

# The CHURCH Series

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Part 10 – The TURNING

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# Introduction

- As we travel through the book of Acts, the temptation would be to rush through it so we can finish quickly.
- This Bible Study platform is NOT a bible college or academic forum with a set of fixed semesters.
- We are all on a journey through the scriptures together.
- Tonight we will study chapter 11 only and let the Holy Spirit speak to our hearts!



# You went in?!

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- *Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.*
- *<sup>2</sup> And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him,*
- *<sup>3</sup> saying, “You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!” Acts 11:1-3*



# What!

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- Acts Chapter 11 is a pivotal moment in the Early Church. These set of passages reflects a shift to where the message of the gospel begins to break through long-held cultural and religious barriers.
- The tension between Jewish Believers ("those of the circumcision") and the inclusion of Gentiles (non-Jews) into the faith community is a central theme in the New Testament,
- This incident highlights the conflict between the old ways of religious observance and the *radical inclusivity* of the Gospel.



# No Way!

- The early church in Judea (which consisted mainly of Jewish Christians) had heard the news that Gentiles had received the word of God.
- This was a significant development because the Jewish people had historically been set apart as God's chosen people,
- with a strong cultural identity centred around their covenant with God, including circumcision as a sign of that covenant.





# Not allowed!!

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- Do you attend a church that has a strong cultural community and identity?
- What would equate to the surprise of the Jerusalem Church to Peter...in today's church culture?
- What Would make your Church leaders and elders angry or upset if they heard that you went to.....?
- I am aware that we visited this matter in the last session, but the Holy Spirit is letting Luke rewrite the whole story over again.
- This means we need to do the same! Repeat our study on this matter!!



# BUT....

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- *4 But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning, saying:*
- *5 “I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me.*
- *6 When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.*
- *7 And I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.*



# Repeat...

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- *<sup>8</sup> But I said, ‘Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.’*
- *<sup>9</sup> But the voice answered me again from heaven, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’*
- *<sup>10</sup> Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven.*
- *<sup>11</sup> At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea.*
- *<sup>12</sup> Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover, these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house.*

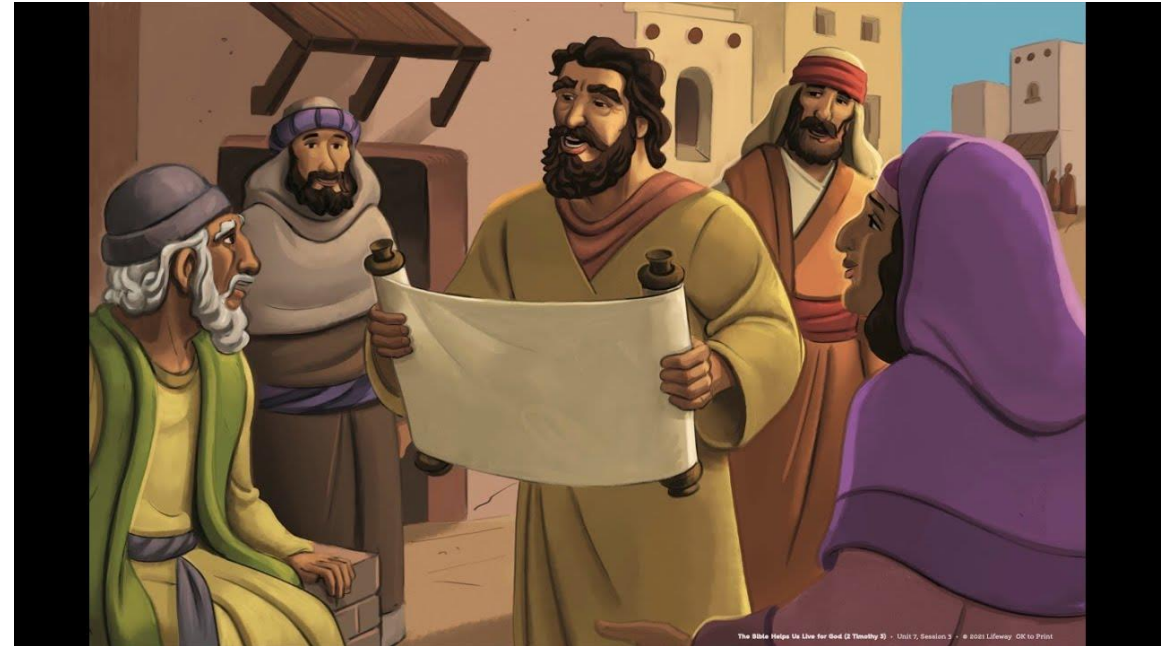




# And Repeat...

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- *13 And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, ‘Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter,*
- *14 who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.’*
- *15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning.*
- *16 Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’*
- *17 If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?”*



# Lesson...

- The whole story is repeated again!
- When God repeats something in scripture, He is letting us know its important!
- This moment is SO crucial we are 'wasting' precious space in retelling the story.
- There are things which need to be repeated so that we get it.
- How many times did you have to repeat the Alphabets? They were so foundational and important, we had to repeat them until we got it!!
- This is very important and foundational that the Holy Spirit brings us over the story **THREE TIMES!!**





# Wow!!

- <sup>18</sup>When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.”
- This is MONUMENTAL!!
- These Jews bow their cultural knees to the Holy Spirit!!
- They do not debate and contend with the Holy Spirit!
- They Glorify God and Worship!
- They accept what God has done!
- This is the work of the Holy Spirit!
- This is how our Churches and leaders of today should behave.





# GO YE....!

- *19 Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen*
- *travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.*
- *20 But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch*
- *, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus.*
- *21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.*  
Acts 11:19-21





# The P Word....

- The scattering of believers after the **persecution** that arose over Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 7)
- shows that God can work through difficult circumstances to advance His purposes.
- The **persecution**, intended to suppress the early Christian movement, ironically led to its spread.
- Those who fled took the gospel with them as they traveled to new regions like **Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch.**
- This demonstrates how adversity can become an opportunity for the church to grow and reach new places.



# Do Likewise....

- **Application Today:**
- Challenges and hardships in life or ministry can sometimes open doors for unexpected growth or new mission opportunities.
- Times of difficulty can often push believers out of their comfort zones and into new areas of service.





# Scattered...

- Initially, the scattered believers shared the gospel exclusively with their fellow Jews.
- This was understandable, as early Christians were primarily Jewish and viewed Jesus as the Jewish Messiah.
- The early followers of Jesus saw themselves as part of a Jewish renewal movement,
- and naturally, they would reach out first to those within their own cultural and religious group





# Break forth!

- The initial focus on preaching to Jews reflects how people often gravitate toward their own cultural or ethnic groups
- when sharing faith. This was a natural starting point but also illustrates
- the limited vision the early church had for the scope of the Gospel at that time.





# The Turning...

- A significant turning point occurs in verse 20, where men from **Cyprus and Cyrene**—Hellenistic Jews (Greek-speaking Jews from outside Israel)—
- arrive in Antioch and begin preaching to the **Hellenists**.
- The term "Hellenists" could refer to both Greek-speaking Jews or more broadly to non-Jews (Gentiles)
- with Greek cultural backgrounds. These believers from Cyprus and Cyrene had a broader vision for the gospel
- and were willing to share the message of Jesus with people beyond the Jewish community



# Barrier Breaking...

- **Breaking Cultural Barriers:**
- This moment marks a shift in evangelism, showing that the gospel is not just for one group of people, but for all.
- These men recognized that the message of Jesus was for everyone,
- regardless of ethnic or cultural background.
- They were not constrained by the old divisions between Jew and Gentile and understood the universal scope of the gospel.





# The Hand...

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- Verse 21 emphasizes that "**the hand of the Lord was with them**",
- and as a result, "**a great number believed and turned to the Lord.**"
- This highlights that the success of their evangelism was not merely due to human efforts
- but was empowered by God's active involvement.
- It shows the importance of divine blessing and guidance in evangelism—
- God was clearly affirming their decision to reach out to the Hellenists.





# Antioch...

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- **Antioch** becomes a central location for the spread of Christianity,
- particularly among Gentiles. Later in Acts, Antioch is described as the place where believers were first called "Christians" (Acts 11:26).
- The city was a major cultural and commercial hub in the ancient world,
- with a diverse population, making it an ideal place for the gospel to take root among both Jews and Gentiles. Antioch would later become the home base





# Barnabas...

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- <sup>22</sup> Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem,
- and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.
- <sup>23</sup> When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.
- <sup>24</sup> For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.  
Acts 11:22-24





# Barnabas...

- The news of the growing number of believers in Antioch reaches the ears of the church leadership in **Jerusalem**.
- As the mother church and the central hub of early Christianity,
- the Jerusalem church was keenly aware of the developments in Antioch,
- especially since this growth was happening among Gentiles, which was a new and significant development.





## Barnabas...

- The sending of Barnabas by the Jerusalem church demonstrates their desire to stay connected
- and ensure that this new movement was aligned with the teaching of the apostles.
- There was a concern for unity in doctrine and practice as the church began to expand across cultural lines.
- It also shows the Jerusalem church's responsibility to oversee and guide new believers in different regions.





# Barnabas...

- **Barnabas**, whose name means "Son of Encouragement" (Acts 4:36), is chosen to go to Antioch.
- His reputation for encouragement, faith, and being "full of the Holy Spirit" makes him the ideal leader to nurture this young and growing community.
- When he arrives, **he sees the grace of God** at work and is filled with joy.
- Rather than being skeptical or critical of this new and diverse group of believers,
- Barnabas rejoices in what God is doing among them.







**Next Week...**

Paul and Barnabas