

**1182 James's view, decision not by Holy Spirit, and Silas and Mark - Acts(15)13–41  
(by Whirlwind)**

**First, we discussed James's view in detail and saw that the concepts cited are scattered throughout various scriptures, as if the Bible had never used the term "Trinity," yet the Bible does contain the concept that God is a triune God. Second, we observed that the apostles, elders, and the entire church agreed with James's words, which led to an erroneous decision. We discussed in detail why this was absolutely not the will of the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit's will would never contradict what Jesus said. Finally, we addressed Silas and Mark, discussing the matter of Silas being a prophet and the inaccuracy of certain ancient manuscripts regarding Silas. For Mark, we refer a previous article.**

**Please note that this article is an expansion of the topicwise Bible study held on Sunday (3/22/26). Unless otherwise specified, verses refer to those in NASB95. If this article refers previous articles, they can all be found on our website, '<https://a-christian-voice.com/>'; click on 'Understanding Spiritual Life'.**

### **1. James's perspective**

**"After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, 'After these things I will return, And I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, And I will rebuild its ruins, And I will restore it, So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,' Says the Lord, who makes these things known from long ago. Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.'"(Acts 15:13–21)**

**As we mentioned last time, the Scripture makes it very clear that the reason for the First Council of Jerusalem was to decide whether to require circumcision for Gentiles. After the extensive debates, Peter then expressed his opinion, essentially stating that we should not place the yoke of our ancestors—a burden we cannot bear—upon the necks of the disciples. He also stated a fact: "...Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe."(Acts 15:7)**

**Next, James shared his perspective, and also added, "Says the Lord, who makes these things known from long ago."(Acts 15:18). He said too, "With this the words of the Prophets agree, ..." (Acts 15:15) Indeed, such a concept exists in the Old Testament, but there is no corresponding verse that says, "So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name "(Acts 15:17) This is because the concept is scattered**

throughout various passages, just as the Bible never uses the term “Trinity,” yet it contains the concept that God is a triune God.

First, let us see that God treats converted Gentiles and Israelites equally, as the Scripture states: "But if a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it. The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns among you."(Exodus 12:48–49) The New Testament also makes this very clear: "For there is no partiality with God."(Romans 2:11)

As for Gentiles seeking Him, it is written: "Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious."(Isaiah 11:10) That “root of Jesse” refers to Jesus: "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as referring to many, but rather to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ."(Galatians 3:16) These verses also speak of Jesus Christ: "“I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations, To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon And those who dwell in darkness from the prison."(Isaiah 42:6-7) It is stated even more clearly: "The Lord GOD, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, “Yet others I will gather to them, to those already gathered.”"(Isaiah 56:8)

We should pay attention to a particular style of writing in the Bible: "So the word of the LORD to them will be, “Order on order, order on order, Line on line, line on line, A little here, a little there,” ..."(Isaiah 28:13) Because it is written this way, we must read the entire Bible to possibly understand God’s laws likee Moses, just as the Scripture says, "He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel."(Psalm 103:7) Unless one is acting in faith, it is generally quite unlikely to read the entire Bible, except in special circumstances.

Finally, he summarized his opinion: "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood."(Acts 15:19–20)

## **2. The erroneous decision of the apostles, the elders, and the whole church**

"Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas—Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, and they sent this letter by them, “The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings. “Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls, it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth. "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell.""(Acts 15:22–29)

From this decision, we know that the apostles, the elders, and the whole church agreed with James's words. They sent Bar-Saba's Judas and Silas, who were leaders and prophets, back to Antioch with them, saying, "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."(Acts 15:28-29)

This is absolutely not the will of the Holy Spirit, for the reason is simple: the will of the Holy Spirit would never contradict what Jesus said, for Jesus declared that all things are clean. As the Scripture says, "And He said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (Thus He declared all foods clean.)"(Mark 7:18–19) This is what Paul understood: "I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean."(Romans 14:14) He also said, "To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled."(Titus 1:15)

Some might wonder, how could the apostles, elders, and the entire church make a wrong decision? In fact, this is not the only instance. In "1169 Jesus' resurrection and ascension, prayer, and Judas with his replacement – Acts (1)1-26," under the section "4. Matthias, chosen by lot, was elected as the twelfth apostle," we discussed in detail why the selection of Matthias was viewed from a human perspective.

Finally, the New Testament mentions several men named James, but does not explicitly state which James is which; consequently, from a human perspective, there are differing interpretations. Since God deems it unnecessary for us to know which James is which, out of respect for God, there is truly no need for such a debate. Even if we were to debate it, there would be no definitive conclusion, because the Bible does not say so. If you ask Christians, they will certainly say we must respect God, but in reality, we can easily end up disrespecting God without even realizing it. Once we realize this, we must repent: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."(1 John 1:9)

### 3. Silas and Mark

"So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. When they had read it, they rejoiced because

of its encouragement. Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. After they had spent time there, they (plural) were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out. [But it seemed good to Silas to remain there.] But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord. After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches."(Acts 15:30–41)

Although this was a wrong decision, since the letter contained words of comfort, from a human perspective, everyone was pleased. It is specifically noted here that Judas and Silas were also prophets; in fact, there were many prophets in the early church. For example, the Scripture says, "As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'""(Acts 21:10–11)

This Agabus was no false prophet; he had previously proven himself, as the Scripture says, "Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius."(Acts 11:27-28) We previously discussed Agabus in "1179 Gospel to Gentiles, angel rescues Peter, and Herod's death – Acts(11)1–(12)19," under section "3. Barnabas seeks Saul, and the man Agabus." At that time, we explained that Agabus merely told Paul what the Holy Spirit had revealed would happen; he did not say that the Holy Spirit did not want Paul to go to Jerusalem. As a result, Paul went, so this does not mean that Paul was disobedient to God.

There is nothing strange about this, for the Bible clearly states that the church is "...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord."(Ephesians 2:20-21) Some people therefore conclude that there are no prophets today, but this is wrong, because the Triune God has absolute sovereignty—how can we limit Him? A person filled with the Holy Spirit could certainly be a prophet.

As for someone who claims to be a prophet, what we must do is discern. The Bible clearly states, "But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.' You may say in your heart, 'How will we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him."(Deuteronomy 18:20–22)

**Since the text uses the plural form, it means both of them returned. We can see that the words found in some ancient manuscripts here are incorrect; otherwise, there would be an inconsistency. No wonder the Chinese Union Version places this only in the footnotes. However, from "But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord."(Acts 15:40), we know that Silas returned to Antioch.**

**Regarding Mark, we discussed the verse below in detail in "1180 Paul's first missionary journey, and their expulsion – Acts(13)1-52," specifically in section "3. The opening portion of Paul's first ministry: From the Patriarchs to David." The verse is "And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus."(Acts 15:39) This should be related to Mark's return; please refer to that article, and we will not elaborate further here.**

**Finally, from the verse "And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches."(Acts 15:41), we know that Paul fulfilled his original intention, just as he had said to Barnabas, "...Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are."(Acts 15:36).**