

ACTS 5:21-42 | TEMPLE OPPOSITION

- Verses 21-28 – see session 18
- Verse 29 –
 - This simple and fundamental principle would save us from endless deliberation on decisions, untold heartache from bad decisions, and from never-ending people pleasing expeditions.
- Verse 30 –
 - The high priest was justifiably concerned that Peter **intend[ed] to bring this man's blood upon us** (v. 28), for that is exactly what Peter does in this verse, moments after the high priest speaks.
 - Once again, note that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is *bad news* not *good news*.
- Verse 31 –
 - **God exalted** Jesus **with his right hand** (grammar allows **with** or *at* or *to*). Jesus was exalted **to be a Prince and a Saviour**.
 - The word **Prince** is a *leadership* word (i.e.: a *monarch*).
 - The Gospel which we preach focuses on the **Saviour** aspect of Christ's work, but His exaltation is equally about His future worldwide leadership.
 - In Peter's day, **Prince** was the primary role, since Peter was preaching a Kingdom Gospel.
 - Christ was **exalted** in order **to give repentance to Israel**, and also **forgiveness of sins**. That is, the exaltation of Christ should have brought a *change of thinking* to the Jewish people.
- Verse 32 –
 - Not only were the apostles **his witnesses** but **also the Holy Ghost**. This is a key point of theology, because if the nation rejects this witness it will have *blasphemed the Holy Ghost* and thus have committed the *unforgivable sin* (Matt. 12:31-32).
 - Note that the **Holy Ghost** was given **to them that obey** because obedience was required in the Kingdom-era message.
- Verse 33 –
 - Assuming that **that** which **they heard** which caused them to be **cut to the heart** and to take **counsel to slay them** was the information in verse 32, then this is the clearest testimony so far we have that the nation was about to commit the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, of which Jesus warned in Matthew 12:31.
 - The actual sin will be postponed, since in the following verses Gamaliel will intervene.
- Verse 34 –
 - Who was this **Gamaliel**?
 - What we know from Scripture: Paul tells us that Gamaliel was the teacher under whom the future apostle learned his Judaism (Acts 22:3).
 - What we know from History:
 - During the first century BC (and very strong in the first century AD), two schools of Jewish thought emerged.
 - The School of Hillel -
 - Born 110BC in Babylon, moved to Jerusalem to study Torah.
 - The School of Hillel emphasized tradition above the Law.
 - Most of the Pharisees were of this school (as was Paul).
 - Jesus often said, "Ye have heard it said..." and then condemned the traditions of men (Mark 7:8). Much of this teaching may have been against the Hillel school.

- The School of Shammai -
 - Shammai took a stricter approach to interpretation of Torah.
 - The "House of Hillel" became the more predominant school of thought.
 - Tradition says that Gamaliel was the grandson of Hillel.
- We know a bit more of Gamaliel's son, Simon, because Simon lived in the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and Josephus wrote about him.
 - Though Simon and Josephus were political enemies, Josephus wrote, "This Simon was of the city of Jerusalem, and of a very noble family, of the sect of the Pharisees, which are supposed to excel others in the accurate knowledge of the laws of their country. He was a man of great wisdom and reason, and capable of restoring public affairs by his prudence, when they were in an ill posture. (Josephus, *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, paragraphs 191,192).
 - Simon, son of Gamaliel, was executed in 70AD at the destruction of Jerusalem. Josephus says that during the siege on Jerusalem, when there was a mockery made of the high priesthood, that, "the people could no longer bear the insolence of this procedure, but did altogether run zealously, in order to overthrow that tyranny; and indeed they were Gorian the son of Josephus, and Symeon the son of Gamaliel, who encouraged them, by going up and down when they were assembled together in crowds, and as they saw them alone, to bear no longer, but to inflict punishment upon these pests and plagues of their freedom, and to purge the temple of these bloody polluters of it." (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Book 4, chapter 3, paragraphs 158-159).
 - Simon said (of his own execution and the destruction of Jerusalem), "This punishment is rather a heavenly decree, which no human being can escape." (https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/112313/jewish/Rabban-Shimon-Ben-Gamliel.htm)
- Gamaliel **commanded to put the apostles forth a little space** (that is, set out of the court) so that the leadership could have a private meeting.
- Verses 35-37 –
 - Gamaliel sought to warn the leadership about their response.
 - He gave two illustrations to prove his point. The first was of a man named **Theudas** and the second **Judas of Galilee**. Both were messianic-like revolutionaries.
 - Josephus has an entire chapter named "Concerning Theudas, and the Sons of Judas the Galilean" (*Wars*, Book 20, chapter 5).
 - However, some of the timing and details do not align correctly, so we are not certain that these are the same accounts (and the names Theudas / Thaddeus / Judas are all derivatives and extremely common names).
 - Josephus also writes about Judas of Galilee in *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 18, Chapter 1, and this account seems to align with Acts.
- Verses 38-39 –
 - Gamaliel appears to give sound advice, and it is advice that certainly brings a certain degree of freedom to the Apostles.
 - One wonders what would have happened had Gamaliel sought to personally determine whether or not their message was of God, and then sought to use his **reputation among all the people** (v. 34) to persuade the nation.