

Peter Explains His Actions



Ice-Breaker

What was the wrong crowd to hang out with when you were in school? Did you anyway?



Scripture Passage

Acts 11:1-18

11 The apostles and the brothers 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 Peter began and explained everything to them precisely as it had happened: 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 of the air. 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^a water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

¹⁷ So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?"

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

a [16] Or in



Bible Study

1. Why did Luke take the time and space to record the events of 10:9-46 all over again?
2. Of what importance is the gift of the Holy Spirit in Peter's argument? Why would this have such a strong effect on the Jerusalem believers? Why is this gift misunderstood (see vv. 5-8)?
3. Why do you think God chose Peter to be the first to go to the Gentiles? Would any other disciple have been as successful in both Caesarea and Jerusalem? Why or why not?
4. How do you explain the change in attitudes from verse 2 to verse 18? How does this story relate to 1:8?



Reference Notes

11:2 the circumcised believers. Since at this point all the believers (except Cornelius and his household) were circumcised, Luke may be using a term popular at the time of his writing to describe those Jews who still insisted that Gentiles must first become Jews before they could be Christians.

11:14 While not stated earlier, this shows why Cornelius was so eager to have Peter come: he had the message of how one might be delivered from sin and guilt to be in a right relationship with God.

11:17 The gift of the Spirit is the indisputable mark of the Christian. Peter highlights that the Spirit is given to all (Jew or Gentile) who believe in the Lord Jesus (see also Galatians 3:2).

11:18 While the Jerusalem church saw in principle that Gentiles were to be included in the church, tradition and prejudice prevented it from acting on that truth to any extent (see Acts 15). Instead, it was the church at Antioch, to which Luke now turns his attention, that spearheaded the missionary movement.



Caring Time

1. How can the principle of God bestowing his Spirit on non-Jews affect the way you treat unacceptable people you meet?
2. How have you been criticized for breaking religious traditions? What did you feel was at stake?
3. The lesson of 10:34-35 and 11:18 was not easily learned, even by Peter (see Galatians 2:11-14). What might have happened if the early church ignored this principle?