

Acts Chapter 5 Second Continued

In the last lesson, we learned that the apostles of Jesus, led by Peter had escaped from jail and were back into the temple preaching. They had been commanded of the high priest not to speak any more in Jesus' name. The apostles told these religious leaders that they in fact caused the death of Jesus. They also told them that they had need to repent.

The Jewish law said that you needed two witnesses to establish a fact. The disciples reminded them that they were all witnesses of Jesus' resurrection and that the operation of the Holy Ghost in the miracle healings, was a witness also.

Acts 5:33 "When they heard [that], they were cut [to the heart], and took counsel to slay them."

They would have to get Peter and these other apostles quieted down, or they would be thrown out of their high position in the temple. This deeply grieved them that they might lose their high esteem among the people, and they started figuring out a way to kill these apostles to get them to be still.

You would have thought they would have had a guilty conscience and repented, but they did not. Their only fear was of losing their power over the people.

Acts 5:34 "Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;"

“Gamaliel” was a respected Pharisee, a prominent teacher at Jerusalem, a member of the Jewish high council (the Sanhedrin), and the teacher of Paul. Jewish tradition states that Gamaliel’s grandfather was Hillel, the prominent rabbi who represented the liberal wing of the Pharisees in opposition to the more rigid, and conservative wing led by Shammai.

Like his grandfather, the prominent rabbi Hillel, Gamaliel the most noted rabbi of his time, led the liberal faction of the Pharisees. His most famous student was the Apostle Paul (22:3).

When the lives of the apostles were in jeopardy before the Sanhedrin, Gamaliel quieted them with his persuasive and pragmatic speech. Gamaliel is mentioned only twice in Scripture (Acts 5:34; and 22:3).

Gamaliel means reward of God. This man was a very educated man in the law and seems to have wisdom in the decisions he makes. First, he is very careful to put the apostles back out of hearing range, so they cannot hear him plead their case. Had they been in close range, the rulers would not have listened, because they would not want to lose face before these Hebrews.

This man is of the same group as Paul (Pharisees). Paul would later remind the Hebrews that he was a Pharisee. This Gamaliel was highly thought of among not only his people, but these rulers as well; perhaps because of the wise decisions he made. He was head of the school in Jerusalem.

Acts 5:35 "And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men."

We see here, a solemn warning to be careful in dealing with these men. Gamaliel is saying, you must be sure of what you are accusing them of and also, careful not to cause their followers to come in force against you.

They could cause a big problem for the leaders of the temple, if they do not handle it just right. This man is not only an educated man in the law, but uses very good judgment as well.

Verses 36-39: Many false messiahs have arisen throughout the ages, as Christ Himself predicted (Matt. 24:5). These have all died and have amounted to nothing. Gamaliel cites two such cases from his lifetime to discourage and rash actions against the Twelve. God in His providence uses this to protect His servants.

Gamaliel's advice must not be regarded, however, as biblical precept. False teachers do not inherently cease with the passing of time. Paul, one of Gamaliel's own students (22:3), did not follow or teach this principle. We are to note, rebuke, and oppose false teachings (Romans 16:17; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; Jude 3).

Acts 5:36 "For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought."

"Theudas": An otherwise unknown individual who led a revolt in Judea in the early years of the first century, not to be confused with a later Theudas cited in Josephus as a revolutionary.

It is uncertain to me who Theudas was. The only thing we know for sure is that he claimed to be a great prophet and convinced about 400 men to follow him.

This Theudas did not pass the test of time. Theudas was killed and his followers scattered. The difference being made here is that Jesus Christ had more followers after His death than in His life. One giant difference is that Jesus rose from the grave.

Acts 5:37 "After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, [even] as many as obeyed him, were dispersed."

"Rose up Judas of Galilee": The founder of the Zealots who led another revolt in Palestine early in the first century. Zealots, a party of Jews who were fanatical nationalists, believed that radical

action was required to overthrow the Roman power in Palestine. They even sought to take up arms against Rome.

“Days of the taxing”: One ordered by Quirinius, governor of Syria (in 6-7 B.C.; Luke 2:2).

This Judas of Galilee was not from Galilee, but Gamala. Galilee was the place he led his rebellion from. He was opposing the census, so tradition says. In the Bible, the only mention of him is here. He was killed just like Theudas and his followers scattered.

You see, these both were worldly men and the men who followed them were of the flesh. They were not spiritual men. There is no comparison at all to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verses 38-39: Members of the Sanhedrin heeded Gamaliel’s words concerning the apostles. But, based on his knowledge of Scripture, Gamaliel should have been more decisive and less pragmatic about accepting Jesus as the risen Messiah.

Acts 5:38 "And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:"

This Gamaliel is advising the temple leaders to just let the apostles of Jesus alone and let them run their course. If they are not of God, these things that they teach will die out and the followers of this Jesus will be scattered.

Acts 5:39 "But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

This is the wisest suggestion he has made yet. He tells them, just in case this is of God, then you are fighting against God and there is no way for you to win. One of the statements Jesus said to the disciples, when they tried to stop someone from ministering in Jesus' name is, don't do it.

Mark 9:39-40 "But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me." "For he that is not against us is on our part."

It would be well for all followers of Christ to remember this Scripture.

We should all be working together, not fighting each other.

Acts 5:40 "And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten [them], they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go."

“Beaten them”: The apostles were unjustly flogged, probably with 39 lashes, the standard number given to avoid exceeding the Old Testament legal limit of 40 (Deut. 25:3).

If they truly agreed that these men might be of God, why did they beat them? They still commanded them not to speak in Jesus' name.

It seems to me that, they were still against them, even knowing that they might be of God. Somehow, I feel that their religious leaders knew all along that these apostles were of God. They were just jealous and were not willing to admit they were wrong.

Acts 5:41 "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."

This is such a far cry from what the Christians of today do. Christians now want everything to go perfectly for them. They are not interested in suffering for Christ at all. These early Christians wanted to be as near like Jesus as they could.

They were pleased to suffer for Him; He suffered first that they might be saved. They felt to suffer for Christ was an honor, not shame.

Acts 5:42 "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

You can easily see that these apostles did not heed the command of the rulers of the temple. They obeyed God and not man. The church seems to always grow the most in times of persecution.

Acts Chapter 5 Second Continued Questions

1. What did these rulers want to do to the apostles?
2. What did cut to the heart mean?
3. Who stood up in the council to advise them?
4. What was he a doctor of?
5. What did he suggest to do with the apostles?
6. Why did they have respect for Gamaliel?
7. What warning did Gamaliel give in verse 35?
8. What was the name of the false leader mentioned in verse 36?
9. How many followers did he have?

10. What happened to his followers?
11. Who was Judas of Galilee?
12. What happened to his followers?
13. What kind of men were both of these men?
14. If these apostles are not of God, what will happen to their followers?
15. If it is God, what are these rulers actually doing?
16. Why did Jesus say not to stop someone ministering in His name?
17. What lesson should all denominations of Jesus' followers learn from this?
18. After they agreed with Gamaliel what did they do to the apostles?
19. What did they command them not to do?
20. What did the apostles rejoice about?
21. Where did the apostles preach daily?