

Episode #1131 Acts 5 Part 3-Apostles Before the Sanhedrin

I. Acts is unique in the New Testament. Rather than the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth, it focuses on what came after, when the Lord had ascended back into heaven. The Lord left His disciples with many commands to carry out, and Acts tells us how they did them.

II. The Holy Spirit worked such great miracles through the apostles that even Peter's shadow as he was walking down the road passing over the sick would heal them. This made these men so powerful and famous that the Sanhedrin was driven to distraction by their jealousy. Finally, they arrested all the apostles and threw them in prison. Yet an angel let them out and told them to go right back into the temple and continue their teaching. How will the religious leaders of Israel respond to God's counter-move?

III. Arrest and Deliverance. Acts 5:17-25.

- A. Verse 21. The apostles immediately obey. The Sanhedrin meets with the *gerousia*, or council of elders. These were the influential men in Israel's old government, but God had set them aside to give the government to others. Matthew 21:43. Which government will win?
- B. Verse 22. These officers must have been afraid for their positions when they found this!
- C. Verse 23. It is easy to imagine the inward feeling and the outward expression on the faces of the high priest and the Sadducees when they heard this report. They hoped to humiliate the apostles, but now they are the ones looking silly.
- D. Verse 24. They are unsure what the outcome of this embarrassment will be. The priests and Sadducees had made the arrest, and the remainder of the Sanhedrin learns about this for the first time.
- E. Verse 25. Now they learn that the men they had arrested are back in their usual spot like nothing had happened. This made them look not only silly, but powerless. God was doing this!

IV. The Apostles Before the Sanhedrin. Acts 5:26-32.

- A. Acts 5:26. This made for a very delicate situation. Again, the people are totally on the side of the apostles, so the officers are afraid to arrest them. They probably humbly asked them if they would come to appear before the Sanhedrin and council of elders. Instead of prisoners, they come as honored guests!
- B. Verse 27. After God's intervention, this trial started off very differently than the priests wanted!
- C. Verse 28. They accuse them for ignoring their command in Acts 4:18. Greek says "command with a command," a Hebrew figure of speech *Polyptoton*, wherein a word is repeated to emphasize it. This was a weak charge, since they had had no reason to give the command in the first place. They were holding this trial because of their frustration, not because they had a good case. He accuses them of seeking to dethrone the Sanhedrin and bring the guilt of murder on them. Notice the high priest refuses to say the name of the Lord Jesus, a habit that many rebellious Jews continue today.
- D. Verse 29. They give the same answer Peter and John did in Acts 4:19.
- E. Verse 30. They repeat the accusation the Spirit through Peter and John brought against the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:10. God showed He did not agree with their judgment when He raised the Lord from the dead. They had indeed murdered an innocent man, and hung Him on a tree, indicating He was accursed, Deuteronomy 21:22-23.

- F. Verse 31. God also exalted Him to sit on His right hand. This means that Jesus Christ sat down on the very authority of God. Prince in Greek is *archegon*, meaning an Author or Originator (Acts 3:15); in this case, Inaugurator. Repentance is *metanoia*, meaning submission and “after-mindedness.” Israel might not have such an attitude now, but she will one day, when God works to bring that about.
- G. Verse 32. The apostles are also witnesses of what God has done. “Things” is again *rhema*. The Holy Spirit, “the Spirit the Holy” in Greek, is also a witness by giving them miraculous power. The Lord ends with a cutting condemnation of these men. The power of the Spirit was given to those who obey Him. The Sanhedrin were jealous of the power, but the reason they had not received it is because they refused to obey! God had gone contrary to them, and so the apostles could do nothing else but go contrary to them if they were to obey God. This was a proper accusation and a sweeping defense, but the rulers didn’t want to hear it, and didn’t respond well.

V. The Reaction of the Sanhedrin. Acts 5:33-40.

- A. Verse 33. Furious in Greek is *diaprio*, and means cut. These words cut to their hearts and showed what was in them. They hated this, though, and hated God for showing them up.
- B. Verse 34. Gamaliel was a teacher of the law, respected by all the people. The *Companion Bible* notes that he was the grandson of a famous man named Hillel. He had instructed Saul of Tarsus, whom we know as Paul. He wanted privacy, but God could hear what these hypocrites were planning.
- C. Verse 35. Gamaliel was a Pharisee, and they taught the resurrection, so Gamaliel may take the apostles’ side as a way of getting at the Sadducees more than anything else.
- D. Verse 36. This argument might appear wise, but it ignores the fact that the Lord Jesus already died, and His followers did not scatter and come to nothing.
- E. Verse 37. Now he cites another case, perhaps a “tax protestor.” Again, this does not fit, for they had murdered the Lord, and this didn’t happen. The truth is they feared the people, and yet needed some excuse to get out of embarrassing themselves by appearing powerless.
- F. Verse 38. This had already been proven wrong, but it was the excuse he was using. This has been called Gamaliel’s counsel of indecision: his cowardly evasion of the obvious facts that this work was already stamped as a work of God. That suited the Sanhedrin because they were afraid of the people. The most convincing evidence had not convinced Gamaliel, so he suggests they wait for more evidence, for more signs, for more proof. There is no doubt but that he did this in unbelief.
- G. Verse 39. His real hypocrisy comes out in this statement. They already had great proof that this work was of God. The miracles of the apostles were why they had arrested them! Did Theudas or Judas ever heal, do signs, or raise the dead? The truth is they had proof, but they refused to believe it. Gamaliel’s argument is not honorable or open-minded.
- H. Verse 40. They agree, because this gets them out of their predicament. By rejecting and crucifying Jesus Christ, the Sanhedrin had already decided that this entire movement is not of God. Here, they agree to take no action until they are sure if it is of God! Their insincerity is shown in the fact that they strip the apostles and gave them each thirty-nine blows with rods across the back. This was no small disgrace, and shows their hypocrisy. If they really wanted to see whether or not this was from

God, then why beat these men? The command not to speak in the name of Jesus also shows they had already made up their minds. Then, though, they cannot hold them.

VI. The Reaction of the Apostles. Acts 5:41-42.

A. Acts 5:41. What an attitude, rejoicing to be worthy of suffering shame for the Lord Jesus!

B. Verse 42. The apostles don't stop teaching, just as they told the Sanhedrin they would not. They made no change in their activities.

VII. Conclusion: The angel's release of the apostles resulted in more embarrassment for the Sanhedrin, who has to politely invite the apostles to appear before them. They accuse them of not obeying their command and seeking to bring the charge of murder against them for their execution of Jesus Christ. Peter makes a sweeping defense, showing God is on their side, and they did indeed murder the Lord Jesus. They wanted to kill them, but had no good excuse. Gamaliel advises caution, but only to get them out of the predicament. The apostles are beaten and commanded not to teach more in the name of Jesus. Yet they only rejoice that they are worthy to suffer shame for Him, and go right on proclaiming. Would we rejoice to suffer for Christ's sake? Do we obey God rather than men? Do we have the kind of boldness for God that these men did? Let us learn from their example!