peter, is the Rock upon which His Body is built.

## Repentance and Baptism are Bound, Adult Circumcision is Loosed

*Then Peter said unto them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Yahshua the Messiah for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,"* Acts 2:38. Here, Peter is exercising his authority: opening the Kingdom of Heaven, with the "keys"—"Repent ... be baptized ... in the Name of Yahshua the Messiah ... receive the gift of the Holy Spirit:" to Jew, Samaritan, and gentile (Acts 1:8).

And now, in the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter, he is again exercising this authority: *Now therefore why tempt ye Elohim, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our Fathers nor we were able*

to bear, Acts 15:10. The Council's decision under the tutelage of Peter, Barnabas, Paul, and James, determined it "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" (Acts 15:28-29). This was false worship (customs) of the gentiles which these new proselytes to the faith were to put off. Worshipping idols and dealing with temple prostitutes was common practice among the heathen. They also drank animal's blood, assuming the strength they were now receiving was the power and life of the bull, or goat, not realizing hormones such as testosterone, or even nutrients such as iron, was most likely the reason they felt stronger.

It should be noted, that in the midst of these deliberations among apostles and elders were the words, *For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day*, Acts 15:21. Clearly, binding Sabbath as a day of holy convocation and solemn assembly whereby, all believers can become established, strengthened, and settled in present truth and continue to grow in grace and knowledge (1 Pet. 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:12, 3:18).

Moreover, there are other laws that are bound in Heaven and on earth—like, the 10 Commandments that cannot be loosed—and some, like physical circumcision and animal sacrifices, loosed by virtue of Messiah's sacrificial offering under the Melchizedek priesthood. We can now approach the throne of Yahweh boldly to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16). For more insight, request your free in-depth booklet called, ***Orthodox Believers***.

The conclusion by which the keys, loosened in Heaven and on earth the customs and traditions of men and bound in Heaven and on earth the rudiments of Salvation: Repentance, water immersion, and conferral of the Gift of the Holy Spirit with the laying on of hands first to the Jew (Acts 2), then to the Samaritan (Acts 8), and lastly to the gentile (Acts 10) confirm, of a truth, "Elohim is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with (by) Him" (Acts 10:34-35).

### **Circumcision Made Without Hands**

While the principal issue brought to the apostles and elders was the requirement of physical circumcision as a requisite for salvation, and the Council's determination was that physical adult circumcision was loosed in Heaven and on earth, nevertheless circumcision of the heart was yet mandatory. Physical circumcision had been given to Abraham as a token of the Covenant Yahweh had made with him (Gen. 17:11), and therewith distinguished his seed from all others among whom he dwelt. But it is clear from the Law (*Torah*, instructions), that what Yahweh was wanting of Israel (see mini-study entitled, ***The Hope of Israel***) was the circumcision made without hands (Col. 2:11) as expressed in Deuteronomy 10:12-13, 16: *And now, Israel, what doth Yahweh thy Elohim require of thee, but to fear Yahweh thy Elohim, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve Yahweh thy Elohim, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of Yahweh, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? ...Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.* This is supported by the Apostle Paul. Neither the circumcision, which is outward in the flesh, but the circumcision which is of the heart. This in the spirit and not in the letter (Rom. 2:28-29). We are given to understand, moreover, that the circumcision made without hands is effected by our burial with Yahshua in water baptism (by the circumcision of Messiah), in putting off the sins of the flesh

(Col. 2:11-12). Following baptism includes the laying on of hands by the presbytery (elders). Request your free study entitled, ***The Authority to Baptize***.

### **Conclusion**

This 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts clarifies that the gentiles were accepted into the Assembly without having to offer animal sacrifices nor being physically circumcised. The Levitical priesthood is set aside (in abeyance) as we are now under our High Priest Yahshua of the Melchizedek order. Entrance into the Kingdom as spirit beings is through baptism through the Saving Name of Yahshua. Baptism is binding (commanded) for the forgiveness of sins (see our mini-study called, ***Why Be Baptized Into the Name of Yahshua?***). Now we apply the Law more spiritually, as Yahshua magnified the Law and made It honorable (Isa. 42:21).

To Peter was given the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. The law of physical circumcision for adult men was loosed on earth and honored in Heaven. But we are still bound by the Ten Commandments, per Yahshua's command (Mark 10) and the Apostle Paul's second witness (Rom. 13).

Notice of the loosing and binding decisions of the apostles and elders was disseminated abroad, as it is written: *And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the assemblies established in the faith, and increased in number daily,* Acts 16:4-5.

And of circumcision? *Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the Commandments of Yahweh,* 1 Corinthians 7:19.

*Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of Yahweh and the faith of Yahshua,* Revelation 14:12.

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