

## Acts 11: THE BIRTH OF THE ANTIOCH CHURCH

### Introduction

The first part of Acts 11 details Peter's defense of himself for daring to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Listen to the reaction of the rest of the apostles and the believers in Jerusalem to the news of Peter's powerful exploit. *"the circumcised believers criticized him 3 and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them."* So we found out that prejudice against the Gentile was deeper than we thought. It looks like the church in Jerusalem is not up to the task of fulfilling all the commandments stated in Acts 1:8, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* They were fine with reaching out to their fellow Jews in Jerusalem and even to the Samaritans but not to the rest of the world. God must find an alternative, someone else or another church who will complete the job. Hence, in the second part of Acts 11, Luke introduces us to the birth of the church in Antioch.

As we would eventually find out, the church in Antioch was later to play a key role in fulfilling the last part of the great commission. You can now see why we said at the beginning that the most important and overarching verse in the book of Acts is **Acts 1:8**. *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* In fact, throughout the entire book of Acts, it is as if Luke is trying to show us how Acts 1:8 was fulfilled by the early disciples.

The Antioch church started as a result of a breakthrough in soulwinning by some unknown brethren who were scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed in Jerusalem. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard of what God was doing in Antioch, they sent Barnabas, a well-respected leader in Jerusalem, to oversee the work and to establish the church.

### Study the Scriptures: Read the Passage Acts 11:1-30

Note your thoughts as you read:

Write down any questions that come to mind as you read:

### **Think Through the Following Questions**

1. Why do you think the church in Jerusalem and all the twelve Apostles got it so wrong when it comes to reaching out to the Gentiles with the gospel?
2. Does that tell us anything about the church today? What lessons can we learn about that today?
3. What do you make of the fact that the church in Antioch did not start as a result of any supernatural, spiritual leading but almost accidentally as a result of migration due to persecution?
4. Do you think God still uses seemingly natural occurrences such as migration today to expand His work into different places?
5. What can we learn about church planting from what the Apostle did by sending Barnabas to lead the church instead of just allowing the brothers to continue the work they started?
6. Why do you think Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul? Read Acts 9:26-27.
7. What do you make of Acts 11:26. Does that tell us anything about the impact of effective teaching and dedication to studying the Word in a local church?

**Lessons Learned: Are there any new things you learned from this passage today?**

**Application: How do you think this will impact your thinking and/or actions going forward?**