

# **ANTIOCH BIBLE CLASS**

LESSON SUBJECT

## **THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S**

**SCRIPTURE TEXT ACTS 5:12-42**

MEMORY VERSE: V41. AND THEY DEPARTED FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE COUNCIL, REJOICING THAT THEY WERE COUNTED WORTHY TO SUFFER SHAME FOR HIS NAME.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The church is very young, but already has faced some momentous events. They include the healing of the lame man; chastisement by unbelieving religious rulers, and the brazen lies of Ananias and Saphira. The presence and power of God was distinctly manifested in each of these. It was God's church, God's kingdom, God's plan of salvation, and he was going to personally enable it to succeed. There was no other way for it to do so.

Acts 5:12-16, records the continual and growing work of preaching Christ, attended and promoted by miraculous works of God. And this was happening right in Jerusalem under the shadow of the temple, as it were. "Then the high priest rose up, and all that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and were filled with indignation". They laid their hands on (all) the apostles and threw them into prison. You know they were intending to find some grounds by which they could kill them and thereby put a stop to this despised sect.

Power, hate, unbelief and religion full of hypocrisy, is a volatile mixture just made for trouble. Like so many times in Israel's history, their rage would not let them consider the truth of the apostles' message nor the consequences of their actions. Their blind rage prevented them from seeing the hand of God so evidently at work in the preaching of a risen Christ and the miracles which attended it. This may be a new religious sect in their view but they were totally ignorant of what God was doing in the world. They would soon get another lesson that to oppose what God is doing is doomed from the start. The utter defeat and destruction of their entire priestly system and the hierarchy in Jerusalem had already been predicted and this was only one more futile skirmish in that direction.

### **DAILY DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS FROM THE LESSON.**

**MONDAY – ACTS 5:12-16. GOD IS DOING A MIGHTY WORK TO PAVE THE WAY FOR THE GOSPEL**

Scripture.

V12. And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. 13. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. 14. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women). 15. Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. 16. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits and they were healed every one.

#### COMMENTS.

Neither the threats of the high priest or the lies of Ananias and Saphira could slow down the work of the gospel through the church. They had prayed (Ch. 4:30) for God to perform miracles, and God answered their prayers mightily. Many signs and wonders were wrought among the people. A multitude of believers were added to the Lord. Multitudes from surrounding cities came and brought their sick and they were healed. And all of this work of God and the gospel was taking place at Solomon's porch, right in the compound of the temple, near the court of the Gentiles. Can you imagine how enraged the high priest must have been for the gospel to be preached and believed by multitudes right at their own premises? Well, verse 17 tells us how they reacted.

#### TUESDAY. ACTS 5: 17-26. EVEN THE JAIL CAN'T STOP THEM.

#### SCRIPTURE.

V17. Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees) and were filled with indignation. 18. And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. 19. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth and said, 20. Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. 21. And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the counsel together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. 22. But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned and told, 23. Saying, the prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened we found no man within. 24. Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. 25. Then came one and told them, saying, behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people. 26. Then went the captain with the officers and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

#### COMMENTS.

Only God could have orchestrated the sequence of the events that followed. The religious rulers take the apostles and throw them in prison. Straightway God opens the prison door and instructs the apostles to go straight to the temple and speak all the "words of this life". "Early in the morning" they entered into the temple and taught the gospel. Not knowing what had happened, the priests sent to the

prison to bring forth these “miscreants” to be dealt with. They then discover that they are not in the prison and are soon found preaching, right in the priests’ own pulpit, as it were. Now they are not only enraged but they are embarrassed at this situation. They carefully brought them before the council for interrogation.

#### WEDNESDAY. ACTS 5:27-32. PREACHING IN THE NAME OF JESUS IS QUESTIONED.

##### SCRIPTURE.

V27. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council and the high priest asked them, 28. Saying, did not we straightly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us. 29. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than men. 30. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. 31. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

The priests had the apostles brought before their council with thoughts of eliminating this “preaching in the name of Jesus”. They asked, “Did we not straightly command you that ye should not teach in this name? (See ch. 3:18) Perhaps the priests thought that their authority and power would intimidate the apostles. However Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than man. Then the apostles took this highly charged and very hostile and volatile situation and proceeded to preach the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. They even declared the need of all Israel (including the priests) to repent and turn to Christ. They are so empowered by the Holy Ghost that they are fearless before the council and are not at all moved by their threats.

#### THURSDAY. ACTS 5:33-40. GAMALIEL ADVISES NOT TO FIGHT AGAINST GOD.

V33. When they heard that they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them. 34. Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space. 35. And said unto them, ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. 36. For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody, to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him were scattered and brought to nought. 37. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished, and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. 38. And now I say unto you, refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: 39. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. 40. And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

##### COMMENTS.

The ruling body of priests were outraged that these “ignorant Galileans” would impugn their authority. They took counsel how they could kill all of them. But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, with a good reputation among all the people (and at whose feet Paul was taught, and likely a student even at this very time – Acts 22:3) – gave his advice to leave the apostles alone. His argument was that if God was not with them, it would soon die of its own weakness; but if God was in it, it would be a losing battle to fight against God. Really what Gamaliel did was to save the face of the priests if they could only see it. If they had pursued their diabolical plans further, God would have taken whatever action necessary to defeat them and promote the work of the gospel.

FRIDAY. ACTS 5:41-42. REASON TO REJOICE.

SCRIPTURE.

V41. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. 42. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

COMMENTS.

These two verses tell a marvelous story. The apostles have spent a night in jail; they have been questioned by the highest tribunal in Jerusalem; they have been threatened with a way to kill them being discussed. Now they are beaten and commanded to speak in the name of Jesus no more. So what do they do? They left the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus. And daily in the temple and from every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. They had every reason to rejoice. God had so miraculously and marvelously displayed his presence and power on their behalf and for the gospel, that they were filled with ecstasy at all that God was doing. Instead of being full of fear and intimidation, they were abounding in courage and enjoying every minute of it. This was God’s doings and it was marvelous in their eyes.

SUMMARY.

The religious rulers were not fighting with the apostles; they were fighting and opposing the great plan of God for the redemption of the world through Jesus Christ. That was a losing battle from the start.

As for the apostles, they were not some arrogant, self-styled and over-zealous protestors against “orthodox religion”. They were ambassadors of Christ, pioneering the message of the eternal God. There was no power on earth that could stop them. What a strength it must have been to them to see the Lord “fight their battles for them”. Over the history of God’s people, it has been demonstrated so many times that the battle truly is the Lords’. The examples are legion: Daniel in Babylon, Job in his sufferings, the constant enemies against Israel, Paul and his battles and more. And the battle is still the Lords’ today as we continue to strive to uphold the name of Jesus and the cause of God. If we are faithful and true to him there is certain victory; without him there is certain defeat.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER.

1. Besides the personal benefits received by the multitude of people who were healed during this lesson, what other vitally important purpose did these miracles have?
2. Explain why the priests acted with such hostility against the apostles and the gospel.
3. Explain why the miraculous opening of the jail and the release of the apostles was totally overlooked and did not get the attention of the priests.
4. Describe Gamaliel, his status and what he did that had a providential effect on the situation.
5. Discuss how needful and important the work of God in the church, the gospel and our lives is today.