

MAKE ROOM FOR THE GENTILES 11

Tradition said that a Gentile had to “_____” in order to be accepted, but now Jews and Gentiles were united in the church through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:26–28). Acts 11 describes three responses of the Jewish believers to the Gentile Christians. As you study these responses, you will better understand how Christians today ought to relate to one another.

1. THEY _____ THE GENTILES (11:1–18) Peter no sooner returned to Jerusalem when he was met by members of the strong legalistic party in the church of Judea (“they that were of the circumcision”) who rebuked him for fellowshipping with Gentiles and eating with them. Keep in mind that these Jewish believers did not yet understand the relationship between law and grace, Jews and Gentiles, and Israel and the church. Most Christians today understand these truths, but, after all, we have Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and Hebrews! There were many _____ in the church who would be zealous for the law (Acts 6:7), and even the ordinary Jewish believer would have a difficult time making the transition (21:20). It was not only a matter of religion, but also of culture, and cultural habits are very hard to break. They wanted to woo the believers into a life of obedience to the law (Gal. 1:6ff.; Phil. 3:1–3, 17–21). It is possible that many of these legalists were genuine believers, but they did not understand their freedom in Jesus Christ (Gal. 5:1ff.). In his personal defense in Acts 11, Peter presented three pieces of evidence:

1. The _____ from God. (Acts 11:5–11) Of course, none of these men had seen the vision, but they trusted Peter’s report, for they knew that he had been as orthodox as they in his personal life (10:14).
2. The _____ of the Spirit (vv. 12–15, 17)
3. The Witness of the Word (v. 16)

Peter had nothing to fear he was following orders from the Lord, and the Spirit had clearly confirmed the salvation of the Gentiles. Peter reviewed the entire experience from beginning to end, and when he was finished, the Jewish legalists dropped their charges and glorified God for the salvation of the Gentiles (Acts 11:18).

2. THEY _____ THE GENTILES (11:19–26) When the saints were scattered abroad after Stephen’s death and during Saul’s persecution of the church (Acts 8:1), some of them ended up in Antioch, the capital of Syria, three hundred miles north of Jerusalem. (Don’t confuse this city with Antioch in Pisidia, Acts 13:14.) There were at least _____ Antioch’s in the ancient world, but this one was the greatest. This city was a busy port and very wicked. All the Greek, Roman and Syrian gods were worshipped there with a particular shrine to Daphne. The church leaders in Jerusalem had a responsibility to shepherd this Antioch assembly. So, the elders in Jerusalem commissioned _____ to go up and evaluate the Church in Antioch. Barnabas also goes on to Tarsus to find _____.

3. THEY _____ FROM THE GENTILES (11:27–30)

Finally, we see the churches in the dispersion sending aid and relief to the church in Jerusalem. Some years later, Paul would gather a similar offering from the Gentile churches and take it to the saints in Jerusalem (Acts 24:17; and see Rom. 15:23–28). **WHY?**

A word about the **Prophecy of Agabus**. Remember the New Testament is not available yet. So God used special miraculous Spirit-filled miracles to validate the early church and apostles. Not everyone who claims to have a “word from the Lord” or “special knowledge” is for real. This can be a dangerous area. We should always test the “spirit” (1 John 4). Any miracle, word, or tongue needs to be in line with the _____ or it is **NOT** of the Spirit!

WAKE UP TO A MIRACLE 12

Imagine waking up to a miracle and having an angel for your alarm clock! That’s what happened to Peter when he was in prison for the _____, awaiting trial and certain death. Years later, when he wrote his first epistle, Peter may have had this miraculous experience in mind when he quoted Psalm 34:15–16: “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Peter 3:12). That quotation certainly summarizes what God did for Peter, and it reveals to us three wonderful assurances to encourage us in the difficult days of life.

1. GOD SEES OUR TRIALS (12:1–4)

This Herod is a descendant to the _____ in Matthew 2 (grandson) with the wise men at Jesus’ birth. Apples really don’t all too far from the tree! When Herod has James beheaded, it immediately brings to light Matthew 20:20–28, which takes on special significance. James and John, with their mother, had asked for thrones, but Jesus made it clear that there can be no glory apart from suffering. “Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” He asked (Matt. 20:22). Their bold reply was, “We are able.”

2. GOD HEARS OUR PRAYERS (12:5–17)

“And His ears are open unto their prayers” (1 Peter 3:12). The phrase “but prayer” is the turning point in the story. Never underestimate the power of a praying church! This serious incident is also very humorous.

Peter Sleeping (5-6) Really? In jail and your comrade has been beheaded and your next? Was Peter a “light sleeper?”

Peter Obeying (7-11) Once again we behold the ministry of _____ (Acts 5:19; 8:26; 10:3, 7) and are reminded that the angels care for God’s children (Ps. 34:7).

Peter Knocking (12-16) The angel didn’t direct Peter to this home. He used common sense. Let’s see how the church prayed....

- (a) Many people were praying
- (b) They were praying _____
- (c) They prayed night and day for perhaps as long as _____
- (d) They prayed _____ on Peter’s deliverance,

Peter Declaring (17)

3. GOD DEALS WITH OUR ENEMIES (12:18–25) “But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Peter 3:12).

The world still lives for praise and pleasure. Man has made himself his own god (Rom. 1:25). The world still lives on the physical and ignores the spiritual (see 1 John 2:15–17). It lives by force and flattery instead of faith and truth, and one day it will be judged.

And what was the result of all this business? “But the word of God grew and multiplied” (Acts 12:24). This is another of Luke’s summaries, or “_____,” that started with Acts 6:7 (see 9:31; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31). Luke is accomplishing the purpose of his book and showing us how the church spread.

Answers:

Become a Jew, Accepted, Converted Priests, Vision, Witness, Encourage, Sixteen, Barnabas, Saul, Received Help, Bible, Third Time, Herod, Angles, Earnestly, A Week, Specifically, Progress Reports