

Seeing God at Work and Supporting It

Acts 11:1-18

August 9, 2020

Acts Series: Taking the Message of Jesus' Kingdom Everywhere

Acts 11¹ The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him³ and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

⁴ Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story:⁵ “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was.⁶ I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles and birds.⁷ Then I heard a voice telling me, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’

⁸ “I replied, ‘Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’

⁹ “The voice spoke from heaven a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’¹⁰ This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again.

¹¹ “Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying.¹² The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man’s house.¹³ He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter.’¹⁴ He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.’

¹⁵ “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning.¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’¹⁷ So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?”

¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, “So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life.”¹

¹ The New International Version. (2011): Zondervan.

A. Gentiles Received the Word of God

In some rabbinical writings, the Gentiles were condemned

Echoes of this are seen in Matthew 10:14 or 15:26

The news travelled faster than Peter

Gentiles were to receive the gospel but the question was over Jewish content, observance and ritual.

B. Peter was criticized

διακρίνομαι (*diakrinomai*) A Greek verb used occasionally in the NT. (19 times and only 4 times by Luke (Acts 10:20, **11:2**, **11:12**, 15:9) all here in Acts and all in relation to the events surrounding Peter and Cornelius. It has a range of meaning from doubt, hesitate, dispute, to criticize, accuse, contend. In some sense the others in the Early Church thought they were doing something that Peter should have done to avoid this situation. Acts 11:2: NIV, ESV, NLT, Criticize; NASB, Took Issue; NKJV, KJV, Contended Acts 11:12: NIV, Hesitation; ESV, Distinction; NASB, Misgivings; NLT, Not to Worry; NKJV, KJV, Doubting Nothing.

Circumcision is the big issue

Peter's behaviour appeared doubtful and disputable

Peter's history is that of rash and impulsive behaviour

Leadership and criticism often go together

Even in the Early Church

C. 'Crime'

Entering an unclean house

Eating with the unclean - uncircumcised

The best part of this criticism was that it was direct

So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way? Verse 17

A. Simple Explanation

Not based on his personality or apostolic authority

Based on Triple Revelation and Triple the minimum 2 witnesses

In Chapter 10 and 11 look at how many times the number 3 or a multiple of 3 occurs and how many things get repeated 3 times. Recount: John 13:38, 18:15-18; 18:23-27; 20:15-17

The vision came three times
no one would miss the denial implications

The Jerusalem leadership needed to draw their own conclusions

B. What kind of Animals were in the Sheet?

Unclean = Non Jewish

Clean = Jewish

Where did the animals go when the vision was finished?

What is the symbolism here?

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Romans 8:11-17 is clear that the Holy Spirit lives in Jesus' followers

The Book of Acts displays numerous 'proofs' of the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person's life including Acts 10:46 the speaking in tongues. There are numerous other 'proofs' of the baptizing presence of the Spirit (conversion) that do not necessarily involve tongues. (Such as: Acts 8:36-40, water baptism; Acts 9:17, 18, healing; Acts 14:21, conversions; Acts 16:14, an opened heart; Acts 16:31; 18:8 belief in Jesus; Acts 17: 4, 34, persuaded)

When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life." Verse 18

A. Earthquake

Nearly every important Jewish distinctiveness was being shaken

Is being or becoming Jewish necessary to be a disciple of Jesus?

The circumcision debate that surfaces in the rest of Acts, Romans and Galatians hinges on this debate and dissent.

Ephesians 2⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

¹¹ Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ²

A Jewish person who follows Jesus can keep their ethnicity and ritual

A non-Jewish person who follows Jesus does not need to convert to Judaism as well.

This is Jesus' point in Matthew 20:1-16

B. Praise to God

Their thinking was beginning to change.

Seeing God at work and supporting it

Conducting an honest search

Responding to the message of Jesus

Recognizing the Presence and work of the Holy Spirit in a life

Connecting with God's people

² The New International Version. (2011): Zondervan.