

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

LESSON 14: CHAPTERS 11-12

28 August 2015

PETER RETURNS TO JERUSALEM AND EXPLAINS HIS ACTIONS AMONG THE GENTILES

- When the apostles and brethren heard that the Gentiles also received the word of God, they had a dispute with Peter for fraternizing with the “uncircumcised” (vss. 1-3).
- Peter described the events in detail, which led to his actions, in order to convince the believers that this was God’s doing and not his own (vs. 4).
 - The vision of the great sheet (vs. 5), the unclean beasts (vs. 6), and the command to eat (vs. 7).
 - Peter’s refusal to eat (vs. 8), the command not to call it common because God cleansed it (vs 9), and the repeat of the vision three times (vs. 10).
 - Three men from Caesarea immediately arrived at Peter’s door after he’s seen the vision (vs. 11)
 - Peter went with these three men, also taking six brethren with him to Cornelius’ house (vs. 12).
 - Cornelius told Peter how an angel told him to send for a man named Peter in Joppa, who would tell him and all his house how to be saved (vss. 13-14).
 - As Peter began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on the Gentile believers (vs. 15).
 - Note: Peter says this happened to them just like it did “on us at the beginning.” This is a continuation of the building of the Lord’s Church, which started in Acts chapter 2.
 - Peter remembered the Lord’s promise that they would be “baptized with the Holy Ghost” (vs.16)
 - Seeing that the Gentiles are being baptized the same as the Jews, Peter realizes that the promise wasn’t just for the Jews. He wasn’t going to resist God’s will (vs. 17).
- The believers in Jerusalem were convinced that this was God’s doing. They glorified God and accepted the fact that God granted “repentance unto life” to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews (vs. 18). (See Romans 1:16, 3:29, John 1:12).

THE CHURCH EXTENDS OUTWARD TOWARDS THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE EARTH

VS. 19 Stephen’s martyrdom resulted in the believers being scattered throughout Judaea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). Now we find that others were scattered farther (Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch). As they preached the word they avoided contact with the Gentiles.

VSS. 20-21 The scattered believers are “**preaching the Lord Jesus**” in Cyprus, Cyrene, and Antioch resulting in a great number (of Jews) believing and turning unto the Lord.

VSS. 22-26 The church in Jerusalem heard about the good results in the north and sent Barnabas to Antioch where he saw the grace of God at work and exhorted the believers to “**cleave unto** (hold to, stick with) **the Lord**” (see Gal. 2:24). This visit resulted in many more believers being “**added unto the Lord**” (vs. 24).

Barnabas travelled to Tarsus to find Saul and they both returned to Antioch to assemble with the church and to teach. Antioch is being established as a Christian headquarters. Paul and Barnabas will be seen more often in Acts, while Peter and John will be observed less. Remember that Luke (the writer) travelled with Paul (2 Tim. 4:11).

Note: Antioch was the Devil’s headquarters, full of various kinds of false religion. God binds the strongman—and spoils his house (takes the precious souls) by setting up Antioch as a Christian stronghold. (See Matthew 12:29 and Mark 3:27).

Note: The term “**Christian**” is only found 3 times in the Bible: Acts 11:26, 26:28, and 1 Pet. 4:16.

VSS. 27-30 Prophets (1 Cor. 12:28, Eph. 4:11) came from Jerusalem to Antioch. The prophet Agabus prophesied that there would be “great dearth” (death + earth= famine). Saul and Barnabas carried relief to the brethren in Judaea.

CHAPTER 12: HEROD PERSECUTES THE CHURCH

VS. 1 Herod wanted to “vex” (torment) the church leaders. There are four Herod’s in the New Testament (Mt. 2:16, Mk. 6:27, Acts 12:1, Acts 25). All of them are types of Anti-Christ.

VS. 2 Herod killed James with the sword. James was put to death as foretold by Jesus (Mk. 10:39-41).

VSS. 3-4 Herod saw that killing a Christian pleased the Jews, so he took Peter also, put him in prison, and had him guarded by “four quaternions of soldiers” (4 soldiers, 4 watches of 3 hours = 16 soldiers).

THE EASTER CONTROVERSY

The Bible says Herod intended “**after Easter**” to bring Peter forth to the people. (vs. 4).

Bible critics say “**Easter**” is an incorrect translation because the Greek word used is “*Pascha*,” which is translated as “**Passover**” 28 out of 29 times in the New Testament.

REASONS WHY “PASSEVER” IS AN INCORRECT TRANSLATION OF “PASCHA” IN ACTS 12:4:

1. Easter comes from the ancient pagan festival of Astarte, also known as Ishtar (pronounced “Easter”).
 - a. This pagan festival was always celebrated in the month of April.
 - b. It is a celebration of the earth “regenerating” itself after the winter season.
 - c. It was a celebration of reproduction with symbols of rabbits and eggs.
 - d. Astarte was the female deity in this religion. The Bible calls her “the queen of heaven” (Jer. 7:18, 44:17-25). She is the mother (and wife) of Tammuz (Ezek. 8:14).
 - e. Easter (Ishtar) rituals took place at sunrise (Ezekiel 8:13-16).
 - f. Passover is always the 14th of April. Easter was always later in April.
2. Peter was arrested during the “**days of unleavened bread**” (Acts 12:3).
 - a. Passover is a memorial day (1 day) in which the Jews remember the night when the Lord smote all the firstborn in Egypt. (See Exodus 12:13-18).
 - i. Unleavened bread is eaten on Passover (Exod. 12:18).
 - ii. Unleavened bread is eaten for seven days after Passover (Exod. 12:15, Num. 28:16-17).
 - iii. Passover is celebrated in the evening (Deut. 16:6). (See Deut. 16:1-8).
 - b. The feast of unleavened bread was one of the three Jewish feasts that God commanded the Jews to keep during the year (2 Chron. 8:13).
 - c. Passover always came before the days of unleavened bread (Ezra 6:19, 22), even if a Jew couldn’t do it in April (2 Chron. 30:15, 21).
 - d. In the Bible “Passover” never refers to the entire week from April 14-21.
3. Herod could not have referred to Passover since it had already passed.
 - a. But the pagan holiday of Easter was just a few days away.
 - b. Herod had no regard for the Jews or for Jewish holidays. He was a pagan Roman.
 - c. Herod wasn’t worried about offending the Jews on their holiday. Peter was no longer a Jew.
 - d. Herod didn’t delay Peter’s execution for respect of the Jewish holiday. Jesus was executed on Passover.

VSS. 5-6 The church prayed for Peter while he slept soundly in the prison chained between two guards. (Psa. 4:8)