

# A Study in Acts

Lesson 5: Acts 4:5 – 5:11

## Peter and John Before the Council

Act 4:5-7 KJV

- (5) And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes,  
(6) And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.  
(7) And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, 'What power, or by what name, have ye done this?

### Who Were the Sanhedrin?

This assembly was known as the Sanhedrin, a form of Jewish supreme court, composed of the presiding officer, who was the high priest, and seventy others, it was the same body, which had demanded and received the crucifixion of Jesus, it was the historical successor to the board of judges appointed by Moses in Numbers 00:06-15.

The council chamber in which they met was traditionally in the temple but about Acts 3:45, they changed their meeting place to a court on the east side of the temple. This had been done by the time Matthew recorded:

. at 16:57 KJV

- (57) And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

### Who Was Really High Priest?

A lot of biblical critics who make some blithely out of the various references in the New Testament to Caiaphas as high priest, or to Annas as high priest, are only guessing. Both were designated both as holders of that office concurrently, in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas (Luke 4:1), hence it was also either correct to refer to either one of them as high priest. The circumstances that brought this condition about are well known. Annas was deposed from his high office by Pilate in 04 AD, a penalty incurred through his excess in executing one of his enemies, but the Jews did not honor the emperor's deposition, still recognizing Annas as the rightful holder of the office. However, Rome controlled the patronage, and the office was rotated among no less than six of Annas' sons, with Caiaphas his son-in-law also holding it for a period of time. His sons who held the office were: Eleazar, Jonathan, Theophilus, Matthias, and Ananus. The record of those who controlled the assembly in view here reveals them to have been the hard core of Sadducean priests who sat at the heart of official Jewish government. A group considered by historians to be unscrupulous.

### What Are the Charges?

It should be pointed out that the Greek word translated 'they' here is scornful in nature. In modern English, it might be translated 'people like you'.

\*he fact is the Sanhedrin had not been able to formulate an charge against the apostles therefore the question was to induce them to talk in the hope that they could turn some of their words into an indictment. However, both the Sanhedrin members and the Apostles knew perfectly well why they were there and Peter, appearing in an audience and opportunity, began to preach to them.

## **Peter Preaches to the Council**

Act 4:13-18 KJV

- (B) When Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,
- (D) How we this day have examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole?
- (05) We give it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom we crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.
- (00) This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.
- (01) Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

## **Peter is Respectful**

Peter's respectful language here teaches the same deference and respect of public officials which are binding upon all Christians but, it's important to remember that just a few weeks before he had knelt before the soldiers and servants in the palace of the high priest. But now he stands before the Sanhedrin and speaks in the language of respect but also that of unflinching boldness. Also, the promise of Jesus to the twelve is kept that they should not be concerned about what they should say when arraigned before earthly authorities, because the Holy Spirit in that hour would give them the message they were to deliver.

Act 5:27-31 KJV

- (07) But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues.
- (0B) And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.
- (0D) But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall say: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall say.

## **But Peter is Bold**

Peter moved back to the attack, charging in the Sanhedrin with murdering the Son of God, and affirming that the great miracle in Jesus had been accomplished by the authority of that same Jesus whom they had crucified.

A prophecy was made in the Psalms:

Psalm 118:22 KJV

- (11) The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner.

Peter had been present when the Lord first used this figure of himself.

. at 10:41 KJV

(41) Jesus saith unto them, 3 id #e ne(er read in the scriptures, \*he stone which the builders re-ected, the same is become the head o\$ the corner: this is the 7ord:s doin , and it is mar(ellous in our e#es)

\*his stor# is \$ounded on an incident in(ol(in the buildin o\$ the temple: \*he \$irst stone that came down \$rom the 6uarr# was most complicated, and the builders could not \$ind a place \$or it, t was dra ed into a corner o\$ the buildin area and in time co(ered with debris. F hen the buildin was completed, there was no cornerstone until someone remembered the re-ected stone, which \$it per\$ectl# #. \*he +anhedrin were the reli ious builders who had re-ected the head o\$ the corner, ! hrist and Aeter hurled this char e in their teeth.

## **All People are Saved One Way**

,t should be pointed out that the >reed word translated ?we@ in (erse 01 is all inclusi(et ,t includes e(er#one present: chie\$ priests, scribes, and \$ishermen ali%e. +o Aeter, in his \$inal sentence, is o\$\$erin an in(itation once a ain. ,t should also be pointed out, that Aeter claims that Jesus is the wa# that men ma# be sa(ed. \*his must ha(e stuc% in the craw o\$ the +anhedrin.

## **The Response of the Sanhedrin**

Act 4:04-08 KJV

(04) /ow when the# saw the boldness o\$ Aeter and John, and percei(ed that the# were unlearned and i norant men, the# mar(elled and the# too% %nowled e o\$ them, that the# had been with Jesus.

(04) And beholdin the man which was healed standin with them, the# could sa# nothin a ainst it.

(05) 'ut when the# had commanded them to o aside out o\$ the council, the# con\$erred amon themsel(es,

(06) +a#in , F hat shall we do to these men) \$or that indeed a notable miracle hath been done b# them is mani\$est to all them that dwell in Jerusalem and we cannot den# it.

(07) 'ut that it spread no \$urther amon the people, let us straitl# threaten them, that the# spea% hence\$orth to no man in this name.

(08) And the# called them, and commanded them not to spea% at all nor teach in the name o\$ Jesus.

\*he words ?unlearned@ and ?i norant@ are not translated well here. \*he +anhedrin did not percei(e that the Apostles were stupid. \*he# percei(ed that the# were ?unlearned@ in the wa#s o\$ the scribes. \*he point here is that the +anhedrin ha(e ta%en note that thou h the Apostles were not trained in the wa#s o\$ the scribes, their %nowled e is impeccable. Gurther the# disco(ered that these men had been with Jesus be\$ore he died. \*his is pointed out so that we should %now that these men %new Jesus per\$ormed similar miracles that had been per\$ormed the pre(ious da# b# Aeter and John. ! learl#, the +anhedrin were well aware o\$ the situation.

'ac% in (erse D, Aeter had basicall# challen ed the +anhedrin to present their char est. \*he +anhedrin clearl# had a problem. \*he# could not den# what Aeter and John had done because the e(idence stood be\$ore them. Cet, since Aeter and John claimed that Jesus was responsible \$or the healin and attached Jesus authorit# to man%indEs sal(ation,

the# clearl# were ta%in all authorit# i(en to the council awa## +o the council went into pri(ate to discuss it

## ***If You Can't Beat Them, Threaten Them***

\*ruth was no consideration to the +anhedrin. \*he# were determined to oppose the teachin o\$ the apostles, and the best thin the# could thin% o\$, at the moment, was to threaten them. ,n (iew o\$ the wea%ness o\$ the apostles durin the Aasso(er, the# mi ht ha(e supposed the# could intimidate them. \*hat \$ailin , the# were prepared to use methods o\$ (iolence2 but the popularit# o\$ the new \$aith made the murder o\$ the \*wel(e ine"pedient at the moment.

\*hese were not idle threats. 7ater, the apostles were arrested and beaten (Acts 5:07-45)2 and still later, +tephen was stoned to death \$or preachin the ospel (Acts 6:B-7:65).

\*here is a pro(ession in this inspired histor# toward that murderous \$ur# which at last si(naled o\$\$icial ,rael:s total re-ection o\$ Jesus !hrist. Gor the moment, the popularit# o\$ the apostles with the people pre(ented all but the threats.

## ***The Forbidden Name Spoken***

,n the boo% o\$ John, the man born blind was brou(ht be\$ore the +anhedrin and his parents re\$used to spea% the name o\$ Jesus because it had been \$orbidden:

[Joh D:0D-11 KJV](#)

(0D) And the# as%ed them, sa#in , ,s this #our son, who #e sa# was born blind) how then doth he now see)

(15) =is parents answered them and said, F e %now that this is our son, and that he was born blind:

(10) ' ut b# what means he now seeth, we %now not2 or who hath opened his e#es, we %now not: he is o\$ a e2 as% him: he shall spea% \$or himsel\$.

(11) \*hese *words* spa%e his parents, because the# \$eared the Jews: \$or the Jews had a reed alread#, that i\$ an# man did confess that he was !hrist, he should be put out o\$ the s#na o ue.

+o hear a ain, the +anhedrin insist that Jesus not be declared publicl# to be the +on o\$ >od and !hrist.

## ***Peter and John Refuse***

[Act 4:0D-11 KJV](#)

(0D) ' ut Aeter and John answered and said unto them, F hether it be ri(ht in the si(ht o\$ >od to hear%en unto #ou more than unto >od, -ud e #e.

(15) Gor we cannot but spea% the thin s which we ha(e seen and heard.

(10) +o when the# had \$urther threatened them, the# let them o, \$indin nothin how the# mi ht punish them, because o\$ the people: \$or all *men* lori\$ied >od \$or that which was done.

(11) Gor the man was abo(e \$ort# #ears old, on whom this miracle o\$ healin was shewed.

\*his (erse pro(es that the responsibilit# o\$ men \$or their reli(ious opinions is direct to >od, and that other men ha(e no power o\$ control. ,t also indicates that men ha(e a ri(ht to pri(ate -ud(ement in matters o\$ reli(ion, sub-ect onl# to >od.

Aeter and John re\$use to accept the +anhedrinEs ?o\$\$er@ / o amount o\$ threatenin could chan(e their mind. \*he +anhedrin could not punish them because the# had the e(idence

o\$ a 45 #ear old lame man, now healed, standin be\$ore them and the people! !learl#, i\$ the# punished Aeter and John, the# would lose \$ace with the people an#w# +o the# released them \$rom custod# ,t is 6uite li%el#, that the +anhedrin e"pected the Apostles and the 3 isciples o\$ !hrist to run o\$\$ a\$ter the threats! ' ut thatEs not what happens!

## Peter and John Report

Act 4:14 KJV

(14) And bein let o, the# went to their own compan#, and reported all that the chie\$ priests and elders had said unto them!

,t is not clear i\$ ?their own compan#@ is the other 05 Apostles, the ori inal 015 members o\$ the church, or some number o\$ the B to 05 thousand members the# now had! ' ut clearl#, the# let the !hurch %now what was happenin ! ,t is also li%el#, as will become clear in some upcomin (erses, that were bac% at the temple to do this reportin !

## The Disciples Pray

Act 4:14-45 KJV

(14) And when the# heard that, the# li\$ted up their (oice to >od with one accord, and said, 7ord, thou *art* >od, which hast made hea(en, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

(15) F ho b# the mouth o\$ th# ser(ant 3 a(id hast said, F h# did the heathen ra e, and the people ima ine (ain thin s)

(16) \*he %in s o\$ the earth stood up, and the rulers were athered to ether a ainst the 7ord, and a ainst his !hrist!

(17) Gor o\$ a truth a ainst th# hol# child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both =erod, and Aontius Ailate, with the >entiles, and the people o\$ ,srael, were athered to ether,

(1B) Gor to do whatsoe(er th# hand and th# counsel determined be\$ore to be done!

(1D) And now, 7ord, behold their threatenin s: and rant unto th# ser(ants, that with all boldness the# ma# spea% th# word,

(45) ' # stretchin \$orth thine hand to heal and that si ns and wonders ma# be done b# the name o\$ th# hol# child Jesus!

<ather than runnin o\$\$H the# pra#ed!

/ otice here, that the pra#er is not \$or relie\$ \$rom persecution! / or is it a pra#er \$or harm or an# calamit# to be\$all their enemies! \*he pra#er is \$or the coura e to do the will o\$ >od and \$or a continuation o\$ the powers ranted them to do >odEs will!

\*his e"pression ?with one accord@ occurs ele(en times in the Acts, and onl# once elsewhere in the / ew \*estament (<omans 05:6)! ,t stresses the unit# o\$ the 7ord:s \$ollowers, and thus re(eals one o\$ the reat secrets o\$ the success o\$ !hristianit# durin those \$irst #ears! ' ut this unit# will be tested in the (er# ne"t !hapter o\$ Acts!

## The Response to Prayer

Act 4:40 KJV

(40) And when the# had pra#ed, the place was sha%en where the# were assembled to ether and the# were all \$illed with the =ol# >host, and the# spa%e the word o\$ >od with boldness!

>od lets his presence be %nown a ain! \*he threat o\$ ci(il authorities is i nored, and the Apostles continue to preach the word o\$ >od boldl#!

## Taking Care of the Brethren

Act 4:41-47 KJV

- (41) And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.
- (44) And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.
- (44) / either was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,
- (45) And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.
- (46) And Joseph, who before the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,
- (47) =a (in land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet:

It is assumed by some, that this means that all Christians should not have personal possessions, but that we allow the leaders of our congregation to collect everything we have and then redistribute it according to the will of God. Communes are built this way.

The point must be remembered. They received something. In those that lacked received according to their needs. That is taught here is not that the institution of private possessions had been abolished, but that the Christians held their possessions, not as their own, but as subject to the will of God in the use of them for the relief of the need. This was an emergency, and all were willing and anxious to use whatever they possessed for the common good. In the fact that all of the events mentioned thus far in Acts occurred within a very short space of time after Pentecost because the most logical reason for an emergency, which is actually inferred rather than plainly stated, lies in the fact that the apostles in Jerusalem for Pentecost, after obeying the gospel, continued to remain in Jerusalem for a time in order to hear the preaching of the apostles, and perhaps to aid in the evangelism. In fact, such a situation would terminate after a while and the extreme generosity of the Christians prolonged it as long as possible.

No universal selling of property is mentioned, and no general instructions were issued that members of the church ought to distribute to the poor all that they possessed. Any of the owners of property, of their own free will, from love of the brethren, would sell their property and bring the proceeds to the apostles.

The result of such overflow of generosity was that the effectiveness of the apostles' message was multiplied, and what might be called a real estate boom of the most fantastic proportions ensued.

Further, it should be noted that not a word is here given to the effect that Barnabas was generous.

, it should also be pointed out, that this Ananias is the (er# same Ananias that will later accompan# Saul on his first mission

## A Problem in the Church

Acts 5:0-6

- (0) ' ut a certain man named Ananias, with +apphira his wi\$e, sold a possession,
- (1) And %ept bac% part o\$ the price, his wi\$e also bein pri(# to it, and brou ht a certain part, and laid it at the apostles: \$eet
- (4) ' ut Aeter said, Ananias, wh# hath +atan \$illed thine heart to lie to the =ol# >host, and to %eep bac% part o\$ the price o\$ the land)
- (4) F hiles it remained, was it not thine own) and a\$ter it was sold, was it not in thine own power) wh# hast thou concei (ed this thin in thine heart) thou hast not lied unto men, but unto >od
- (5) And Ananias hearin these words \$ell down, and a(e up the host: and great \$ear came on all them that heard these thin st
- (6) And the #oun men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him

### The Love of Money...

\*he word "but" that starts this passa e clearl# connects it with the pre(ious (erse. F h# a chapter di(ision was placed here, is be#ond m# abilit# to decipher

\*his e(en was a dramatic chan e \$rom the wonder\$ul miracles o\$ merc# and healin which, until then, had mar%ed the deeds o\$ the apostles. but it was necessar# that the se(erit# o\$ >od, as well as his merc#, should be stressed. And, -ust as Jesus had withered the \$i tree, there appeared here an instance o\$ se(erit#, \$ollowin the instances o\$ oodness: >od is to be both lo(ed and \$eared

\*he apostles o\$ !hrist, a\$ter their baptism in the =ol# +pirit, were inspired men, able to per\$orm miracles and to discern the thou hts o\$ men. \*he# claimed in\$allibilit#, as ha( been uided into all truth b# the blessed +pirit in them. and, i\$ such a \$raud as that underta%en b# Ananias and +apphira had been success\$ul, it would ha(e discredited the central authorit# o\$ >od's church upon the earth. \*he sale o\$ a piece o\$ land, as well as the price paid and recei(ed, could not lon ha(e been concealed, since such thin s ha(e been in the public records o\$ e(er# eneration. and, i\$ the deception had succeeded, the word o\$ the apostles themsel(es would ha(e been suspect. \*here was no wa# that >od could ha(e permitted such a discreditation o\$ his \$oreordained witnesses o\$ the resurrection.

/ote that the sin here is / I \* that he %ept somethin bac%, but that he lied about it.

\*hose who (iew this act o\$ di(ine -ud ment a ainst this couple as some %ind o\$ (indicti(e and spite\$ul punishment in\$licted b# the apostle Aeter are totall# wron . It was not Aeter, but >od, who e"ecuted this e"treme penalt#. and the contrast o\$ it with the lon su\$erin and \$orbearance o\$ the Gather concernin the sins o\$ the whole race leads to the conclusion that there were the most wei ht# reasons \$or what >od did here.

### Like Husband, Like Wife

Acts 5:7-05

- (7) And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.
- (8) And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether she sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.
- (9) Then Peter said unto her, How is it that she had a deed to either to tempt the spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.
- (10) Then she fell down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

However the discipline of Ananias might have shocked and surprised Peter, he could not have been unaware of the discipline that would befall Sapphira in case she was guilty. What a dreadful fear must have fallen upon the assembly as Sapphira made her entrance! In an hour in the silence as her examination proceeded Peter unhesitatingly reproached them who had conspired to deceive him, therefore, received the same punishment.

#### Acts 5:00

(00) And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

It is highly likely that many present at this time had been tempted like Ananias and Sapphira to pretend a holiness they did not possess and this sudden discipline led to the widespread conclusion among them to the effect that elsewhere but for the sake of God and His discipline, therefore, had the consequence of impressing upon the young church the awful consequences of sin, and of warning non-Christians of the danger of associating themselves with the new and popular movement for purely selfish motives. This great fear upon both Christians and outsiders was precisely the effect desired.