

Acts 11

This chapter has 2 parts. The first part is a continuation of what happened after visit of Peter to Cornelius in chap 10. The second part is the growth of the church in Antioch.

A. V11-18

V1-3

Apostles and believers heard about the gentile conversions. Gentiles accepting Jesus is not the problem.

The problem v3 ***“Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?”***

Peter had thus broken a Jewish custom. But there existed a secondary and even more difficult problem. Because till then the believers were mostly from the Jewish background, the followers of Christianity seemed to be a sect under Judaism which believed Jesus as their Messiah and the Son of God. So, it would be taken for granted that all gentile converts would have to first accept the Jewish faith before becoming Christians, because the new faith essentially had its roots in the Jewish faith.

This was now going to become a problem that the church and the Apostles would struggle with for a long time. Peter and Paul, both would struggle against it. Here people who would have come to the faith having listened to Peter, now question Peter. Paul also wrote some of his epistles to places where this controversy

existed. E.g. Galatians. Paul’s apostleship itself was called into question not only because he was not among the original 12 disciples, but also because of the above conflict with the Judaizers. (Judaizers was a term used for Jewish Christians who insisted that all gentile converts to Christianity would have to follow Mosaic Law and Jewish customs including circumcision).

V4-18

Peter, in his response, began to explain the entire sequence of events “step by step”(v4), beginning with his vision and continuing to the conversion and baptism of Cornelius and his household. The aim of this narrative is to convince the hearers that what happened through Peter is truly God’s Action through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Peter’s vision. Gods statement “what God has made clean, you must not call profane”.

Arrival of 3 men sent by Cornelius from Caesarea. Holy Spirit’s instruction to go with them.

V12 - The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us.

Six other Christian witnesses accompanied Peter.

Cornelius story of being led by the Angel to send for Peter.

(Peter’s proclamation of his realization in all this Act 10:34 is not mentioned here.)

After the Holy Spirit came on Cornelius and his household Peter remembered the words of Jesus ***'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'*** Jesus would have paraphrased the words of John the Baptist from Mark 1:8.

V17 – Peter's proclamation of his realization - a question to confront Judaizers' accusation – ***"If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?"***

V18 – agreement of his questioners – silence and praise to God. ***"Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."***

Emphases

This was going to be a persistent problem in the Church whenever new groups were reached with the Gospel of Christ.

Questions

From a hostile attitude in v2 to an accepting attitude in v18.
What seems to be the decisive factor that led from criticism to acceptance?