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The Acts of the Apostles Chapter 5



Review of Chapter 4

- The Sadducees are ‘disturbed’ by the Apostles’ teaching because they preached the resurrection of the dead in and through Jesus Christ. The number of believers grew to 5,000.
- The Jewish authorities arrest the Apostles Peter and John to intimidate them and try to prevent them from preaching the truth of Christ.
- The Apostles testify to the truth that the lame man was healed by and in the name of Jesus Christ “whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead” (v. 10).
- The Apostles further testify that there is salvation in no other name other than that of Jesus Christ, much as Jesus Christ testifies in John 14:6, saying, “I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life...”
- The Jewish authorities pressure the Apostles to stop preaching to which they respond boldly, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge” (v. 19).
- After their release, the Apostles Peter and John return to the others and testify to how God had used them to witness the Truth of Christ to the Jewish authorities.
- All together praise God “with one accord” (v. 24), quoting Psalm 2.
- Rather than shrink back from preaching out of fear of persecution, the Apostles beseech God to enable them to continue to preach the Truth and perform miracles to glorify His holy Name.
- The Apostles pray, the place where they are shakes with the presence of the Holy Spirit and they all speak the word of God boldly (v. 31).

Acts 4:31-37

Q: What does it mean in verse 31 that “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit”? Had they and others newly baptized not already received the Holy Spirit?

“He looks on the earth, and it trembles; He touches the hills, and they smoke.” (Ps. 103:32 LXX)

Q: What were the hallmarks of the answered prayer and strengthening (inflaming) of the Holy Spirit?

“This was the proof that they were heard, and of His visitation. ‘And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.’ What means, ‘They were filled?’ It means, They were inflamed; and the Gift burned up within them. ‘And they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.’” (St. John Chrysostom, Homily XI on Acts 4:23)

Q: What characterizes giving and offering in the early Orthodox Church? What can we learn from this for the Church today?

Chapter 5

Q: What is the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, his wife?

“He that has chosen to sell his goods and distribute them, and then withdraws them, is guilty of sacrilege... Do you see that this is the charge brought against Ananias, that having made the money sacred, he afterwards secreted it?” (St. John Chrysostom, Homily XII on Acts 4:36,37)

Q: Was this a ‘harsh’ punishment for what Ananias and Sapphira did in lying to God and His Church?

“But perhaps some one will say that he dealt very harshly with her. What do you mean? What harshness? If for gathering sticks a man is to be stoned, much rather ought he for sacrilege” (ibid.).

n.b. Numbers 15:32-36 details the stoning to death by God’s command of a man caught collecting sticks on the Sabbath, i.e., for breaking the Law of the Sabbath.

Q: What is the reaction in the Church following the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira?

Q: What do the miracles of vv. 12-16 reveal to us and teach us about how God’s grace and healing is communicated?

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father.” (Jn. 14:12)

Q: What do the efforts of the high priest and the other Jewish authorities to put the Apostles in prison and the ensuing events reveal? What is the irony in their outrage and threats?

Q: What stands out to you in the Apostles’ response to once again being arrested, put in prison,⁶ and threatened again by the Jewish authorities (vv. 17-32)?

Q: What is the wisdom spoken by the Pharisee Gamaliel (vv. 35-39)?

n.b. Theudas and Judas of Galilee were two of many who made false messianic claims. They raised the sword of rebellion against Rome and were crushed, as reported by the Jewish historian Josephus (OSB, p. 1478 on Acts 5:35-39)

Q: How do the Apostles respond to the beating they received at the hands of the Pharisees and Jewish authorities for the sake of Christ’s Name? What was the effect?

Q: What do we learn from the Apostles in their willingness and, even, joyfulness, in suffering for the sake of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ?

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces ^[a]patience. ⁴ But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be ^[b]perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” (James 1:2-4)