

ACTS 8

1. Why did the apostles and the other believers not go immediately to the Gentiles to teach them about Christ?

-Because the Jewish believers were Jews who would not mix with uncircumcised Gentiles.

-Because the Jewish believers did not understand that circumcision was no longer necessary to be accepted by God.

2. Cornelius was a Gentile, but how was he different from most Gentiles?

-Cornelius believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the teachings of the Old Testament.

3. In the vision God gave to Peter, what was God teaching Peter?

-First, because God has cleansed all who believe in Jesus, no one in Christ is unclean.

-Second, just as God put the clean and unclean animals together, God puts together all who believe in Jesus.

-Third, the laws of clean and unclean animals are no longer necessary because of the death of Jesus.

4. What was the only reason that Peter went to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile?

-Because God gave Peter the vision.

5. Why did the Holy Spirit come upon Cornelius and other Gentiles and give them the ability to speak in

foreign languages just as He did at Pentecost?

-This was a sign for Peter and for all of the Jewish Christians.

6. What does this sign mean?

-That God had fully accepted the uncircumcised Gentiles who believed in Christ, and that they were now a part of the Church just like the Jewish believers.

-After Cornelius and his family believed in Christ, what happened to Peter when he returned to Jerusalem?

Let's read Acts 11:1-3

1-Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

2-And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him,

3-saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"

-Some of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were very angry that Peter had entered the home of a Gentile and ate with them.

-Did these Jewish Christians understand why Peter went into Cornelius' house and ate with him?

-No.

-What did many of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem believe about the Gentiles?

-That the Gentiles were unclean.

-That God did not want the Jews to be with Gentiles.

-That God would not save the Gentiles, but only the Jews.

-In Acts 11:2, Luke refers to these Jewish believers as those “of the circumcision.”

-What did the Jews “of the circumcision” believe?

-They believed that if the Gentiles did not become circumcised and follow the ways of the Jews, then God would not save them.

-These Jewish believers “of the circumcision” caused many problems in the early Church.

-We will learn more about these problems and God’s answers when we study other books in the New Testament.

-Because the Jewish believers in Jerusalem did not see the vision that God had given to Peter, they were very angry with him.

-How did Peter respond?

Let’s read Acts 11:4

4-Peter began and explained everything to them precisely as it had happened.

-Peter explained to the Christians in Jerusalem the vision and told what happened at Cornelius’ home.

Let’s read Acts 11:15-17

15-[Peter said] “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 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?”

-When the apostles heard how God had accepted the Gentiles, even though they were uncircumcised, what was their response?

Let’s read Acts 11:18

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.”

-What is the lesson here?

-The lesson here is that God wants to save all people whether they are Jew or Gentile, man or woman, black or white.

-After Peter helped the Jewish Christians to understand that God wants to save all people, the Book of Acts now tells us about the Jewish believers who fled Jerusalem when Stephen was stoned to death.

Let's read Acts 11:19-20

19-Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews.

20-Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.

-When many of the Jewish believers had to leave Jerusalem because of persecution, they went to other towns.

-Yet these Jewish believers would only tell the Jews about Jesus.

-Some of these Jewish believers, however, were born in Cyprus and Cyrene where their fathers had lived among

Gentiles.

-Because these Jewish believers were born in Cyprus and Cyrene, they spoke the Greek language.

-This is because the Greek language was spoken in all of the countries under the control of the Romans.

-Like Cornelius, there were many Gentiles living in the nations surrounding Israel.

-Some of these Gentiles believed in the God of the Old Testament.

-Some of these Gentiles knew that God promised to send a Savior.

-These Gentiles heard the teachings of the Old Testament from their Jewish neighbors.

-These Gentiles also heard the teachings in the Jewish synagogues that were built in the cities where the Jews lived.

-Therefore, these Greek-speaking Jewish believers began to teach God's Word to the Gentiles living in Antioch.

-Here is what happened in Antioch:

Let's read Acts 11:21

21-The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

-What was the result of the Jewish believers teaching these Gentiles in Antioch?

-Many Gentiles believed, and a church began.

-It was in Antioch that the first large group of Gentiles believed in Jesus as their Savior.

-When the believers in Jerusalem heard that many Gentiles in Antioch believed in Christ, what did they do?

Let's read Acts 11:22-24

22-News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.

23-When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

24-He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

-Whom did the church send to Antioch?

-Barnabas.

-Who was Barnabas?

-Barnabas was the Jew who befriended Saul when he returned to Jerusalem as a new believer.

-Like the Jewish believers teaching the Gentiles in Antioch, Barnabas was also born in Cyprus.

-Why did the believers in Jerusalem send Barnabas to Antioch?

-Because they wanted to make sure that these Gentile believers were following the teachings of Christ.

-At that time, the New Testament was not yet written.

-Today also, it is important that Christians read and follow the Word of God written in the Old and New Testaments.

-When you teach others the Word of God, you must make sure that they also read and follow the Word of God.

-When Barnabas was teaching at Antioch, what did God prompt him to do?

Let's read Acts 11:25-26

25-Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,
26-and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met

with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

-Why did Barnabas go to Tarsus?

-To ask Saul to help him teach God's Word in Antioch.

-What were the believers in Antioch called?

-Christians.

-What does the name "Christian" mean?

-It means "Christ's people" or "those who belong to Christ."

-For a time, the Christians were not persecuted, but the time of peace came to a sudden end.

Let's read Acts 12:1-2

1-It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them.

2-He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword.

-Who was this king Herod?

-He was the grandson of the king Herod who tried to kill the baby Jesus.

-It was this Herod who ordered the death of James.

-James was the first of the apostles of Jesus to be killed.

-When Jesus was on earth, He told James that he would be killed.

-When James was killed, many Jewish leaders were happy.

-The Jewish leaders were angry because many Jews believed in Jesus as their Savior.

-The Jewish leaders were also angry because the Jewish believers were teaching Gentiles that God would accept them through faith in Jesus.

-Because Herod wanted to please the Jewish leaders, he sent his soldiers to arrest Peter.

Let's read Acts 12:3-4

3-When [Herod] saw that this pleased the Jews. He proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

4-After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

-What did the Christians in Jerusalem do when they heard that Herod had put Peter in prison and wanted to

kill him?

Let's read Acts 12:5

5-So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

-The believers continued in prayer, asking the Lord to rescue Peter.

-The prison walls were made of thick stone.

-The prison doors were made of strong iron.

-The prisoners were bound by chains to their guards.

-There were other guards in the prison who were also watching the prisoners.

-Could God rescue Peter?

-There is nothing that God cannot do.

-The God who delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt could rescue Peter.

-The God who led Israel through the sea and gave them water and bread for forty years in the desert could rescue Peter.

-Did God rescue Peter?

Let's read Acts 12:6-11

6-The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance.

7-Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

8-Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him.

9-Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision.

10-They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

11-Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating."

-Why did God send His angel to rescue Peter, but allow Stephen and James to be killed?

-Did the Lord Jesus love Peter more than He loved Stephen and James?

-No,
-God does not love one person more than another.
-All of God's children are very precious to Him.
-Why did the Lord save Peter, but not Stephen and James?
-Did the Christians pray for Peter, but not for Stephen and James?
-No.
-We can be sure that the Christians also prayed for Stephen and James.
-Although we are not told, we do know that God loves us and always does what is right for His children.
-Will God always say "Yes" to all who ask Him?
-No.
-God will only say "Yes," if it is best for us.
-Should we ask God to help just like the Christians did when they prayed for Peter?
-Yes.

-We should pray to our God about everything.
-The prayers of God's children are very important.
-If we do not pray for God's help, we will not receive the help we need from Him.
-But even if we ask God to heal someone who is sick or do something for us, the Lord may say "No."
-We cannot command God to do something because we are only people, and He alone is God.
-God is our Master, and we must accept His will even if we do not understand.
-It is important, however, to understand that God is wise and loving, and that He always does what is right for His children.
-God allowed the people to kill Stephen because Stephen's work for the Lord was finished.
-God allowed Herod to kill James because James' work for the Lord was finished.
-God rescued Peter because Peter's work for the Lord was not yet finished.
-What did Peter do when he realized that God had set

him free from prison?

Let's read Acts 12:12-17

12-When this had dawned on him, [Peter] went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying.

13-Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door.

14-When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

15-"You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

16-But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.

17-Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the brothers about this," he said, and then he left for another place.

-What did Peter tell the believers to do?

-To tell James and the other leaders in Jerusalem how the Lord had rescued him.

-Who was this James who became one of the leaders in Jerusalem when Peter had to hide from King Herod?

-He was the son of Mary and Joseph and the half-brother of Jesus.

-This James was the son of Mary and Joseph.
-Therefore, he was the half-brother of Jesus.

-It was after Peter left to work for the Lord in other places that James became one of the leaders in Jerusalem.

-What did the Holy Spirit guide James to do?

-To write one of the books of the New Testament.
-The name of this book is called James.

-Besides James, Mary and Joseph had other children.

-Jude was another one of their sons, and the half-brother to Jesus.

-What did the Holy Spirit guide Jude to do?

-To also write one of the books of the New Testament.
-The name of this book is called Jude.

-In the next lesson, we will begin the story of how the Holy Spirit helped Saul and his companions to take the Good News of Jesus to many other countries around Israel.