



Study Guide: Acts – Chapter 5

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This study guide provides an educational overview of Acts Chapter 5 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

Acts Chapter 5 continues the narrative of the early church's growth and challenges following Pentecost. This chapter highlights the seriousness of integrity within the community, the power of the Holy Spirit working through the apostles, and the opposition they face from religious authorities. As the story unfolds, readers are invited to observe the tension between divine authority and human resistance, and to consider the cost and courage of faithful witness. Key elements to watch for include the account of Ananias and Sapphira, the miraculous signs performed by the apostles, and the escalating conflict with the Jewish leaders.

Context

The immediate literary context of Acts 5 follows the communal life described in Acts 2 and 4, where the early believers shared possessions and experienced growth through the apostles' teaching and fellowship. The chapter is set in Jerusalem, during the early days of the Christian movement under the leadership of the apostles, particularly Peter and John. Historically, this period is marked by the fulfillment of Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of the church as a distinct community within Judaism. The key speakers include Peter, who confronts Ananias and Sapphira, and the Jewish religious authorities who challenge the apostles. The chapter reflects the covenantal tension between the new covenant inaugurated by Christ and the existing Jewish religious structures.

Outline

Acts 5 can be divided into three main movements. The first section recounts the story of Ananias and Sapphira, focusing on their deception and the resulting divine judgment. The second section describes the apostles' continued ministry marked by miraculous signs and growing numbers, despite opposition. The final section narrates the conflict with the Jewish authorities, including the apostles' arrest, miraculous release, and bold proclamation of



the gospel. Each movement highlights the themes of holiness, divine power, and faithful witness under persecution.

Verse-by-Verse Study

Verses 1–3: Ananias and Sapphira sell a piece of property but deceitfully withhold part of the proceeds while claiming to give all. Peter confronts Ananias about lying to the Holy Spirit, resulting in his sudden death. This passage emphasizes the seriousness of hypocrisy and deceit within the community.

Verses 4–10: Sapphira, unaware of her husband’s fate, repeats the lie and also dies after Peter exposes her deception. The fear of the Lord falls upon the entire church and all who hear about these events, underscoring the holiness expected among believers.

Verses 11–16: The apostles continue to perform many signs and wonders among the people. The number of believers grows steadily, and the sick are brought to the streets so Peter’s shadow might heal them. This section demonstrates the power of God working through the apostles to validate their message and ministry.

Verses 17–21: The high priest and the Sadducees, filled with jealousy, arrest the apostles and put them in the public prison. However, an angel of the Lord frees them and instructs them to continue preaching in the temple courts. This divine intervention highlights God’s protection over His messengers and the unstoppable nature of the gospel.

Verses 22–29: The apostles return to teaching despite the threat of arrest. The religious leaders are perplexed and send officers to recapture them. When the apostles are brought before the council, Peter boldly declares obedience to God rather than men, affirming their mission to bear witness to Jesus’ resurrection.

Verses 30–32: The council’s reaction reveals their inability to refute the apostles’ message. Gamaliel, a respected Pharisee, advises caution, suggesting that if the movement is of human origin it will fail, but if it is from God it cannot be stopped. This pragmatic counsel leads to the apostles being released.

Verses 33–42: After their release, the apostles rejoice for being counted worthy to suffer for Jesus’ name. They continue teaching daily in the temple and from house to house, demonstrating their unwavering commitment to spreading the gospel despite opposition.

Key Themes



One key theme is the holiness and integrity required within the church community, as seen in the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira. Another theme is the power of the Holy Spirit working through the apostles to perform signs and wonders, authenticating their message. The chapter also highlights the tension between divine authority and human opposition, illustrating the cost of discipleship and the courage needed to proclaim the gospel. Finally, the unstoppable advance of the gospel despite persecution underscores God's sovereign plan and protection.

Cross-References

The story of Ananias and Sapphira echoes Old Testament warnings against deceit and hypocrisy, such as Achan's sin in Joshua 7, where hidden sin brings judgment on the community. The apostles' boldness in proclaiming Jesus' resurrection recalls Jesus' own teaching in Matthew 10 about fearlessly witnessing before authorities. Gamaliel's counsel parallels prophetic wisdom in Proverbs 3 about trusting God's sovereign plan. The miraculous healings connect to Jesus' ministry in the Gospels, affirming the continuation of His work through the Spirit. Together, these references deepen understanding of the chapter's message about integrity, divine power, and faithful witness.

Application

Modern disciples are challenged to examine the sincerity and transparency of their faith, recognizing that hypocrisy damages both individual and community witness. The chapter encourages believers to rely on the Holy Spirit's power for ministry and to expect opposition when faithfully proclaiming the gospel. It also calls for courage in the face of persecution and trust in God's sovereign protection and timing. The example of the apostles teaches the importance of obedience to God above human authorities and the value of rejoicing in suffering for Christ's name. Practically, this means cultivating a community marked by honesty, boldness, and perseverance.

Summary

Acts 5 presents a vivid portrayal of the early church's challenges and triumphs as it grows in Jerusalem. Through the sobering account of Ananias and Sapphira, the chapter underscores the necessity of integrity within the community. The apostles' miraculous signs and bold witness demonstrate the Holy Spirit's empowering presence, while the conflict with religious authorities reveals the inevitable opposition to the gospel. Ultimately, the chapter affirms that God's kingdom advances despite human resistance,



calling believers to holiness, courage, and faithful proclamation of Jesus Christ.