

Acts Chapter 11

8. Peter's defense to the Jews, 11:1-1

Act 11:1 Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.

Notice there is no mention of the Holy Spirit here. There should be no question that the these others heard about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but the emphasis is on the Gentiles receiving the WORD.

The conformation that the Gentiles were also to be part of God's kingdom, through the outpouring of Holy Spirit, was not as important as receiving the word, which leads to obedience.

Act 11:2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him, those who were circumcised took issue with him,

It doesn't say these are Jewish Christians. They are referred to as simply be circumcised. But by reading further into Peters account of what happened, the indication is that they are Christians, Acts 11:18

Act 11:3 saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them."

Peter is now confronted with the very issue he had brought up earlier, Acts 10:28

Note: The question might be asked, "If the apostles and brethren who were throughout Judea heard of this, why not these in Jerusalem? By the response it seems that they are not fully aware of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

These jews seem to be in a similar boat as Peter prior to his vision on the rooftop. He was still holding to many of the Jewish traditions. Those Jewish Christians in Jerusalem are refereed to as the circumcised, and this seems to establish a group still holding on to the Jewish traditions as well. There vision is still clouded as to what Jesus meant in Matt. 28:19,20.

Act 11:4 But Peter began speaking and proceeded to explain to them in orderly sequence, saying,

Act 11:5 "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object coming down like a great sheet lowered by four corners from the sky; and it came right down to me,

Act 11:6 and when I had fixed my gaze on 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.

Here Peter adds the phrase "wild beast," which was not in Lukes first account, Acts 10:12. Peter is just elaborating more fully on what he saw.

Act 11:7 "I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.'

Act 11:8 "But I said, 'By no means, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth.'

Again Peter elaborates beyond what Luke originally wrote, but this might be because of the audience he is speaking to.

This is reminiscent of Ezek. 4:14

Act 11:9 "But a voice from heaven answered a second time, 'What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.'

Act 11:10 "This happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into the sky.

Act 11:11 "And behold, at that moment three men appeared at the house in which we were staying, having been sent to me from Caesarea.

Act 11:12 "The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. These six brethren also went with me and we entered the man's house.

Peter clarifies he was not alone in this, there are other witnesses

Act 11:13 "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;

Act 11:14 and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.'

Peters work was simple and straight forward, go and preach the gospel. It is through the word of God that salvation has come to man, Heb. 11:1

Without these words faith cannot develop, Rom. 10:17

Without faith developing obedience will not take place, Acts 2:37,38

Act 11:15 "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning.

This is in reference to Acts 2:1-4. We know this for two reasons

1. This is the only other time something like this has happened.
2. Peters comments in the next verse are connected to Acts 1:5, which points to Acts 2:1-4

Act 11:16 "And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

Act 11:17 "Therefore if God 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?"

Act 11:18 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."

The Jewish Christians make the connection between the work of the Holy Spirit in Acts 10:44-46 and this being a confirmation of God's will.

H. The Church in Antioch, 11:19-26

Act 11:19 So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone.

This is pointing backwards in time, Acts 8:4, to when Paul had persecuted the church.

These went about preaching the gospel but only to the Jews. The baptism of Cornelius and his household had yet to take place.

It seems Luke does this to bring us up to speed on what takes place next.

Act 11:20 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.

Those who were scattered because of Stephen's persecution made their way to Cyprus and Cyrene. It is men from these cities that who go to Antioch and preach to the Gentile population.

We know this takes place after Peter returned to Jerusalem following his visit to Cornelius because of what we read in Acts 11:22.

Remember, the circumcised in Jerusalem took issue with Peter because of he went to the Gentiles. Their view only changed after Peter's explanation. Since they send Barnabas to Antioch, Acts 11:22, it would make sense to place this after the baptism of Cornelius.

Act 11:21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

Act 11:22 The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.

Act 11:23 Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord;

Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God,

God's grace is witnessed in the fact that so many were living the Christian life. Antioch was a very immoral city, with prostitution worship etc.

he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord;

Becoming a Christian is just the beginning. There was a need for continued growth. This is the work of Barnabas.

Act 11:24 for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.

Act 11:25 And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul;

Sometimes the work is too much for one man. This seems to be the case with Barnabas. With new converts come new struggles and it seems even Barnabas needed help.

Who better to get than the one who was called to be an evangelist to the Gentiles, Acts 9:15; 22:21

As well Barnabas already had a history with Saul. It was Barnabas who stood up in his defense, Acts 9:27

Act 11:26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Note: William Barclay states that about nine years had passed since Saul went to Tarsus, Acts 9:30., Lenski says it was seven or eight years.

It seems from Paul's own words that he was busy preaching the gospel during this time, Gal 1:21, Acts 15:41

Barnabas had a difficult time finding him as seen in the verb translated "to look for" in v.25. According to Moulton it means,, "is specially used of searching for human beings, with an implication of difficulty, as in the NT passages."

It is believed that Saul's statement in Phil 3:8, and that some of the suffering he endured as recorded in 2Cor. 12:2ff had taken place prior to Barnabas coming to find him, and during this absence.

I. Prophets from Jerusalem, 11:27-30

Act 11:27 Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

Act 11:28 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.

One of them named Agabus

There is a possibility that this is the same man mentioned in Acts 22:10. Once again he is referred to as a prophet.

stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit

Agabus was one who had the gift of prophecy,
Eph. 4:11; 1Cor. 12:8-11

As such he had the ability to deliver the will of God, 2Pet. 2:20,21

that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.

Four famines occurred during the time of Claudius. The second four years into his reign.

The third was in A.D. 48. The fourth took place in the eleventh year of Claudius. Many believe this famine came at the time of the fourth famine, around A.D. 47.

Josephus states; "This" says he, "is the famine foretold by Agabus."

Act 11:29 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.

Notice, that as the people give they do so according to the proportion they have. 2Cor. 9:7; 1Cor. 16:1,2

Act 11:30 And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul

After a year of meeting with the brethren a level maturity had been reached which allowed Barnabas and Saul to leave.

to the elders.

They sent the money to those who would be in charge of how it was to be used, 1Pet. 5:1-3. (Charles Depalma notes this is the first time "elders" are mentioned in the book of Acts).