



*The Book of Acts*  
Bringing in a New Dispensation  
Acts 5:12-42 | No Compromise

Acts 5:12 | The Signs and Wonders of the Apostles

Verse 12 —

**By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought.** There is no mystery what is happening here. The apostles are performing signs and miracles. This was just as Jesus told them they would do. This was an Apostolic Dispensation. Notice it is only the Apostles who are performing these miracles. The reason for these **signs and wonders** is that the Jews required a sign (John 4:48).

But Jesus also warned that even false Christs and false prophets would show signs (Matthew 24:24), and *it if were possible, they shall deceive the very elect* (Jews). The passage reads: “if possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” Notice *it were* is in italics. Literal reading, “if possible.” The word *possible* does not mean *chance*. It means *if power enough or, if mighty enough* the elect shall be deceived. The *elect* in Scripture is identified as being the nation of Israel. Believers today are not the *elect*. We are the Body of Christ. It is important to see that distinction—but many miss it. Using Scripture to interpret Scripture, we can go to passages like Isaiah 65:9 where the *elect* are identified.

The Hebrew word used in Isaiah for elect is *bahir* (Strong’s number 972). It is the same word used in Psalm 105:6, “Ye children of Jacob his chosen.” The elect/chosen refers to Israel, not us. You and I are not saints, we are not chosen, we are not elect. We base that assumption using Scripture and not the opinions of man.

Some will say that Paul calls us the *chosen* in his letter to the Ephesians. While we don’t have time to exegete that passage today, Ephesians 1:1 appears to be addressed to two groups of people, to the saints and to the faithful in Christ Jesus. If that assumption is true, then Ephesians 1:4, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world” is directed to the *saints* or Jews in that Ephesian church. Further down in his letter (vs. 13), Paul addresses the non-Jewish believers when he says, “In whom ye also...were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.” We have been called *saints* for so long that we all just go along with it and parrot it without studying it for ourselves. If you make the distinction that the elect, chosen, and the saints are Israel, it will clear up a lot of confusion when reading Paul’s epistles.

Back to the **signs and wonders**,

Even when Christ performed signs (or miracles), many did not believe in him (John 12:37). The apostles were given a mandate from Jesus to perform signs (Acts 1:8; John 14:12). Therefore, the apostles are fulfilling their kingdom authority given to them by Jesus Christ in anticipation of His return. The word **wrought** is the past participle of *worked*.

**And the people were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.** The covered area surrounding the Temple, also known as Solomon's Portico (see John 10:23; Acts 3:11). This is another indicator that these believers in the Messiah are all Jews, still practicing the Law of Moses, as they are meeting in the temple just as good Jews should. They were in **one accord** as they awaited the return of their Messiah in whom many of them have believed in through *repentance and baptism, not by grace through faith*.

#### Acts 5:13,14 | Fear Still Abounds, Yet The Multitude of Believers Grows

Verses 13,14 —

**And of the rest durst no man to join them. Them** most likely refer to the apostles and multitude who were gathered in Solomon's porch. The word **durst** is an archaic form of the past tense of *dare*, *i.g.*, *No man dared to join them* (See John 9:22;12:42). Many watched from the sidelines but were afraid to join the group. They knew Peter and John were on the Sanhedrin's radar (4:1,7), and had earlier been arrested (4:3). They knew Peter and John had been warned to stop speaking in the *name of Jesus*. But they also feared the signs and wonders. The **people magnified** (highly esteemed) the apostles.

More **believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both men and women.**

#### Acts 5: 15,16 | Peter Heals Everyone Brought to Him.

Verses 15,16 —

Luke now records the kinds of *signs and wonders* mentioned in verse 12. Here again is an indication this is not the church as we know it today. **Every one** who was **brought forth** (carried out) **into the streets** (literally, every street), not only the residents of **Jerusalem** but **also a multitude** from other **cities** around **Jerusalem**. Luke doesn't describe in these two verses how much time has passed for this to occur, but it would have been at least several days as word would have taken some time to reach those in other cities, and then travel time, etc. It appears, as Peter walked through Jerusalem, he healed multitudes along the way, which would have eventually caught the attention of the *religious leaders*.

The text does not say that they were healed by Peter's shadow. It is not out of the question that his shadow could have healed, but it seems to imply that some of them *thought* that if they couldn't get to Peter, his shadow might be sufficient. There are accounts in Scripture of involuntary flow of power from healers. For example, in the Gospels of Mark and Luke there is the account of a woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years. All of her life she was treated by physicians, but no one could heal her. When Jesus, surrounded by a large group of people passed by this woman, she stretched out her arm and touched the *border of the Lord's garment*. She was immediately healed (Mark 5:30, Luke 8:46). So this could have applied to a shadow as well, we don't know. (See also Matthew 14:34-36).

There are other instances of people being *overshadowed by God*. Mary, the mother of Jesus, when the angel told her, "*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee...*" (Luke 1:35).

Or when Jesus took Peter, James, and John to a mountain where He was transfigured before them, the passage states, "*There came a cloud, and overshadowed them.*" (Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7).

What we see in this passage is Peter carrying on the ministry of Jesus and obeying His command to "*Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils.*" (Matthew 10:8).

## Acts 5:17-18 | The Second Persecution

Verses 17,18 —

**The high priest rose up.** In the negative sense, when someone has to *get up* to prevent something from continuing there is trouble. Not only the **high priest**, but the **sect of the Sadducees**. There were many religious **sects**. The **Sadducees** were not as numerous as their opposition, the Pharisees, but they were wealthier and therefore had more clout or influence (follow the money). The **Sadducees** denied there was a resurrection (Matthew 22:23; Acts 23:8). What were Peter and John preaching? The resurrection (Acts 2:31; Acts 4:2; Acts 4:33). Because of this, and the popularity of the apostles with the *people*, the religious leaders were filled with **indignation** (or envy. Greek, *zelos*). Envy is destructive. We are warned of it by the apostle Paul (Romans 1:29; 13:13; 1 Corinthians 3:3; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:26; 1 Timothy 6:4; Titus 3:3), because any of us can fall victim to envy.

**Laid their hands on the apostles** for the second time, fulfilling Jesus's words in Luke 21:12. **Put them in the common prison**, that is the *public jail*.

### Acts 5:19-20 | Instructed by the Angel and Prison Doors Opened

Verse 19 —

**But.** The conjunction means something bad or good is going to happen. In this case, it is a good for the apostles as **the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors.** There are several imprisonments in the book of Acts, all did not turn out well. In Acts 12:2, James was killed by the sword. Other times, they were miraculously released (Acts 12:7:11), and sometimes prison doors were opened, but they stayed in the prison and did not escape (Acts 16:28). Paul was left in prison for an extended period (Acts 24:27; 26:30-32). God doesn't seem to open prison doors today. But still, those who live godly will be persecuted, 2 Timothy 3:12. This was truly an apostolic moment for this period of transition.

Verse 20 —

The angel gave the apostles instructions to **Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people.** This took boldness which Peter and John both had! (Acts 4:13). **The words of this life.** This is may or may not refer to *eternal life*, but literally **this life**, which entailed *repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins*. But in Acts 3:15, Peter spoke of the *Prince of life*, so it could mean *the words of Jesus*. God continually allowed the Jews a chance to say *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord* (Luke 13:35). Going to the temple suggests they are continuing Jesus' ministry — they are to go back to the Temple and *reclaim it for Jesus Christ!*

### Acts 5:21-23 | Back to the Temple and the Empty Cell

Verses 21-23 —

The apostles obeyed and **entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught.** Meanwhile, the **council** (the Sanhedrin) convened and **sent to the prison to have** Peter and John **brought** before them. There was a slight problem: the **officers found them not in the prison.** The report to the council was the **prison was shut with all safety** and well-guarded, but the cell was empty. Luke does not describe if it was only the cell of the apostles, or the entire prison that was opened. How they escaped is not known either. Reminiscent of the tomb of Jesus, the cell was well guarded, but empty.

### Acts 5:24-26 | The Religious Leaders Mounting Fear

Verse 24 —

The word **doubted** means *perplexed*. **Whereunto this would grow**, that is, what in the world is going on?

Verse 25, 26 —

The report: **the men ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people**. Go get them! They were **brought without violence**, because the people were on the side of the apostles. In Luke 20:6, the religious leaders were in fear of the people stoning them. The court of public opinion often rules the actions of the politicians.

### Acts 5:27-28 | Standing Before the Sanhedrin, Again

Verses 27-28—

**When they had brought them**, again before the **council**, it is interesting Luke doesn't record Peter and John being asked, "*How did you get out of the prison?!*" Rather, the narrative jumps immediately to what they did after they escaped. **Did we not straitly (directly) command you that ye should not teach in this name? Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine**. The doctrine the **high priest** is referring to is the resurrection and the Apostles determination to put the sin of the crucifixion on the Jewish leaders (See 4:10). The teaching of the apostles was successful and their success, as we have already seen in verse 17 provoked jealousy and *indignation*.

The only way the council could get around this was to *repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sin!* They don't appear go about doing that. Therefore, the statement of Annas the high priest was true, **You intend to bring this man's blood upon us**, Peter's response? **We ought to obey God rather than men**.

### Acts 5:29-32 | No Compromise

Verse 29 —

This statement in verse 29 was a commonplace, saying that the people would have understood. It was recorded around 400 BC in Plato's account (Plato. Apologia 29d) of the trial of Socrates. After being brought to trial, Socrates was warned not to spend his time in philosophy or else they would kill him. If he ceased his investigation of philosophy, they would let him go free, to which Socrates responded, "Men of Athens, I respect and love you, but I shall obey the god rather than you..." It was a well known bold statement. The divine commission they were set on obeying was given by God through Jesus that they should be His witnesses.

The verse reads **Peter and the *other* apostles answered.** Here we discover that it is no longer only Peter and John, but ***other* apostles** (plural). It is most likely all twelve of the apostles at this time. Their answer to the high priest: **We ought to obey God rather than men.**

Does this hold true today? What about Romans 13? Many Christians cite Romans 13 as a command to obey the government no matter what. Key points in Romans 13,

1) *Every soul (person) is to be subject unto the higher powers.*

2) *There is no power but of God: the powers...are ordained of God.*

It is unclear whether the Romans passage is referring to *governmental higher powers, or angelic higher powers, or higher powers within the church.* Let's assume it refers to the government (although my personal speculation is, this is not referring to *flesh and blood—see Ephesians 6 so it may be supernatural higher powers*) The mandate is to be subject to them. Not to be obedient to them in all things. To be subject means that if one disobeys, then he must accept the outcome. That is precisely what we will see happen in this passage. The apostles are disobeying and they will take whatever it is they have coming to them.

While we can disobey anyone in the face of being forced to go against our God-given rights; we are also strongly encouraged to pray for all *that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty* (1 Timothy 2:2). Yet we should not be surprised when the day may come when we will not lead that sort of quiet and peaceable life.

Verse 30 —

In verse 28, the priest inquired if Peter and the apostles intended to bring **this man's** (that is, Jesus) **blood upon us.** The answer is "yes." **The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.** But first, Peter and the other apostles voiced their loyalty in verse 29. But Peter confirmed the high priest's accusation that indeed, the apostles intended to bring the blood of Jesus upon Israel's religious rulers.

Verse 31 —

**Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour.** More clearly the passage should read, **Him hath God exalted to his right hand.** Acts 2:33 clarifies where Jesus is now--He has been exalted from earth to heaven where he sits at the **right hand** of God (Acts 5:31; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22). God, the King eternal sits on His

heavenly throne with Jesus, the **Prince and Savior**. The word **Prince** is the Greek word *archegos*. Not *prince* like we think of a prince in a royal kingdom. Rather the word *archegos* is probably better understood as authority or rank. Therefore, Jesus is the One with Authority to bring Salvation. God, by exalting Jesus to his right hand assures Jesus's authority. His authority then is to **give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins**. Although he was despised and rejected by men (Isaiah 53:3), and his own received him not (John 1:11), Peter makes it known to the high priest and the others that there is still a chance to believe in Jesus as Messiah.

Verse 32—

By what authority could Peter speak? By his own witness and by the witness of the **Holy Ghost**. If these religious leaders would have been obedient to God, they would have had the Holy Ghost and would have also been a witness to Jesus's exaltation. But, they did not obey, in fact they were in danger of the unpardonable sin, i.e., *blasphemy of the Holy Spirit* (Matthew 12:31-32).

What will their response be? We will find out next time.

*And next time we will see the apostles bear a third persecution, one of corporal punishment.*