

READING I *Acts 15:1-2, 22-29*

Some who had come down from Judea were instructing the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved." Because there arose no little dissension and debate by Paul and Barnabas with them, it was decided that Paul, Barnabas, and some of the others should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question.

The apostles and elders, in agreement with the whole church, decided to choose representatives and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. The ones chosen were Judas, who was called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers. This is the letter delivered by them:

"The apostles and the elders, your brothers, to the brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia of Gentile origin: greetings. Since we have heard that some of our number who went out without any mandate from us have upset you with their teachings and disturbed your peace of mind, we have with one accord decided to choose representatives and to send them to you along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, who have dedicated their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. So we are sending Judas and Silas who will also convey this same message by word of mouth: 'It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities, namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage. If you keep free of these, you will be doing what is right. Farewell.'"

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalms 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8 (4)

R. O God, let all the nations praise you!
or: Alleluia.

May God have pity on us and bless us;
may he let his face shine upon us.
So may your way be known upon earth;
among all nations, your salvation. R.

May the nations be glad and exult
because you rule the peoples in equity;
the nations on the earth you guide. R.

May the peoples praise you, O God;
may all the peoples praise you!
May God bless us,
and may all the ends of the earth
fear him! R.

READING II *Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23*

The angel took me in spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. It gleamed with the splendor of God. Its radiance was like that of a precious stone, like jasper, clear as crystal. It had a massive, high wall, with twelve gates where twelve angels were stationed and on which names were inscribed, the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites. There were three gates facing east, three north, three south, and three west. The wall of the city had twelve courses of stones as its foundation, on which were inscribed the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

I saw no temple in the city for its temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb. The city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb.

GOSPEL *John 14:23-29*

Jesus said to his disciples: "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me.

"I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me tell you, 'I am going away and I will come back to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe."

Practice of Hope

Promises, promises—the final words of Jesus are to repeat again the promises he has made us. Perhaps his understanding of our all-too-human nature leads him to think we might need many reminders. But then he gives us a final gift of hope: the Paraclete. It is through the Holy Spirit that the redemptive work of the paschal mystery is open for our participation. The work of the Holy Spirit is why we may hope, without fear or trouble, in God's promise for us. ♦ Read scriptural accounts of hope. (Paul speaks of hope many times, as do the psalms.) ♦ Pray the "Come, Holy Spirit" prayer (<https://www.usccb.org/prayers/prayer-holy-spirit>), and ask the Spirit to renew the face of the earth by restoring hope to the hopeless. ♦ Hope in a time of tribulation is a hallmark of Christian faith: Donate time or money to an organization that supports those who hope for freedom, healing, or justice against great odds.

Download more questions and activities for families, Christian initiation groups, and other adult groups at <https://www.ltp.org/ahw>.

Scripture Insights

Acts 15 records the first official gathering of the young Church: the Jerusalem council. They debate whether Gentiles should be circumcised when they convert to Christianity. Must Gentiles become Jews to worship Jesus? One obvious answer to this question is "yes!" Jesus and his first disciples were Jews. Surely following the Jewish messiah meant keeping the Torah as all faithful Jews did. But because there was "dissension and debate" among the various Church leaders, they convened a gathering to hear all sides.

The reading omits verses 3–21, when Barnabas, Paul, and the apostle James argued that both Gentiles and Jews will be saved through God's grace. They agreed to an interesting compromise: Gentiles should observe certain aspects of the kosher laws (which made it easier for Jews and Gentiles to break bread together) and refrain from sexual immorality.

The apostle James quoted from the Old Testament to support his case that the Gentiles will one day call upon the name of the God of Israel. He could have quoted from Psalm 67, which repeatedly prays that all the nations on earth will one day praise Israel's God.

The reading from Revelation reminds us that God's promises to Israel remain at the heart of the Gospel, since Jerusalem and the twelve tribes of Israel (representing the fullness of Israel) are woven into the new creation along with the twelve apostles (representing the fullness of the Church). Jesus' promises to his disciples in John 14 have been fulfilled: God and the Lamb have indeed come and made their dwelling with God's people. Just as he promised, Jesus returns to be with his followers forever.

- ♦ How did the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 make their decision about the requirements for Gentiles (Acts 15:28)?
- ♦ Why did Church elders ask Gentile converts to observe certain aspects of Torah—and why those elements?
- ♦ In Revelation 21, what is absent from the heavenly city and why?