

Acts Chapter 11

Verses 11:1-18: Although there was joy in heaven over the conversion of Cornelius, there was little joy in Jerusalem, for “Peter” had fellowshiped with “uncircumcised ... Gentiles.” Peter defends his action by reciting all of the phenomenal things “God” has done in bringing this about. Peter did not go by choice.

Acts 11:1 "And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God."

Up until this time, they had not even tried to bring the gospel message to the Gentile nations. The Israelites felt that they were a set aside nation to whom God had given this message. They felt that it was for them alone.

Acts 11:2 "And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,"

We see in this Gentile conversion, the beginning of the Gentile church. The Jews were so self-centered that they believed they were the only ones God offered salvation to. They had not had the vision that Peter had from God showing them that all people were acceptable to God.

The fact that Peter had baptized these Gentiles was causing problems. They had already forgotten that Jesus ministered to publicans and sinners.

Acts 11:3 "Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them."

“Eat with them”: The Jewish believers were outraged over such a blatant breach of Jewish custom. It was difficult for them to conceive that Jesus could be equally Lord of Gentile believers.

We must realize that the beginning of the early church was made up of Jewish men and women.

Verses 4-14 (see 10:1-23; 28-33).

Acts 11:4-5 "But Peter rehearsed [the matter] from the beginning, and expounded [it] by order unto them, saying," "I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:"

“Came even to me”: God attested to the reality of Gentile salvation with the same phenomenon that occurred at Pentecost (see note on 8:17).

You see, Peter now is relating to them the vision God had given him in Joppa, which convinced him that he was not to call any man common or unclean anymore.

Acts 11:6-10 "Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air." "And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat." "But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth." "But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, [that] call not thou common." "And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven."

If this does not convince these Jews, then they are not convincible. Peter was perhaps, the most set in Jewish tradition of any of them, until he had this vision. God has a way of doing away with our preconceived ideas.

Acts 11:11-14 "And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me." "And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:" "And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;" "Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved."

“All thy house”: All who were under Cornelius’ authority and care, who could comprehend the gospel and believe (16:15, 31).

You see, Peter at the time this happened, was the one that all the others looked to for instruction and doctrine. Peter was the foundation rock. If Peter okays the Gentiles, then they know it is correct. He is explaining in detail what influenced him to believe in allowing Gentiles to join their ranks.

Verses 15-16: First, Peter says the Holy Spirit came on these Gentiles “as on us.” What happened to Cornelius is parallel to what took place at Pentecost. This is a “Gentile Pentecost.”

Second, Peter relates this event to what had happened to the Jews “at the beginning.” Peter thus describes Pentecost as the beginning of something. It is most easily understood as the beginning or birth of the church.

Third, Peter says, “then remembered I”, how Christ promised that He would baptize in the Holy Spirit. It would seem that Peter has seen few dramatic outpourings of the Holy Spirit involving tongues, as he did at Pentecost and here with Cornelius. Both served as signs to Jews who were slow to accept the work God was doing.

Acts 11:15 "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning."

This they cannot criticize, because they know that the Holy Ghost is a gift from God. They would be questioning God, if they said anything about the Holy Ghost falling on them.

Acts 11:16 "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."

(See note on 1:5).

Peter reminds them, here, that it may be alright to criticize him in this matter, but be sure and remember that it is Jesus Christ their Lord who baptizes in the Holy Ghost.

Acts 11:17 "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as [he did] unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?"

Peter tells them here, that he has no intention of going against God on this matter. Peter knows that he too, is a servant of God carrying out the will of God, and not his own will. The Holy Ghost is not only a gift from God, but is also an empowerment to minister the Word of God to the lost.

This gift has a purpose. This makes our witness filled with power from on high. There is so much hidden in the name Lord Jesus Christ. Many believe in Christ the anointed one. Many believe in Jesus the Savior.

It is a totally different thing to believe that the Christ (the anointed one), and Jesus (your Savior), is also your Lord. When we make Jesus Christ our Lord we are saying, not my will but thine be done in my life.

Acts 11:18 "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

“God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life”: One of the most shocking admissions in Jewish history, but an event that the Old Testament had prophesied (Isa. 42:1, 6; 49:6; see note on 2:38).

How can they fight against God? This just shows them again, the greatness of God. This leaves no doubt. God is interested in the Gentiles, as well. Salvation is to whosoever will. One thing they have overlooked in all of this, is those Jesus ministered to.

One of the most vivid examples to me, is where the mother comes to Jesus for help for her demoniac daughter.

Matthew 15:21-28 "Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon."
"And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, [thou] son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."
"But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us." "But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of

the house of Israel." "Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me." "But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast [it] to dogs." "And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great [is] thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

You see, God respects faith wherever it is. Jesus set the example here and in many other places. Peter has done the correct thing. He has been obedient to God and not man.

Acts Chapter 11 Questions

1. What did the apostles in Judaea hear that disturbed them?
2. Who contended with Peter?
3. What was this the beginning of?
4. In verse 3, what complaint did they make to Peter?
5. What did Peter rehearse to them?
6. What city was Peter in when he had the vision?
7. What had the Lord told Peter to do that Peter said, not so to?
8. How many times did the Lord give Peter the vision?
9. Where were the three men sent from to get Peter?
10. How many of Peter's brethren went with him?
11. Who had appeared to Cornelius?
12. In verse 14, what had Cornelius been told Peter would tell him?
13. In verse 15, Peter tells them something that they cannot argue with, what is it?
14. What did John baptize with?
15. Who baptized with the Holy Ghost?
16. In verse 17, Peter said he would be trying to withstand whom, if he had not accepted them?
17. What, besides a gift from God, is the Holy Spirit?

18. In verse 18, what did these apostles do after hearing Peter's statement?
19. Who is offered salvation?
20. In Matthew chapter 15, who does Jesus minister to?
21. Who did Jesus tell her he was sent to?
22. Why did Jesus answer her prayer?