

Chapter 11

NOTE: The sub-bullets are my observations or thoughts inspired by Willie James Jennings' *Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible – Acts*.

• Peter Reports to the Church at Jerusalem (11:1-18)

Summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Word gets back to the believers in Judea that Gentiles “had also accepted the word of God.”○ “Circumcised believers” criticize Peter when he returns.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concern: Did Peter betray the “sacred covenant” with God by communing with Gentiles?○ Peter responds by recounting his experience, culminating with, “If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?”<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tension exists between what God has done and what God is doing now. What is the bridge between the old and new? How do we recognize the Spirit at work?○ This silences the critics, who then praised God for giving “even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life.”<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It won't end the concerns, but the Spirit leads to rejoicing for the time being.

• The Church in Antioch (11:19-30)

Summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ While those who had been scattered by persecution spread the word only to the Jews, some from Cyprus and Cyrene came to Antioch and spoke to the Hellenists (Greeks) and “a great number became believers.”<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Through the Spirit, they bridge the divide between Jew and Greek.○ The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch and he rejoices on seeing God's grace among them and stays to encourage them. Later, Barnabas brings in Saul (Paul) and they teach the church in Antioch for a year.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Barnabas connects Jerusalem with Antioch and becomes the bridge between Paul and the Gentile ministry.• The Spirit draws the Jewish and Gentile communities together in a shared life in Christ.○ Antioch is where the disciples were first called Christians.○ Prophets come to Antioch and predict a severe famine “over all the world.” The disciples respond to send relief to Judea.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Spirit calls the church to be involved in the world and the church is to respond.

Chapter 12

• Herod kills James and imprisons Peter (12:1-5)

Summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ King Herod has James, the brother of John, killed, and Peter arrested because “it pleased the Jews.”<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Execution and imprisonment are tools of the powerful to suppress those who challenge the system of power.○ Herod intends to bring Peter out to the people after Passover.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not only does Herod pander to the crowds, but he plans to show his power to all

- The believers pray for Peter.
 - The disciples are familiar with how power usually plays out, pray for God’s intervention.

● **Peter delivered from prison (12:6-19)**

Summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ While Peter is bound in chains between two soldiers, an angel appears in the cell, wakes Peter, and removes the chains. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Note the dehumanization that takes place to the prisoner in this passage. ○ The angel leads Peter past the guards and out of the prison while Peter thinks he’s dreaming. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Only divine intervention can save Peter. ● Peter is on the other side of the resurrection, where Jesus has defeated death. ● How does the angel restore Peter’s humanity and prepare him for freedom? ○ Peter then goes to the house of Mary (mother of John/Mark), where many are gathered praying for him. ○ Peter knocks, a maid named Rhoda goes to answer. When she recognizes Peter’s voice, she runs back to tell the disciples without letting Peter in. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A bit of humorous relief in the account. ○ After telling the disciples what happened, Peter left for another place. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do the disciples react to Peter’s return? ● Why does Peter leave for another place? ○ “No small commotion” happens in the morning when the soldiers find Peter missing. Herod has the guards put to death, leaves to go to Caesarea. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The guards are also captive to the oppressive prison system. ● What are the similarities and differences between the prison system of Peter’s time and today’s prison industrial complex? What is our call as Christians today?

● **Death of Herod (12:20-25)**

Summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Herod is angry at the people of Tyre and Sidon. They come to him, seeking reconciliation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The people seek reconciliation in the face of abuse of power by Herod. ○ Herod delivers a speech and the people call him “a god and not... a mortal.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This is an example of the oppressed pandering to power. ● What parallels do we see in response to power and abuse today? ○ Herod is struck down because he had not given glory to God and is eaten by worms. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● God intervenes, has the final say. ○ The word of God continues to spread. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The church continues to grow through the Spirit. ○ Barnabas and Saul return to Jerusalem, bringing John/Mark with them. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A preview of Paul’s first missionary trip.