

Acts Part 1 Study Guide

Lesson 5: Trials Within and Without – Acts 5

1. Acts 5:1-16 – An Act of Heavenly Discipline

A. One hallmark of the divine origin of the Scriptures is the inclusion of details which are uncomplimentary. We see the warts and weaknesses of even the greatest heroes. Though there was a strong spirit of camaraderie and selflessness among the early disciples, there was also a spirit of competition.

B. Describe the actions of Ananias and Sapphira relative to:

1. Satan –

2. The Holy Spirit –

3. Barnabas –

4. Other brethren –

5. Each other –

C. People may reason that they aren't so bad because they have not robbed, raped or killed, but consider how seriously God takes hypocrisy and the attempt to deceive!

2. Acts 5:17-32 – Apostles On Trial Again

A. The Jewish leaders are growingly incensed that their orders are being defied and the new movement is gaining ground – and this right under their noses in the temple!

1. The apostles are arrested, only to be let out of jail by an angel – 5:17-21.

2. Upon receiving this shocking news, the priests have the apostles brought before them again – but very gently, fearing a backlash by the people – 5:22-26.

3. The high priest, missing the great truths staring him in the face, blusters about the apostles' defiance and their intimations of the Sanhedrin's guilt in the death of Jesus – 5:27-28.

B. Peter (again) takes the lead in responding, with the assent of all the apostles.

1. Yes, they had defied the edict of the Sanhedrin because they have a greater obligation to obey God – 5:29.

2. Yes, the blood of Jesus rightly belonged upon the hands of the Jewish leaders because: a) They murdered Jesus; b) God had raised Him up to be a Prince and Savior (and they have been unable to disprove it); c) Both the apostles and the Holy Spirit were bearing witness to these truths.
3. *The blood of Jesus belongs on the hands of the Jews*, but there is still the opportunity of forgiveness – if they will lay their envy and stubbornness aside.

3. Turning Up the Heat on the Apostles – 5:33-42

- A. The Sanhedrin is enraged at the *justified* defiance of the apostles. They begin to openly discuss their murderous intentions until Gamaliel intervenes.
- B. Men differ on whether Gamaliel's advice is sound (though it does work to the benefit of the apostles). Consider:
 1. His recommendation ignores the facts of the case; it is totally speculative.
 2. If the facts warrant that Christianity is apostate Judaism, then the Council was *obligated* to oppose it, not leave it alone.
 3. In spite of the demise of Theudas and Judas, false notions are not immediately overthrown by God. Witness Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.
- C. Note the resolve and fortitude of the apostles after being beaten by the Council.

Questions:

1. What reaction did the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira have upon the church?
2. What effect did this discipline have upon outsiders becoming Christians?
3. At this early stage, who is working miracles in the church?
4. What does this passage say about the Jews' responsibility for Jesus' death?
5. How does the second charge (5:28) fulfill the instructions of Jesus to the apostles?
6. What is the implication of Peter's assertion about the Holy Spirit in Acts 5:32?
7. Which of the two episodes in Acts 5 seems to be the greater threat against the church?