

What is God Doing

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I. Introduction.

- A. Text: Acts 15:1-35.
- B. In this text is the first emergence of false Christianity.
- C. There was a split in the church over race and ritual.

II. The church struggles to accept different people today.

- A. The New Testament reveals that the union between the Jews and Gentiles was not revealed in the Old Testament.
- B. Paul was prepared to go against all the Apostles if they acted against the unity of the Jews and the Gentiles.
- C. The Council at Jerusalem was called to settle the dispute about the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the church.

III. Peter rebukes the Council.

- A. He reminds them that no one ever came to God by trying to be good and fulfill the law.
- B. The Gentile must come to God the same way as the Jew--through grace.

IV. James summarizes the mind of the Spirit.

- A. James reminds the Jews that God had already saved the Gentiles without reference to ritual or law.
- B. James reminds them that God's actions are only validated when it corresponds to His Word--James saw that Gentile conversion was something God predicted in the Old Testament. (Amos)
- C. James gives restrictions for the Gentiles nonetheless so as not to offend the Jews--two things in the moral realm and two things in the ritual realm. Idolatry, sexual immorality and murder deny in reality what one claims in faith.

V. We are to be a part of God's great program to reach the nations.

Application questions:

1. What are some other ways besides those mentioned that the church has difficulty accepting those that are "different"?

2. How does having an understanding that works do not save help us to accept others?

3. What can you do this week to participate in God's program to reach the nations? How can you make a contribution where you are at right now?
