Acts Chapter 5

Introduction to Act 5

In Acts, the Holy Spirit is on the move, the church is growing and advancing, the numbers at this point are over 10,000 in the city of Jerusalem, including men, woman and children. Peter had just preached Christ to the Sanhedrin with boldness, and the power of the Holy Spirit was on him. The Kingdom of God has begun its advance on Satan's domain. The healing of the lame beggar had established the authority of the disciples; the church has prayed for boldness to proclaim the "Word of God" throughout Jerusalem. Events were moving forward with under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

What can Satan do? Remember, Satan has authority in this fallen world, and the Church is the instrument to take his authority. Satan's power and authority is worldwide, from the result of the fall of Adam and Eve. Their descendants, all of humanity, had relinquished their authority, given at Creation (Genesis 1:28). This is why Satan could say to Jesus in the Temptation in the wilderness, "*It has been delivered to me…and I give it to whom I will*". Jesus Christ has come to take back what Adam lost.

> Luke 4:5-7 And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, 6 and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom 7 I will If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

So, the struggle is over authority in this fallen world, and the salvation of souls who are under Satanic authority. Jesus' victory means Satan will be cast out, the Devil does plan on leaving without a fight. The world is under his authority, but Jesus victory at the cross was to his loss.

> John 12:31
> 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.
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> Luke 10:17-19
> 17 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" 18 And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.
> 19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you

Here in chapter 5, Satan begins his assault from within, and outside the church, to prevent it from advancing on his territory. From the beginning, the Church as has been locked into a spiritual battle with "*ruler of this world*", whose goal is to keep his domain and authority, from the Good News of Jesus Christ. He wants to keep lost people lost.

The Kingdom of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit has begun to advance on the world, "*The ends of the earth*" (Act 1:8), but that advance begins in Jerusalem. Satan's goal was to stop it.

Here in chapter 5, we see deceit within the Church and violence outside the church begin, in chapter 4, was the threat of violence, weapon of fear. Next are Satan's weapons of deceit and violence to prevent the Gospel.

> 2 Corinthians 4:3-4
> 3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.
> 4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Satan's goal is to keep the Gospel from those who are perishing, to blind their minds, so they don't even have a chance to hear the Gospel. He has many weapons in his arsenal. This is what we are witnessing in Chapter 5, his attempt to silence the Holy Spirit empowered Church. Everyone who comes to Christ means a loss to Satan's territory.

Lying to the Holy Spirit

Acts 5:1-42
1 But a man named **Ananias**, with his wife **Sapphira**, sold a piece of property,
2 and with his **wife's knowledge** he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought **only a part** of it and laid it at the apostles' feet.
3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has **Satan** filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep **back for yourself** part of the proceeds of the land?
4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God."
5 When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it.
6 The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.
7 After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.
8 And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much."
9 But Peter said to her, "How is it that **you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?** Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."
10 Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.
11 And **great fear** came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

Earlier in Acts 4:36-37, we see Barnabas, a Levite, also the cousin of John Mark (Col 4:10), sell property, he donates the money to the church. Barabas probably received some attention and gratitude from the apostles for this generosity. Watching this attention and praise was Ananias and Sapphira, a married couple who also owned land, they also promised to give the proceeds to the church. The problem, they wanted the attention and credit Barnabas received. So they conspired together to keep back some of the money and lie about the full amount received. Maybe they received more then they thought it was worth, so they thought they would pocket the difference.

What were they actually doing? To them it might have seemed like it was a little sin, after all they were still giving the money. The Church would still benefit so they would tell a little lie, it's a minor sin. The lie was not to people, it was to God, the Holy Spirit. They had a diminished view of God and the church, they wanted the same credit and praise Barnabas received. They conspired together, nobody would know the difference. They were not afraid of God, they willfully sinned and God made an example of them with Church discipline. The word used for "*kept back*" is the same word used for Achan's sin in Joshua 7:1, in the Greek translation of the Torah(the Septuagint) *nosphizo*, Achan kept some of the items of Jericho, and hid them under his tent, obedience was a minor inconvenience. Achan saw the victory at Jericho as a way of securing his families future. His sin caused the loss of the next battle at Ai, thirty men died as a result. All of Israel suffered because of him. In the same way, Achan

became an example for Israel in the conquest of the Promised Land, Ananias and Sapphira became an example for the early church, in the conquest of the Kingdom of God.

God's Discipline

God corrects us because He loves us, if this couple's actions was not corrected, they might have thought they fooled everyone, including God. They would sin again, and others would copy. Their "little" sin would have infected the Church. This was Satan's goal, to infect the Church with willful sin, making the early church think God cannot know deception taking place. Its in our fallen nature to sin, this fallen nature can infect the church also.

We see this in Revelation, in the letters to the "Seven Churches" Jesus gives correction to five of the seven churches, two of the seven have no issues of correction, Smyrna and Philadelphia[1] (Revelation 2-3). Jesus says to the church of Laodicea, "*Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent*" (Revelation 3:19). The church of Laodicea was wealthy, Jesus said you think your are wealthy, but are really "*wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked*".

Church at Laodicea: Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent"…Jesus (Rev. 3:19)

What was Ananias and Sapphira's thinking? Maybe they wanted to be leaders? Ananias could have been competing with Barnabas for praise or authority. Or maybe they saw this large group of new believers and they had plans to take advantage for gain. Whatever their thinking, its no different than today. Human nature is the same as it was 2000-years ago. Satan will use our fallen nature to wage war, he will use our jealousy, hate, pride and ego to destroy us and destroy the church. He wants to remove our effectiveness and authority for the Kingdom of God. That is why Peter describes Satan as a roaring and hunting lion, looking for prey. He is on the prowl and Ananias and Sapphira fell victim to Satan's deception.

1 Peter 5:8
8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

The Holy Spirit is our guide, he will let us know when we are crossing the line, he will give us the unction to not sin, he will testify against our actions and when that fails, God will discipline us.

Hebrews 12:4-6 .
4 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. 6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

Ananias and Sapphira both knew they were going to sin; they planned it together. Being saved by the blood of Christ, does not prevent discipline. If we fail to yield to God's discipline, then God might remove His people from the field, lest we become a hindrance or a trap for others. Paul warns to the Church at Corinth, their willful sinning, while participating the Lord's Supper is causing sickness and death, it the Lord's discipline. He tells them to judge themselves, so God does not have to judge them.

The same for us, we should judge ourselves so we will not be judged. We need to listen to the Holy Spirit and correct our actions. This couple lacked a fear of God in their planning.

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[1] The city of Philadelphia, the first capital city in the United States was named after this church in the book of Revelation by William Pitt.

1 Corinthians 11:27-32
27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.
28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.
29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.
30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.
31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.
32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

You agreed together: This shows the extent of their sin, they had full knowledge in their intent, their thinking was bathed in a lack of fear. Maybe they thought: God did not know or care about their lies, or that their sin was not that big a deal. Regardless of what they thought, Satan deceived them, because in the end, they did not really understand the gift of the Holy Spirit, and they became examples for the rest of the church.

Great fear: Fear of God is not a negative, neither is the fear of parents, fear helps us to be obedient, because our fallen nature wants to sin, its innate. So we need to fight against our natural will, on our power, we can't win. However, with the Holy Spirit, we have the power to be obedient and conquerors. We see this conflict of the inner man, the old nature (Romans 6:6) and the new nature, both fight for control. When our "New Nature" is in control we can walk victorious in this life. We can have victory over our old nature, when we fear the Lord, because the Spirit gives us the power to have relationship with God, the Creator of the universe.

Romans 8:1-2 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Exodus 20:19-21
19 and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die."
20 Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin."
21 The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

Ananias and Sapphira problem was they did not fear the Lord, that lack of fear invited Satan to tempt to lie to the Holy Spirit, and use them with the intent of infecting the church with sin.

Continuing Power in the Church

12 Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico.
13 None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem.
14 And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,
15 so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them.
16 The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

What is the purpose of signs and wonders? One is to draw attention to the message, the other is to establish the credibility of individual. Jesus healed, raised the dead, stopped the storms to demonstrate who he is to a skeptical world. When four men lowered their paralyzed friend through the roof, for Jesus to heal, Jesus asked the scribes and Pharisees,

"*Which is easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven you" or to say "Rise and walk"?*
Obviously anybody can say your sins are forgiven you, but Jesus said;

"that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" …"*I say to you, pick up your bed and go home"*. (Luke 5:23-24).

The healing of the paralyzed man demonstrated Jesus authority, his nature and his ability to "Forgive sins".

In the same way, God allowed Peter to heal the lame beggar in Acts 4, to demonstrate the power of the *Name of Jesus* to Jerusalem and Sanhedrin. The same authority is established with the rest of the 12 apostles, "***many signs and wonders were regularly done***". The apostles were regularly going to the Temple, to **Solomon's portico**, they were not afraid of the Sanhedrin prohibition on speaking the "Name of Jesus", so the very authority was being challenged by the early church.

Cessationism:
is the view that the "miracle gifts" of tongues and healing have ceased—that the end of the apostolic age brought about a cessation of the miracles associated with that age.

Most cessationists believe that, while God can and still does perform miracles today, the Holy Spirit no longer uses individuals to perform miraculous signs. The biblical record shows that miracles occurred during particular periods for the specific purpose of authenticating a new message from God. Moses was enabled to perform miracles to authenticate his ministry before Pharaoh (Exodus 4:1-8). Elijah was given miracles to authenticate his ministry before Ahab (1 Kings 17:1; 18:24). The apostles were given miracles to authenticate their ministry before Israel (Acts 4:10, 16).

Jesus' ministry was also marked by miracles, which the apostle John calls "signs" (John 2:11). John's point is that the miracles were proofs of the authenticity of Jesus' message.
https://www.gotquestions.org/cessationism.html

Ananais and Sapphira's passing, the healings put a real sense of seriousness in the church, the people had a fear of God, understanding the power of the movement was real, it was from God, and not to be trifled with. "**None dared join them**" is probably referring to the leadership of the church, the apostles authority was established, so people seeing what happened to Ananias, did not want to take any chances. As time goes on, we see Barnabas take an active role with Paul in evangelism. The very next verse tells us **believers were added to the Lord,** but it was done under the apostolic authority.

Healing continued to be a demonstration of apostolic authority, **people brought their sick and … afflicted with unclean spirits….and they were healed.** The healing ministry of the apostles was to establish the authority of the church in Jerusalem. Also today, healing in distant land where the Gospel is being preached, happens to establish the authority and credibility of the Name of Jesus.

There is a debate within the Church, if this gift given to the early church during the time of the Apostles is still active:

Those who say it ceased with the apostles are known as *Cessationists.*

Stories of healing from the past 2000 years continue today, many times God uses healing from prayers to establish authority and credibility of the evangelist.

Imprisoned Apostles Freed

17 But the **high priest** rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the **Sadducees**), and filled with jealousy
18 they **arrested** the apostles and put them in the public prison.
19 But during the night **an angel of the Lord** opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said,
20 "Go and stand **in the temple** and speak to the people all the **words of this Life**."
21 And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and **began to teach**. Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together **the council**, all the **senate of the people** of Israel, and **sent to the prison** to have them brought.

The authority of the **high priest** was being challenged by the "Church" they were meeting within the Temple grounds, Solomon's Portico, they were healing, people were coming to them who were afflicted with unclean spirits in an outright challenge to the prohibition in Acts 4:18, "*Charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus*". The Sadducees, rejected most supernatural events; such as angles, spirits, prophets and the resurrection of the dead. So not only did they challenge their authority but their doctrines were also being challenged.

Arrested: Since the disciples were meeting on Temple grounds at Solomon's Portico they were

available for arrest**.** Meeting in the Temple area made them subject to the authority of the Saducees who were allied with the Roman authorities.

An Angel of the lord: There is a tug of war taking place in the spiritual realms,(Ephesians 6:11-18), as the Sadducees are having the disciples arrested to stop the Gospel from being preached, God is sending an angel to free them from the prison, telling them to go back, and **stand in the Temple** and preach the **Words of this life**. In other words the Gospel, the words to Life. The Satanic goal is to stop the Gospel from being preached, not only is the angel telling them to preach it, but he is telling them to stand in the Temple.

Began to teach: So at daybreak, when the Temple first opened, the apostles returned. Teaching is a command of the great commission, it not only to proclaim, we are called to teach,the Greek word is *didasko, meaning to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them, deliver didactic discourses.* The instructions would have been to show what the prophets proclaimed about the Messiah, how he was to die for our sins according to the prophets. This is what Peter taught the Sanhedrin, and what we see Phillip teach the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:26-39.

Acts 3:18 But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.

Sent to the prison: When they called had assembled the leaders, **the council** is the Greek word, translated from *sunedrion,* where get the word *Sanhedrin*. The **senate of the people,** seems like an additional body of elders or scribes of the 70 plus members of the Sanhedrin. Things are getting serious, as more and more people are being drawn to the faith in Christ. Now while they are trying to retrieve the apostles to stand before these bodies, they are on the spiritual offensive inside the Temple grounds proclaiming Jesus. Its not a very political correct move on the part of the disciples, its outright aggressive and confrontational with the Sadducees control.

Apostles are on Trial Again

22 But when **the officers** came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported,
23 "We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside."
24 Now when **the captain of the temple** and the chief priests heard these words, they were **greatly perplexed** about them, wondering what this would come to.
25 And someone came and told them, "**Look! The men** whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and **teaching the people**."
26 Then the captain with the officers went and **brought them**, but **not by force**, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.
27 And when they had brought them, they set them **before the council**. And the high priest questioned them,
28 saying, "We **strictly charged** 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."
29 But **Peter and the apostles** answered, "We must **obey God** rather than men.
30 The God of our fathers **raised Jesus**, whom you killed by **hanging him on a tree**.
31 God exalted him at his **right hand** as **Leader** and **Savior**, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
32 And **we are witnesses** to these things, and **so is the Holy Spirit**, whom God has given to those who obey him."

The officers: the situation demonstrates God is in control, even when it seems impossible, the officers are going to the prison to remove the apostles for a hearing before the Sanhedrin and the senate of the people; just like the Romans had a "Senate" and the house of the Plebians, the Jews had adopted a similar type of structure. The prison guards had no idea there prisoners had left the building, either they were put to sleep by the angels, or they were completely blinded while the apostles left their cell is not

explained.

The captain of the Temple: He was second in charge after the high priest, he was there when Judas sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, he was also present after Peter healed the lame beggar. He was like the police force on the Temple grounds. (Luke 22:52, Acts 4:1). Everyone was confused or **perplexed**, because it didn't make sense, what happened to the arrested apostles? It seemed like they just disappeared.

As they are trying to figure things out, the apostles are found **teaching the people**, **standing in the Temple**. In obedience to an angel of the Lord, who freed them from the prison.

They are brought before the dual meeting of *Sanhedri*n and *senate of the people,* they were willing go, no violence was involved, there they are questioned about their. Again, the question is brought before the Israel's leadership: The obedience to man or God. The Sadducees were disobedient, they not only rejected Jesus, but they rejected most of the God's Word except the Torah.

Peter again stands to the face of Israel leadership, and rejects the **charge** in Acts 4:18, "*Not to speak or teach at all **in the name of Jesus***" Peter then goes on to affirm the sin of the nation, because they killed the Messiah of Israel by **hanging him on a tree.** Jesus became a curse for our sins.

> Deuteronomy 21:22-23 "And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 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.

Gamaliel's Advice

> 33 When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to **kill them**.
> 34 But a Pharisee in the council named **Gamaliel**, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while.
> 35 And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men.
> 36 For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing.
> 37 After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered.
> 38 So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail;
> 39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" So they took his advice,
> 40 and when they had called in the apostles, **they beat them** and **charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus**, and let them go.
> 41 Then they left the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor** for the name.
> 42 And every day**, in the temple** and from **house to house**, **they did not cease teaching** and **preaching that the Christ is Jesus.**

Peter and the apostles are fearless, with the spread of Christianity, they were looking for a way to **kill them**, because the movement is growing and their authority might be challenged. **Gamaliel**[2], Paul's teacher (Acts 22:3); he was part of the Pharisaic minority of the Sanhedrin, but he was a descendent of Hillell, one of the greatest Rabbinic teachers. When the Spirit is in power in our lives, our perspective changes. We look toward the Kingdom of God and our destiny, not the current situation: Look at what happened with the apostles:

- They beat them
- They charged them to not speak in the name of Jesus
- They rejoiced
- They were counted worthy to suffer dishonor
- The taught and preached, from house to house and in the Temple

[2] Gamaliel was one of the first to be given the title **Rabban** (our master), a step above "Rabbi," signifying his leadership as the Nasi (president) of the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem during the mid-1st century.