

URGENT

The Jerusalem Council



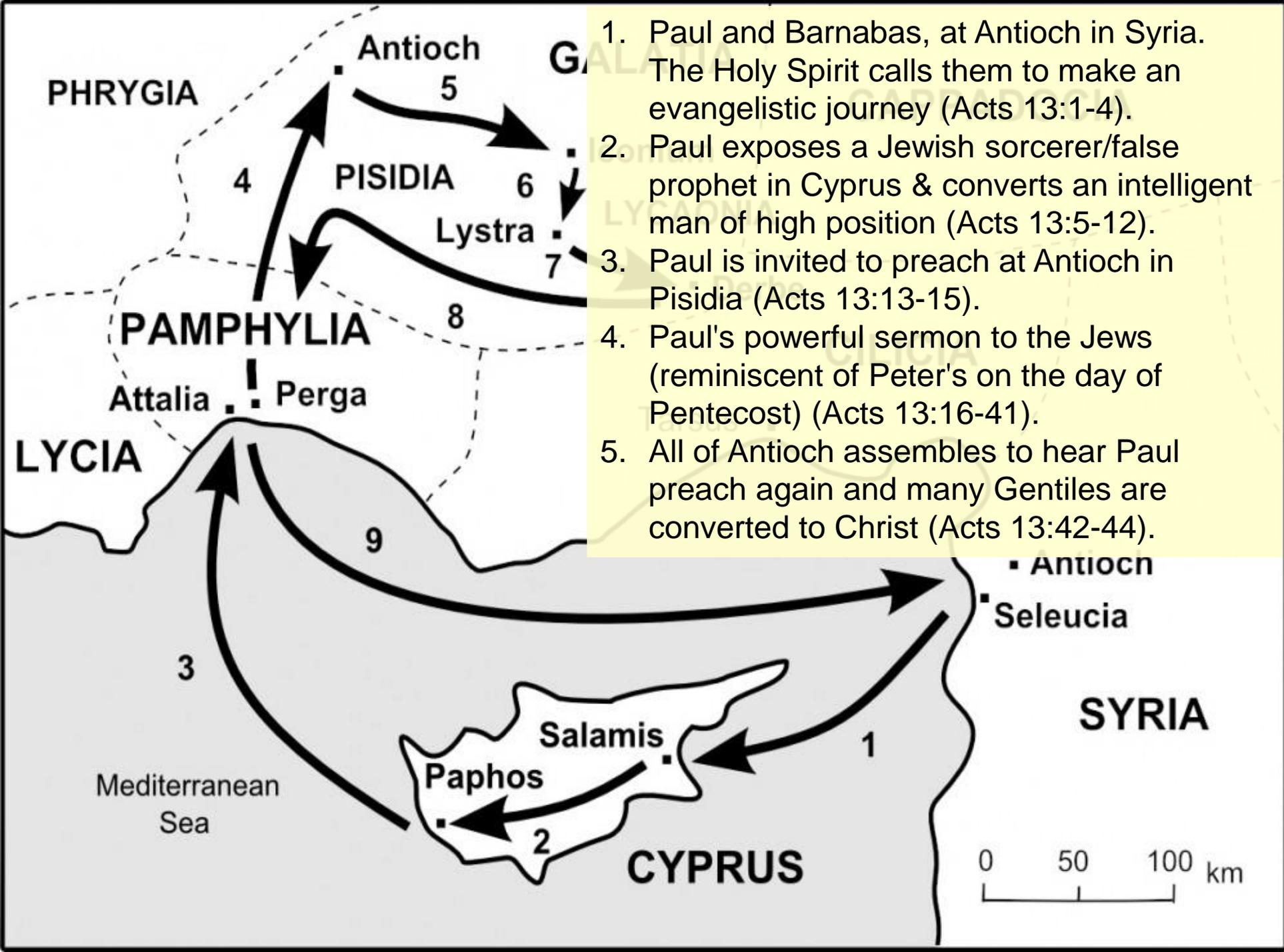
Acts
15:1-35

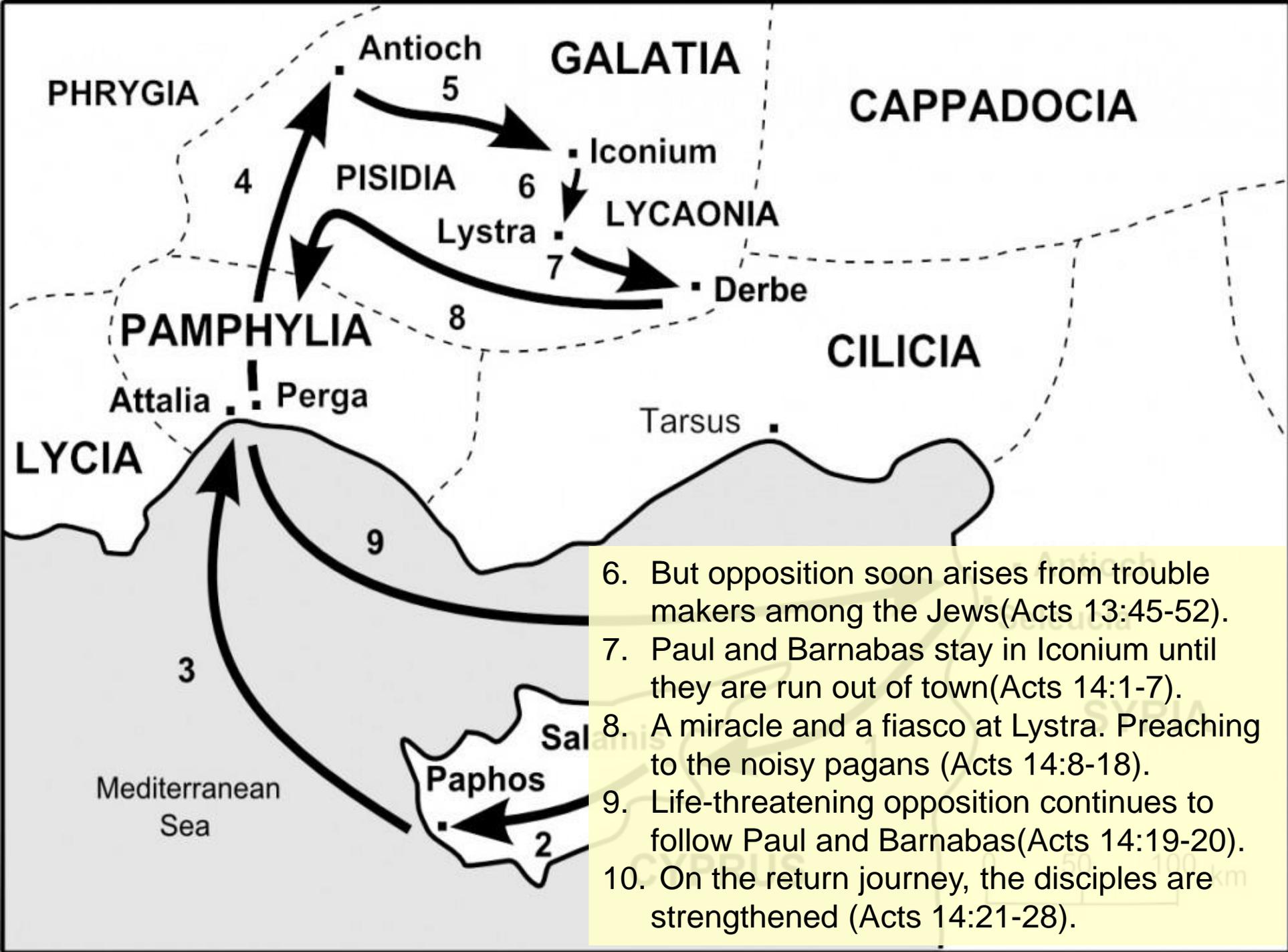
It's been a good year.

We had some fun.

We learned a lot.

We got things done.





6. But opposition soon arises from trouble makers among the Jews(Acts 13:45-52).
7. Paul and Barnabas stay in Iconium until they are run out of town(Acts 14:1-7).
8. A miracle and a fiasco at Lystra. Preaching to the noisy pagans (Acts 14:8-18).
9. Life-threatening opposition continues to follow Paul and Barnabas(Acts 14:19-20).
10. On the return journey, the disciples are strengthened (Acts 14:21-28).

A testament to God's
great commission & work



in)(between.

Sermon Outline

I - THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL



1 – THE ISSUE

2 – THE OUTCOME

2.1 – PETER'S RESPONSE – THE GENTILES ARE
SAVED THROUGH CHRIST AND CHRIST ALONE

2.2 – THE TESTIMONY OF PAUL & BARNABAS

2.3 – JAMES' RESPONSE – AGREEMENT & WISDOM

II - APPLICATION TODAY & CONCLUSION

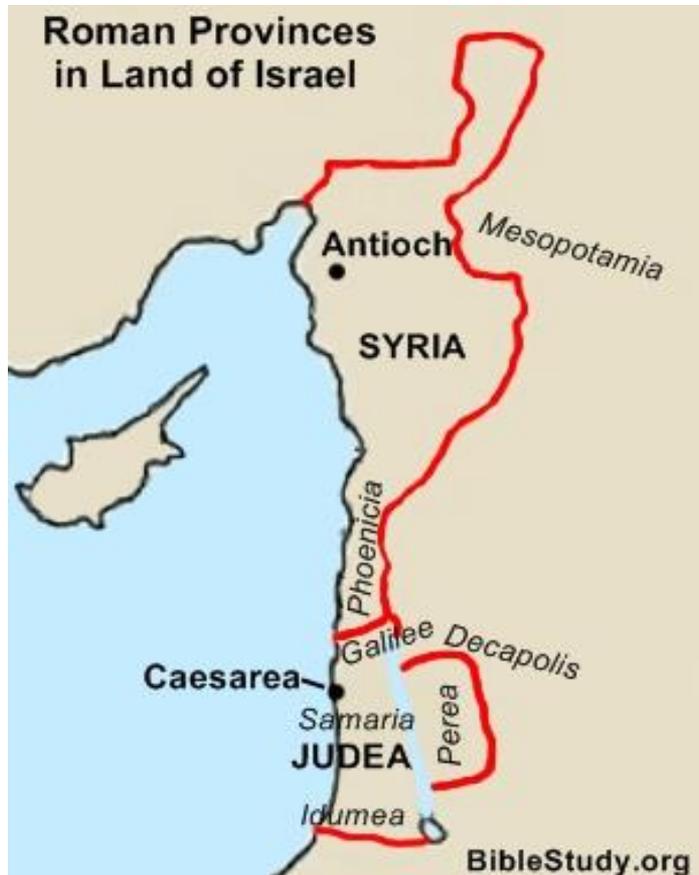
1 – 4 GUIDELINES IN DISPUTABLE MATTERS

2 – MOVING FORWARD (AS A CHURCH)

The Jerusalem Council

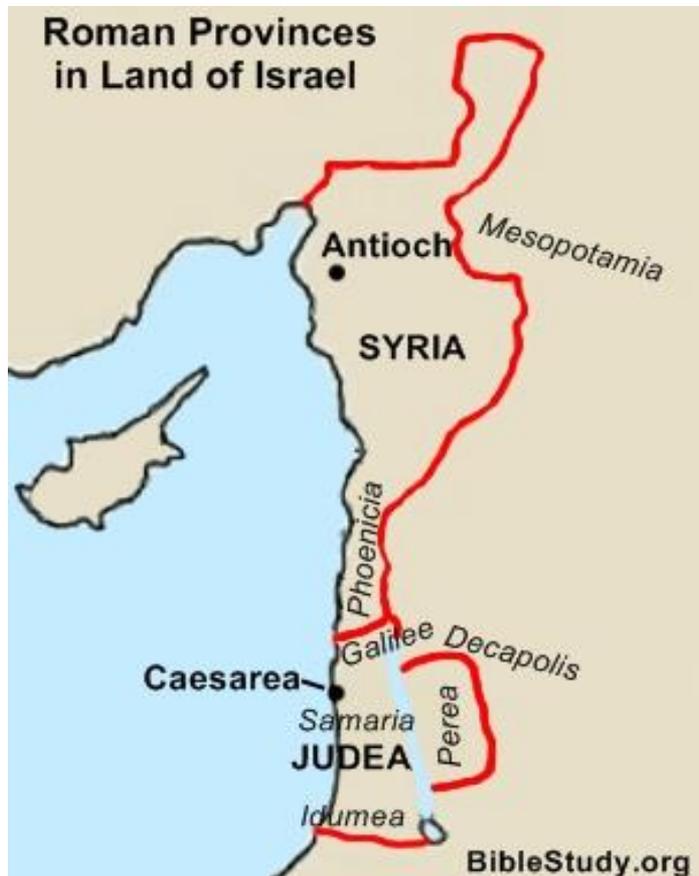
The background

Acts 15:1 Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”



The issue

Acts 15:1 Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”



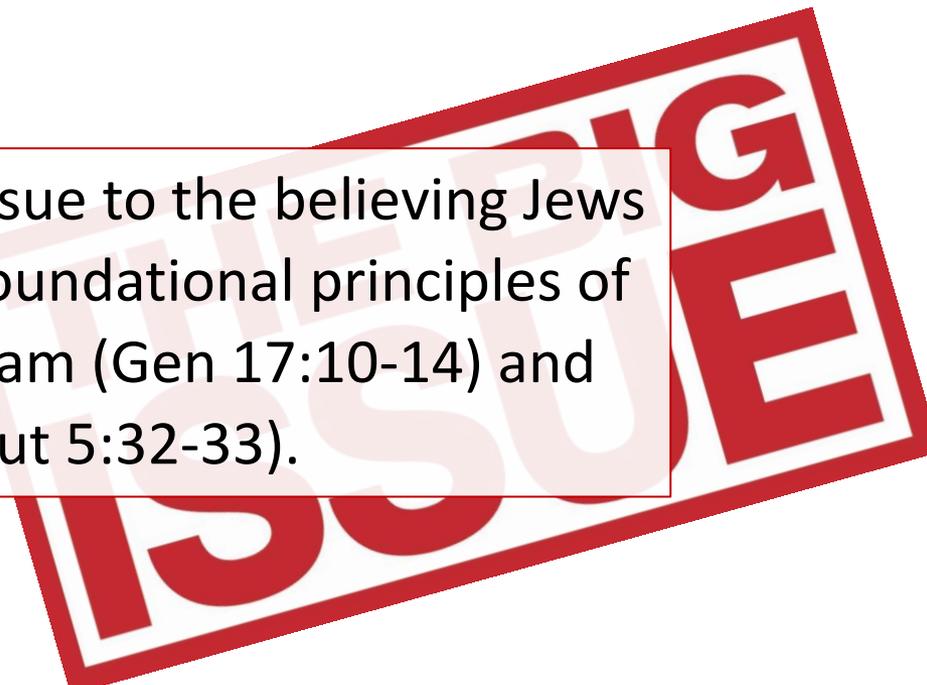
- The significance – Antioch was the heart of Gentile outreach and missionary efforts. Tradition holds that the first Gentile church was founded in Antioch, Acts 11:20-21. It was from Antioch that St. Paul started on his missionary journeys
- Significant – because unless this was resolved, the work to the Gentiles would be held back.

The issue

Acts 15:4-5 ⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses.”

This is a most fundamental issue to the believing Jews who hold fast to God. The foundational principles of God’s covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:10-14) and with Moses (Deut 5:32-33).



The dispute

- v.2 says that Paul and Barnabas totally disagreed with them – the Bible uses the word sharp dispute and debate ... oo oligos (no puny/little/small – double negative = large) stasis (a standing, position) stasis = not moving; suzetesis (mutual questioning; disputation = debate or argument)
- v.2 appears to be a standstill for they were appointed (along with other believers) to go to Jerusalem where the apostles and early church elders were still stationed.



The dispute

- **Inference 1.** This people from Judea probably were not a correct representation of the apostles and elders' thoughts but their own (v. 24 you see that the elders clarifying this).
- **Inference 2.** These people from Judea (believers from the party of Pharisees?) were possibly sincere in as we read no record of further rebuke when the matter was later settled. One church's opinion verses another. One believer's preference over another.



Some issues of contention today

1. Hymns vs contemporary Christian songs
2. To what extent can a woman participate in church
3. The grace movement; prosperity gospel
4. Hyper-Calvanism vs Arminianism
5. Mega churches vs small churches
6. Adopting the world's strategies to reach out to more people and bring people to church
7. The older generation and the newer generation of Christians
8. How we use our money in church
9. Community work and involvement of the church in politics
10. Church dispute with one another – internally within the church & externally between churches (all usually backed up with some form of doctrine)



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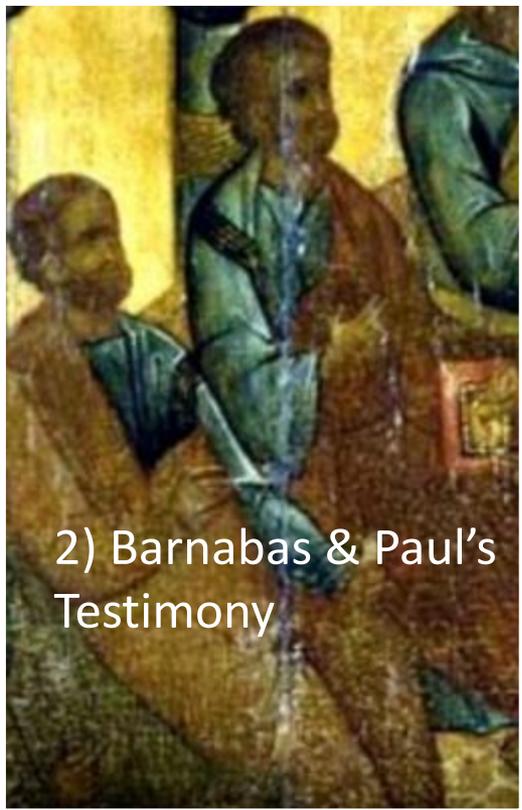
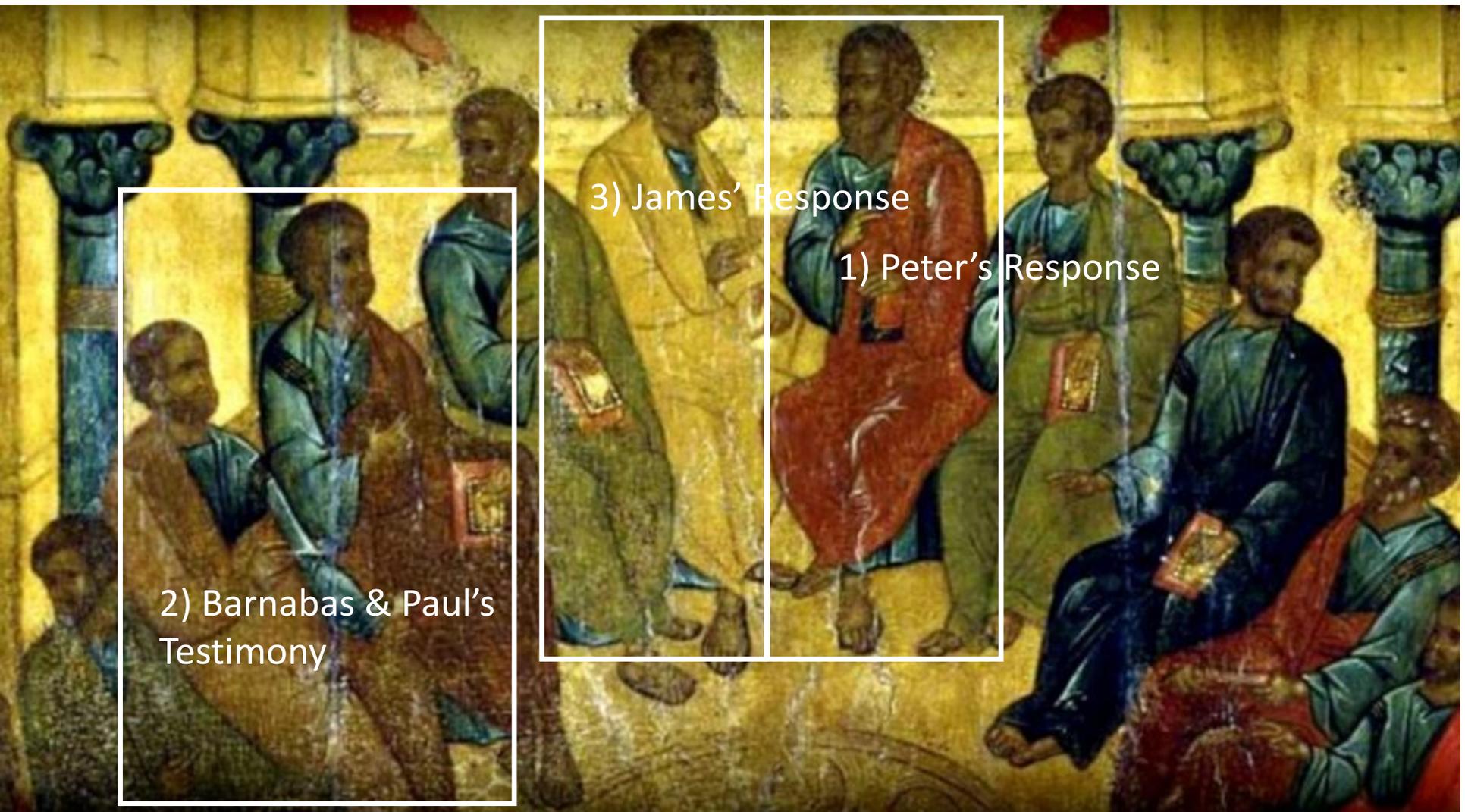


The Jerusalem Council

v.6-7a The apostles and elders deliberated and discussed this question



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Peter's response

PETER'S RESPONSE TO THE CIRCUMCISION & KEEPING OF MOSES' LAW BY THE GENTILES

1. The transformation of Peter (v.7)
2. God knows the heart & God's prove that He accepted the Gentiles just as they are (v.8-9)
3. From the Law to the Centrality of Christ (v.10-11)



Peter's response

PETER'S RESPONSE TO THE CIRCUMCISION & KEEPING OF MOSES' LAW BY THE GENTILES

1. The transformation of Peter (v.7)

- He starts with himself - how God led him to the Gentiles? (v.7-8)
- Recalling the account of his vision + his meeting with Cornelius (and how Peter was also very uncomfortable with his) Acts 10:15; Acts 10:28



Peter's response

PETER'S RESPONSE TO THE CIRCUMCISION & KEEPING OF MOSES' LAW BY THE GENTILES

2. **God knows the heart & God's prove that He accepted the Gentiles just as they are (v.8-9)**
 - a) God, who knows the heart,
 - b) showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them,
 - c) just as he did to us.
 - d) He did not discriminate between us and them,
 - e) for he purified their hearts by faith.



Peter's response

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3. From the Law to the Centrality of Christ (v.10-11)

- Why do you tempt (G3985) God? (v.10a) – same words used in Acts 5:9-11. The word is to test/discipline/to try whether a thing can be done
- Ananias and Sapphire tried/tested to see if they could lie and get away with it
- Here trying to see if they could try/test God by adding the (1) law back to (2) the work, the teaching, the covenant, the grace of Jesus Christ



Peter's response

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3. From the Law to the Centrality of Christ (v.10-11)

- (2) Peter redirects them to the Centrality of Christ – His person, His life, His words and His completed work as full substitution of and in complement to the Law.
- What is the Centrality of Christ? Tom Schreiner, (teacher of New Testament at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) has 4 key points about this “Centrality of Christ and God in Paul's Theology”



Peter's response

PETER'S RESPONSE TO THE CIRCUMCISION & KEEPING OF MOSES' LAW BY THE GENTILES

3. From the Law to the Centrality of Christ (v.10-11)

A. The Preeminence of Christ

Colossians. Christ is the image of God. He reflects who God is. He is the firstborn of all creation. (Col 1:17-19)

B. The Glory of God and the Glory of Christ

In 1 Corinthians 10:31, we read that we are to do all things to the glory of God, whether we eat or drink or whatever we do.

C. God's Great Work for us in Christ

In Ephesians 1:3-14, Paul speaks of the great work that is done for us by God. God has elected us before the foundation of the world to be saved. God has redeemed us.

D. Spreading the knowledge of Christ

Paul's whole goal is to bring the knowledge of Christ to others.

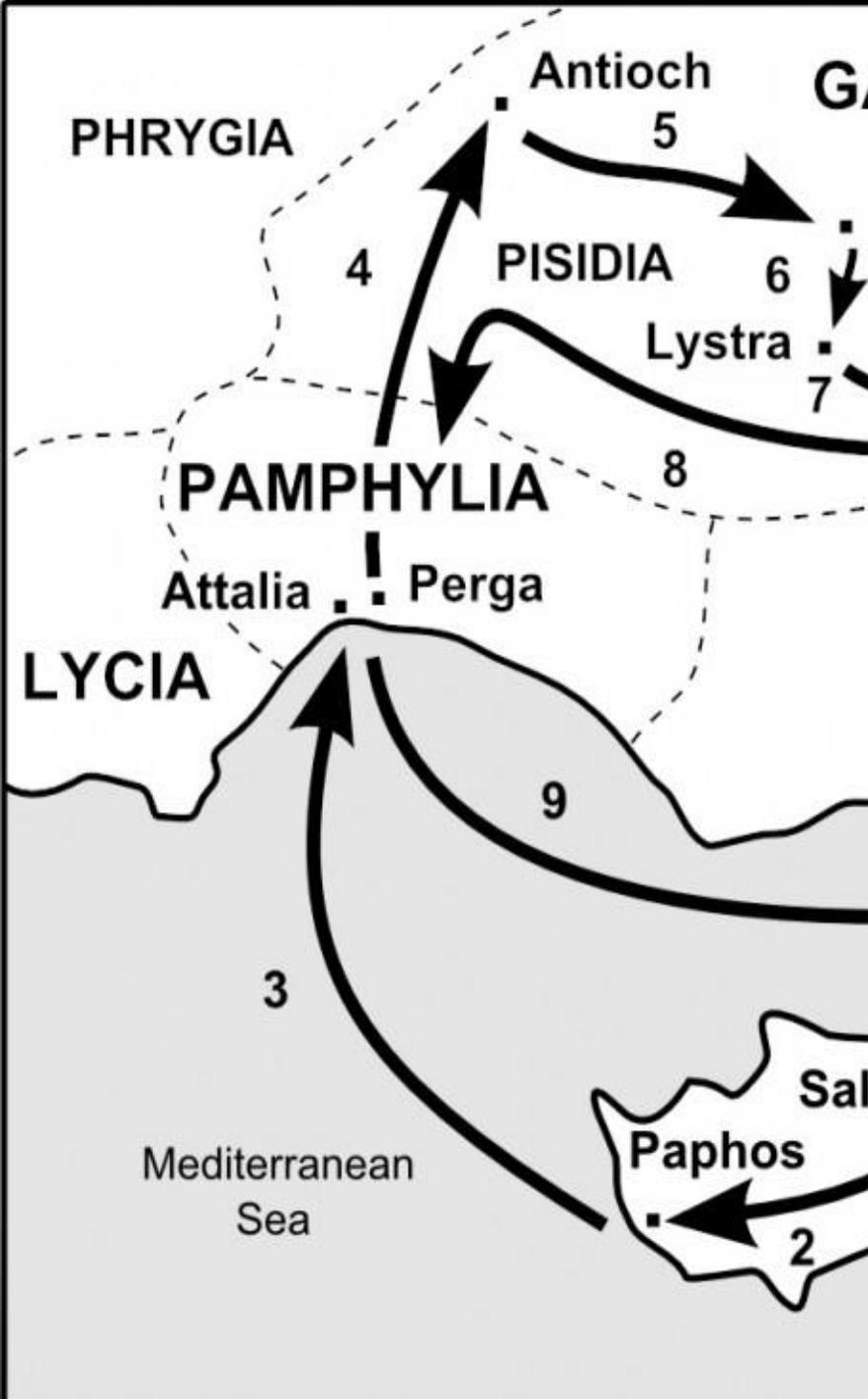


The Testimony of Barnabas & Paul



Acts 15

¹² The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.



1. Paul and Barnabas, at Antioch in Syria. The Holy Spirit calls them to make an evangelistic journey (Acts 13:1-4).
2. Paul exposes a Jewish sorcerer/false prophet in Cyprus & converts an intelligent man of high position (Acts 13:5-12).
3. Paul is invited to preach at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:13-15).
4. Paul's powerful sermon to the Jews (reminiscent of Peter's on the day of Pentecost) (Acts 13:16-41).
5. All of Antioch assembles to hear Paul preach again and many Gentiles are converted to Christ (Acts 13:42-44).
6. But opposition soon arises from trouble makers among the Jews (Acts 13:45-52).
7. Paul and Barnabas stay in Iconium until they are run out of town (Acts 14:1-7).
8. A miracle and a fiasco at Lystra. Preaching to the noisy pagans (Acts 14:8-18).
9. Life-threatening opposition continues to follow Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:19-20).
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The conclusion of James



Who is this James?

- John Gill's exposition of the Bible "*This was James the son of Alphaeus, one of the twelve apostles, sometimes called the brother of the Lord;*
- The other James, the son of Zebedee and brother of John, was dead, being killed by Herod, (Acts 12:2)
- This was the brother of Jude (Jude 1)
- The same that wrote the epistle that bears his name (the book of James): whether he was now bishop or pastor of the church at Jerusalem, is not certain; nor whether he was president in this council;"

The conclusion of James



The conclusion of James (v.13-21)

1. He seem to have taken note & agrees with Peter
2. He asserts that Scripture (the books of the Prophet Amos) prophecies and is consistent with this
3. He lays down three areas Gentile believers are to comply, but this yoke is not one of them.

The conclusion of James



The conclusion of James

- 1. He seem to have taken note & agrees with Peter**

Acts 15 ¹³ When they finished, James spoke up. "Brothers," he said, "listen to me. ¹⁴ Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles.

The conclusion of James

In KJV, James words are translated, “to take out of them a people for his name”; ... for himself, for his own glory, to call upon his name, and to be called by his name, to bear his name, and support his Gospel, cause and interest. A similar term used for the Jews (Exodus 19:5, Deuteronomy 14:2)

... then note & agrees with Peter

... finished, James spoke
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The conclusion of James

The conclusion of James

2. He asserts that Scripture (the book of the Prophet Amos 9:11-12) prophecies is consistent with this.

¹⁵ The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:

¹⁶ *“After this I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it,*

¹⁷ *that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name,*
says the Lord, who does these things’—

¹⁸ *things known from long ago.*



The conclusion of James

The conclusion of James

3. He lays down three areas Gentile believers are to comply, but this yoke is not one of them.

v.19 *“It is my judgement therefore, ...”* (James’ judgement, not Amos or Peter – he puts himself as personally accountable for this decision) ... *that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God* (don’t trouble them; harass them further)



The conclusion of James

The conclusion of James

3. He lays down three areas Gentile believers are to comply, but this yoke is not one of them.

v.20 Instead we should write to them, telling them to

- (1) abstain from food polluted by idols,
- (2) from sexual immorality,
- (3) from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.



The conclusion of James

SOME IDEAS (THEORIES) OF THE THREE AREAS

1. Rabbinic "Noachic" laws
2. Laws for gentiles living in the land (Lev. 17-18)
3. Spiritual wisdom: Outright sin & acts that stumble



The conclusion of James



SOME IDEAS (THEORIES) – RABBINIC “NOACHIC” LAWS

- James Dunn (British New Testament scholar, Professor of Divinity in the Department of Theology at the University of Durham) - a Noachic theory neatly explains the prohibition of blood (and, as a corollary, strangled meat, which contains blood), because Gen. 9:4 forbids blood. Since Noah is the ancestor of gentiles as well as Jews, these commands could with reason be applied to gentiles.
- The rabbis listed seven Noachic laws: "idolatry, incest/unchastity, shedding blood, profanation of God's name, robbery, injustice, and eating the flesh of a living animal."

The conclusion of James



SOME IDEAS (THEORIES) – LAWS FOR GENTILES LIVING IN THE LAND

- Another theory is that of a Leviticus source. With a little creativity, Lev. 17-18 can be correlated to all four prohibitions. Lev. 17:2-9 prohibits sacrifices to any god except Yahweh; 17:10 prohibits blood; 17:13-15 might be construed as prohibiting snare-strangled game; and 18:6-26 prohibits incestuous sex, homosexuality and other sexual aberrations. What makes the Leviticus theory especially attractive is that all four prohibitions apply specifically to alien gentiles as well as to Israelites.

The conclusion of James



SOME IDEAS (THEORIES) – SPIRITUAL WISDOM:
OUTRIGHT SIN & ACTS THAT STUMBLE

- The third idea is pure spiritual wisdom. James considered the Gentiles situation (they did not know the Law and all the Levitical requirements) and the Jewish believers (with their Abramic and Mosaic heritage). He also considered the purpose of Christ's work was to fulfil the Law as the Jews throughout history could never do. He also considered Christ's commission. How to put everything together?
- Avoid outright sin & acts that stumble (v. 19-20)

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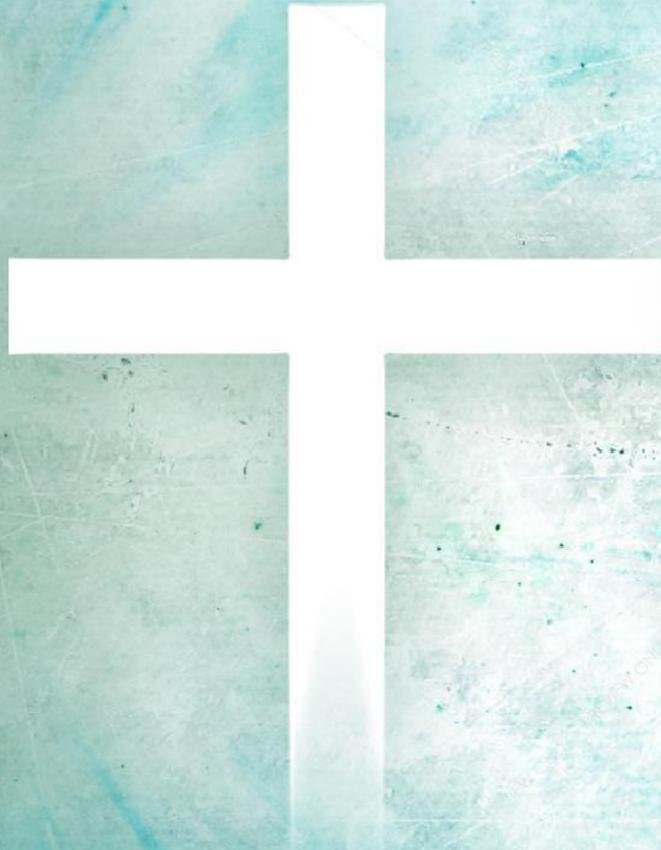
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4 Guidelines in disputable matters



Some issues of contention today

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4 Guidelines in disputable matters

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- 1. The centrality of Christ**
 - 2. Outright sin**
 - 3. Acts that stumble**
 - 4. Idolatry**
- © Share the Faith



in)(between.