

## Acts 11

**Isaiah 9:6-7** For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of [*his*] government and peace [*there shall be*] no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Each successive event in the book of Acts builds upon the preceding. In chapter 10, the Gentiles Break through the middle wall of partition. The Jerusalem church tolerated this spearhead of invasion from the Gentile world. Verses 1-18.

**Acts 11:1-18** And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, 3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. 4 But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded *it* by order unto them, saying, 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: 6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. 8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. 9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common. 10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. 11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. 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: 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; 14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. 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. 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? 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.**

**Notice the three verbs in 11:18.**

**First: “they held their peace.” The first indicates the criticism was stifled.**

**Second: they “glorified God.” The second says for that even for a believing Jew for a Gentile to be of equal value to God was astounding.**

**Third: that God “granted repentance...” The third is of special note by its structure (aorist tense) Luke points out that these believing Jews were reluctant to adopt such acceptance of the Gentiles as a policy for the future ...**

**The verb indicates that they thought this was just probably just a onetime deal ...**

**But for this once they conceded that God worked a moral miracle ...**

**But they were not committing themselves to a permanent policy or principle.**

**Next comes the story of the rising tide of Gentile converts.**

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

**Now they which were scattered abroad.**

**Acts 8:3-4 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed [*them*] to prison. 4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.**

**As they went they were preaching the word but speaking to Jews only and not every creature. In spite of Jesus teaching forty days they would be “witnesses to all Nations”. Even when in other nations they confined their preaching to Jews only. Their message was given not to humanity but to particular section of humanity.**

**“Travelled as far as Phoenicia ...” Phoenicia was a long, fertile plain between the Lebanon mountains and the sea containing the famous cities of Tyre and Sidon. These preachers, perhaps, founded churches here, as we find them existing later in the book at Acts 21:4 & Acts 27:3 .**

**Cyprus was a famous island in the Mediterranean Sea. In the Bronze Age the first cities were built. Their Copper resource was widely traded. That the Mycenaean Greeks**

were inhabiting Cyprus from the middle to late Bronze Age is attested by the 15th century BC Linear B script found at the excavated palace on Cyprus.

Antioch was the capital of the whole province of Syria, including Palestine, situated on the Orontes (O-ron-tes) a short distance from the sea. Antioch was next to Rome and Alexandria in Egypt of the cities of the world in greatness, commerce and wealth. It was cultured, luxurious and corrupt, a Greek civilization corrupted by the wealth and luxury of Asia; a sort of oriental Rome.

Preaching . . . unto the Jews only. These disciples departed Jerusalem before the conversion of Cornelius and the Gentiles and therefore knew nothing about the Gentiles being acceptable to Christ.

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.

Here we see that the word was preached to Gentile Greeks not Hellenized Jews.

Note specifically it was these unnamed brethren referred to simply as “men of Cyprus and Cyrene” not the Apostles from Jerusalem who preached and baptized these Greeks. Without distinction the message of God was for all men but unnamed believers from “Cyprus and Cyrene” led the way by being the first to preach to the Gentiles without hesitation.

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

When these raw pagans hear the Gospel proclaimed a great number believed.

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.

This describes the anxiety of the Jerusalem church when they heard the Gentiles were coming by the droves this time not just a single family. This great influx was in a city known for its moral laxity.

“... Sent forth Barnabas ...” The church dispatched Barnabas that he might investigate. He held the total confidence of the Jerusalem church. He was a Grecian Jew (Acts 4:36), also the friend of Saul, another Grecian Jew (Acts 9:27). He was chosen as a suitable man to go to Antioch and see whether there had been a real work of the Lord.

**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.

When he had seen that it was truly the grace of the Lord, he rejoiced and gave it Godspeed, and the work grew more and more in this great metropolis.

Note that this is the first church outside the bounds of Israel and Palestine.

Antioch was to become the great missionary center for the conversion of the Gentile world for hundreds of years into the Byzantine Empire.

**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.

So he rejoiced when he saw the grace of God saving the Gentiles.

To exploit this opportunity the Holy Spirit needed a man of broader sympathies than Jerusalem could offer.

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

This needed one unimpeded by Jewish cultural scruples and Barnabas knew the man for the task. He was not from Jerusalem but from the Greeks world, Saul of Tarsus.

Seeing the great opening, he knew that Saul was the best man to aid him.

His trip to Tarsus is supposed to have been in 43AD. Saul departed from Jerusalem about 39 AD. Therefore Saul spent about four years in missionary work in "Syria and Cilicia" we last saw him after being sent to Tarsus cf: Acts 9:30

**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.

The main verb in the sentence is "came to pass" the Greek has three subjects to this main verb, 1."assembled themselves". 2. "Taught" 3. "Were called". This last verb were called is in the passive voice that normally means that the subject is the receiver not the doer of the action. So the translation into English gives the idea that the disciples were called Christians by someone else. God is that someone else.

**Isaiah 65:15** And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord GOD shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name:

**Isaiah 62:1-2 For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp [that] burneth. 2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.**

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

**Acts 11:26 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.**

**A whole year, 44 AD they continued the work with great success. The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. The Jews called them "Nazarenes," or "Galileans." They called themselves "disciples," "brethren," "saints."**

**The main verb "came to pass" It is also an active infinitive with the word "disciples" serving as the subject in other word it was the disciples that did the calling. With some justification knowing what we know about the name "Christian" coming from "the mouth of the Lord, we could translate the clause "the disciples called themselves Christians first at Antioch."**

**The two clauses "taught much people". "And" "disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." You will notice is held together by the English word "and". The Greek word *te* that we translate into English as the word "and" joins two ideas together. Therefore vitally related to this teaching they received, in deed as a consequence of it, the disciples took the name "Christians," the new name was one of the effects of the year's ministry of Saul. The name was a result of the content of their teaching.**

**The Greek ending of *avos* appears in the English as *ian*, it means belonging to.**

**The verb we translate "called" comes from a word meaning "matter or business" When a man becomes efficient in a business he sometimes becomes that name. For example "Shoemaker", which means that someone in his family tree was an expert in making shoes.**

**Barnabas and Saul taught that the most important thing in life the very meaning of life was belonging to Christ. Who is the origin of life and source of their new life. The business of the new convert's life was that of belonging to Christ. These**

were raw pagans in needed the first principles of the doctrine of Christ and the new life in Christ. One's profession was the means of making a living. But their real business of life was belonging to Christ and being "Christians."

In Jerusalem they were all Jews and did not change their God when they accepted Jesus. But at Antioch the believers were mostly Gentiles not Jews. They had broken with their gods and could not go back to their former temples. They had never been under the Law of Moses. They were an absolutely unique body of believers. Being unique and finding that their chief business in life was Belong to Christ. It was inevitable that they adopted from "the mouth of the Lord" this new name "Christian".

At Antioch in Syria they flood in until numerically the Gentiles exceed the Jews. This creates a new phenomenon nothing like it ever before in history a church in which Gentiles are worshipping the God of the Jews and they outnumber the Jews.

Of necessity something new like this demands a new name by which to characterize it and that new name was "Christians"

Acts 26:28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

We present the great cry of the restoration movement:

We don't claim to be the only Christians  
But we are Christians only  
and we won't be called by any other name

I Peter 4:16 Yet if [*any man suffer*] as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Romans 16:16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

Hebrews 1:4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Philippians 2: 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [*things*] in heaven, and [*things*] in earth, and [*things*] under the

**earth; 11 And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

**I John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.**

**Acts 11:27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.**

**“... In these days” while Saul and Barnabas preaching was at Antioch Came prophets.**

**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.**

**“... one of them named Agabus ...” In some kind of pantomime he symbolized the coming of a famine that would scourge the Greco-Roman world.**

**“... should be a great dearth ...” A famine throughout all the world. This expression in the Scriptures often means the Jewish world, in the days of Claudius Cesar. Josephus (Antiquities, 20: 2, 6) describes a great famine that prevailed in Palestine in the reign of Claudius Cæsar, beginning about the close of 44 AD, and lasting three or four years. Food had to be imported by the benevolent persons from Egypt and Cyprus, yet many perished.**

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

**Nothing reveals a genuine conversion more than a change in a persons' relationship to money. After Pentecost disciples sold their goods and possessions and parted to all as anyone is having need.**

**The reality and geniuses of the spirits work among the Gentiles is attested by the way they opened up their generosity to their Judean brethren. This above all would demonstrate to those all of in Jerusalem of the effectiveness of the Holy Spirits work among the Gentiles. This is the Spirits' way of showing the genuine commitment of the Gentiles and that there is nothing phony about Gentile Christianity.**

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

**“and sent it” ... “by the hands of Barnabas and Saul”. 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.**

**Isaiah 61:1-6 The Spirit of the Lord GOD [*is*] upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to [*them that are*] bound; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; 3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. 4 And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. 5 And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien [*shall be*] your plowmen and your vinedressers. 6 But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: [*men*] shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.**

**Isaiah 62: 1-12 For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp [*that*] burneth. 2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name. 3 Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. 4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah (my delight is in her), and thy land Beulah (Married, claimed as a wife): for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. 5 For [*as*] a young man marrieth a virgin, [*so*] shall thy sons marry thee: and [*as*] the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, [*so*] shall thy God rejoice over thee. 6 I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, [*which*] shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence. 7 And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. 8 The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of**



his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn [*to be*] meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured: 9 But they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the LORD; and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness. 10 Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. 11 Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward [*/s*] with him, and his work before him. 12 And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.