

The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter Eleven The First "Christians"

Focus Verse: Acts 11:26

"And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

I. Study Introduction

- A. Just because a person is saved, does not make them a *Christian* these days. It used to be so, but in these modern times, people turn to Jesus for only the "fire insurance" but not a whole new life. They want "fellowship" but not "fellowship" or "servanthood."
- B. To be a Christian means to be "Christ-like" in all our actions, thoughts, aspirations, and emotions. Therefore, there are very few true "Christians" today. Only a lot of religious people who put on a show, but have very little "life" that is like Christ.
- C. Chapter Eleven of Acts helps clear-up what it takes to be a Christian.

II. Chapter Review

- One **The Church Commissioned** - The Ascension of Jesus
- Two **The Church Empowered** - The Day of Pentecost
- Three **Christianity Meets The Need** - The Invalid Man Healed
- Four **How To Stand-Up For Christ** - Handling Persecution
- Five **Staying True!** In Spite of Sin in Christian's Lives
- Six **Delegating the Work** - Choosing Deacons
- Seven **Learning the Lessons of History** - Stephen's Attack on Religion
- Eight **The Church Expanding** - Saul Begins His Persecution
- Nine **The Conversion of Saul** - Saul on the Road to Damascus
- Ten **Cornelius Meets Christ** - Peter Tells Cornelius About Christ

I. Study Outline - The First "Christians" (Acts 11)

- A. **To Be A Christian Means More than Being a ___** - The Bad News For Jewish Christianity (Acts 11:1-18)
 1. Everyone hears of Peter's *fellowship* with "Gentiles" (11:1) - News spreads fast about Cornelius (a Gentile) getting saved
 2. The Problems this caused (11:2,3) - not only had Peter misconceptions about the Gospel plan, but so did most of the Jewish Christians in Judæa - there was a lot of explaining and teaching to do in order to mature the Jewish Christians
 - a. Up until this time, salvation seemed to be exclusive only to the Jews - they had the Bible, the priesthood, the Saviour, etc
 - b. One of the authorities in the church at Jerusalem (the apostle Peter) was "defecting" from the accepted way of doing things – the traditions!
 - c. The Old Testament _____ Laws (circumcision) were still dominating people's view of grace (Gal 2:11-16; 3:2,3)
 - d. _____ were also still very dominate (of forbidding to eat with the Gentiles) to the point of closed minds to God's word
 3. Peter presents his case - lays out the evidence (11:4-17) He reviews everything from start to finish - he has nothing to hide
 - a. During his prayer time, Peter (11:4-10):
 - 1) Had a vision of a sheet descending full of _____ animals as defined by the Ceremonial aspect of the OT Law
 - 2) Heard a voice from heaven commanding him to eat
 - 3) He immediately refused - he is quick to be steadfast!
 - 4) God rebukes Peter _____ times on the basis that when God cleanses something, it is then truly clean - no longer sinful - this applies to two things:
 - a) If **unclean foods** can be cleansed by Christ's blood
 - b) Then, **unclean** _____ (Gentiles) can ALSO be cleansed!
 - b. Peter then went with a group of Gentiles seeking him to come meet a man named *Cornelius* (11:11-17):
 - 1) Cornelius reviews *his* recent extraordinary events
 - 2) Peter preaches a very short message of only 217 words
 - 3) The whole house simply believed the words preached
 - 4) The Holy Ghost then fell upon them and gave them the very same gift of tongues that He did to the Jews. This then shows the secondary purpose of tongues

- a) As a sign to _____ Jews that Christianity is of God, just as much as the Exodus from Egypt was (both start with signs)
 - b) As a sign to _____ Jews that the Gentiles are to be allowed "in" on God's salvation equally!
- 5) John the Baptist said this was what to expect
6) Peter realised that he could not over-rule God - had simply misunderstood God's ways (Ps 95:10)!
4. The Jewish Christians _____ (11:18) - the Gospel then is no longer exclusive to one nationality (Jewish), but is universal!

B. To Be a Christian Means _____ Ourselves - The Birth of the Church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-26)

1. We usually limit our Christianity to ourselves, our enjoyment, and our own desires - but what about God's desires? To be truly Christian, we must crucify OUR desires, and launch-out into this world, and "become fruitful and multiply." To be human means no less!
2. Persecution and Scattering means _____, not Ruin (11:19)
 - a. At first, there was the church at Jerusalem - made up of Jews
 - b. But the persecution was driving these Jewish Christians all over the region, and new churches were sprouting up, but still only consisting of Jewish believers
 - c. So, instead of destroying Christianity, persecution and scattering only _____ the number of believers - howbeit, only Jewish ones. Let's always make sure that we have the same determination: to build this church, and to multiply!
3. Mistakes in our ministry are not always bad (11:20,21)
 - a. Some of the Jewish Christians "accidentally" preached to the Gentile Grecians, who then got saved - just like Cornelius
 - b. God was behind their "mistake" - some things to learn:
 - 1) God will use _____ to get His will done - His will is that the world would hear and get saved (Mk 16:15)
 - 2) No matter how you may "ruin" a situation, God can make it turn out right - if you will permit Him
 - 3) It is best to allow God to use your concerted efforts instead of your rebellious hindrances
 - c. The Gentiles, as well as the Jews had to turn away from their religion (whatever it would be), and turn ONLY to the Lord
4. Discern the Hand of the Lord - the will and work of God (11:22)
 - a. Heard the whole story- did not react to gossip and innuendo
 - b. Sent someone (Barnabas) to personally verify:
 - 1) If the salvations matched what the Scriptures demanded
 - 2) If there were any _____ lives - would anyone be able to verify that YOU and I are Christians!?
5. Encourage and help other churches to grow (11:23-26) - even if they are not what you expected, nor are what you want!
 - a. Barnabas **looked** to see if God's _____ was in these people's lives - not miracles, tongues, etc.
 - b. Barnabas **loved** to see God saving the Gentiles - what is YOUR love?
 - c. Barnabas **exhorted** - _____ to the congregation (14:22):
 - 1) They must cleave (cling) unto the Lord - totally depend - no "on again, off again" Christianity
 - 2) They must make it a _____ - purpose of heart - no matter what troubles may lie ahead!
 - d. Barnabas **lived** what he asked the Antioch Christians to do:
 - 1) Everyone came to know him as a good man
 - 2) They knew him to be full of the Holy Ghost (Acts 6:5)
 - 3) And full of faith - confidence, dependence upon Christ
 - 4) And a soul-winner - much more people got saved!
 - e. Barnabas **used** the situation to develop a young Christian in the ministry (hands on experience) - _____ of Tarsus (11:25)
6. The Results of living like Christ (11:26)
 - a. Opportunities - for new disciples to grow around you
 - b. Spiritual Hunger - people start to see what Christ was all about instead of just what "Church" is all about
 - c. Being called Christians - the highest commendation, even when spoken in disgust! Notice:
 - 1) Nowhere in the Bible is anyone called a Jehovah's Witness, a Mormon, a Catholic, or a Protestant
 - 2) The term Christian is an earned commendation for _____ (Mt 9:9; 16:24), not for *free-loaders*, and *feel-gooders*

- C. **To Be A Christian Means Not Forgetting Our _____** - The Burden of Christians for Judæa (Acts 11:27-30)
1. The work of the Holy Spirit shifts from Jerusalem only to _____ - some of the prophets (Eph 4:11) come up to Antioch
 2. _____ (a leading prophet) makes a prophecy that a great _____ would affect the whole known world
 3. Instead of everyone worrying only about themselves, they determine to send "relief" unto the brethren back in Judæa
 - a. Took up a special offering - above the normal tithes. God says learn to meet other needs, and your needs will be met
 - b. According to their ability - not mandatory - an act of _____ and respect - the Christians in Jerusalem had brought them the Gospel in the first place (11:19; Ro 15:25-27; 1Cor 9:11)
 - c. Sent the money by Barnabas and Saul- they were _____
 - d. Placed the money into the hands of the pastors of churches in Judæa to distribute to the people - no Govt handouts
 4. Never forget some things
 - a. Your Jewish connections:
 - 1) The Bible is a _____ Book
 - 2) Salvation is Jewish, not Catholic (John 4:24)
 - 3) Jesus is a Jew - not European, African or American
 - 4) Every Gentile who gets saved, gets *grafted* into Abraham's descendency (Rom 11) - adopted into a royal line
 - b. Your Responsibilities as a Christian
 - 1) To _____ and support Israel. God blesses those who bless Israel, and curses those who curse them (Gen 12:1-3) - as seen throughout history (Egypt, Babylon, England)
 - 2) To _____ for Israel. Christians are commanded to pray for peace in Jerusalem (the city of peace; Ps 137:5; 122:6)
 - 3) Thank the one who gave you the Gospel!

II. Conclusion

III. Study Questions