

ACTS LESSON 11

Acts Chapter 11

Distributed by: KJV Bible Studies

Website: www.KjvBibleStudies.net

e-mail: mailKjvBibleStudies@gmail.com

Memory verses for this week: *Eph 1:18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, Eph 1:19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.*

Introduction: In Chapter 10, we witnessed the conversion of Cornelius and his family as Peter was given a directive from God to go and to preach unto the Gentiles. We saw that after they were saved, they were baptized. We know today that there is no difference between the Jew or the Greek. Praise God that he has allowed the Gentiles to partake of the wondrous gospel of Jesus Christ. All who will come to Christ may be saved. *Acts 2:21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

Chapter 11 presents three events: (1) Peter, defends his visit to gentiles, rehearses the events of chapter 10; (2) the flourishing of the gospel in other places, notably Antioch; and (3) the church at Antioch sends help to the church in Jerusalem for an impending famine.

I. Peter's Defense of His Gentile Ministry

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

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

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

Peter returned to Jerusalem. The apostles and brethren heard about how gentiles had received the Word of God. They therefore "contended with him." The reference to "they of the circumcision" apparently was a 'party' within the church that leaned toward Judaizing Christianity.

They may have been the root of all the problematic Judaizers Paul later addressed in Romans, Galatians, and elsewhere. These Jews essentially were

believers in Christ but held that believers ought otherwise to observe the Law and all Jewish traditions. They were appalled that Peter had actually sat down and eaten with “men uncircumcised.”

Their problem was not that Peter had preached the Word of God to them. Rather, they were upset that Peter, in contradiction of Jewish tradition, had eaten with them. This mentality would plague the early church for decades to come. It also is clear that Peter, though an apostle, held no lordship or papal authority over the church even at Jerusalem.

As happens many times, when we are doing the exact will of God in our lives, we may face opposition. And sometimes that comes from our own brethren. Peter returns to Jerusalem and they of the circumcision (the Jews), begin to contend with Peter about this. They accuse him of going in to men uncircumcised and eating with them. We know the old traditions forbid a Jew from going into the home of a Gentile. The Jews truly had nothing to do with those who were not Jews. But praise be to God, things changed. Now all men, of all nationalities and backgrounds, were given the same equal opportunity to come and worship God in the church. The key was to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

John 4:9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

We know the Samaritan woman at the well marvelled that Jesus even spoke to her. Jesus was radically different from the those who had come up with the traditions of the fathers. The Jews accused Peter of eating with the Gentiles, and if you remember, they accused Christ for eating with publicans and sinners. Be sure that someone will not like what you are doing if you are fired up for God and really working for Him.

Mat 9:10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

Mat 9:11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

Acts 11:4 But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying,

Peter “rehearsed the whole matter from the beginning,” expounding it point by point to them. He began with the events taking place at Joppa, summarizing how God led him to Caesarea and the culmination there.

Acts 11:5 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:

Acts 11:6 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.

Acts 11:7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.

Acts 11:8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.

Acts 11:9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

Acts 11:10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.

Acts 11:11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me.

Peter goes into the complete explanation and tells them all the things that had transpired, beginning here with his vision of the sheet let down from heaven by the four corners. By telling the whole story, those in Jerusalem could make up their own minds whether this was of God, or something that Peter had decided to do on his own.

This was not something Peter had chosen to do, but it was something from God. As you remember from last week's account and also here in verse 8, we see that Peter vehemently argued to not partake of eating of these "unclean" animals. He was simply trying to do what was right and follow the law to every extent.

For greater detail on the following summary, review our notes on lesson of chapter 10.

Acts 11:12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:

Acts 11:13 And he showed 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;

Acts 11:14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

Here, we find detail not mentioned in chapter 10. There were in fact six (Jewish) brethren who traveled with Peter. They all "entered into the man's house." In continuing his summary of events in Caesarea, it is noteworthy that Peter did not mention Cornelius by name nor mention his rank or position as a Roman officer.

Perhaps he feared that would have further inflamed the situation. Further detail is revealed here as Peter quotes Cornelius, "Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved."

Acts 10 portrayed Cornelius as a devout man who feared God. Here, it is clear notwithstanding that, he was not saved. It is noteworthy that household salvation here preceded the household baptism mentioned at the end of chapter 10. Baptism by a parent or organization never enters a child into a covenant relationship with God. The only covenant a child enters with God is when he is old enough to receive Christ, thus receiving salvation. Then, and only then he or she is to be baptized.

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

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.

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?

Without a doubt, the reason for the visible and obvious manifestation of the Spirit at Caesarea was to confirm God's blessing upon the gentiles receiving Christ. Peter meanwhile had come to relate these events with Jesus' words that "John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." See John 14:26 and Acts 1:5.

Joh 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Act 1:5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

The baptism with the Holy Ghost is an event that the Lord used in guiding the early church in the absence of that which is perfect (the Word). In verse 17, Peter recounted that God had likewise given to these gentiles an obvious manifestation of the Holy Spirit even as He had to them. Who was he (Peter) to "withstand God."

Peter points out that it was not he alone that went to Cornelius' house, but six other brethren also went along. The bible teaches that there is wisdom in counsel, and sometimes it is good to have multiple brethren around to validate things are happening exactly as they are.

This was wise on Peter's part because he was going to do something that had never been done before. God was opening up a new and different way, and these brethren were witnesses that he was doing what God instructed him to do.

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.

Whereupon the leadership of the church, along with the Judaistic believers, "held their peace and glorified God." What could they say? It would be apparent, however, soon that the Judaizers still took the position that even gentile believers ought to conform to Jewish tradition and keep the Law of Moses.

The reference to God granting the gentiles "repentance unto life" brings to light the initial idea in the early (Jewish) church that repentance was the dominant essence of salvation. Recall how at Pentecost that repentance was emphasized. See Acts 2:38, 3:19, 5:31, 8:22 as well as John the Baptist's early preaching of repentance to hardened Jewish hearts.

Later, Paul and John would clarify and elaborate that the greater truth is indeed of faith. The exercising of true faith is always accompanied by genuine repentance. These are inseparable graces *wrought* in Christ. The early church used the word repentance to summarize the greater matter of turning to Christ. In their mind, trusting Christ was assumed in that term. The word translated (metanoia metanoia) is the turning of one's heart from the direction going and turning to Christ. See Isaiah 53:6. In its broader sense, it refers to a turning to Christ.

Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

We know that after Peter was given the opportunity to preach the Gospel, the Gentiles accepted the message, and God granted them repentance unto life. I am so glad he did, because most of us who are studying these scriptures are not Jews. There are some, who like Paul, were saved out of their due time. But the vast majority of Jews still are looking for the Messiah to come and have rejected Jesus as Lord and Savior.

It is important to know that even though this officially opened the Gospel to the Gentiles in the New Testament, Gentiles were part of God's plan and people all through time. You will notice that Rahab was a Gentile, and God saved her. She was the one used to hide the spies and her father's house was all left alive when they came in and took Jericho. We know God allowed Rahab to be in the ancestry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Josh 2:1 And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.

Josh 2:2 And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country.

Josh 2:3 And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country.

Josh 2:4 And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were:

Some other verses concerning Rahab. Rahab became the wife of Salmon.

James 2:25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

Mat 1:5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

Matthew Henry said this about the Gentiles being granted repentance unto life.

They not only held their peace from quarreling with Peter, but opened their mouths to glorify God for what he had done by and with Peter's ministry; they were thankful that their mistake was rectified, and that God had shown more mercy to the poor Gentiles than they were inclined to show them, saying, *Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life!* He hath granted them not only the means of repentance, in opening a door of entrance for his ministers among them, but the grace of repentance, in having given them his Holy Spirit, who, wherever he comes to be a Comforter, first convinces, and gives a sight of sin and sorrow for it, and then a sight of Christ and joy in him. Note, (1.) Repentance, if it be true, is unto life. It is to spiritual life; all that truly repent of their sins evidence it by living a new life, a holy, heavenly, and divine life. Those that by repentance die unto sin thenceforward live unto God; and then, and not till then, we begin to live indeed, and it shall be to eternal life. ¹

II. The Church at Antioch (Disciples first called Christians here)

Acts 11:19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

Acts 11:20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when

¹Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.

they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

Things changed. After the persecution which arose at the time of Stephen's death, many of the disciples at Jerusalem were scattered. They traveled as far as Phenice. (Phenice is a reference to Phoenicia which, for all practical purposes, is equivalent to modern day Lebanon). Others journeyed to the Isle of Cyprus. Some went even as far as Antioch on the Orontes River near the Mediterranean in what is present-day Syria.

Though there were several cities in the Roman Empire named Antioch, this Antioch at that time was the third largest city in the Roman Empire behind Rome itself and Alexandria. It was a large cosmopolitan area. As these Jewish believers fled, they went "preaching the word unto the Jews only" who likewise lived in these areas. Satan's attempt to stamp out the early church had backfired. The more he opposed the church, the more it spread.

It is noted that some of the early believers were "men of Cyprus and Cyrene." Cyrene was a city on the south shore of the Mediterranean in what is now present day Libya. Upon their arrival in Antioch, they "spake unto the Grecians."

What clearly is implied is that they also were believing Jews. The word translated Grecians (Ἑλληνιστῶν Hellenistes) is a reference to Jews who spake Greek and were of western culture in distinction to Jews who spoke Aramaic and were more middle-eastern in their culture. That distinction, in some measure, remains to this day. Notice that these displaced Jewish believers came "preaching the Lord Jesus."

After the Lord gave the church the great commission, at first they preached only to the Jews. The persecution that came upon the church scattered them abroad after the stoning of Stephen. God used this persecution to spread the gospel into all the countries.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 11:21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

Once again, the combination of repentance (turning unto the Lord) and believing as the essence of saving faith are presented. We see that when the disciples came to Antioch, that they preached Christ and the gospel to the Greek speaking

Jews, and a great number of them were saved. Why were they successful? Because in verse 21 we see that the hand of the Lord was with them. They were preaching Jesus Christ and him crucified and resurrected. That is the message that God wants proclaimed from his pulpits, back then, and also today.

*2 Cor 4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:
2 Cor 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.
2 Cor 4:5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.
2 Cor 4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

Acts 11:22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

Upon hearing of the gospel being widely received among Hellenistic Jews in Antioch, the leadership of the church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to witness firsthand the work of these itinerant preachers caused by the pervasive persecution.

It was sort of unusual how the church there in Jerusalem always seemed to send someone to check out things after they heard that people were saved in another city. Perhaps it was to be sure that the record was true, and to be sure that the pure gospel was being preached. For whatever reason, Barnabas was sent to check out what was happening in Antioch.

Acts 8:14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

Barnabas was an excellent choice to go. He had an outstanding reputation in the church at Jerusalem.

*Acts 4:36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,
Acts 4:37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

*Acts 11:23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.
Acts 11:24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and*

much people was added unto the Lord.

Barnabas was referred to earlier in Acts 4:36-37. He was a Jew of the tribe of Levi who was originally from Cyprus. He also had given a large donation to the church at Jerusalem. It seems clear he was a Hellenistic Jew himself and that probably was why the church sent him where they did. He, upon arriving in Antioch “and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.”

The final phrases referring to cleaving unto the Lord has the sense of continuing with the Lord, of persevering, of keeping on keeping on. We are further told that Barnabas was “a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and faith.” The adjective good (agayov agathos) in modern vernacular is almost trite. In Scripture, it is one of the highest descriptions of Christian character. Though never in the same lofty height of Deity as it refers to men, recall that the Lord is called ‘good’ on numerous occasions.

He also was filled with the Holy Spirit. This likewise is a spiritual comment of the highest order. Few men in Scripture were ever so ascribed. He also was a man of great faith. All three of these qualities are available and are to be sought today. As a result of his ministry in Antioch, a multitude of people were added to the Lord there.

He found things to be as he had heard, and that many were saved, and he witnessed the Grace of God being shown to those in Antioch. No doubt he saw lives being changed. We are never the same after we are saved.

2 Cor 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

2 Cor 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

2 Cor 5:19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Acts 11:25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:

Acts 11:26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

In this cryptic verse, record is briefly given of Barnabas then traveling to the not-too-distant Tarsus and searching there for Saul. Tarsus was Saul’s hometown. Exactly how long he had been there since departing Jerusalem is not clear, though Galatians 1 and 2 does give some chronology of this general time. It has

been thought by some that the time was around A.D. 43. Nothing is said of Saul's time in Tarsus, but it may well be assumed that he there had preached Christ.

Barnabas found him, convinced him of his need in the full-time ministry, and brought him to Antioch. They together spent an entire year in Antioch assembling in the church and teaching them. Notice that in the meantime, the believers in Antioch had organized themselves into a church.

This church would go on to become one of the great churches in early church history. Giants of the faith such as Ignatius and Chrysostom later pastored this great church. Notice also that "the disciples were called Christian first in Antioch." The word translated as Christian (Cristianov christianous—the 'ianous' suffix being added to the proper noun Christ) was a fairly common way of creating a Greek adjective. It literally meant 'one belonging to,' in this case Christ.

In like fashion, the Greek adjective Caesarianous meant one belonging to Caesar. The word Christian is used only three times in the New Testament. It essentially means 'Christ's ones.' The term was coined and applied to the disciples by unbelieving gentiles. The disciples themselves preferred that term along with 'people of the way,' believers, brethren, and saints.

The Jews would never so use the term for it implied that Jesus was in fact the Christ, their Messiah, which notion they categorically rejected. In the case of the Anabaptists, the name was means of identification of the believers by their unbelieving enemies. What is significant is that their testimony was such that the world around them knew exactly who they were and in whom they trusted.

We see from verse 24 that Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and faith. These are the kind of men that Paul told young Timothy to seek out to teach others.

2 Tim 2:1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 Tim 2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

2 Tim 2:3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

We see that after Barnabas left Antioch, he went to Tarsus to seek Saul. (the apostle Paul after being saved.) We see from verse 25 that after some had sought to kill Paul, the disciples sent him to Tarsus, which was his home town. Since Barnabas was involved in helping Paul escape those who sought to kill him

in Damascus, he knew where to go to get him to help teach. Note the term Christians was first used here in Antioch to describe those followers of Jesus Christ. A Christian is one who is saved and is following Christ.

Acts 9:27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

Paul and Barnabas stayed a year at Antioch and taught them doctrine in the church. I'm sure this was a great blessing to those young disciples there in Antioch.

J. Vernon McGee said this about Barnabas.

This is a wonderful thing that is said about Barnabas. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit, and full of faith. And, my friend, there is no reason why every Christian shouldn't be a good person.

Barnabas became the pastor of the church there. He began "exhorting," which would be preaching and teaching. And the congregation grew, for "much people was added unto the Lord." As the church grew, it became evident to Barnabas that he needed an assistant pastor, and he knew where to get a good one. ²

III. The Church at Antioch Sends Relief to Jerusalem

*Acts 11:27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.
Acts 11:28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.*

Prophets came to Antioch from Jerusalem including one Agabus. They foretold the coming dearth (famine). (See Acts 21:10). Secular historians Seutonius, Tacitus, and Dio Cassius record that a famine swept the Roman Empire in the latter portion of Claudius Caesar's reign (A.D. 41-44).

We see that God used this prophet to for tell some future events. In the old testament times (and early on in the New Testament), God used men to pen down words of events that were going to happen in the future. Agabus also was used to tell what was going to happen to Paul at Jerusalem.

Acts 21:10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

2J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible commentary [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1981 by J. Vernon McGee.

Acts 21:11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

Agabus declared that there was going to be a dearth (or famine) throughout all the world. God signified this with His Spirit.

1 Cor 13:8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

1 Cor 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

1 Cor 13:10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

We see that God told us that there would come a time when these things that were done in part would be done away. This signifies the completion of the Word of God, which we now have. Prophecies, tongues, and knowledge without a human tutor would be done away with.

Acts 11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:

Acts 11:30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Whereupon "the disciples" at Antioch according to their own ability decided to send help to their brethren in Judaea. What is implied is that the church at Jerusalem had fallen upon hard times, perhaps by the insistent persecution thereof. It is noteworthy also that throughout the New Testament, charity and social action by the church was always directed to their own. The church was never a social relief agency to the world at large. The gift, probably money, was sent to the elders in Jerusalem by Barnabas and Saul.

We see that the disciples at Antioch determined to send relief to their fellow brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. This is the first time we read of a people of another country coming to the aid of someone else. This offering was sent back by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. It is wonderful when God's people have a loving heart and want to give to help others.

2 Cor 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

2 Cor 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

KJV Bible Studies are prepared and distributed free of charge. The lessons may not be sold without consent. If you have questions or wish to discuss the lessons, or possibly need help in finding Jesus Christ as your Personal Lord and Savior, contact us at the email below.

Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Website: www.KjvBibleStudies.net

e-mail: mailKjvBibleStudies@gmail.com

Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.