

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS 5:27-42

Outline of Acts 1 – 8

- I. Jesus promises power for witness to the nations 1:1-11
- II. The apostles witness in Jerusalem & Judea 1:12–6:7
 - A. The church in Jerusalem is planted 1:12–2:47
 - B. The church in Jerusalem expands 3:1–8:3
 - 1. By the apostles' witness 3:1-4:22
 - a. Before the people 3:1-26
 - b. Before the authorities 4:1-22
 - c. Before the Lord 4:23-31; 5:12-16
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 - e. Before the high priest 5:12-42
 - 2. By the believer's word 6:1–8:3

Preceding Context

Jewish religious authorities had forbid Jesus' apostles to speak publicly about Jesus, yet the apostles were going to temple every day, teaching about Jesus, healing many sick folk. The authorities had them arrested again, putting them in jail for a night, from which they escaped and returned to teach at temple. So the temple police arrested them again.

²⁷ When they had brought them, they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, "We gave [~Did we not give] you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet here you [–have] filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man's blood on us." [NASV. Square brackets = variant readings in some manuscripts.]

Council (Sanhedrin)

An assembly or court of 23 or of 71 elders ≈ parliament + supreme court + college or cardinals. Roman imperial authorities had limited its powers.

High Priest

He was the only priest allowed to enter the Most Holy Place in the temple. His respect ≈ ayatollah in Islam ≈ pope in Catholicism. Roman imperial authorities approved the Jewish high priest, and local kings feared him.

"This name ... this man." These men would not deign to speak the name of Yeshua's (Jesus'), whom they had pressured the Romans to crucify.

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The apostles' teaching

Compare Jesus' command: "Go make disciples ... by teaching to obey all that I commanded you." (Matt. 28:19).

²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than any human authority. ³⁰ [+And] The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might [~to] give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are [+by him] witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."

QUERY: Wait! Are we not saved by faith alone? Why say, "We must obey God"? Is that not salvation by works? Is that not legalism? (Hint: this is a contrast, not a salvation text.)

QUERY: Wait! Does not the Bible say to obey human authorities: kings, governors, church elders? (Hint: Always obey the higher authority. When abused, appeal to a higher authority.)

QUERY: Wait! Was it a tree, a stake or a cross? (Hint: It was a stake made of a tree, to which a cross bar was attached.)

QUERY: "Raised up" Does that mean "made him public"? Or "raised him from death to life"? (Hint: both are true, but which fits the context better?)

QUERY: In what way is the Holy Spirit a witness to Jesus' death and resurrection? (Hint: What was the Spirit doing then, aside from his "inner witness" to Christian believers?)

GRAMMAR: "God has given" = Greek aorist tense which is timeless in a subordinate clause, so can quite legitimately be translated, "God gives". So, what is something that you and I can do in order to get more of the Holy Spirit? (Hint: read again verse 32.)

³³ When they heard this, they were [~being] enraged and wanted to kill them. ³⁴ But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, respected by all the people, stood up and ordered the men to be put outside for a short time. ³⁵ Then he said to them, "Fellow Israelites, consider carefully what you propose to do to these men."

QUERY: What might have motivated Gamaliel to defend the apostles? (Hint: He understood their message. He knew the Law [Torah]. He knew how the Romans suppress rebels. He knew the Sanhedrin. He understood human nature.)

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³⁶ For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and disappeared. ³⁷ After him Judas the Galilean rose up at the time of the census and got [+many] people to follow him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered.

NOTE: Theudas and Judas were both common names and there were other rebels with the same names. This was not the Theudas named by Josephus.)

³⁸ So in the present [-case], I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone; because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; ³⁹ but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them [~it] — in that case you may even be found fighting against God!”

QUERY: Why would a respected, intelligent man, such as Gamaliel, even consider that the apostles' message could possibly be from God? (Hint: He knew the Hebrew Scriptures better than most of the Sanhedrin.)

They were convinced by him, ⁴⁰ and when they had called in the apostles, they had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let [-them] go. ⁴¹ As they left the council, they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name [+of Jesus].

FLOG. (Literally, to skin) to beat with fists or to whip leathern strips in ways that inflict pain and leave skin lesions.

QUERY: What had the apostles done that merited to be flogged? (Hint: They had disobeyed the Sanhedrin's earlier order.)

QUERY: What is it that all atheists and false religions want Christians to stop doing? (Hint: This has nothing to do with feeding the poor, or with shuffling our feet as worship teams try to lead us with non-melodious, commercial songs.)

QUERY: Why would Luke write in verse 41 "the Name" and not write "Jesus" or "the Lord"? (Hint: What did the phrase "The Name" mean to Jews?)

⁴² And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah.

DISCUSS: Recommend practical ways in which to fill a city with the apostles' teaching, aside from weekly 'services' that the city does not attend, now that we cannot perform healing on demand.