

Chapter Eleven

Chapter 11

- This chapter begins by informing us that the news of the events in the previous chapter had reached the ears of those in Jerusalem.
- The text states in verses 2-3 that "When Peter had come up to Jerusalem, those who were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"
 - Was anyone on either side of this issue discussing eating unclean foods?
 - Those "who were of the circumcision" refers to that subset of the Messianic community still clinging to the man-made Rabbinic requirement that required ritual conversion of gentiles and disallowed interaction with them. Instead of rejoicing over these gentiles coming to faith, they criticized Peter for not

following their traditions regarding separation from gentiles.

- What was "the issue" that was the source of the tension?
- Verses 4-16 include Peter's retelling of the events of his vision from God and the subsequent events that explained it to him.
 - Obviously, Peter understood the vision of the unclean animals in the sheet as a reference to his prejudice regarding gentiles, otherwise his application of this as a response to the issue at hand stated in verse 3 would not make sense.
- Verse 17 explains Peter's unassailable logic.
 - According to Peter's statement, was there any difference in the way Jews or gentiles experience salvation?
 - His subtle challenge to those questioning him involved recognizing the sovereignty of God and the evidence of the bestowing of the Holy Spirit with "the same gift" on those believing gentiles.
 - His statement, "who was I, that I could withstand

God?" was directed at his detractors with considerable force.

- According to verse 18, what was their unified response?
- Their acknowledgment that "God has also granted to the gentiles repentance to life!" demonstrates that the sole issue this "party of the circumcision" had was their prejudice against gentiles and their fealty to their man-made Rabbinic separation from them and had nothing to do with any so-called abrogation of the food laws in Leviticus 11.
- According to verse 19, when Jewish believers had left Jerusalem, where did they travel to?
 - Did they preach the gospel to Jews and gentiles or only to Jews?
 - How does this inform us of their previous commonly held belief about prejudice against gentiles?
 - Some of these believers from Cyprus and Cyrene began sharing the gospel with Greeks, meaning gentiles.

- According to verse 22, when news of this successful outreach to the gentiles reached the leadership in Jerusalem, what did they do?
 - Barnabas was originally from Cyprus. Why did it make sense to choose him to investigate what was happening in Antioch?
 - In Acts chapter 8, we saw the Jerusalem elders send Peter and John to verify what they had heard about the Samaritans receiving the gospel message. Why had this been a surprising turn of events?
 - If the Samaritans were coming to faith, how much more challenging was it for these believers to realize gentiles coming to faith as well, without the Rabbinic invention of ritual conversion?
- According to verses 23-24, what was the reaction of Barnabas after his investigation?
- According to verses 25-26, why do you suppose Barnabas sought out Saul and have him come to Antioch?
- As a Torah scholar fluent in Hebrew and Greek, how appropriate was Saul as the choice to teach these new believers?

- In verses 27-30, we see the prophetically induced response from these believers to help each other during the coming famine.
 - In sending additional relief to the Jerusalem congregation, it was a gift of grace that could also demonstrate equality in terms of their faith.
 - Do you think that the Jerusalem congregation may have been encouraged by this gracious act?
 - How do you think it may have helped in their overcoming previously held prejudices against gentiles?