**Lesson 6: Acts 15,16, & 17**

**Reading One: Study Notes from Lesson 5; Acts 15**

1. What scripture, thought or concept did you find helpful from the notes on chapter 5?

Note: Acts 15 records one of the turning points of Christian history. The conflict comes to a head over whether new converts to Christianity had to be circumcised before baptism, or whether one could became a Christian without becoming Jewish first. Church leaders meet in what has become known as the Jerusalem conference.

2. Those who felt it was necessary to follow the Mosaic Law were called “Judaizers.” Look at Genesis 17:9-14 and Galatians 5:1-6. (See Scripture List) These scriptures represent the two opposing viewpoints about whether new Christians needed to be circumcised as in the Law of Moses, or whether that could now be done away. Using these two scriptures as references briefly summarize the arguments of each side.

**3.**If you achieve righteousness by obeying the law, then the Pharisees felt successful because they felt they were excellent at law keeping. Christ, at the Sermon on the Mount, taught a higher law, the Law of the Gospel, which required a humble acknowledgement of one’s sins and the need for a “new heart.” He said in Matt. 5:20, “*For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* **What kind of righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees?**

3. Do you think it is easier to keep the Law of Moses strictly, or to keep the Law of the Gospel---sometimes called the Law of Love? Defend your answer.

4. Peter speaks of the Mosaic Law in Acts 15:10, calling it a “yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear.” What about the Law of Moses was hard to bear?

5. **See Ezekiel 36:25-28 (SL)** Under the new covenant, something basic changes. What is it?

6. Acts 15:11 says “…we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved….” The definition of “grace” is “an unearned gift.” (Un-earned meaning that you do *not* do something equal in value to the gift you get, even though you may have to do *some*thing to qualify before you can be given the gift.)

a) What unearned gifts make living a righteous Christian life possible?

b) What ***do*** *you have to do* to qualify, or in other words, what conditions do you have to meet for the gifts of God’s grace to be given to you?

**Reading Two: Acts 15:12-29** *The Decision*

7. The conference decides that although the Gentiles do *not* have to come into the Mosaic covenant, they do have to abide by certain rules. What rules does the Jerusalem Conference decide upon?

8. Why do you think the conference sent both letters and Judas Barnabas and Silas from the apostles to the church at Antioch to tell of their decision?

**Reading Three: Acts 15:30--41** *The Aftermath*

9. After a time Paul and Barnabas decide to hit the missionary trail again. This time however, they have a sharp contention between them about taking John Mark along as a companion. Barnabas says yes; Paul says no. Review Acts 13:5 & 13 to see what had happened on their previous journey with John Mark that caused these feelings. Explain what each man might have said in defense of his point of view:

 Paul:

 Barnabas:

10. How did God turn Paul and Barnabas’ conflict into a blessing for the Church?

11. a) Does having a “new heart” and having the gift of the Holy Ghost mean that you lose your old personality and unique characteristics? Defend your answer.

 b) How could you illustrate this from the lives of Paul and Barnabas?

**Reading Four: Acts 16:1-15**

12. In lieu of all the discussion about the Law of Moses versus conversion by faith alone, and in lieu of the letter stating that circumcision was not necessary, why do you think Paul had Timothy circumcised?

13. Luke states that Paul and Silas were planning to go further into Asia but that “the Spirit suffered them not.” a) How did the Lord let them know where to go?

 b) How can the Spirit let us know that we should not go ahead with something that we are planning?

 c) Personal: Can you share a time that the Lord has changed your plans?

14. a) In what ways was the convert Lydia a blessing to Paul and his companions?

 b) How can the Lord use a sister who has the gift of hospitality in our church today?

**Reading Five: Acts 16:16-34**

Note: *Starting in verse 10 of this chapter Luke uses the pronoun “we” in describing the action. Many scholars feel that he was from this region and joined Paul on his missionary journey at this point.*

15. Describe how the persecution began against the missionaries in the city of Philippi.

16. Look at the Scripture List under “Praise Scriptures.” Yes, it’s long, but addicting. You won’t be able to stop reading it. ☺ (OK. If you don’t have time, you can skip some of them.) Answer the following:

 a) In prison, what things did Paul and Silas have to complain about, if they had been in a complaining mood?

 b) What did they focus on instead by singing praises to God?

 c) What are some of the praiseworthy characteristics of God from the scripture list?

 d) Why do you think it is so powerful to focus on God and not on our own troubles?

**Reading Six: Acts 16:35-40**

17. From the reading about the conversion of the jailer and his family, what in the text shows that “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” means more than just mentally agreeing to the truth about Jesus Christ?

18. What does “believing on the Lord Jesus Christ,” mean to you?

19. a) What effect did it have on the city magistrates to learn that Paul was a Roman citizen?

 b) How did Paul’s having Roman citizenship help the Lord’s work go forward?

**Reading Seven: Acts 17:1-23 Find on your map: Thessalonica, Berea, Athens.**

20. What were the differing responses to Paul’s preaching in Thessalonica?

21. What happened to Jason for his assistance to Paul and Silas?

22. a) What is it about the Bereans that enabled them to respond favorably to the truth?

 b) What advantages would come from the same habit in your life?

23. a) Look up the Epicureans in your Bible dictionary and tell something you learned about them.

 b) Look up the Stoics in your Bible dictionary and tell something you learned about them.

24. a) What was the motivation of the philosophers who asked Paul to explain his beliefs in the Areopagus, (i.e., a hill near the meeting place of the governing council of Athens where people met to discuss and argue about current issues)? Cite verse.

 b) Describe how the same motivation is manifest in our world today.

 c) What are some of the philosophies of the world today that compete with the gospel’s explanation of life?

25. a) What might be the appeal of idolatry? In other words, what is appealing to people about having a god of the sea, of the sun, of the seasons, of war, etc.?

 b) What are some things in the life of an LDS woman that could potentially turn into idols that would compete with our worship of God?

**Reading Eight: Acts 17: 24-34**

26. Summarize the content of Paul’s discourse to the Greeks in the following verses:

 a) In verses 24-25

 b) In verses 26-29

 c) In verses 30-31

27. How would believing the doctrine in verses 26-29, i.e., that God is our father, making us all of one blood, and that He is “not far from every one of us” change a person’s life if they had not known these things before?

28. What lessons can we learn from Paul’s sermon on Mar’s Hill that will help us do missionary work in our modern post-Christian world?