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By Dan Maines

## Acts 11

### Acts 11:1-3

Now the apostles and the brothers and sisters who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, the Jewish believers took issue with him, saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them."

† The inclusion of Gentiles provoked controversy. Table fellowship was a major boundary marker in Judaism. Peter's actions challenged long-standing divisions.

† Josephus (Antiquities 20.2.4) describes how strict Jews separated themselves from Gentiles to preserve purity.

### **Acts 11:4-10**

But Peter began and explained at length to them in an orderly sequence, saying, "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object coming down like a great sheet lowered by four corners from the sky; and it came right down to me, and when I had stared at it and was thinking about it, I saw the four-footed animals of the earth, the wild animals, the crawling creatures, and the birds of the sky. I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' But I said, 'By no means, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' But a voice from heaven answered a second time, 'What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.' This happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into the sky."

† Peter repeated the vision of unclean animals, clarifying its meaning for his fellow believers. God Himself declared the Gentiles clean.

† The Mishnah (Kelim 1.6) shows how meticulous Jews were in distinguishing clean from unclean, highlighting the radical shift God revealed.

### **Acts 11:11-14**

"And behold, at that moment three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea came up to the house where we were staying. And the Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man's house. And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, 'Send some men to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.'"

† Peter emphasized that the Spirit Himself directed him, leaving no room for human doubt. Witnesses confirmed his account.

### **Acts 11:15-17**

"And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' Therefore, if God gave them the same gift as He also gave to us after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

† Peter linked Cornelius' household directly to Pentecost. The Spirit's outpouring proved God made no distinction between Jew and Gentile.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS 4.20-21) describe God pouring His Spirit on the faithful, but the church saw this extended beyond Israel.

### **Acts 11:18**

When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has also granted to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."

† The controversy was silenced by God's clear action. Repentance and life extended to Gentiles was undeniable.

### **Acts 11:19-21**

So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the good news of the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

† Antioch became a major center for the church's expansion. The gospel spread to Greeks as well, showing God's universal plan.

† Josephus (Wars 7.3.3) notes Antioch as a large city with many Jews, making it a fitting place for early church growth.

### **Acts 11:22-24**

The news about them reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and faith. And considerable numbers were added to the Lord.

† Barnabas, the Son of Encouragement, nurtured the new Gentile believers. His Spirit-filled character made him the ideal envoy.

### **Acts 11:25-26**

And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers of people; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

† Saul (Paul) joined Barnabas in Antioch, strengthening the new community. The term "Christians" originated there, showing the church's distinct identity.

† Tacitus (Annals 15.44) later refers to "Christians," showing the name's spread in the first century.

### **Acts 11:27-28**

Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and indicated by the Spirit that there would definitely be a severe famine all over the world. And this took place during the reign of Claudius.

† Prophecy confirmed real events. A famine under Claudius is confirmed by Josephus (Antiquities 20.2.5) who recorded famine in Judea.

### **Acts 11:29-30**

And to the extent that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brothers and sisters living in Judea. And they did this, sending it with Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

† Gentile believers demonstrated unity with Jewish believers by sending aid. This fulfilled the vision of one body in Christ.

### **How it applies to us today**

† The church must never put barriers where God has removed them. Jew and Gentile, insider and outsider, are united in Christ.

† God confirms His will through the Spirit, Scripture, and historical events.

† True faith is shown not only in words but also in deeds, as seen in Antioch's generosity.

† We must be ready to encourage, nurture, and strengthen new believers as Barnabas did.

**† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †**

### **Source Index**

† Josephus, Antiquities 20.2.4 – Jewish separation from Gentiles

† Mishnah, Kelim 1.6 – Clean and unclean distinctions

† Dead Sea Scrolls, 1QS 4.20-21 – God's Spirit poured on the faithful

† Josephus, Wars 7.3.3 – Antioch as a major city with Jewish presence

† Tacitus, Annals 15.44 – Early use of the name Christians

† Josephus, Antiquities 20.2.5 – Famine during Claudius' reign

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