

STUDY NOTES

The Acts of the Apostles

A MESSAGE SERIES AT NEW CITY CHURCH (Spring 2016)

WWW.NEWCITYPHX.COM/SERMONS - Tom Shrader

The following content is based on the message "From the Urban Core of Jerusalem: Live, Work, Study, and Play" spoken on 03/13/16 by Tom Shrader at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis of the message but rather a brief look at the main ideas.

To use this Study Guide effectively you must listen to the message found at <http://newcityphx.com/sermons/>. Leaders using these Study Notes for group study and reflection should read the Biblical text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material.

THE SCRIPTURE - ACTS 5:17-42

But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy ¹⁸they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. ¹⁹But 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.” ²¹And 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. ²²But 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.” ²⁴Now 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. ²⁵And someone came and told them, “Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.” ²⁶Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people. ²⁷And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸saying, “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.”

²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³²And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

³³When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. ³⁴But 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. ³⁵And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with

these men. ³⁶For 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. ³⁷After 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. ³⁸So 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; ³⁹but 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,

⁴⁰and 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. ⁴¹Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. ⁴²And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

BACKGROUND

So far in this series, we have seen that Luke, the writer of Acts, has show how the early church grew through the power of the Holy Spirit. Luke alternates the setting of his historical account between a picture of the church by itself and a picture of what the church looked like in the world around it.

On an average week, people may spend **two hours as the church gathered** at the building, which means that they also spend **166 hours as the church scattered** in the city.

Tom mentioned that it is dangerous to focus on gathering together while neglecting to scatter in the city. He also said that it is dangerous to focus on scattering in the city while neglecting to gather together.

The early church gathered together and experienced the invisible God. They also scattered into the city and made the invisible God visible.

Questions:

- What could be dangerous about either neglecting the gathered church or neglecting the scattered church?
- Two hours gathered seems small in comparison to 166 scattered. Why is putting effort into the **gathered** church important?
- What could happen to the church if it does not **scatter in the city**?

APOSTLES ARRESTED

In Acts 5:17-18, we see that the apostles were arrested by the High Priest and the Sadducees--both of whom were part of the religious leaders of the day. Luke tells us that they were "filled with jealousy" and they put the apostles in a public prison. As difficult as it may seem, everyone who follows Jesus is promised to face persecution.

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted
2 TIMOTHY 3:12

This persecution may not be as overt as being thrown in prison or as extreme as our brothers and sisters being persecuted by ISIS. However, we are promised that it will happen.

It should not surprise us when opposition rises against us because there is always opposition to the Gospel.

In verse 19 an angel of the Lord freed the apostles from the prison and told them to continue preaching the Gospel. It is important to remember that while we are promised persecution, God does not leave us to face it alone.

He dwells with us and in us.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, who the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.
JOHN 14:16-17

Questions:

- *Why do you think there is opposition to the Gospel?*
- *How can we walk through persecution with one another?*
- *How does it feel to know that God does not abandon us to face persecution alone?*

THE APOSTLES GO BEFORE THE COUNCIL

The religious leaders called together Israel's senate and governing council. They wanted to get rid of the apostles and eradicate the followers of Jesus. When they went to get the apostles, they could not find them in the prison cell. They were out preaching in the temple just like the angel had told them.

The apostles spoke the truth boldly.

The religious leaders feared an uprising, but when they found the apostles speaking in the temple, the apostles willfully came to the council.

Questions:

- *What kind of courage do you see the apostles displaying?*
- *Why do you think they were so quick to go back out into the temple to speak the message of Jesus in the city?*

THE APOSTLES MESSAGE: THE GOSPEL

*The Apostles are told to stop preaching again. In ACTS 5:28 the high priest said to the apostles, "We strictly charge 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."*

The high priest did not even want to say Jesus' name, but he knew about whom Peter and the other apostles preached. The sermons of the early church focused on the death and resurrection of Jesus, that is the Gospel. This time is no different.

Peter's defense is the Gospel:

- 1) *Jesus was killed by the hands of the religious leaders.*
- 2) *God raised Jesus from the dead.*
- 3) *Jesus is their Savior and he provides a way for repentance and forgiveness of sin.*

"The resurrection is God's 'amen' to Jesus' finished work"

The religious leaders became enraged. A man named Gamaliel, who was a respected Pharisee, reminds his fellow religious leaders that other people created movements like Jesus did. All of those movements died not long after the leader died. However, even Gamaliel sees the possibility that God is behind this movement. He urges the religious leaders to leave the movement of Jesus alone to see if it dies or if it grows even more.

As we know and as we have experienced, the movement of Jesus has grown bigger than what most people in the early church may have expected.

Questions:

- *Why is the resurrection so important?*
- *How does the resurrection influence our message?*
- *What does it mean to you to see that the movement of Jesus was indeed "of God" and it continues to grow since the resurrection of Jesus?*

LIVE, WORK, STUDY, PLAY

The church began with a group of people commissioned by Jesus who were committed to living out the message of the Gospel.

In verse 32, Peter says that they "are witnesses" to the Gospel. In verse 28, we see that the witness of their lives and their words filled Jerusalem.

The Apostles were committed to living out the message of Jesus in the urban core of Jerusalem in the places where they lived, worked, studied, and played.

After facing opposition, the early church "did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." (ACTS 5:42).

Questions:

- *How does the resurrection influence how you live, work, study, and play?*
- *How can you make the invisible God visible in the places that you live, work, study, and play?*
- *What are some things that get in the way of speaking boldly in the places that you live, work, study, and play?*
- *How can we encourage one another to continue to live out the message of Jesus in the places that we live, work, study, and play when opposition arises?*
- *How can we as a Community Group take the message of Jesus to the places that we live, work, study, and play?*