

The Acts of the Apostles

Lesson: 7

Topic: The Apostles Are Imprisoned by the Sanhedrin

Reading: Acts 5:12-42

Review

Scripture Analysis

Verses 12-16

- QUESTION: What was done through the hands of the apostles?
 - “many signs and wonders” (v.12) such as healing the sick (v.15) and casting out of unclean spirits (v.16).
 - These healing miracles ultimately point us to the resurrection of the body on the last day when sickness and death will be no more.
- QUESTION: By what authority were they able to perform these miraculous signs?
 - By God!
 - This authority marked them as Jesus’ apostles, the ones:
 - through whom the NT Scriptures would be given to the Church,
 - sent by God to teach the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins, which is the source of deliverance from all the effects of sin in the world.
- QUESTION: Where were these healings taking place? Where did we hear this before?
 - They were all together (literally – they were all of one mind) in Solomon’s Portico.
 - Notice again the “oneness” of the people.
 - Those who weren’t of one mind dared not join them (most likely because of what they heard about Ananias and Sapphira), but held them in high regard.
 - It was in Solomon’s Portico where Peter preached to the crowds after healing the lame beggar (Acts 3:11).
 - This is also where they were arrested and taken before the Sanhedrin.
 - Notice what happens next.

Verses 17-18

- “the high priest rose up, and all who were with him...arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.”
 - The Sanhedrin must have tolerated the apostles’ bold disobedience of their orders not to speak or teach in Jesus name.
 - Yet, with the growing numbers the tension increased.
- QUESTION: What does the preaching of the Gospel mean for us today?
 - It is always accompanied by persecution.
 - Those who repent and believe the Gospel will receive it with joy and gladness.
 - Those who reject the Gospel in impenitence and unbelief often lash out in anger.
 - This anger stems from the self-righteousness and pride of the sinful nature that refuses to let go of the worship of self and one’s own works.

Verses 19-21

- QUESTION: Who delivered the apostles from prison and what did he command them?
 - “Angel of the Lord” came to them during the night and miraculously released them.
 - “Go and stand in the temple and proclaim to the people all the word of this life.
 - The “words of this life” the angel was referring to was Jesus and everything concerning him.
 - To put it another way, go back to where you were and what you were doing prior to the arrest.
 - When it was “daybreak” they did just that.
 - Thought:
 - In the fact of persecution, having an angel from God come and release them had to give the apostles’ confidence to continue confessing Christ.
 - Gave them that certainty that they were doing the Lord’s word even though they were trying to be silenced.

Verses 21-26

- “Now when the high priest came...”
 - Having gathered in the morning for the trial, members of the Sanhedrin were unaware that the apostles:
 - had been delivered from prison during the night and
 - were back teaching in the temple.
 - Yet, they were made aware of this when:
 - the officers returned back from the prison empty handed and reporting the cells were securely locked.
 - and a messenger from the outside told them where the apostles were.
- QUESTION: Why did the captain of the guard refrain from violence when he arrested the disciples?
 - They feared a revolt among the people who believed the teaching of the apostles.
 - The apostles were held in high regard among the common people.
 - It was dangerous to make a false move against them in the presence of the people.
 - This is all very similar to Jesus.

Verses 27-28

- “And when they had brought them, they set them before the council...”
 - Notice there’s no word concerning how the apostles escaped from prison.
 - Caiaphas surely had to be suspicious about that.
 - It would have been a fine thing for him and other Sadducees, who didn’t believe in angels, to hear it was an angel who opened the prison.
 - But that would have avoided discussing the real topic at hand.
- “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name...”
 - The council prohibited the apostles from:
 - teaching in the name of Jesus or filling Jerusalem with the doctrine of Jesus’ death and
 - how the Sanhedrin had participated in Jesus death.
- “You intend to bring this man’s blood upon us”
 - This indicates the high priest’s guilty conscience.

- He had heard the preaching of the Law by the Apostles.
- They had the word of the prophets to know and believe Jesus was the Christ.
- Yet, they reject Christ because they refused to believe that they were sinners.
- They couldn't let go their belief that salvation was by their own works.
- As a result, they were trying to silence the Apostles, which in reality, were trying to silence the accusations of the Law.

Verses 29-32

- “We must obey God rather than men.”
 - Here, Peter speaks for the apostles.
 - Peter's words are the apostles' words.
 - The apostles were rightly obeying God, placing his authority above that of the Sanhedrin.
 - AC XVI 6-7 (Civil Government)
 - “It is necessary for Christians to be obedient to their rulers and laws. The only exception is when they are commanded to sin.”
- “The God of our fathers raised Jesus...”
 - The content of the apostles' preaching is consistent:
 - Jesus Christ.
 - The death and resurrection of Jesus for the salvation of the world.
 - His exaltation by God the Father as Savior of all people.
 - The call to repentance and faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins.
 - Their witness to these things
 - The testimony of the Holy Spirit

Verse 33

- QUESTION: How did the Sanhedrin respond to the testimony of the apostles?
 - “...enraged and wanted to kill them.”
 - Their impenitence and unbelief in the Gospel causes them to lash out in anger.

Verses 34-39

- QUESTION: Who stops them from killing the apostles?
 - Gamaliel, who was both:
 - a teacher and
 - one who held in honor with all the people.
- “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men.”
 - Gamaliel advises the Sanhedrin to leave the apostles alone.
 - He says, “if their work is of men, it will come to nothing.”
 - He gives the example of two men:
 - Theudas: Incited a rebellion in AD 45-46.
 - Judas: Active during a troubled time in Judea (roughly AD 6)
 - These men were false messiahs and deliverers of Israel.
 - They led people astray.
 - They eventually died and nothing came about from their plans.
 - What this reveals to us is that every foundation that is built on man will eventually fail.

- He goes on to say, “if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them.”
 - The only thing that endures, is that which is built on God
 - Matt. 16:16-18; “Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Verses 40-42

- QUESTION: Although the Sanhedrin agreed to follow Gamaliel’s advice, what did they still do to the apostles?
 - They were beaten. Most likely scourged.
 - Stripped and given thirty-nine blows with rods across the back.
 - They were told not to preach in the name of Jesus.
 - Similar to the command they were given last time.
 - We know how well that went.
- QUESTION: Of what does this remind us?
 - Of how Christ suffered persecution and rejection by the Sanhedrin for what He preached and taught.
- QUESTION: How did the apostles respond to this treatment?
 - They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus’ name
 - Matthew 5:10-12:
 - “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 - ¹¹ “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
 - They continued to preach daily in both the temple of the Jews and in the houses where the Church gathered.
 - They taught that Jesus is the Christ and Savior promised from the Old Testament Scriptures.

Terms

Catechesis Summary

- The preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is always accompanied by persecution.
- Those who repent and believe the Gospel will receive it with joy and gladness.
- Those who reject the Gospel in impenitence and unbelief will often lash out in anger.
- Such anger stems from the self-righteousness and pride of the sinful nature that refuses to let go of the worship of self.
- In our persecution for Jesus’ sake, the sufferings of Christ are manifest in us that we might find our comfort and sufficiency in His grace alone.

- No earthly authority can overturn the command of the Lord to preach the Gospel. “We must obey God rather than men.”
- The content of the Holy Spirit’s witness in the preaching of the Gospel is always the death and resurrection of Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

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