

ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

NOTES 19

ACTS 5:17-32

FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP BIBLE STUDY

After the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira two opposites reactions began to occur: the apostles and new believers were held in high esteem, yet many feared to join them. At the same time, “more than ever believers were added to the Lord” (v. 14). It even appears that the apostles were doing more miracles and wonders than before.

The high priest and the Saducees became jealous of the apostles, however, and “laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail” (V. 18). They grew jealous of the obvious favor which the apostles were receiving from God. They couldn’t pretend their signs and miracles were not from God, nor could they avoid the conclusion that these men had been Jesus’ disciples, and they were doing the same sorts of things Jesus had done: healings, casting out demons, and so forth.

Other examples confirm the Jews’ jealousy over the apostles’ power from God. Acts 7:6-10 tells of Stephen giving his expository sermon just before being stoned to death. He tells how God told Abraham his offspring would be enslaved and afflicted for four hundred years before God would lead them out. He recounts how Joseph’s brothers became jealous of him and sold him into Egypt “but God was with him and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household.”

Joseph was obviously their father’s favorite son, and the older brothers were jealous of his special treatment and of their father’s emotion toward him and committed a heinous act to try to eliminate Joseph forever.

Acts 13:13-16 records a later event in the life of the early church. Paul and his companions went into the synagogue in Antioch when they arrived in the region of Pisidion. They sat down, and Paul read from the Law and the Prophets. The synagogue rulers asked Paul if he had a word of encouragement to give, so he did. He stood up and taught how Jesus had come and had fulfilled the prophecies. After the meeting broke up, “many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas,” and the next Sabbath almost the whole city came to hear Paul teach.

“But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, ‘It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’”

“And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region” (Acts 13:43-49).

Acts 17:1-7 records Paul’s visit to Thessalonica where he and his companions first went into the synagogue to teach, and for three Sabbath days he reasoned with them, explaining it was necessary for the Christ “to suffer and to rise from the dead.” He explained that Jesus, of whom he spoke, was the Christ. Some of those present were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, “as did a great man of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, ‘These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.’”

Paul makes direct assertions about God’s plan to make Israel jealous by His acceptance of the Gentiles. He quotes the Old Testament to establish this reality years before it happened in Romans 10:16-21: “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?’” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world. But I ask, did Israel not understand?”

First Moses says, “I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry.” Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.” But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”

In the next chapter, Romans 11:11-15, Paul explains the jealousy of the Jews in his own words: “So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

“Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?”

God’s history with Israel has been one of continual push-pull. When they were doing well, they would forget to honor God and would begin to worship pagan gods. Eventually, God punished them by exiling them to Assyria and Babylon and permanently breaking up the nation. By the time Jesus was on earth, only the Southern Kingdom existed: the tribe of Judah and the the half-tribe of Ephraim. Not only were they limited as a nation, but they also were under the domination of Rome.

Finally, the nation rejected Jesus as their Messiah, and by the time we get to the book of Acts, a faithful remnant of Jews come to faith after Pentecost, but increasingly it is Gentiles who receive the good news. The Jews are furious and jealous of the apostles’ power and influence, just as they were jealous of Jesus.

In the earliest days of the nation, before Moses died, God revealed that the time would come when He would make Israel jealous “of those who are not a nation”, and Isaiah said that God would be sought and found by those who did not seek Him nor ask for Him. God would reveal Himself to these unseeking people, and they would receive Him while His own special people would refuse to come to Him even though He held His hands out to them continuously.

In Romans 9 through 11 Paul reveals one of the clearest New Testament explanations of God’s future plan for Israel. In Romans 11:11-15 Paul confirms that Israel’s stumbling—which was a long, continual “stumble” that lasted for over a millennia and which culminated in their betrayal of Jesus, is not ultimately fatal. Rather, their sin has resulted in salvation being extended on a large scale to the gentiles. Then Paul reveals the core of this situation: this reversal of God’s favor, from being poured out on His people to being poured out on gentiles, is ultimately going to make Israel jealous. This jealousy will eventually result in their desire to come into relationship with their God again. They are going to see that they have forfeited His blessing; they will see that His blessing and power and favor rests on the “not a nation” people.

Paul then makes a powerful statement: if their failure to honor God means “riches for the Gentiles”, their inclusion back in God’s favor will be even greater blessing. Their rejection of God means the reconciliation for the world, but their eventual acceptance of Him and His Messiah will mean “life from the dead”!

Paul said he made much of his ministry to the gentiles. He considered that calling to be God’s grace to him (Eph. 3:9), and he threw himself into it—not only because he knew it meant gentiles were receiving salvation, but because he knew that as his own fellow Jews saw the gentiles coming to faith and receiving God’s blessings, some of those watching Jews would also come to faith.

Seeing the previously blind and stubborn gentiles embracing the God who had historically been the God of Israel, as far as the world could see, began to have a profound effect on Jews who had hearts that desired truth. They were able to own their rebellion and surrender it to their God and see that they had to believe in His Son and submit to His authority in order to receive His blessings.

They were able to lay aside their arrogance and receive Him. God was now calling not only gentiles to Himself, but He was calling Jews to see their true condition of arrogance and rebellion and realize that He means what He says and keeps His promises. If they, His own formed and chosen people could reject Him, those who had no sense of “specialness” would respond when He called them. The chosen Jews would finally see that their God was keeping His ancient word; He was making them jealous by a people who had been “not a nation”, and they knew that God’s faithfulness to Himself and His own word meant that He would still reveal Himself to them again. He would bring them to a place where they had to recognize that their birth did not give them special privileges; rather, it is God’s calling and election that gives blessings to people. When Israel will see that their standing with God is not based on their identity but rather on God’s faithfulness to His own promises, they will again be “unhardened”, and God will save those who finally believe.

BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

Once again the apostles were called before the Sanhedrin. Angered by the increasing miracles the apostles were doing and by the crowds following them and receiving healing, the Sadducees were inflamed with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and had them put in prison.

During the night, however, an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and released them. Immediately they returned to the temple, as the angel commanded them, and began to teach “all the words of this Life” (v. 20).

This message of Life was the message the Lord Jesus defined. In John 6:60-69, after telling the Jews and His disciples that the way to have eternal life was to eat His flesh and

drink His blood, that those who did would abide in Him and He in them. Some of His disciples began to grumble, “‘This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?’ But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, ‘Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.’ (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, ‘This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.’”

“After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, ‘Do you want to go away as well?’ Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.’”

Jesus had previously defined this mystery as being born again. When He spoke to Nicodemus secretly at night, He said to him, “‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, “‘You must be born again.’” The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit’” (Jn. 3:3-8).

The message of Life which the apostles were now preaching in Jerusalem was the message that the Lord Jesus had died for humanity’s sin, that He had been buried, and that God had raised Him up. Anyone who now heard and believed this amazing news would live forever. He would not come into judgment but would pass from death to life!

Sin had been atoned; each person could now receive the gift of God, believe in the Lord Jesus and trust Him for his own salvation. This was the message of life!

The apostles returned to the temple and resumed teaching at daybreak.

In the morning when the high priest arrived, he called for the apostles to be brought before the council again—but they weren’t in prison. The officers, fearing the people would stone them, did not use force on the apostles but ushered them back to the council. The high priest questioned them and reminded them they had been strictly warned not to teach in Jesus’ name, yet they had filled Jerusalem with His teaching. Peter answered by stating again that God had raised Jesus whom they had killed and that God had given the Holy Spirit to those who believed.

Peter responded, “We must obey God rather than man” (v. 29).

Interestingly, the Sandhedrin was so fearful of the apostles’ filling Jerusalem with their teaching that they were almost non-reactive to the miracle that the apostles were out of prison, preaching in the temple court by the time the rulers and officers arrived at work! They feared what would happen, but they did not use force on the apostles.

The apostles’ message was the same as it had been since Pentecost. Acts 2:22-24 records the thrust of Peter’s sermon: “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”

Again in Acts 3:13-15 we read Peter’s words: “The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.”

Acts 4:8-12 again records Peter preaching the same message after he and John healed the crippled man: “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.’”

During Jesus’ trial, Pilate had tried to distance himself from the implications of condemning innocent Jesus to death. Matthew 27:24-26 explains it this way: “So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, ‘I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.’ And all the people answered, ‘His blood be on us and on our children!’ Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.”

The horrifying thing that occurred when Pilate washed his hands of the whole matter was that the Jews cried out, “His blood be on us and on our children!” They cursed themselves, accepting in the passion of the moment the guilt of shedding Jesus’ blood.

It had not been long since Jesus had been in Jerusalem, since his brutal flogging and crucifixion outside the city. The people in Jerusalem had seen the terrifying events, and the Jewish rulers remembered clearly what had happened. They

KNEW the Jews had called a curse on themselves! And now the apostles were declaring with every preaching of the gospel the fact that they had killed Jesus.

It wasn't just the apostles who were articulating the truth; in Acts 7:52-53, just before the deacon Stephen is stoned to death, he also clearly states the facts: "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."

The Jews cannot escape. The Holy Spirit-filled followers of Jesus are preaching Him all to the whole city, and part of their preaching is their call to them to repent of their sin of crucifying their Messiah. If their hearts had been softened, they would have admitted their great sin and confessed, but their hearts were hard. The more they bumped into the disciples, the more they became angry and desperate to stop them, and nothing worked.

Jailing them didn't work; angels would release them. Telling them to be quiet didn't work; the apostles merely stated what the Jews themselves would have claimed: they had to obey God rather than men.

The Sanhedrin was terrified of losing power and of losing face. The power of Jesus and the authority of those who believed in Him was greater than anything they knew, and they could not overcome it. Not only were they losing spiritual power, but they were also aware that their own plotting and sin would become known to everyone: they had masterminded Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. The people couldn't blame the Romans; their own leaders had betrayed one of them—one greatly loved by much of the general population—into the hands of the enemy. They had encouraged the crowds of Jews into a mob frenzy of anger and rejection of the Messiah. Their own reputations were disintegrating, and they could not retrieve them.

OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MAN

In spite of the Jews mounting panic and anger resulting from the apostles' persistence and the large numbers of people who were believing their message, Peter and the others continued to speak. Even after being thrown in prison and miraculously released, when the Jews came to them and reminded them that they had "strictly charge you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us," Peter and the others simply said, "We must obey God rather than men" (v. 29), and they continued by reiterating that God had raised Jesus, the one whom they "killed by hanging him on a tree" (v. 30). Not only had they killed Him, but God had exalted him "at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to

Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to things things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

The Jews knew the law in Deuteronomy 21:22-23 that said, "And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance."

They had demanded that Jesus be hung on a tree—crucified with thieves—and they knew this sentence of death by crucifixion was a sign of a person being cursed by God. This killing was no mere stoning, the consequence prescribed by God for Jews who broke His covenant. Stoning purged sinners from the camp of Israel; a person who was hung on a tree, however, was cursed by God. He was not merely being disciplined or punished by God; he was actually cursed, and his dead body, if left hanging, would defile the land and extend its curse to the land as well.

Peter, in Acts 5 as well as elsewhere, was driving home the fact that the Jews themselves had Jesus hung on a tree. They are the ones who had Jesus killed in a manner that signified God's curse, that he was not just sinning as a member of the covenant people, but He was rejected and cursed by God Himself, killed as one who had been thrown out of God's covenant people.

In Galatians 3:13-14 Paul reiterates the significance of Jesus' being hung on a tree: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith."

Jesus was not only crucified on a tree as one who was cursed by God, but He literally became a curse. He became what God hated. God could not remain in the presence of sin, and Jesus became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21) and became a curse, receiving the public sign of that curse by being hung naked on a cross.

Peter is not allowing the Jews to sidestep the fact that they were responsible for this singularly sinless Man to have been hung on a tree, receiving publicly the sign of God's curse that all Israel knew from their study of the Torah. This was not just a killing; this was a deliberate plot for Jesus to receive the wrath of Rome and the public sign of being rejected by God. They killed Him, but they arranged for His death to be a demonstration of God's wrath.

What they did not believe because of their hard hearts was that this death was God's will; He wanted the world to see that His wrath was relentless against sin, and in the Person of the Son, God's wrath was received in full for human sin, and in the blood of the Son the payment for human sin was made.

EXALTED TO GOD'S RIGHT HAND

Peter immediately followed his declaration that the Jews had killed Jesus by hanging Him on a tree, marking Him with the sign of being cursed by God, with these words: "God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (v 31). God exalted Jesus as a sign that Jesus' sacrifice had passed the death sentence on Satan's reign of terror on the earth and had given Him authority over all creation as its Lord. To Jesus God gave the authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man (Jn. 6:27).

The "right hand of God" has historically been a phrase that described the power of God. For example, Exodus 15:6, in the Song of Moses and Israel, Moses says, "Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy."

Using figurative language, Moses proclaimed God's sovereignty over all the pagan gods. The pagan nations believed that their military victories came from their gods; in fact, they frequently took their gods with them into battle. The winning nation thus demonstrated that their god was the more powerful. Therefore, when God defeated enemy nations before Israel, he was declaring His sovereignty, and the nations recognized that fact.

God's sovereign power was described as the work of His right hand that had the strength to defeat Israel's enemies. Psalm 98:1 repeats this theme: "Oh sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him."

During His ministry, Jesus applied the "right hand of God" metaphor to Himself. In the Old Testament, God's mighty right hand was understood to apply to Yahweh. Jesus now puts Himself into the "metaphor". In Luke 22:69 He says, "But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God."

The Jews knew that by this statement He was claiming the identity of God the Son, and they said to Him, "Are you the Son of God, then?" To which He replied, "You say that I am" (Luke 22:70). And then the priests accused Him of blasphemy, and the events of Jesus' trial and crucifixion accelerated.

As He stood beaten and bleeding in front of the chief priests, Jesus stated that "from now on" He would be seated at the right hand of God's power. He would be the One with the authority to exercise the power of God over the earth because He would have bought humanity back from the curse of eternal damnation with His own blood. Because He is the Son of Man, He would from then on be at the right hand of God's power because as God the Son, He took human flesh and took the curse of human sin and paid His own price for His creation's transgression.

Paul carried on this theme. In Romans 8:34 he wrote, "Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." Paul articulates the fact that Jesus' death and resurrection are connected to His being seated at God's right hand.

The amazing thing is that there is even more to this metaphor. When we are born again, we are hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:3), and Paul admonishes, "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."

We as believers are commanded to focus not here but on things of heaven, where Christ is, at the right hand of God. We are to seek these things because we have been raised with Christ. In Jesus we are also sitting at the right hand of God! This is not a mere metaphor; we are literally and eternally in Christ and His body. We participate in the power and authority of Christ—not as intrinsically powerful with God's power, but as His adopted children who are hidden in Him. Where He is, we are; where we go, He goes. His power is ours because we are heirs with Him.

We are not to live as if we are earth-bound. We are already seated in heavenly places in Christ—and we are in Christ because He has died and risen, and eternal life is His to give to all who believe in Him. He bought us from death and hell, and He has reconciled us to the Trinity.

Peter, who had walked and worked with Him for three and one-half years, said Jesus "has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him."

Hebrews 1:3 states, "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," and Hebrews 10:12 says, "But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God."

Jesus is the One who upholds the entire universe by His powerful word. He is in charge of all creation, and we hold together in Him. And in Him, we are also ushered into the power and victory of God. Jesus has won the right to execute judgment because He is human like us, and He has the power to give us Life when we believe because He is God the Son (Jn. 6:25-27).

All rulers and authorities and powers are subject to Jesus. He is God the Son, and His position at God's right hand means that all creation bows to Him.

HOLY SPIRIT WITNESS

Peter closes his response to the Jewish leaders by saying, "And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him." In order

to understand this statement with more depth, let's look at what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.'

"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning."

Again in John 16:7-15 Jesus says, "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.' But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning."

Jesus states clearly that when He would leave, the Holy Spirit would come. The Spirit would bear witness of Jesus to the world and to believers. Moreover, the Spirit would convict the world—that word refers to unbelievers—of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. The Holy Spirit would bear witness of Jesus, and because His disciples had been with Him since the beginning of His ministry, they also would bear witness of Him. The Spirit knows Jesus, and He would testify of Him, and those whom He would indwell would also bear witness.

In his introduction to Romans Paul writes, "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holi-

ness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. . . ."

The Spirit of holiness bore witness to Jesus' identity as God the Son by Jesus' resurrection from the dead. That first resurrection to a glorified body was the statement to all creation that sin was atoned and that Jesus was God. Moreover, through Him we also receive grace and apostleship to witness of Jesus and thus bring about the "obedience of faith" to the nations.

Peter told the Jews that not only he and his fellow apostles bore witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus but that the Holy Spirit also bore witness—and the Holy Spirit is the One given to "those who obey" Jesus.

Who are those who obey Jesus? He Himself identified the obedient in John 6:29: "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." This amazing fact means that those of us who believe receive the witness of God the Spirit, and we become witnesses of the Lord Jesus' death and resurrection in the tradition of the apostles. While we are not eyewitnesses, we are true witnesses. We have been born again of the Spirit, and we are new creations because of Jesus' death and resurrection. We have already been reconciled to God and are seated at His powerful right hand in Christ. We are His witnesses!

MEDITATE

As you reflect on the apostles and their interactions with the Jews, do identify with the apostles and their willingness to do what God asked of them no matter the cost, or do you identify more with the Jews who were irritated by the continual mention of the Lord Jesus?

Ask God to reveal Himself to you as He is. Ask Him to give you the faith to believe in the Lord Jesus and His sacrifice for your sin. He is faithful; He will incorporate you into Himself and seat you next to God's right hand in Himself.

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STUDY 19

ACTS 5:17-32

FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP BIBLE STUDY

After the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, as the church began to grow and the apostles were performing many signs and wonders, the high priest and all his Sadducee associates became jealous and “laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail.”

1. Of what were these Jewish leaders jealous, and why did Paul later say he hoped to make his Jewish kinsmen jealous?

Acts 7:6-10 _____

Acts 13:13-16; 43-49 _____

Acts 17:1-7 _____

Romans 10:16-21 _____

Romans 11:11-15 _____

2. When the angel of the Lord released the apostles from prison, he told them to return to the temple and speak “the whole message of this Life.” What was the “message of this Life”?

John 6:60-69 _____

John 3:3-8 _____

3. What was the “Council” and “all the Senate” that was called together the next morning, and why were they called? Describe the unfolding of events outlined in verses 22-29.

4. What lay behind the Sanhedrin’s focus on their fear that the apostles were filling Jerusalem with their teaching and intended “to bring this man’s blood upon” them?

Acts 2:22-24 _____

Acts 3:13-15 _____

Acts 4:8-12 _____

Acts 7:52-53 _____

Matthew 27:24-26 _____

5. What was the disciples' response to the Jews, and why was their persistent declaration that they had killed Jesus on a cross, or a tree, significant to them?

Verses 29-31 _____

1 Peter 2:20-24 _____

Deut. 21:22-23 _____

Gal. 3:13-14 _____

6. What is significant about God's exalting Jesus to His right hand, and what does this position mean?

Exodus 15:6 _____

Psalms 98:1 _____

Luke 22:69 _____

Romans 8:34 _____

1 Corinthians 3:1 _____

Hebrews 1:3 _____

Hebrews 10:12 _____

1 Peter 3:22 _____

7. What is the significance of Peter's saying that not only were they witnesses of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, but also the Holy Spirit is—and that furthermore, God had given the Holy Spirit "to those who obey Him"?

John 15:22-27 _____

John 16:7-15 _____

Romans 1:1-7 _____

John 6:29 _____

MEDITATE

Have you received "the whole message of Life"? Does the news of Jesus dying for sin cause you joy and gratitude, or does it irritate you? Have you done "the work of God" and believed in Him whom He sent? Thank God for providing payment and forgiveness for your sin Himself. Thank Him that He has brought you from death to life, and ask Him to glorify Himself through you!

"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." 1 Peter 2:24-25, NIV