

ICON OF JERUSALEM COUNCIL I

Kees Slijkerman



This icon is a picture of Jerusalem Council I, as described in Acts 15 and Galatians 2.

If we are going toward Jerusalem Council II* it is important to have a clear picture of Council I.

FIVE JEWS

The five Jews on this icon played a key-role in the history of the Jewish people and the history of the Church: James, Peter, John, Paul and Barnabas.

They were the leaders in the group of followers of Yeshua after His resurrection. This group started as a charismatic movement among Jews. Out of this Jewish movement came into being what we call 'Christianity' and 'the Church'.

For a good understanding it is very helpful to rethink the situation at the beginning:

- The followers of Jesus were Jews who recognised Yeshua of Nazareth as the Messiah of the Jewish people, the Messiah of Israel.
- As Jews they were faithful to the Torah (see Acts 21), just like Yeshua was.

Five of these Jews are shown on the icon. **Paul** and **Barnabas** - *right on the icon* - had seen many conversions of Gentiles in Asia. **Peter** - *with the keys* - was led to baptise the gentile Cornelius and his family and close friends. **James** - *left on the icon* - belonged to the close family of Yeshua and was leader of the Church in Jerusalem**. **John** - *in the middle* - was the youngest apostle, painted without a beard. Does he symbolise the centrality of love?

TWO DECISIONS

The question in Council I was: what to do with the Gentiles who came to faith in Yeshua.

This Council was a meeting of Jews. Their question was *not*: shall we continue to be faithful to the Torah? The question was: what to do with the Gentiles?

Two very important decisions were made:

- The first decision ruled on how gentile-followers of Yeshua should deal with the Torah. See Acts 15:1-31. A leading thought behind the decision seems to be that Gentiles had to obey the covenant with Noah, which is a covenant with all peoples (Genesis 9).
- The second decision was: **let's go** (Galatians 2:9).

Let us go to the Jews to tell them: God has made Yeshua the Messiah we were waiting for. Let us go to the Gentiles to make them disciples of Yeshua.

ICON OF RECOGNITION

They recognised that **Peter** had been commissioned to preach the gospel to the Jews and that **Paul** had been commissioned to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:7). Therefore this icon is called: icon of recognition. Both groups, Jews and Gentiles, need a special preaching. Together they should form one tree: gentile-believers should be grafted in like branches of a wild olive-tree into the cultivated olive tree that is Israel (Romans 11).

LOOK

Look at this icon***.

If you are a gentile, you may be thankful to these five Jews.

If you are a Jew, you may be proud of these fellow Jews.

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*See www.tjci.org and www.tjci.nl

** This James is not the brother of John. The brother of John had been killed (Acts 12:2). Maybe the James on this icon is the apostle James, son of Alphaeus (Acts 1: 13-14), maybe he is another James. Jesus had taken John (central on this icon), his brother James and Peter (with keys on the icon) with Him on the mountain (Matthew 17:1) and in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:37).

*** See this icon on www.stucom.nl, nr. 0078. The original icon is in the office of Kees Slijkerman, who ordered an icon painter to make it.