

January 13, 2019

Morning Overview

Lesson: *The Jerusalem Council*

Lesson Objective:

In our story today, we learn about a significant part of church history – the Jerusalem Council. While there is more to the story in the background, for our purposes today we'll focus on the core of the conflict: What does it mean to be saved and have the Holy Spirit indwelling inside of us? A group thought it was following Jesus and keeping the law of Moses. Paul and Barnabas taught it was all of God's grace! The Jerusalem Council upholds the Gospel message that salvation is all of God's grace. This does not mean rules are not important, beneficial, or needed. They certainly help, but the rules, or in this case the law of Moses, does not save us from our sin. Only God's gift, His Son Jesus Christ, can do that!

Teaching Summary:

- God's promises do not change despite circumstances, people and even our inability to believe them. God keeps His promises even when we do not trust Him or follow His commands.
- God has promised to always be with His people. He is with us through the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- The Church is growing, but also experiencing persecution. Because of the persecution, followers of Jesus scatter.
- The scattered Church takes the Good News and tells others about Jesus.
- Some men come to Antioch and begin teaching the law of Moses as equal to the Gospel to non-Jewish followers of Jesus. This creates mass confusion.
- Paul and Barnabas defend the Gospel and the message they had received from the Apostles.
- A group is sent back to Jerusalem from Antioch to get a final answer.
- Along the way Paul and Barnabas meet other Christians and tell them all the Lord is doing.
- Once in Jerusalem, both groups – those who want to uphold the Law of Moses and Paul and Barnabas - report what happened.
- A long debate ensues, but eventually Peter and James remind the group that only by grace through faith in Jesus can anyone be saved and have the Holy Spirit.
- The Apostles send a group of people back, including Paul and Barnabas, to encourage the followers of Jesus in Antioch with a letter.
- The non-Jewish followers of Jesus in Antioch, upon hearing the letter, rejoice in knowing they are followers of Jesus indwelt with the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Acts 15:11-16:10

Scripture Memory for January:

The Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." *Acts 13:47* (ESV)

Activity of the Day:

Engage the children with the following to help them bring the lesson to life. Role play with them so they understand the main concept of the teaching.

5's – Dress up

4's – Little People figures

3's – Finger puppets

Craft: Letter of Encouragement

Supplies: Envelope, heart, verse sticker, magnet

Instructions: 1. Help children write an encouragement on heart.

2. Place verse sticker on flap side of envelope.

3. Color heart and envelope if desired; place magnet on opposite of envelope.

If child has already done craft first hour, have them work on a coloring sheet



Story

Transition

Boys and girls, in our story today we learn about a very big fight! Not with fists or kicking and no weapons, but it was a dangerous fight. The fight was over what it meant to be a follower of Jesus and to have the Holy Spirit inside us. Let's find out more in our story...

The Church Is Growing

The Church was growing. The Bible tells us every day more and more people believed the Good News! They believed that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue us from our sins and that He rose from the dead! More and more people believed in Jesus – the Church was growing! But as the Church grew, there were people that wanted to hurt and even kill followers of Jesus. Followers of Jesus had to run, hide and live in different places and cities. As they scattered they took the Good News with them and told others about Jesus.

Followers of Jesus went to tell others about Jesus. Paul and Barnabas went to many places to tell the Good News – that Jesus, God's Son, came to save them from their sins. Some people, however, did not teach the right things. But the Apostles taught that good works were a result of believing the Good News.

The Jerusalem Council

Some men traveled from Judea to a city called Antioch; these men were Jewish. In Antioch these Jewish men began teaching the people who were not Jewish: "You cannot be saved if you do not do what Moses taught us to do." Paul and Barnabas heard what these men were teaching and did not agree with them. Paul and Barnabas argued with the men about what it means to have a relationship with God. They could not agree, so Paul, Barnabas, and some other men were sent to Jerusalem to get an answer. There they could talk more about this with the apostles and elders.

As Paul, Barnabas and others traveled, they met other followers of Jesus. Paul and Barnabas shared what God was doing: people who were not Jewish were turning to God! This made all the believers very happy. When Paul, Barnabas, and the other men reached Jerusalem, the church there welcomed them. Paul, Barnabas, and the others told about all the things God had done with them.

Paul, Barnabas, and the other men told the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem what they were arguing about. Some of the men came forward who had once belonged to the Pharisees and said, "The non-Jewish believers obey the law of Moses! They must!" The Pharisees thought the law of Moses was the most important thing, and everyone had to follow all the rules in the law of Moses. God's forgiveness and grace was hard for them to understand. They thought God would forgive them if they followed all the rules. But, this isn't true – God forgives us because of Jesus. God forgives us because He loves us. God forgives us because Jesus died for our sins and rose again!

The apostles and the elders came together to give an answer. There was a lot of talking and arguing. The apostles and elders wanted to be sure to give the right answer. Then Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know what happened in the early days. God chose me from among you to preach the Good News to the non-Jewish people. They heard the Good News from me and they believed. God, who knows the thoughts of all men, accepted them. He showed this to us by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us. *To God those people are not different from us.* When they believed he made their hearts pure. So now why are you testing God? You are making it very hard for them to be followers of Jesus. We cannot follow all the rules in the law of Moses; our fathers and grandfathers could not either! We believe we and they too will be saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus!"

The whole group became quiet. Paul and Barnabas then spoke. They told about all the miracles and signs that God did through them among the non-Jewish people. The apostles, the elders, and the whole church decided to send some of their men with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch. They also decided to write a letter to let the people of Antioch know what was right.

From the apostles and elders, your brothers.

To all the non-Jewish brothers:

Dear Brothers,

We have heard that some of our men have come to you and said things that trouble and upset you. But we did not tell them to do this! We have all agreed to choose some men and send them to you. They will be with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul— men who have given their lives to serve our Lord Jesus Christ. They will tell you the same things. It has pleased the Holy Spirit that you should not have to do everything in the law of Moses, and we agree. You need to do only these things: Do not eat any food that has been offered to idols. Do not eat raw meat. Stay pure. If you stay away from these things, you will do well.

Good-bye.

The men left to take the letter to Antioch. There they gathered the church and gave them the letter. When they read it, the followers of Jesus in Antioch were very happy because of the encouraging letter. Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch. They and many others preached the Good News and taught the people the message of the Lord!

Questions for Review with Younger Children

Have children answer “yes” or “no.”

- Is the Church growing – adding more and more people? (Yes)
- Is the Holy Spirit growing the Church? (Yes)
- Did some men come from Judea to Antioch and confuse the people there? (Yes)
- Did the men tell people in Antioch to follow the law of David? (No! The law of Moses.)
- Did Paul and Barnabas agree with these men? (No! They did not agree with them.)
- Did Paul, Barnabas, and some of the men go to Jerusalem so the apostles and elders could give an answer? (Yes)
- Did the Apostles and Elders say that the non-Jewish followers must obey the law of Moses? (No. They are saved by grace through faith in Jesus.)
- Did the Apostles and Elders send back a bunch of candy to Antioch to encourage the followers there? (No. They sent back a letter.)
- Did the letter encourage the followers in Antioch? (Yes)
- Did the letter tell the followers of Jesus in Antioch they were true followers and had the Holy Spirit? (Yes)

Questions for Review with Older Children

- Name some of the people in our story today.
- Why is it important for the followers of Jesus in our story to know that the Holy Spirit was inside them?
- What is the Good News?