ACTS 11

To the Gentiles Also

a hard question in Jerusalem, a careful answer from Peter, and a new church in Antioch where the name "Christian" was born

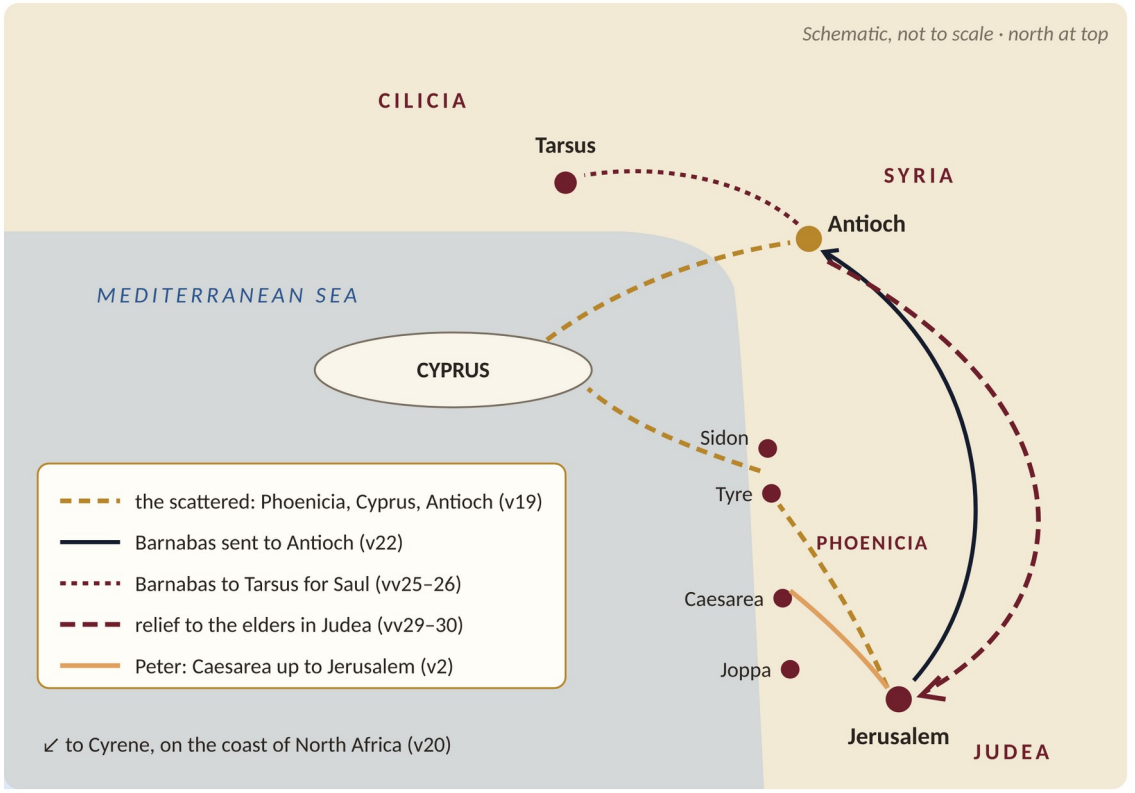
> *"When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.""*
> ACTS 11:18

Where Luke has brought us

1. Acts 10 told how God opened the door: an angel sent Cornelius, a Roman centurion at Caesarea, to find Peter; a vision on a rooftop in Joppa taught Peter not to call unholy what God had cleansed; and…

2. The complaint is not that Peter preached to Gentiles but that he ate with them: “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them” (v. 3).

3. The second half of the chapter goes back to a thread Luke left in 8:1–4 — the believers scattered by the persecution after Stephen.



You Went to Uncircumcised Men

The news reaches Jerusalem, the circumcised take issue, and Peter begins at the beginning

ACTS 11:1

Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.

DAVID GUZIK

More concerned with what Peter did than with what God was doing.

C.H. SPURGEON

Grace overcame a deep prejudice; contenders became worshipers.

MATTHEW HENRY

A censure, once fastened, sticks; ministers must expect it.

διακρίνω

DIAKRINŌ · "TAKE ISSUE / HESITATE"

Literally "to judge between, to separate."

Who Was I to Stand in God's Way?

Three men, an angel, the Spirit falling — and repentance that leads to life

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."

DAVID GUZIK

God's stamp of approval; who was Peter to withstand God?

R.C. SPROUL

The Gentile Pentecost: all received the Spirit; one body.

C.H. SPURGEON

True repentance hates and forsakes sin; it is God's gift.

MATTHEW HENRY

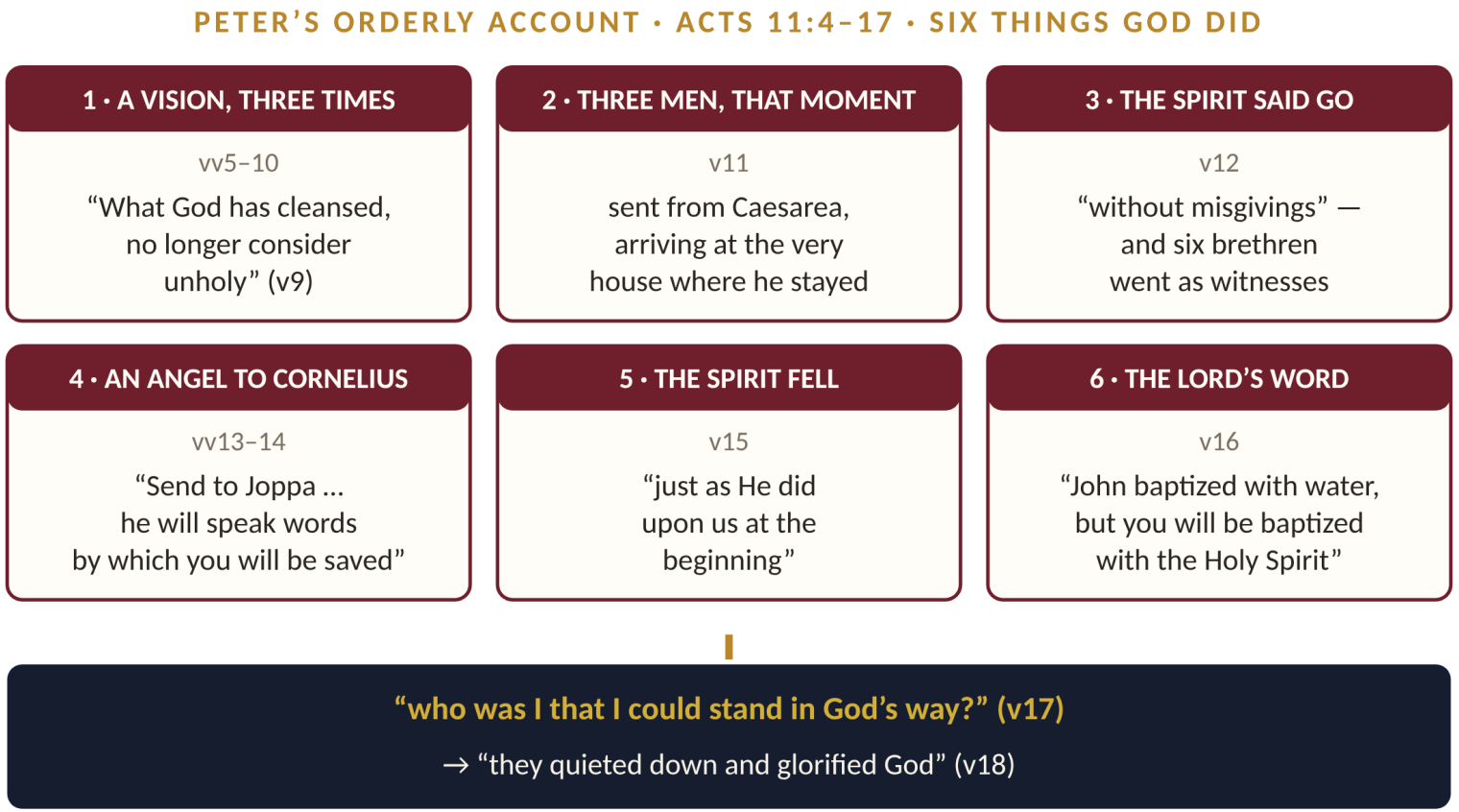
Those who hinder conversions withstand God; repentance is unto life.

κωλύω

KŌLYŌ · "STAND IN THE WAY, HINDER"

"To hinder, prevent, forbid."

Peter’s orderly account



Peter does not argue; he lists, in order, six things God did — and lets the list ask the question in the dark bar.

The Hand of the Lord Was with Them

Unnamed men preach to Greeks, a great number turn, and Barnabas sees the grace of God

ACTS 11:19

So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone.

DAVID GUZIK

Unnamed heroes; no conversions without the hand of the Lord.

R.C. SPROUL

God's hand brings growth — but numbers alone prove nothing.

C.H. SPURGEON

Sow, for God has ploughed; the Spirit moves them by moving you.

MATTHEW HENRY

Ordinary ministers did wonders; be glad of grace where unexpected.

Ἑλληνιστάς

HELLĒNISTAS · "GREEKS"

The manuscripts differ in verse 20.

First Called Christians

Barnabas finds Saul, a year of teaching, a new name, and a famine answered with giving

ACTS 11:29

And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.

DAVID GUZIK

A jeering nickname became a badge; the first church charity.

R.C. SPROUL

Barnabas fetches Saul; “Christian” began as derision.

MATTHEW HENRY

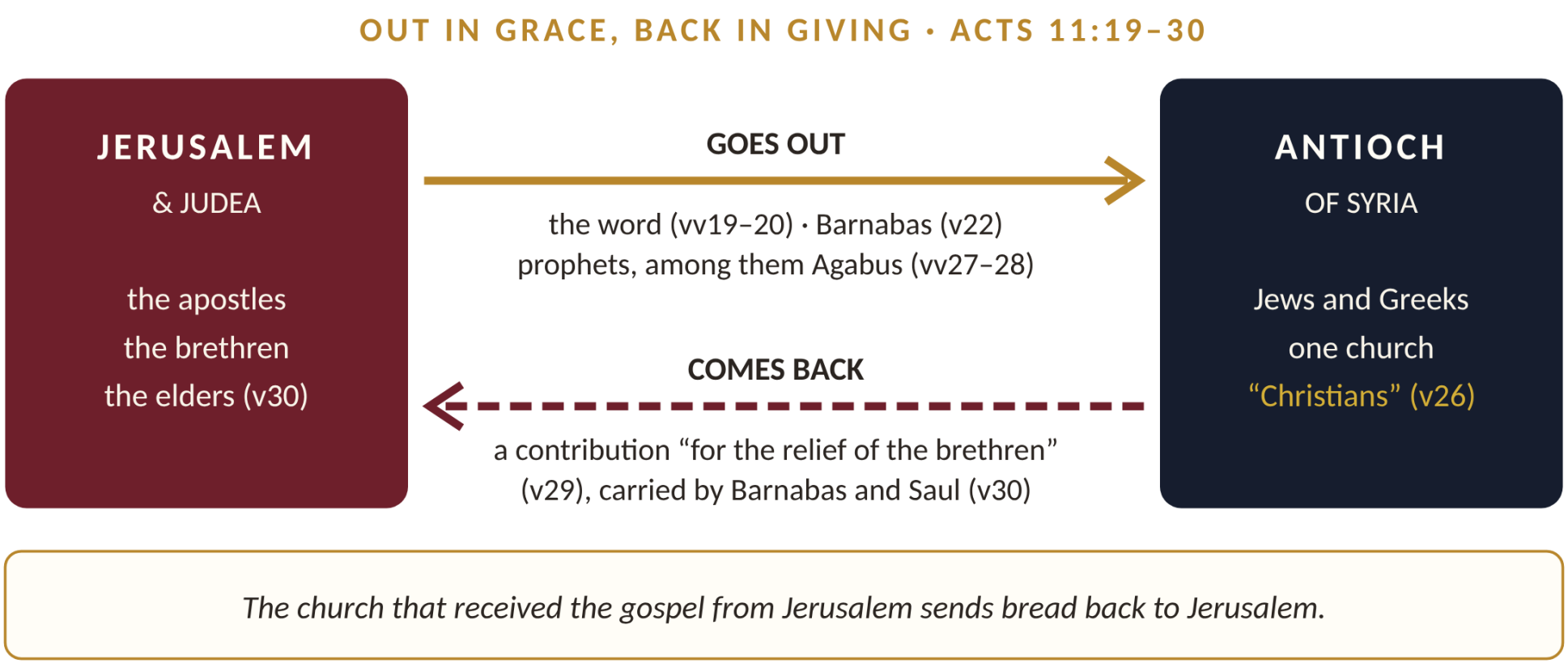
Named for Christ’s office; then live as becomes Christians.

Χριστιανός · χρηματίζω

CHRISTIANOS · CHRĒMATIZŌ

Christianos occurs only three times in the New Testament: here; on King Agrippa’s lips, “you will persuade me to become a Christian” (26:28); and in Peter’s letter, “if anyone suffers as a Christian”…

Out in grace, back in giving



The top arrow carries the word and the teachers north; the bottom arrow carries the famine relief south — the young church gives back to the mother church.

What to carry from this chapter

1

The complaint was about the table.

“You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them” (v3).

2

Tell it in order.

Peter answered with kathexēs — the events one after another (v4), the same word Luke uses for his own Gospel (Luke 1:3).

3

They made a distinction; the Spirit said not to.

The verb behind “took issue” (v2) is the verb behind “without misgivings” (v12): diakrinō.

4

The same gift.

“God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us” (v17).

More to carry

5

Repentance is a gift, not a fee.

“God has granted … the repentance that leads to life” (v18).

6

Silence, then praise.

The critics “quieted down and glorified God” (v18).

7

Persecution became a sowing.

Henry: “Those that fled from persecution did not flee from their work.”

8

Unnamed men changed history.

Not apostles but “men of Cyprus and Cyrene” first preached the Lord Jesus to Greeks in Antioch (v20).

Talk it through

1. The Jerusalem believers objected to who Peter ate with. Whose table would I be uncomfortable sitting at — and what does that reveal about me?

2. Peter answered criticism with an orderly account of what God had done, not with his title. How do I usually respond when my walk with God is questioned?

3. “Who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” Where might I be standing in the way of what God is doing in someone else?

4. If repentance is a gift God grants, how should that change the way I pray for the men I love who are still far from Him?

5. Barnabas looked for the grace of God before he looked for problems. When I walk into a church, a group or a man’s life, what do I look for first?

CLOSING

Acts 11 is the day the church found out how big God's grace is. Good men argued, heard the evidence, went quiet and praised God; ordinary men crossed a line and preached Jesus to Greeks; an encourager saw grace and fetched a forgotten brother; and a brand-new church answered a famine with an offering. If God has granted you repentance that leads to life, don't stand in His way — be glad of His grace in others, and give.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study and reflection journal: see the Acts study page.