

Acts 11:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

Analysis

A Pivotal Moment in Church History

This verse marks a watershed moment in the expansion of the early church. The Greek word ἤκουσαν (ēkousan, "heard") indicates not just casual awareness but significant news that demanded attention. The phrase "the Gentiles had also received" uses ἐδέξαντο (edexanto), meaning "welcomed" or "accepted," suggesting an active reception rather than passive hearing. The word λόγον (logon, "word") emphasizes the gospel message as divine communication.

This report follows Peter's encounter with Cornelius (Acts 10), representing the first official acceptance of Gentile believers without requiring Jewish conversion. The phrase "apostles and brethren" indicates the news reached both church leaders and the broader believing community in Judaea, the heartland of Jewish Christianity. Their hearing of this development would soon lead to questioning and controversy (Acts 11:2-3), yet ultimately to praise (Acts 11:18). This moment foreshadows the theological discussions that would culminate in the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), establishing that salvation is by grace through faith for all people.

Historical Context

In the first-century Jewish context, the inclusion of uncircumcised Gentiles into the people of God was revolutionary and controversial. Judaism had a long history of

proselytism, but converts were expected to fully embrace Jewish law, including circumcision for males. The news reaching Judaea would have traveled along established trade routes and through messengers, likely taking several days from Caesarea. The Jerusalem church served as the mother church for early Christianity, making their acceptance of this development crucial. The phrase "apostles and brethren" reflects the early church's structure, with apostolic leadership working alongside the broader believing community. This news would have created significant tension, as it challenged centuries of Jewish identity and practice.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does God's plan for salvation challenge our cultural or religious assumptions about who belongs in His kingdom?
2. What barriers do we create in our churches that might prevent certain people from receiving the gospel?
3. How should church leaders respond when God moves in unexpected ways that challenge traditional understanding?
4. In what ways does the gospel transcend ethnic, cultural, and social boundaries in your community?
5. How can we maintain biblical truth while remaining open to God's surprising work among diverse peoples?

Interlinear Text

Ἦκουσαν δὲ οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ οἱ
heard **And** ^{G3588} **the apostles** **also** ^{G3588} **brethren** ^{G3588}
G191 G1161 G652 G2532 G80

ὄντες κατὰ τὴν Ἰουδαίαν ὅτι καὶ τὰ ἔθνη
that were **in** ^{G3588} **Judaea** **that** **also** ^{G3588} **the Gentiles**
G5607 G2596 G2449 G3754 G2532 G1484

ἐδέξαντο τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ
had ^{G3588} **the word** ^{G3588} **of God**
G1209 G3056 G2316

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 22:27 (Parallel theme): All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

Isaiah 32:15 (Parallel theme): Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

Malachi 1:11 (Parallel theme): For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.