

THE FIRST CHURCH CONFERENCE / *Acts 15*

Group	Position	Reasons
Judaizers (some Jewish Christians)	Gentiles must become Jewish first to be eligible for salvation	1. They were devout, practicing Jews who found it difficult to set aside a tradition of gaining merit with God by keeping the law. 2. They thought grace was too easy for the Gentiles. 3. They were afraid of seeming too non-Jewish in the practice of their new faith—which could lead to death. 4. The demands on the Gentiles were a way of maintaining control and authority in the movement.
Gentile Christians	Faith in Christ as Savior is the only requirement for salvation	1. To submit to Jewish demands would be to doubt what God had already done for them by grace alone. 2. They resisted exchanging their pagan rituals for a system of Jewish rituals—neither of which had power to save. 3. They sought to obey Christ by baptism (rather than by circumcision) as a sign of their new faith.
Peter and James	Faith is the only requirement, but there must be evidence of change by rejecting the old life-style	1. They tried to distinguish between what was true from God’s Word versus what was just human tradition. 2. They had Christ’s command to preach to all the world. 3. They wanted to preserve unity. 4. They saw that Christianity could never survive as just a sect within Judaism.

As long as most of the first Christians were Jewish, there was little difficulty in welcoming new believers; however, Gentiles (non-Jews) began to accept Jesus’ offer of salvation. The evidence in their lives and the presence of God’s Spirit in them showed that God was accepting them. Some of the early Christians believed that non-Jewish Christians needed to meet certain conditions before they could be worthy to accept Christ. The issue could have destroyed the church, so a conference was called in Jerusalem, and the issue was formally settled there, although it continued to be a problem for many years following. Above is an outline of the three points of view at the conference.