



# **WELCOME TO BIBLE HOUSE OF GRACE**

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## **Acts 11**

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## Acts 11.

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### Topics.

- Peter goes to Jerusalem and is criticized by the Jews.
- A majestic era in God's history for Gentile nations.
- Peter explains to the Jews at Jerusalem why he baptized Gentiles.
- The Holy Spirit fell on Gentiles just as on us at the beginning.
- To the Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life.
- In Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.
- A great famine over the entire world.

**The previous chapter:** in the previous chapter an angel of God appeared to Cornelius in a vision, Peter had a vision of a great sheet full of unclean animals descending from heaven and while Peter was speaking to Jews and Gentiles in Cornelius house the Holy Spirit falls on them all, the chapter ended with all those in Cornelius household being water baptised.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

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### ACTS 11:1-3

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#### Peter goes to Jerusalem and is criticized by the Jews.

- **Acts 11:1-3:** Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. <sup>2</sup>So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party (Jews) criticised him, saying, <sup>3</sup>"You went to uncircumcised (Gentile) men and ate with them."

**NOTE:** the term, "The circumcision party" (v2) refers to Jews who believed a person had to be circumcised to be counted worthy of God's word and His gifts.

#### The key verse of this chapter:

- God has granted repentance that leads to life to the Gentiles (v18).

**A majestic era in God's history for Gentile nations:** this is an absolutely fabulous time in God's history for the Gentiles, up until now Israel has been God's special people, the LORD has always dealt with Israel differently to any other nation, He declared His word, statutes and His rules to Israel (the LORD has not done this with any other nation). They are children of Abraham the father of faith and because they are his offspring they were entrusted with the oracles of God and to them belongs the adoption, the glory and the covenants. God says he gave birth to Israel and carried them from the womb even to their old age (Isaiah 46:3-4) and loved them when they were a child, and out of Egypt He called Israel His Son. (Hosea 11:1). They were given the law, the worship and the promises, to them belong the patriarchs and from their race, came the Christ who is Lord over all that God created (Rom 3:2) (Rom 9:4-5, 7). Added to this; the LORD called Israel His Treasured Possession and the apple of the LORD'S eye, his allotted heritage and a people holy to Him

(Exod. 19:5) (Deut. 7:6) (Deut. 14:2) (Deut. 26:18) (Deut. 32:9).

But God is now pouring His Spirit out on all flesh, meaning Jews and Gentile alike, God has no partiality or favouritism toward the Jews just because they were born into a Hebrew or Jewish family in fact God is building an entirely new nation in Christ made up of Jews and Gentiles. This new nation is called a new creation, the body of Christ or the Church. Paul in his writings says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come, neither circumcision (being Jewish) counts for anything, nor uncircumcision (being Gentile), but a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17) (Gal 6:15). For further information see the title:

- The Commonwealth of Israel (at the end of this chapter).

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## **ACTS 11:4-14**

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### **Peter explains to the Jews at Jerusalem why he Baptized Gentiles.**

- **Acts 11:4-14:** But Peter began and explained it to them in order: <sup>5</sup>"I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me. <sup>6</sup>Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. <sup>7</sup>And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' <sup>8</sup>But I said, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' <sup>9</sup>But the voice answered a second time from heaven, 'What God has made clean, do not call common. <sup>10</sup>This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven. <sup>11</sup>And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. <sup>12</sup>And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. <sup>13</sup>And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; <sup>14</sup>he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.'

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The Jews saw their nation as the holy race with God and the Gentiles as an unclean people without God that is why when Peter arrived in Jerusalem the Jews (of the circumcision party) (v2) who believed a person needed to be circumcised to be counted worthy of God's word and His gifts were criticising Peter, he had not only associated with uncircumcised Gentiles but had water baptised them in Christ. Peter tells the Jews of his vision of a sheet descending from heaven with unclean animals in it and that an angel spoke to a Gentile Roman man named Cornelius and tells them of all the miraculous events that led up to him being in Cornelius house. For the actual story see:

- Acts chapter 10.
- In Commentary New Testament (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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## **ACTS 11:15-17**

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### **The Holy Spirit fell on Gentiles just as on us at the Beginning.**

- **Acts 11:15-17:** As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. <sup>16</sup>And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.' <sup>17</sup>If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

After explaining to the Jews how the Lord had miraculously brought Peter to the home of Cornelius he says, "How could he stand in the way of what God was doing when the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and all who were gathered with him just as the Holy Spirit had fallen on them at the beginning?" The beginning refers to the first time God poured out His

Spirit on all flesh (Jews and Gentiles) which was on the day of Pentecost when one hundred and twenty people were praying in an upper room and filled with the Holy Spirit which enable them to miraculously speak in a language which they had never learned and that was different to their native language (Acts 2:1-11) but was clearly understood by those who spoke that language.

**John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit:** Peter told the Jews of the circumcision party that when he saw the Holy Spirit being poured out on those gathered in Cornelius house as it was on those at the beginning he remembered that Jesus had told them (the apostles), "John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit" (v16). Jesus said this to the apostles when he appeared to them after his death and resurrection and told them to wait at Jerusalem until they were baptised in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:1-5). Just a few days later on the day of Pentecost the apostles were waiting in an upper room with many others and were all filled with the Holy Spirit and people from about sixteen different languages heard them speaking of the mighty works of God in their own native language and clearly understood what they were saying (Acts 2:7-11).

**Peter will declare a message by which Cornelius will be saved:** the angel told Cornelius, "Peter would declare a message to him by which he and his household would be saved" (v14). The message Peter proclaimed to Cornelius was; God is showing no partiality or favouritism to Jews or Gentiles, but whoever fears the LORD and does what is right is acceptable to God regardless of their nation or their birthright and that everyone (Jew or Gentile) who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ receives forgiveness of sins through his name (Acts 10:34-44). It was while Peter was speaking these words that the Holy Spirit fell on those gathered in Cornelius house which was a miraculous sign that God was confirming in a spectacular way what Peter was saying.

**God shows no partiality:** Peter opened his mouth and said:

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- Truly I understand that God shows no partiality <sup>35</sup>but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. (Acts 10:34-35).

God shows no partiality means it matters not if a person is born a direct descendant of Abraham, a Levite priest, rich or poor, noble or lowly it makes no difference in regards to God's acceptance of them. This is because God will accept whoever humbles themselves in honest repentance and accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as their eternal Saviour and their King and does what is right.

**The fear of the LORD:** is having a hatred of everything that harms another human physically, financially, sexually, verbally, emotionally, or spiritually and having a strong dislike of those who deliberately destroys the planet (i.e., arsonists who set forests on fire, companies who pour their toxic poisonous waste into rivers and such like things and having a strong dislike toward whoever deliberately treats animals cruelly and a fear of doing any of these things, because they are all destructive and bring pain, hurt and harm to others.

- Jesus said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

These words of Jesus shine a brilliant spotlight on the truth that God loves humans so much so that He gave his only Son to die for them. The fear of the LORD is about protecting and preventing harm to other humans. It is about knowing we are all going to stand before God one day and give an account of our actions, thus the fear of this judgment should motivate a person to do the right thing and treat others with respect.

**The fear of the LORD and salvation:** the reason a person is told to fear the LORD is because all humans have sinned and will one-day be judged by God. This fear should motivate all of us to seek God and his eternal salvation and forgiveness. That is why the Bible says the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom it motivates a person to seek God and His forgiveness. The apostle John says:

- If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and if we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (1 John 1:8-10).

But once a person finds the LORD and His forgiveness and knows His grace and salvation the human heart is transformed and the mind and passions are changed in such a way that they now consider God's testimonies more wonderful than fine gold. Added to this they now understand that God's laws are about protecting them and other humans from harm and impart wisdom and understanding to even the lowest in rank. The motivation to follow and continually seek God is not from fear anymore, but from love because they now know and experience the love God's has for them.

### **The Fear of the LORD has two aspects:**

1. **An eternal aspect:** wisdom teaches that mankind is separated from God because of sin and without God a person has no hope of eternal life and will be judged accordingly. The fear of the LORD in this context is wisdom because it motivates a person to seek God and eternal life.
2. **An aspect for the present moment:** the fear of the LORD in the present moment motivates mankind to obey God's Ten Commandments which are all designed to protect the innocent from harm, physically, financially, sexually, verbally, emotionally and spiritually. Thus, the fear of the LORD in this context is wisdom because if everyone feared the LORD humanity would live in harmony with each other. Sadly, there is very little fear of the LORD in the world today and so we see rampant rebellion, crime and wars in most countries.

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## **ACTS 11:18-26**

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### **To the Gentiles God has granted Repentance that leads to Life.**

- **Acts 11:18-26:** When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified god, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."

When the Jews of the circumcision party at Jerusalem (v2) heard that God had poured out His Spirit on the Gentiles in Cornelius home they glorified God saying, "God has granted repentance that leads to life to the Gentiles" (v18).

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## **ACTS 11:19-26**

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### **In Antioch the Disciples were first called Christians.**

- **Acts 11:19-26:** Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. <sup>20</sup>But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. <sup>21</sup>And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. <sup>22</sup>The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. <sup>23</sup>When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, <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. <sup>25</sup>So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, <sup>26</sup>and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

**Antioch:** was a Greco-Roman city and the capital of the province of Syria in Turkey. It was a great metropolitan centre of over 500.000 people and one of the largest cities in the empire and greatest commercial centers of ancient times. The city though populated by a large and influential Jewish population was predominantly pagan with Hellenic cults of Zeus and Apollo and held to many ancient mystery religions. In this Syrian town called Antioch Christianity emerged from its Jewish chrysalis.

**The Hellenists:** were non-Greeks who spoke Greek, a term used specially of Jews who made Greek their tongue and with it often adopted Greek ideas and practices (Acts 6:1) (Acts 9:29), the KJV has Grecians, the RSV has Hellenists.

**The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch:** after Stephen was stoned to death for proclaiming Jesus, Saul and the Jews who rejected Christ aggressively sought out Christians and not only persecuted them, but also threw them into prison. This resulted in disciples of the Lord being scattered throughout the surrounding regions. Most only proclaimed Jesus to the Jews, but some proclaimed Jesus to the Hellenists and many were turning to Christ (19-21) so the church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch. Barnabas was overjoyed when he saw the grace of God moving on those being added to the Lord. It seems Barnabas stayed awhile in Antioch and after teaching them for some time went and found Saul/Paul and brought him back to Antioch where he stayed for one year teaching a great many people in the church (v22-26).

**NOTE:** in the New Testament when the writers use the word church it refers to meetings in people's homes, there were no church buildings or cathedrals as we understand church today, during the early church era all church meetings were in brother and sisters' homes.

**The global church:** don't make the mistake of limiting the church to only the established religious institutions, denominations or church buildings, they may be a part of the body of Christ but they are not the only part. There are many individual Christians in all countries of the world who meet in coffee bars, social outings and mostly their own homes to give thanks to Christ and share their discoveries of God's word and their spiritual experiences with Him. Many of these people are helping others and simply manifesting the reality of their faith to the people that come into their lives.

God is not limited to any one pattern or organisation; He is far too creative for that. Jesus church is global and is manifested in a vast variety of ways across the face of the earth. In many third world countries church is held outside under a tree (for shade) with its members sitting on the dusty ground often with dogs, chooks and other animals roaming around. Remember the word church does not embrace everyone simply because they confess to be Christians, when the Bible uses the term church, it means those who belong to Christ and those who do the will of his Father. The will of God in this context is:

- Loving Thy Neighbour as Thyself.

In the New Testament this is called the, Royal Law, and means, do-good to others.' Those who deliberately harm or use people, especially those who belong to Christ for their own selfish gain and greed, sexually, financially, emotionally and spiritually are referred to by Christ himself as workers of iniquity and cast out from his eternal Kingdom (Matt 7:21-23). Not everyone who confesses to know Christ is part of his church there are those in his present Kingdom who he calls wicked servants. They use his name and his Gospel for their own selfish gain and line their own greedy pockets with the wealth and riches of this world by making merchandise



of those who do belong to him. Nevertheless, Jesus knows those who are his and those who are not and will not only reject anyone who use his message of grace, mercy, compassion and love for their own selfish gain, but when he returns will deny them entry into his eternal Kingdom. Jesus said:

- I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:14) (John 10:26-27)

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## ACTS 11:27-30

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### A Great Famine over the Entire World.

- **Acts 11:27-30:** Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. <sup>28</sup>And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). <sup>29</sup>So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. <sup>30</sup>And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

**NOTICE:** the words, "The entire world" refers not to all the world but to all the land of Judah and that brothers and that sister gave according to their ability to give meaning that they did not give to the extent that their own families would be in financial bondage, but rather each one gave as they were able.

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## THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL

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**Jews and Gentiles become one new nation in Christ:** it is important to understand that the promised seed of Abraham and David is Christ, all the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in Christ therefore they are not limited to Israel only but extend and embrace all those who belong to Christ because God is now creating one new nation in Christ made up of both Jew and Gentiles. (Gentiles are everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew). The apostle Paul said:

- **Ephesians 2:11-22:** Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands— <sup>12</sup>remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the COMMONWEALTH of ISRAEL and STRANGERS to the COVENANTS of PROMISE, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup>But now in Christ Jesus you (Gentiles) who once were far off (from God) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup>For he himself is our (Jews and Gentiles) peace, who has made us both ONE and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup>by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he (Jesus) might create in himself ONE NEW MAN (or Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), so making peace, <sup>16</sup>and might reconcile us (Jews and Gentiles) both to God in ONE BODY through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (between the Jews and Gentiles). <sup>17</sup>And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off (from God) and peace to those who were near (Jews). <sup>18</sup>For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in ONE SPIRIT to the Father. <sup>19</sup>So then you (Gentiles) are NO LONGER strangers and aliens, but you are FELLOW CITIZENS with the SAINTS (the Jews) and members of the HOUSEHOLD of God, <sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone <sup>21</sup>in whom the WHOLE STRUCTURE being joined together (Jews and Gentiles) grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup>In him you (Jews and Gentiles) also are being built together into a DWELLING PLACE for GOD by the Spirit.

Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the, Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one

by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Christ is the head of this new nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all nations of the world.

**The practical application of what this means to you:** if you belong to Christ, all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to YOU. The book of Revelation states:

- When Christ returns in glory every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth (Rev. 1:7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) and he has made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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