

Acts Chapter Eleven

Acts 11:1-4

Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." But Peter began speaking and proceeded to explain to them in orderly sequence, saying,

- Peter is giving his message to the church—predominantly born-again Jews—who would have all been baptized. This is a particular group who continued to embrace Mosaic restrictions/conditions (Acts 15:6, Gal 2:12)
- Called 'The Circumcision'—also called 'Judaizers'
- These had more of a negative reaction to what Peter had done, than a positive response to what God had done.
- It is wisdom on Peter's part to have had 6 witnesses with him.
- In eating with gentiles—Peter had crossed an ancient barrier.

Acts 11:5-11

"I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain object coming down like a great sheet lowered by four corners from the sky; and it came right down to me, and when I had fixed my gaze upon it and was observing it I saw the four-footed animals of the earth and the wild beasts and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air. "And I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Arise, Peter; kill and eat.' "But I said, 'By no means, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' "But a voice from heaven answered a second time, 'What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.' "And this happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into the sky. "And behold, at that moment three men appeared before the house in which we were staying, having been sent to me from Caesarea.

- Peter does not respond using apostolic authority—but in all humility, rehearses his story again.
- Story is fully repeated—conversion of Cornelius—conversion of Peter to what God is revealing—opportunity for church to now be converted.
- Gentiles allowed to convert to Christ without converting to Judaism.

- A few new details emerge: what angel said to Cornelius (vs14)—that the H.S. fell when Peter began to speak.
- Sheet represents the church—having both kosher and non-kosher on it—with no dividing line (Eph 2:11-18)

Acts 11:12-18

“And the Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. And these six brethren also went with me, and we entered the man’s house. “And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, ‘Send to Joppa, and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; and he shall speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.’ “And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He did upon us at the beginning. “And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, ‘John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ “If God therefore gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” And when they heard this, they quieted down, and glorified God, saying, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.”

- Peter demonstrates one of the ways we hear the Lord speak—'remember'
- Gift of tongues—becomes a sign to Peter—evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Entering gentile home was prohibited by Jewish custom and tradition—not Mosaic law.
- Began to have insight into scriptures—as church begins to respond to this transition (Mk 1:8, Is 49:6)
- Activity alone does not validate work of God—must also align with scriptures.
- Listeners—become quiet—then respond with praise. Their prejudices and objections find resolution.

Acts 11:19-22

So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large

number who believed turned to the Lord. And the news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.

- Seleucus I—an inheritor of Alexander the Greats' Empire—founded Antioch in 300 BC. He named this city after his father—and did so approximately 15x--Half a million in population then—now around 3500.
- Considered the third greatest city in the Roman Empire—behind Rome and Alexandria. Known for trade, culture, and immorality. (Rome: all about power—Alexandria: intellect—Athens: Philosophy—Antioch: business and immorality).
- Nearby—in Daphne—a cult to Artemis and Apollos—worship of Astarte—ritual prostitution
- Great crossroads of culture and trade. Located in Syria (Antioch in Pisidia is mentioned in Acts 13—different—found in the middle of Turkey)—15 miles inland from sea—on the River Orontes—a thriving city full of travelers.
- Since the gospel is penetrating the gentile world as well—the church sends the encourager—Barnabas—to strengthen the work.

Acts 11:23-26

Then when he had come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church, and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

- Barnabas recognizes an entire community of gentiles are coming to the faith and need a spiritual foundation.
- Gives leadership and pastoral oversight
- First time that the word- Christian- is used. (Greek would be the primary language here—Christ is the Greek word for messiah).
- Called disciples (1:15)—called believers (5:14)—called witnesses (5:32)—called brothers (6:3)—called followers of the way (9:2)—called saints (9:13)—called Christians (11:26)—called Nazarenes (24:5)
- It is time to teach—following evangelism—Barnabas can see a place where Saul would be helpful to the church.

- Antioch becomes the second center for the church. (In Revelation—all 7 churches are in Turkey).
- Antioch teachers 1st century: Barnabas, Paul and Peter—2nd century: Ignatius and Theophilus—3rd century: Lucian and Chrysostom.

Acts 11:27-30

Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

- Sometimes prophecies speak to distant, future events. This appears to be a current situation seen from God's perspective (remember—no weather forecast or CNN).
- Sending contribution to the poor—read Gal 2:1-10.
- History verifies a time of famine in Rome, Greece, Egypt and Judea
- First charitable action recorded in history—one race of people collecting money to help another group.

Acts Chapter Eleven—Workbook

Key Words:

Harmonize:

Read Matthew 9:9-13. How is this similar to Peter's experience after being with Cornelius?

Dig:

- 1) How does the story about Cornelius fulfill Acts 1:8?
- 2) What is the first reaction in Jerusalem to the news about the Gentiles?
- 3) What is the difference between a trance and a vision?
- 4) What is the significance, in Peter's vision, that a sheet is lowered from the sky?
- 5) What verse explains why Cornelius had gathered his relatives and close friends to hear Peter?
- 6) What did God grant to the Gentiles in this chapter?
- 7) When did persecution break out against the early church? What was the immediate effect from this?
- 8) Describe Barnabas.
- 9) What instruction is received directly from the Holy Spirit in this chapter?

Discuss:

- 1) How would you respond to such a major doctrinal change taking place in the church? Would you have difficulty with the way this change came about?
- 2) Does your church have any traditions that members dispute about? What is behind the dispute?

Point of Prayer:

Pray for an area of the world that is suffering from famine today.

Integrate:

What other scriptures come to mind as you read this chapter?

Application:

- 1) Have you received criticism from other believers for something you said or did?
- 2) What is the best way for the Lord to change your mind/heart on an issue?
- 3) If you were invited to speak to a room full of unbelievers, what part of your testimony would you choose to share?
- 4) If a door for ministry opened for you, and you needed help, who would you go look for—to see if they would partner with you?
- 5) Have you ever heard a prophetic word delivered to the church?
- 6) Have you ever had a prophetic word to deliver?
- 7) What response did the church make to this particular prophecy?