

**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.**

Even without CNN and today's technology, it didn't take long for the news to reach the apostles and believers in Judea that the Gentiles had also "received the word of God"; in other words, they had joined the body of believers. Once Peter returned to Jerusalem, he was immediately faced with accusations of wrongdoing for eating with "uncircumcised" men. The context indicates that those making the accusations were among the Jewish leaders in the church. Rather than being happy that other sinners were finding salvation in Jesus, these men were more concerned with the fact that Peter had broken Jewish laws.

I think Peter fully understood their reaction. God had employed supernatural means to make Peter understand that God's will supersedes Jewish law.

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

**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.**

**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 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;**

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

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

So, Peter recounted his whole experience as detailed in the previous chapter. It's interesting to note that he pointed out that he had six witnesses to verify all that had occurred at Cornelius' home. They could testify to the fact that the Gentiles

there had received the power of the Holy Ghost in just the same way the believers had received that same power on Pentecost.

**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?

**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.

Peter went on to say how he remembered Jesus telling them that though they had been baptized with water by John, they would be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Once he witnessed these Gentiles evidencing that same baptism of the Spirit, who was he to deny the work of God. To their credit, the accusing brethren were quick to recognize their mistake and begin to glorify God for providing salvation for the Gentiles.

They shouldn't have been surprised. The truth is that God's plan had always been to provide salvation to both Jew and Gentile.

*Genesis 12:1–3 “Now the LORD had said unto Abram...in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”*

*Isaiah 49:6 “And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”*

*Matthew 12:18–21 “Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.”*

*John 1:29 “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”*

I think God used Peter's experience with Cornelius to lay the foundation for the future ministry of the Apostle Paul and the great growth of the church that would occur among the Gentiles. Though the body of believers was composed almost entirely of Jews in the beginning, it would not be long before the church would become predominantly Gentile.

**Acts 11:19** ¶ Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled 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 they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

**Acts 11:21** And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number

**believed, and turned unto the Lord.**

In this section we are reminded that the persecution of believers greatly escalated after Stephen was murdered. Some believers traveled as far away as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch to seek safety. Along the way they shared the gospel message with fellow Jews. Once they got to Antioch, however, it seems that some of the believers decided to share the good news about Jesus with the Greek Gentiles. Luke tells us that the Lord approved of their efforts as evidenced by the great numbers of people who turned to the Lord in belief for their salvation.

I think it is important to point out that these Jewish believers from Cyprus and Cyrene realized on their own that being Jewish wasn't the important thing—turning to God through faith in the Lord Jesus was. They recognized that God loved these Gentiles just as surely as He loved them. Maybe the Holy Spirit reminded them of the command of Jesus.

*Matthew 28:19–20 “Go ye therefore, and **teach all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”*

**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.**

**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.**

Again, without the aid of mass media, the news got back to the church leaders in Jerusalem; so they sent Barnabas to Antioch to bring them back a report.

What Barnabas witnessed gave evidence of God's grace at work among the people. He encouraged them to remain steadfast in their faith. Note that he pointed out that to remain strong in their faith would require them to make a conscious effort to do so—to purpose in their hearts as did Daniel.

*Daniel 1:8 “But **Daniel purposed in his heart** that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank....”*

It seems that many more people came to saving faith through the ministry of Barnabas. Luke describes him as a “good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.” I am striving for just such a testimony.

**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.**

Antioch was about 300 miles north of Jerusalem, and Tarsus about 358 miles. Barnabas decided to go find Saul and bring him to Antioch to help him in the ministry there. They ended up staying with the church in Antioch for a whole year to provide them a strong foundation in the teachings of Jesus and the scripture.

Side note: Antioch was the third most important city in the empire behind Rome and Alexandria. Research reveals it to have been a cosmopolitan city that was known for its commerce and immorality.

Luke also tells us that the term “Christians” was first coined in Antioch.

**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.**

**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.**

During that year, a group of prophets from Jerusalem came to Antioch. One of them, identified as Agabus, foretold that a great famine was in their future; his prophecy was in some way authenticated by a sign from the Holy Spirit. The historical record reveals that the reign of Claudius Caesar experienced several famines. The disciples in Antioch determined to send as much aid as they could to help the body of believers in Judea survive the time of famine. Barnabas and Saul eventually delivered their gift.

Note that these believers were concerned about their fellow believers in Judea. Each gave “according to his ability.” That would mean that some gave more and some gave less—but they gave willingly.