



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 11

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Introduction

In This Chapter We Will Study:

- The purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles
- The beginning of the Lord's church in Antioch, and the early ministry of Barnabas and Saul

St. Peter Defends God's Grace (11:1-18)



- Apostles and brethren in Judea hear that Gentiles received the Word of God
- St. Peter was challenged upon his return to Jerusalem
- The descent of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, and their reception into the church, would excite attention, and be likely to produce much sensitiveness in regard to the conduct of St. Peter and those with him
- Those of the circumcision contend with him
- If he had been regarded as having the authority which the Roman Catholics claim for him, they would have submitted at once to what he had thought proper to do
- They accuse him of eating with the uncircumcised

St. Peter Defends God's Grace (11:1-18)



- St. Peter carefully explains the events in the order in which they occur
- Thus showing that he acted under the Divine orders
- To remove their prejudice, and to give them the fullest reasons for his conduct, he thought it best to give them a simple relation of the whole affair
- His vision in Joppa with the sheet and the unclean beasts

St. Peter Defends God's Grace (11:1-18)



- This voice he heard in the same sense and manner, as the Apostle Paul heard when in a trance, Acts 22:17
- Get up and slay some of these creatures upon the sheet, and dress them and eat them
- For he took the voice he heard to be the voice of the Lord, and yet he was not obedient to the heavenly vision, and even though he was an hungry; which shows what a strict observer he was of the ceremonies of the law, and how much he was prejudiced in favor of them
- The voice from heaven: "What God has cleansed you must not call common."

St. Peter Defends God's Grace (11:1-18)



- What had been declared to be clean and fit for use, and did not defile, and could not defile the man into whose mouth it entered, and therefore ought not to be pronounced unclean, and of a defiling nature
- Jesus Christ by His death an end was put to the ceremonial law, and the distinctions of meats by it; Matthew 15:11
- The voice from heaven answered three times, and encouraged St. Peter to kill and eat
- The arrival of men from Caesarea at the conclusion of the vision
- These were brethren of Joppa, but Peter had taken them to Jerusalem to confirm his words. He knew his course would be called into question

St. Peter Defends God's Grace (11:1-18)



- How Cornelius was told to by an angel to send for St. Peter who would tell him words by which they would be saved
- How as he began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles just as upon the apostles at the beginning
- Note the import of these words of the angel to Cornelius:
 - (1) Notwithstanding his prayers, alms, devotion, and justice, he was not yet saved
Only the gospel could save him
God's mercy was shown in bringing him the gospel
 - (2) This is the first instance named in Acts of a household baptism

St. Peter Defends God's Grace (11:1-18)



- St. Peter remembered the Lord's promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit; the reference is to Acts 1:5
- He reasoned that if Gentiles received the same promise as they did when they believed, who was he to stand in God's way?
- It was not St. Peter who called them to salvation: it was God; and the thing is proved to be from God alone, for none other could dispense the Holy Spirit
- All these extraordinary signs were then given in order to show St. Peter and the Jewish Christians that the Gentiles were also accepted

St. Peter Defends God's Grace (11:1-18)



- The reaction by those who heard Peter's account:
 - They became silent, and then glorified God
 - They concluded that God has granted Gentiles repentance to life
- The great truth in this manner established that the doors of the church are opened To the entire Gentile world

Barnabas and Saul at Antioch (11:19-26)



- Thus far, the history had recorded chiefly the preaching of the gospel to the Jews. From this point the history records the efforts made to convert the Gentiles
- They travel as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching only to the Jews
- Phoenice – Phoenicia: A long, fertile plain between the Lebanon mountains and the sea containing the famous cities of Tyre and Sidon
- Cyprus - An island of the Mediterranean Sea
- Antioch - A city of Syria, built by Antiochus Seleucus, near the river Orontes; at that time one of the most celebrated cities of the east

Barnabas and Saul at Antioch (11:19-26)



- Unto the Jews only - For they knew nothing of the vision of St. Peter; They departed before the Gentiles at Caesarea were called to Christ
- Cyrene. A great Grecian city of North Africa, with a large Jewish population
- These preachers were Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene who had been converted at Jerusalem

Barnabas and Saul at Antioch (11:19-26)



- The preachers were Grecians, i.e. Hellenistic Jews (foreign Jews), but those to whom they spoke were Greeks, Gentiles, not of Jewish blood at all, probably devout Greeks who had turned from idols to seek the purer worship of Jehovah (Acts 10:2)
- These preachers preached the gospel to these Gentile seekers for light
- God showed them favor, and evinced his power in the conversion of their hearers
- A great multitude believed and turned to the Lord

Barnabas and Saul at Antioch (11:19-26)



- It was natural that so remarkable an occurrence as the conversion of the Gentiles, and the extraordinary success of the gospel in a splendid and mighty city, should be reported at Jerusalem, and excite deep interest there
- Barnabas was sent to Antioch; It was in the first instance, no doubt, a mission of inquiry; and no one could be more suitable to inquire into the proceedings of those Cyprians and Cyrenians than one who was himself a "Grecian" of Cyprus (Acts 4:36), and "a son of consolation."

Barnabas and Saul at Antioch (11:19-26)



- Barnabas was glad to see the grace of God and approved of what had been done in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, and rejoiced that God had poured down his Spirit on them
- He exhorted them with fixed purpose and resolution, that they would cleave unto the Lord; to remain with the Lord; to continue in union and fellowship with him; to be faithful in keeping his truth, and obedient in the practice of it
- He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith
- A great many people are added to the Lord
- No wonder, when they had such a minister, preaching by the power of the Holy Spirit

Barnabas and Saul at Antioch (11:19-26)



- Seeing the great opening, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he knew that Saul was the best man to aid him; he was appointed by Christ to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles and had a great knowledge of the Greek language and, consequently, the better qualified to explain the Gospel to the Greek philosophers
- Saul arrives in Antioch assembling with the church for a whole year, teaching a great many people
- Here was the first great Gentile church
- Outsiders could see that they were not Jews nor pagans, hence they called them after their Lord
- The designation Christians occurs only twice elsewhere in the New Testament (Acts 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16)

Relief to Judea (11:27-30)



- Some time in that year that Saul and Barnabas were at Antioch, there came from Jerusalem some Christian prophets
- Agabus had the prophetic gift is once more mentioned, Acts 21:10
- Agabus shows by the Spirit that there will be a famine
- A great famine prevailed in Palestine in the reign of Claudius Caesar, beginning about the close of A.D. 44, and lasting three or four years
- Food had to be imported by the benevolent persons from Egypt and Cyprus, yet many perished

Relief to Judea (11:27-30)



- The disciples determine to send relief to brethren in Judea
- they contributed, each as he could, whether rich or poor, master or servant, everyone according to the substance he was possessed of, for the relief of their Jewish brethren, and sent it by the hands of Barnabas and Saul to the apostles in Jerusalem
- The love of Christ was in their hearts
- We see here the dawn of that new spirit that was to revolutionize the Gentile world
- The Gentiles of Antioch extend their hands to relieve the distress of the Jews of Palestine.
- This was the pure prompting of Christian love



Conclusion

- St. Peter saw a vision in chapter 10 and repeated it in chapter 11. What was the vision and what does it mean?
- Why was St. Peter defending himself when answering the apostles and the brethren from Jerusalem?
- How did the Holy Spirit come upon Cornelius' house?
- Where were the disciples called Christians for the first time?
- Who did the Church of Jerusalem send to Antioch?