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Book of Acts - Course A

Instructions:

Please take all courses in order as listed on our home page (the computer will ask!). If you have not done all the lessons of previous courses, please [click here to go to the beginning](#).

If you have not already done so, save this lesson to your computer using the "save" feature of your browser or PDF reader. Then print out the lesson (or at least open it in your browser or PDF reader **offline** - not on the Internet). Read the lesson and **study in your Bible the passages indicated >>> Scripture <<<**. Following each passage, study each question that has a number enclosed in asterisks (*1*, *2*, etc.), and **write down your answers on paper**. Some questions include more than one number because they have more than one blank to fill in. ("Think" questions should be carefully considered for your own benefit, but your answers will not be submitted to us.) Please take your time, study each passage carefully, answer the questions honestly, and consider the applications to your own life (John 12:48; 2 Tim. 2:15).

When you have studied the whole lesson and written down answers to all the indicated questions, return to the menu for this course on our web site at www.BibleStudyLessons.com and click on the link for the **answer quiz** for this lesson (or simply click on the link at the end of this lesson). Follow the directions to submit your answers and receive your grade. You will then be given an opportunity to see the correct answers to the questions. Please save this lesson and the correct answers for future reference.

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Thank you for your interest, and God bless your study of His word.

The Beginning of Persecution - Acts 4&5

Lesson 4

Introduction:

To this point in our study, most people looked favorably upon the early Christians (see 2:47). However, Jesus had promised that His disciples would be opposed as He had been (John 15:18-16:4). These chapters record the beginning of opposition.

I. The Arrest and Trial of Peter and John - 4:1-22

The Arrest

>>> Please read Acts 4:1-6. <<<

1 Who arrested Peter and John in the temple? (a) the priests, (b) the captain of the temple, (c) the Sadducees, (d) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

2&3 What effect did the miracle and Peter's sermon have? Answer: Many people _____. The total number came to be (give a number) _____ men.

Comment: The early Christians were persecuted for several reasons. (1) Preaching the resurrection offended the Sadducees, who denied life after death (Acts 23:8). (2) The preaching accused the leaders of having killed an innocent man. (3) This caused loss of popularity for the rulers.

Despite the rulers' concerns, however, many people were converted by the miracles, the testimony of the resurrection, and fulfilled prophecy.

Having arrested the apostles, the rulers convened a council. This was the Sanhedrin - the Jewish "Supreme Court."

Peter's Defense

>>> Please read Acts 4:7-12. <<<

4&5 The apostles were asked what question? Answer: They asked by what _____ or by what _____ the man had been healed.

6 By what power did Peter say the man had been healed? (a) Peter's own power, (b) Jesus' power, (c) medical treatment, (d) witchcraft. Answer: _____.

7 What did Peter conclude about salvation (v12)? Answer: Peter said salvation can be found only in _____.

Comment: When the leaders asked about the miracle that had been done, Peter affirmed it had been done by the power of Jesus. He then proceeded to boldly state that the Jewish leaders had killed Jesus, but God had raised Him from the dead. This summarized previous sermons.

Peter cited a prophecy in Psalm 118:22 in which some builders rejected the most important stone in a foundation - the chief cornerstone. This had been fulfilled by the Jewish leaders, who ought to have honored their Messiah but instead they rejected and killed Him.

Peter concluded that no one but Jesus can provide salvation. We cannot be saved by Buddha, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, or the Pope. And no one can be saved by his own power. Salvation comes only through Jesus' sacrificial death. See John 14:6; 3:16; 8:24; Mark 16:16.

In his speech, Peter shows us the significance of the expression "in the name" or "by the name" of Jesus. Some folks so emphasize the word "Jesus" that they claim we must say "in the name of Jesus" when we baptize folks (yet compare Matt. 28:19).

Note the expressions used in v7-10

by what power" = "by what name" (v7) = "by what means" (v9) = "by the name of" = "by Him" (v10)

So "in the name of Jesus" means by His power or authority, according to His will. To do miracles in Jesus' name meant to do them by His power. So to baptize in His name means to do it by His power or authority (cf. Col. 3:17). It is not so much a matter of mouthing a word formula, but a matter of what power or authority is being obeyed. Baptism in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38) is the same as baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19), because the three Beings together make up God. They all possess the authority of Deity, and all agree in what work they command us to do. When we act, we obey them all.

Verse 12 then shows that this same name (power, authority, or will) is the only name in which we can be saved!

The Conclusion of the Trial

>>> **Please read Acts 4:13-18.** <<<

8 What training had the apostles received? (a) seminary courses, (b) college degrees, (c) being with Jesus, (d) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

9&10 What did the leaders conclude about the lame man's healing? Answer: It was a notable _____, and they could not _____ it.

11 How did they try to stop the spread of the gospel? Answer: They commanded the apostles not to _____ about Jesus.

Comment: Many people think that men must be trained in special schools in order to become preachers. But like Jesus, the apostles had not done so (cf. Mark 6:2,3; John 7:14-17). To be effective teachers, men simply need a good understanding of the teachings of Jesus.

The rulers could not deny the miracle done through the apostles, since everyone in Jerusalem could see the proof of it. This demonstrates still another characteristic of Bible miracles: Evidence of the miracles was so clear that even the enemies of truth could not deny them. This is not the case with modern so-called miracles. Note similar Bible examples: John 11:47; Acts 8:5-13; Acts 13:6-12; Exodus 8:17-19; 1 Kings 18:20-40; Daniel 2.

Like many people today, the rulers could not disprove the gospel message, but they still did not want anyone to listen to it!

>>> **Please read Acts 4:19-22.** <<<

12&13 How did Peter respond to the rulers? Answer: Peter said they must speak what they had _____ and _____.

14 What did the rulers do then? (a) they were converted, (b) they threatened them further, (c) they killed the apostles. Answer: _____.

Comment: Christians are law-abiding people, but gospel preaching is so important that nothing should be allowed to stop it (cf. Acts 5:29).

The leaders here showed their dishonesty. They could not disprove the evidence that confirmed the gospel, but they still rejected the message. They were not motivated by love for God or respect for truth. Like many modern rulers, they just wanted to maintain their popularity.

Further, despite the fact they strongly objected to the resurrection, they made no effort to refute it. Note that a supreme court, consisting of the greatest enemies of the gospel, could not disprove the resurrection in the presence of people who had witnessed it. What are the chances anyone today could disprove it?

II. Disciples Care for One Another - 4:23-37

>>> **Read Acts 4:23-31.** <<<

15 What did the disciples do when Peter and John were released? Answer: The disciples met and raised their _____ in prayer to God.

16&17 What prophecy did they quote? Answer: The prophecy said people would stand against the _____ and His _____ .

18 What request did they make? (a) death to the Jews, (b) political power, (c) strength to preach boldly and do miracles, (d) none of these. Answer: _____.

Comment: When truth is opposed, disciples should not give up. Instead we should encourage one another and seek God's help in prayer. Note that church meetings were not restricted to the first day of the week. Disciples met to pray and teach the word whenever it was needed.

They found comfort in God's prediction in Psalm 2:1,2 that people would oppose the message about Jesus. Instead of turning from the Lord or keeping quiet, they asked for power to boldly continue speaking God's word. We need that same attitude.

Note again that this opposition to Jesus was not unexpected by God, as some teach; rather, He knew beforehand that it would happen.

>>> **Please read Acts 4:32-37.** <<<

19 What did they do to care for the needy among them (v35)? Answer: They collected money and distributed it to people as anyone had _____.

Comment: We studied a similar example to this in Acts 2:44,45. Here we learn that the church continued to meet this special need, and people demonstrated great generosity in doing it.

This section also introduces Barnabas. Clearly he was a generous man and an effective gospel teacher. He will become very important later as the story of the spread of the gospel continues.

III. The Death of Ananias and Sapphira - 5:1-11

>>> **Please read Acts 5:1-11.** <<<

20&21 Who sold a property and gave part of the price? Answer: A man named _____ and his wife named _____ sold property and gave part of the price.

22 Who had the right to decide how much people should give? (a) the preacher, (b) the elders, (c) the Pope, (d) the givers. Answer: _____.

23&24 What sin did they commit and what happened to them? Answer: They told a _____ and for that they _____.

Comment: Ananias and Sapphira were killed, not because they didn't give the whole price of their property, but because they lied. Some people worship God to make a show and receive the praises of other people. God will not accept such worship. Acceptable worship must be motivated by sincere love. (See Matt. 6:1-6; 1 Cor. 13:1-3.)

Christians are commanded to give to the church, but no specific amount or percentage is stated in the New Testament. Each one should give according to prosperity (1 Cor. 16:2). But each should decide for himself the exact amount (v4; 2 Cor. 9:7; Acts 11:29). And note again that the early church received its income by taking up a collection, not by modern humanly invented fund-raising schemes, such as raffles, bingo, carnivals, pledge cards, and pressure tactics.

Further, this story clearly distinguishes church action from individual action. Some folks claim that the church can/should do anything individual members can/should do. But members should decide what to do with their own property and how much to give to the church. The church cannot decide this for them. Furthermore, individuals worked at gainful employment to obtain funds, but the church gets money by taking collections. God has made distinctions between church work and individual work, and we must honor those distinctions.

Then note the importance of discipline among God's people. Children of God may fall into sin and be lost (Gal. 5:4). When they do, the church needs to oppose their sin, so other members will know to avoid that error. God has always ordained discipline among His people. In this case, God Himself directly punished the sinners. Later He commanded that, when members sin and won't repent, the church should refuse to keep company with them. See 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14,15; Matthew 18:15-17; Titus 3:10,11; Romans 16:17,18.

IV. Arrested Again - 5:12-26

Miracles Continue

>>> **Please read Acts 5:12-16.** <<<

25 How is the growth of the church described (v14)? (a) multitudes were added, (b) the church died out, (c) a few occasionally obeyed. Answer: _____.

26 How many of the sick people were miraculously healed? Answer: They were _____ healed.

Comment: The church had faced opposition from outside and sin within. Both problems were dealt with by faith in God and obedience to His will. As a result, the spread of the gospel and growth of the church continued. Multitudes believed and were added to the number.

The working of miracles by the hand of the apostles also continued. People came from all around bringing sick people, and all were healed. This confirms a characteristic of miracles that we studied earlier. No disease was too hard for the apostles to heal. They never tried and failed, after the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. When people come to modern "faith healers," they are often turned away. Or the healers try but simply cannot heal them. This proves they do not have the power of true miracles, as they claim to have.

Released by an Angel

>>> **Please read Acts 5:17-26.** <<<

27 When the angel released the apostles, what did he say to do? Answer: He said to speak to the people all the words of _____.

28 When the rulers sent for them, what was found? (a) prison doors shut, (b) guards outside, (c) no one inside, (d) all the preceding. _____.

29 Where did they find the apostles? Answer: They found them preaching in the _____.

Comment: The apostles had been commanded to quit preaching about Jesus (4:17,18). But they continued preaching anyway, so once again the High Priest and Sadducees arrested them. An angel released the apostles and, obeying him, they went right back to preaching in the temple. Imagine the courage this required!

Note again the evidence that true miracles are clearly impossible by natural law. The prison doors were closed and locked. Soldiers stood outside the doors, confident that they were guarding the prisoners within. But there were no prisoners! And all this was admitted by the enemies of the truth! Instead of recognizing this as proof these men were really from God, the rulers arrested the men again.

V. A Second Trial - 5:27-42

The Apostles' Defense

>>> Please read Acts 5:27-32. <<<

30&31 What charge did the High Priest bring against the apostles? Answer: They had filled _____ with preaching and blamed the rulers for Jesus' _____.

32&33 Toward whom did the apostles offer the highest allegiance? Answer: We ought to obey _____ rather than _____.

34&35 What did they say had happened to Jesus? Answer: The Jews had _____ Jesus, but God _____ Him.

36 Who bore witness to the resurrection? (a) no one, (b) the apostles and the Holy Spirit, (c) everyone, (d) the High Priest and Sadducees. Answer: _____.

Comment: When Jesus had been on trial before Pilate, the Jews willingly accepted responsibility for His blood (Matt. 27:25). Now they wanted to deny it! This is what was really upsetting them.

God instructs Christians to obey civil law (Rom. 13:1-5; 1 Peter 2:13-17). However, when rulers command us to sin against God's law, we must obey God instead. Note that this does not say we may disobey whenever we think a law is unfair or unreasonable or even when the rulers themselves commit sins. We may disobey only when they command us to sin. And then we **must** disobey!

The apostles boldly affirmed everything the rulers had commanded them not to say: (1) The Jews had murdered Jesus. (2) God had raised Him from the dead. (3) The apostles were witnesses that all this was true. The apostles were supposed to be on trial, but instead they took the witness stand against the rulers! What courage!

Note that the Holy Spirit witnessed for the resurrection by the miracles He did, which confirmed the apostles were telling the truth (Mark 16:20). Note also that they again claimed Jesus is on God's right hand, where He was to reign as King over God's people (cf. Acts 2:30,33). Through Him Israel (and all people) can repent and be forgiven of sin.

Gamaliel's Advice

>>> Please read Acts 5:33-39. <<<

37 What did some want to do? (a) be baptized, (b) bring witnesses to contradict the apostles, (c) kill the apostles, (d) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

38 What did Gamaliel predict, if the apostles were wrong? Answer: If they were not from God their work would come to _____.

Comment: Note the contrast to the people in Acts 2. Both those people and these people were told they had killed Jesus, and both were cut to the heart. Those in Acts 2 repented and were baptized. These tried to kill the messengers! The same message causes some people to change and others to rebel. It all depends on the hearts of the hearers.

Gamaliel rightly concluded that all religious movements are from God or from men (cf. Matt. 21:25; 15:3-9). His advice benefited the apostles, but was he correct in believing that all false movements will die out of themselves? Should we not oppose false teachers? In fact, many false systems have lasted for centuries. We do not kill opponents of truth, but we should oppose them by preaching the truth, just as the apostles were doing with these rulers. See Rev. 3:19; Eph. 5:11; 2 Tim. 4:2-4.

The Final Outcome

>>> **Please read Acts 5:40-42.** <<<

39&40 What was done to the apostles? Answer: They were _____ and told not to _____ in the name of Jesus.

41 How did they react? Answer: They rejoiced and did not cease _____ Jesus as Christ.

Comment: Gospel preaching is so important that nothing should cause us to quit. No one likes to be persecuted, but we can rejoice knowing God is pleased and we are suffering like other faithful servants of God throughout history (Matt. 5:10-12; 1 Peter 4:14,16).

Verse 42 shows that the gospel should be preached to large groups or small. We should teach, not just when we are assembled together, but wherever and whenever we can. We too must not cease to teach and preach Jesus as the Christ.

Personal application questions:

42 What is your attitude when people oppose the gospel? _____

43 What does it mean to do a thing "in Jesus' name"? _____

44 How much should a person give to the church? _____

When you have carefully studied this lesson and written down answers to all the questions, [click on this link to submit your answers.](#)

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