

- A Study in Acts -

Chapter Eleven – Peter's Explanation – First Called Christians

ACTS 11:16-18:

In our previous lesson, we began to look into Peter's defense of going in to the Gentiles to preach the Gospel. This defense was being made to Christians who were of Jewish ancestry and still mired in the traditions of their fathers.

Here is the outline of the defense again:

- 1) Vision from God – **Vs. 5-11**
- 2) Spirit of God told him to go – **Vs. 12**
- 3) He took witnesses – **Vs. 12**
- 4) Peter had words for Cornelius and his household for their salvation – **Vs. 13-14**
- 5) The Spirit of God demonstrated God's approval of these events – **Vs. 15-16**
- 6) The result – **Vs. 17-18**

In our last lesson, we ran out of space before we could finish with **verse 16**, so we will pick back up with the remainder of that verse and move on.

Text #1:

Acts 11:16-18 “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?”

¹⁸ **When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.”**”

Then I Remembered: In the previous verse (15), remember that as Peter was preaching his sermon and before he could conclude the necessary instruction of what to do to be saved, the Spirit fell on these Gentiles. It was at this moment that Peter recalled the “**words of the Lord**”.

This is an important phrase to remember in order to differentiate between two different sets of teaching, which is sometimes brought together incorrectly here.

What this is not a reference too –

This is **not** a reference to John the Baptist's teaching to the Pharisees and Sadducees that came out to him at the Jordan River.

Matthew 3:11-12 “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.””

In the context of the confrontation between John the Baptist and this “**brood of vipers**” (his words concerning the Pharisees and Sadducees – **Matthew 3:7**); John is talking about a baptism of revelation (the universal work of the Spirit) and judgment (the universal understanding of “**fire**”), which the Lord Himself would bring to this people.

This is defined without question in **Matthew 3:12**. The wheat will be brought to the barn (those who heed the revelation), and the chaff will be burned (judgment on those who do not heed).

What this is a reference too –

This is a reference to the words of the Lord, spoken to His chosen prior to His ascension, note:

Acts 1:4-5 “And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” *He said*, “you have heard from Me; ⁵for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.””

Now, once again in the context of the instruction, the chosen disciples of the Lord (soon to be Apostles) are being instructed to wait in Jerusalem until they receive the promise of the Father (a promise given to them by the Lord). This promise for them and them alone was the Apostolic measure of the Holy Spirit that Jesus taught His chosen that they would receive after He had left them, the night before His subsequent arrest and trial – see **John 14:15-17, 26; 15:26-27; 16:13-15**.

This becomes the “**what**” it was going to be that the Apostles of the Lord would receive. It is the “**how**” that we are going to notice the commonality by which we share a similar likeness to the events transpiring in our text.

The Apostles of the Christ would be immersed with the Spirit of God, which we know would bestow the “**what**”, but would also become the “**how**” and a sign of the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus as the Christ coming first to the Jews, then to “**all who are afar off**” (Gentiles – **Acts 2:39**).

Summary -

So, Peter is recalling the same “**how**” as was spoken to him and the other Apostles of Christ; when the Spirit fell on the Gentiles in the same way as it had fallen on them (same “**how**”, not “**what**”); and acted in the same way, as a sign of God’s approval of the Gospel coming to those afar off, the same way He approved it coming to Israel!

So, let's take a look at the importance of this sign once again:

- (1) **10:47** – Peter would point to it as a demonstration of God's approval in order to challenge the Jewish witnesses that were with him, if they could deny baptism to these Gentiles.
- (2) **11:17** – To these Jews that Peter is giving this defense to; if God approved them (Gentiles), can men withstand God?
- (3) **15:7-9** – Later, when Jews are still troubling the Gentiles with burdens of the Law of Moses, Peter would use this sign again to show Jews that Gentiles were approved by God and having no distinction when it comes to receiving and obeying the Gospel of Christ (added to the body of Christ as well – **Galatians 3:26-29**).

Finally, there is nothing recorded and no reason to believe that this demonstration (the “**how**”) was retained for any reason after this point, nor can we possibly conceive that it did for the recipients anything more than the intended approval it was meant for.

With the sign and its value used by Peter as a demonstration that any continued dispute about the Gentiles having any distinction from the Jews cannot be considered, he states that he could not withstand God as a sign to these Jews that it would be futile for them to continue in this way as well.

The final verse of this portion of our text, demonstrates the capable unity that all can have, when we set aside our personal prejudices, and seek with humility the will of our God through Jesus Christ the Lord.

It should also give all of us an appreciation of the true intent of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is intended to be the power of God unto salvation (**Romans 1:16**); but also, a unifier of men (**Ephesians 2:14-18**), culminating in complete access to the Father as dear children.