

Lesson 14- Acts 11:1-30

One in Christ

Do you like to read mystery stories? Perhaps you enjoy those intriguing places in the story where your imagination is allowed to conclude what may happen. And then you discover that you guessed wrong!

A real life mystery took place among God's people. The Jews—God's chosen people—had enjoyed a special status and favor throughout their history. In the New Testament, many Jews who trusted in Jesus as the promised Messiah believed that they remained exclusively in a favored relationship with God. The Jews were certain that they understood how the “story” would end—but they were wrong. Peter was now reporting that God was freely giving His gracious promises to the Gentiles as well!

Paul describes this “mystery” when he says, “that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Ephesians 3:3–6).

Mystery books give clues throughout the story that make sense when the mystery is solved. Through generations of prophets, the Lord had been giving signs through promises that showed peoples of all nations coming to worship Him. It should not have surprised the Jews when God's plan of salvation for the Gentiles was fully revealed—in Jesus Christ all the nations of the world shall be blessed.

[TM: In Acts, the Apostles are able to fully communicate the “mystery,” that in Jesus Christ all the nations of the world shall be blessed (Genesis 22:17-18, Galatians 3:14, 26).]

Barnabas

We first encountered Barnabas in Acts 4 [TM note: Acts 4:36-37]. His name was Joseph, but he was also called Barnabas, meaning “Son of Encouragement.” He owned property, sold it, and gave the money he earned on the sale to the apostles. Not only was he an encourager, he was generous too!

The next reference to Barnabas is in Acts 9 [TM note: Acts 9:26-27]. Saul had just been converted to Christianity, and all the believers in Jerusalem were still afraid of him. Barnabas defended Saul and went with him to see the apostles. The church leaders were willing to listen to Barnabas' recommendation to meet with Saul. Imagine how Saul felt about Barnabas' help and friendship.

Now in Acts 11 [TM note: Acts 11: 22-26], Barnabas is described as a trusted teacher, an encouraging influence, a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.

Into the Word: Acts 11:1-30

It didn't take long for the news of the astounding events at Caesarea (Acts 10) to reach the ears of the believers in Jerusalem. Peter not only had eaten with uncircumcised Gentiles, but he also had shared the message of salvation in Jesus which the Jews considered to be for them alone. Peter preached that salvation was for all.

Peter's Explanation of Profound Events

Acts 11:4–15 recounts the events that led up to his (1) *vision* and the visit from (2) *Cornelius' men*, and his visit to Cornelius' household.

Peter recalled (v.16) that Jesus had promised to (3) *send the Holy Spirit*.

The “gift” Peter refers to in verse 17 is the (4) *Holy Spirit*.

The Response of Jewish Believers in Jerusalem

The people were no longer upset (v.18) but (5) *glorified God* and agreed that God had granted to the Gentiles (6) *repentance* that leads to life.

Many Jewish believers had scattered because of Stephen's (7) *stoning* (read Acts 7:59–8:1). Though these persecuted believers had moved throughout the known world, they only preached to (8) *Jews*. Note that the believers living in Cyprus and Cyrene (vv.20–21) were preaching to both the Jews and Gentiles.

The church leaders in Jerusalem decided to send Barnabas to the city of (9) *Antioch* where he saw that God was granting grace to the Gentiles (vv.23–24). He rejoiced and encouraged the believers to remain (10) *faithful* to the Lord.

Barnabas and Saul worked for one year together in Antioch, teaching and encouraging the new believers there. The Holy Spirit revealed that there would be a great worldwide (11) *famine* (vv.27–30). Funds were collected to send to the believers in Judea. Saul and (12) *Barnabas* were the ones who brought the money to Jerusalem.

[TM note: History records this calamity actually did occur from 41–54 AD during the reign of the emperor Claudius.]

New Ideas:

A Gentle Answer Turns Away Wrath

When we read Acts 11:2–3, we see a situation that could easily have turned into a fight. The Jewish believers were upset with Peter, and if Peter had gotten angry with them, a huge disagreement could have developed.

The crowd challenged Peter. But rather than becoming defensive, he carefully explained to them what had happened. According to verse 18, Peter's response quieted those who had been upset, and they agreed that God had orchestrated the whole event.

Read Proverbs 15:1 for good advice to follow when we need to get along with people who are irritated with us. Different attitudes cause different responses:

Gentle answer: *turns away wrath*

Harsh words: *stir up anger*

How does Proverbs 15:18 explain this?

Someone who is quick to get angry stirs up anger in other people. Someone who is slow to get angry can calm down a contentious situation.

Memory Verse

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:26

Extra Memory Challenge

Acts 11:18

When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."

Discussion Questions

Each teacher should encourage, as much as time permits, discussion and inquiry on the part of students. Not every aspect of the following questions is addressed here, and students may have thoughts related to but not mentioned in this guide. The obligation of the teacher, then, is to understand as deeply as possible the Scriptures that are being discussed, in order to answer as well as possible any questions a student might have.

1. There must be a reason God told about the same vision twice in two chapters. In Acts 10:9-16, Luke reports the event, and in 11:5-10, Peter personally recounts the story. Why do you think this event was recorded twice?

God's desire to see the Gentile nations come to repentance came as a big surprise to the Jews. By telling the same story twice, God makes sure that we who read it are doubly sure: God does really desire every person to be saved, regardless of race, background, nationality, age, or gender--His salvation is for everybody!

2. Acts 11:27-30 describes a great “act of generosity” among believers. How are their actions an example for us? Can you think of ways your congregation or family can respond to the needs of others?

I John 3:18 instructs us to love not only in words but also in deeds. The believers didn't just talk about needs; they went into action to help meet the needs. Their love for one another became visible to others around them. We also let the light of Jesus shine to those around us when we are active in meeting the needs of others. (Possible examples of helping to meet needs in your congregation or community: donations of time or money to local food pantries, meals to congregation members who are ill, childcare provided to a family with parental illness.

3. Acts 11:26 says, “the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” Define the word “Christian.” What does it mean to be called a Christian?

The word “Christian” means “Christ-follower.” To be a Christian is not simply to be a church-goer or a kind person. There is a distinction: some people may be called “Christian” but don't have faith in Christ. To be a Christian is to be a sinner saved by God's grace (sinner-saint). Because we follow Christ, we are anxious to know Him better and eager to learn more about Him every day.

Daily Devotions

Sunday:	Romans 10:5-13
Monday:	Romans 10:14-21
Tuesday:	I Corinthians 12:12-14
Wednesday:	Colossians 3:8-11
Thursday:	Galatians 6:14-18
Friday:	Ephesians 3:3-6
Saturday:	Galatians 3:26-29

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH: THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE AFLC

* Fundamental Principle 1

Just as a congregation needs confessions and creeds to keep it focused on true teaching about God and His salvation, the congregation also needs a primary teaching that will guide its purpose for being. In the AFLC, the Fundamental Principles unite us in one ministry.

Principle 1 says, “According to the Word of God, the congregation is the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth.”

1. According to God's Word, the congregation is described in various ways. How is it described in I Corinthians 12:27 and Matthew 5:13-16?

*A simple definition of the congregation is a local gathering or assembly of individuals coming together around God's Word and Sacraments. In I Corinthians 12, Paul describes the congregation as the **body of Christ** where the Word would be taught and proclaimed to the spiritual benefit of all. Please note that he refers to the congregation at Corinth as Christ's body. In Acts 1, Luke refers to the congregation at Jerusalem, born of the Spirit, as the **Kingdom of God**. A Kingdom is a certain place where someone rules and governs. In the local congregation the Holy Spirit and Word establish the Kingdom of Christ in the hearts of the assembled. Matthew 5:14-16 describes the congregation as a city on a hill, **the light of the world**.*

2. What does the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth mean?

The right form of the kingdom of God means “that the local congregation is the only visible form of the Kingdom instituted by God.” “Sverdrup believed that there is no authority over the congregation but the Spirit and the Word of God.” (Sverdrup Journal 2006, Vol. III, p.25).