

God's Story of Salvation for Mankind is Worth Telling Over and Over Again!

Acts 11:1-18

Some Important Truths of this Passage:

- ***Luke gives time and diligent effort in making sure that the reader understands the importance of the gospel message to the Gentiles is to the world.***
 - ***In ancient times a writer did not have a lot to work with when it came to writing down thoughts and facts***
Papyrus (forerunner of paper) was used. It was made of the pith of the papyrus plant. Longest role was 35' (It took about that much to write the Book of Acts).
 - ***Luke felt that the Story of Peter and Cornelius was important enough to write the story down twice. Luke sees it as a notable milestone on the road to reaching the world for Christ.***
 - ***Luke was a Gentile....I am an American. Luke loved to hear how the gospel came to his people. I love to hear how America got its freedom...but, more than that, how we achieve true freedom through Christ.***
 - ***Peter was on trial...for eating with the Gentiles (verse 3). By doing so, Peter had outraged the ancestral Law and traditions of his people.....But, remember this...Peter's defense was not an argument; it was a statement of facts, i.e. the Holy Spirit had come upon these Gentiles just like the Spirit did to the Jews in Jerusalem...and the Gentiles accepted Jesus as the Messiah, just like they had done.***
 - ***Peter said he took six (6) brothers with him (v. 12). Counting himself, that made seven (7). In Egyptian law (Jews knew these laws well) seven witnesses were necessary to prove a case. In Roman law, which the Jews knew well, it took seven seals to authenticate a really important document. Peter was saying, "I am not arguing with you, I am telling you the facts...and there are 7 witnesses to bare out those facts. The case is proved."***
- ***The proof of Christianity always lies in facts. The proof of Christianity is that:***
 - ⇒ ***It works***
 - ⇒ ***It does change men***
 - ⇒ ***It does make bad men good***
 - ⇒ ***It does bring to men the Spirit of God***

Acts 11:19-30

The Church Reaches Out to the World!

Three (3) Steps on the Ladder to Get the Message to the World:

1. *Philip preached to the Samaritans (half Jewish)...the bridge to the next step.*
2. *Peter Accepted Cornelius...but it was Cornelius who took the initiative. The Church did not seek Cornelius; Cornelius (the God Fearer) sought the Christian Church*
3. *In Antioch the Church did not go to the Jews or half Jews, it preached the gospel to the Gentiles.*

Christianity is finally launched on its world-wide mission!

We don't even know the names of the people who took that first step...reaching the World (Gentile World) for Christ. All we know is that they came from Cyprus and Cyrene. They go down in history as nameless pioneers for Christ! We need people who does not care who gets the credit...just so long as the work gets done.

These men may not have their names written in men' books of history, but they have their names written forever in God's Book of Life.

Antioch...3rd greatest city in the world at that time (behind Rome and Alexandria)

- *Near the river Orontes, 15 miles from the Mediterranean Sea.*
- *Lovely and Cosmopolitan...by word for "luxurious immorality."*
- *Known for chariot racing and...her deliberate pursuit of pleasure which went on day and night*
- *Famous for the worship of Daphne (a goddess of pleasure)...known as a city of loose living*
- *Yet...it was a city like this that Christianity took the great stride of becoming the religion of the world...*

Reminds us...that no situation is hopeless!

Leaders of the Church at Jerusalem...had to see what was going on at Antioch! Praise God...they sent a man that helped Paul when nobody wanted to believe Paul was on the Lord's side...and not against the Church. They sent Barnabas. Barnabas knew that the new believers in Antioch must have a leader that knew the word of the Lord...and could bring the best out in the people. Barnabas went to find Paul...to bring him to Antioch.

The Believers (the Church) were called "Christians" first at Antioch. Which was a nickname at first...meaning, "these Christ-folk." Now, "Christ-like."

Acts 12:1-25

Some important points to remember:

- *Herod, spoken of here in this passage, is the last of a long history of this ungodly family...*

1. *Herod the Great...Matthew 2, reigned from 41 B.C. to 1 A. D... (In power when Jesus was born)...*
2. *Herod Philip the First...husband of the Herodias who was responsible for the death of John the Baptist...Matthew 14:3; Mark 6:17; Luke 3:19. He was the father of Salome.*
3. *Herod Antipas...Ruler of Galilee and Peraea. 2nd husband of Herodias and consented to the death of John the Baptist. He was the one to whom Pilate sent Jesus for trial (Luke 23:7)*
4. *Herod Philip the Second. Founder of Caesarea Philippi which was named after him. Mentioned in Luke 3:1*
5. *Herod the Great had another son called Aristobulus...His mother was Mariamne, a princess who was descended from the Maccabaeans heroes. He was murdered by his own father...He had a son called Herod Agrippa (this is the Herod of our present passage in Acts 12).*
6. *This family doesn't end here...even to Felix, the governor before whom Paul was tried (Acts 24:24)*

This Herod, Herod Agrippa, loved to be loved...He would do anything to stay in the good graces of the people in which he had control. He knew the strict orthodox Jews, who wanted the Christians heads, would praise him if he gave them what they wanted. So he killed James...and arrested Peter. He placed Peter in jail and waited until after the Passover...to execute (no trial or execution could take place during the days of unleaven bread). He did not wait because of his belief in Judaism, he waited because he wanted to be popular with the people....Much like our politicians today.

God took control...brought Peter out of prison (call it what you want...it was a miracle!) And, I bet that there were 7 witnesses to that fact, too!

Peter went straight to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark. This was the headquarters of the Christian Church in Jerusalem. Note that they were praying. When Christians are up against great odds, they are praying!

We find the leader of the Church at Jerusalem being summoned by Peter. Why do you suppose that James was not with them praying?

James...was summoned. He was the brother of Jesus. Remember James...he did not believe Jesus was for real (John 7:5) and actually thought Jesus was mad (Mark 3:21)...but we find him waiting with the others in the upper room waiting for the power of God to come upon them.

James...the brother of Jesus was convinced that his brother was the Messiah when he saw his brother die...and he saw His resurrection. He was now the leader of the Church at Jerusalem.

*Herod wanted the people to think that he was God...not just a god. It is a “terrible thing to blaspheme the Lord God Jehovah.”
Herod struck dead...and was eaten by worms.*

The word of God increased....because God willed it to be so...and the disciples brought God’s will to fulfillment.

God’s will is going to be done....God wins in the end....Do you want to be one of those that helps carry out God’s will?

You can....tell someone of the story of Christ Jesus.

All you really need to do is to tell them your story of how you came to Christ...that is what Paul did...and that is what we are to do!