

Acts 5:12-42

12 Why was it the Apostles that performed the miraculous works? 14:3; 2Corinthians 12:12. Solomon's Colonnade was an area where those thousands could gather to worship on the eastern side of the Court of the Gentiles.

13-14 The word of Annanias and Saphira's deaths kept those who were not sincere from joining the believers. But sincere believers continued to be added. Why was it important for the early church to have genuine believers? Isa 33:14 What will the preference for numbers over purity do to the church?

15-16 The Apostles' power to heal was convincing evidence that their message was from God. In days when modern medicine was not available, many would be desperate for any hope of healing. Both Jewish and Hellenistic folk belief the shadow was believed to carry spiritual power for good or evil. Some believe the text indicates they were healed in spite of their superstition. Others disagree with that interpretation.

17 Jealousy was the motivation for the arrest. (The Jewish traditional use of this word is used in a sense of zeal for the Law – Numbers 25:13) This was probably Caiaphas who held office until 36AD. Most of the opposition to Jesus came from the Pharisees. In the early church, it was usually the Sadducees. They wanted the status quo maintained. The belief in a resurrected Messiah was contrary to their theology and denied their authority.

18-19 (All the apostles?) If we live godly lives we will be persecuted. 2Timothy 3:12 Jail is not an obstacle for the believer. In three different accounts in Acts, it becomes an opportunity for God to display His power. The Chinese call it their seminary.

20 The angelic command! God overrides the authorities of this world. Take note of the angel tells them to preach "the full message of this new life." 1John 5:20 The Jews referred to the Temple as "the house of our life." It would be frightening to go back where you were just arrested and continue to do what you were arrested for, but if an angel commanded you...

21-23 Surprise! It won't be the last Holy Spirit jail break. Brother Yun reported one in our time, confirmed by the Chinese newspapers.

24-26 Imagine how hardhearted you would have to be to continue on your course when even prison bars cannot hold them. They dared not use force because the people knew God was at work and respected the Apostles. In fact, the captain and his men were afraid they would be stoned if they used force. Luke 22:2 There was constant political battle going on ideologically. The people had some distrust for the Sadducees compromising position with Rome.

27-28 Why no mention of the escape? Why did they not mention Jesus' name. It may already have been considered blasphemy. The accusation: They were demanded to stop preaching; the whole city is filled with the doctrine; people are starting to see the Sadducees as guilty of killing the Messiah. True, true, and true, but sitting in their places of authority, they couldn't believe in the audacity of the Apostles.

29 The trump card: God rules! We are to obey authority, unless God says otherwise. Jesus commanded them to preach first in Jerusalem. They were being obedient. Now the once cowardly Peter blasts the Sanhedrin with Gospel truth.

30-32 He is saying, "Yes, you killed the Messiah. God raised Him, and we are witnesses to that fact, and so is the Holy Spirit who is given to those who obey Him. The implication is the members of the council do not have the Spirit because they refuse to obey God! Who was on trial? That is the answer to the prayer for boldness, but it is also said fearlessly, knowing to die is to be with Christ.

33 They were furious because they understood the implications meant the end of the Temple system. Their authority was being challenged by a fisherman!

34-39 Gamaliel (one of the most famous of Pharisees, grandson of Hillel, and the teacher of the Apostle Paul) talked them out of taking rash action. At least someone had a little sense. I don't think they really took to heart the fact that they might be fighting against God because the Sanhedrin will continue in its attack of the Way. Deuteronomy 18:21-22 (Gamaliel's son was named Yeshua and became the High Priest in A.D. 63-65.

40 The word for their sentence is *dero*, literally meaning to flay the skin. The Mishnah described in detail how to flog. The victim's back and chest were bared and hands tied to the sides of a post. The victim was to bend low. The one who whipped him used a double whip and stood on a rock. One third of the stripes were to land on the chest and two-thirds on the back with all the might one could give. If the person died, the scourger is not held responsible.

41-42 The Apostles believed Luke 6:22-23. It was a disgraceful thing to be whipped by the Sanhedrin for disobedience. Yet, they considered it an honor to suffer for the name of Jesus.

They must have divided up the Christian homes where there were meetings and spent much of their time teaching in those homes. Their message was a whole new light on the Jewish Scriptures. The mental and spiritual shift was very radical, but at the same time so compelling and freeing. All the Scriptures were now seen in the light of the life, death, and resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus.