

ACTS CHAPTER ELEVEN

Read vs. 1-18

1. *How did the Jews who weren't with Peter at Cornelius' house feel about Peter's trip? (vs. 1-3)*

This was a new idea for them. They never imagined that Gentiles were a part of God's plan. Consider John 10:16 where Jesus speaks about having "other sheep" and that they would all be one flock. Jesus was telling them in advance about Gentile believers, but they didn't understand. In Acts 1:8, Jesus' last words to the apostles was that they would go to the ends of the earth and be witnesses. Did they interpret that as going to the Jews who lived all around the world?

2. *How did Peter describe the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles? (vs. 15)*

Peter gives an accurate account and simply tells them all that happened. Having the other men there also as witnesses to the event would have made his story more convincing. In verse 16, Peter says "who was I to think that I could oppose God?" His logic was enough for them. They didn't want to oppose God either and came to the same logical conclusion.

3. *What was the council's reaction to Peter's explanation? (vs. 17 & 18)*

This is a commendable reaction and a good first step. Consider Acts 15:5 however. There would be misunderstanding for many years about God's plan for the Gentiles and the church. The Jewish leaders would want the Gentiles to become Jewish converts first. They would want them to be circumcised and to start living by all of the Jewish laws. There will be more discussion about this in future lessons.

Does this suggest to you that God had a particular reason for the Gentiles to speak in tongues at this time? Explain.

I will emphasize again the need to understand the context of this event. Acts is a book of history. It is recording the huge transition between law and grace and between Judaism and Christianity. We have seen the gospel spreading out, just as Christ told the disciples in Acts chapter one. It went first to the Jews, then to Judea and Samaria (half Jewish/ half Gentile) and now to "all the ends of the earth" (the Gentile nations.) As each new field was opened, God confirmed that it was genuine by giving them the gift of the Holy Spirit and by making that evident with the speaking in tongues. This sign is no longer necessary because all believers now receive the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion. See John 7:39, John 14:26, John 15:26, Ro. 8:9, I Cor. 12:13, Gal. 4:6, Eph 1:13

Read vs. 19-30

4. *It has now been approximately 9 years since Pentecost. The missionary emphasis is still totally to the _____ (vs. 19)*

The change begins in verse 20. This is the first time they actively try to convert Gentiles.

5. *In vs. 20 & 21 many Greeks become Christians. What gracious man did the church in Jerusalem send to help with the new believers? (vs. 22)*

It wasn't necessary this time for Peter to go. The door was already open for the Gentiles to receive the gospel and become a part of the church. Peter had already used his keys.

How does Barnabas react in verse 23? He rejoices and encourages them. Barnabas could have reacted differently. He might have balked at the idea of going to these people who were previously considered unclean. He might not have wanted to minister to people who were so culturally different than him. Can you think of a comparable situation today? Do you have immigrants in your community? How about Muslim neighbors? How do you feel about going to minister to them? How would your church and your friends react to this outreach?

6. *Who did Barnabas think would be just the right person to come and disciple the Christians? (vs. 25 & 26)*

What had Saul been doing? You will recall that in chapter nine, God had told Ananias that Saul was chosen to share the gospel with the Gentiles. We don't know when Saul realized his mission. Perhaps he had been in God's "waiting room" during this time.....sensing that he had a mission to fulfill and frustrated that nothing was happening in his life.

Why do you think Barnabas thought of Saul? Why did he think that Saul might have things to offer that he himself couldn't? Consider Saul's background, education and training. So Barnabas goes in search of Saul. The language used in verses 25 & 26 suggests that he had some difficulty finding Saul. But he persevered and together they returned to Antioch.

Antioch was the 3rd largest city in the Roman Empire. Trade routes passed through this city and news would have traveled to other parts of the world. It was also a city known for its immorality and idol worship. Saul, with his gift of teaching and Barnabas, the encourager, full of faith and full of the Holy Spirit were about to take the city by storm. Together they would make a great team.

Acts 11:25 says that the disciples were called Christians for the first time in Antioch. This was not a complimentary term, but one of derision. To be called a Christ-follower (Christian) was embraced by believers as it continues to be today.

7. *What prophecy was fulfilled in the days of Claudius Caesar? (vs. 27-30)*

This time in Antioch was about 9 years after Pentecost, which places it at approximately 42 A.D. History records a great famine that occurred in this area of the world in the late 40s and early 50s.

8. *How is Christian love demonstrated in verses 29 & 30?*

A Christian's faith is demonstrated by his love for other believers. Compare James 2:14-17. It was a natural outgrowth of their faith for the new believers to want to help those in need.