

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for March 6, 2011

“The Arrest of the Apostles”
Acts 5:17-32

Acts 5:17-32 records the second phase of persecution against the church and followed a time of countless miracles (Acts 5:12-16).

a. The apostles seized (5:17-18)

The Sadducees held the positions of power within the council and were opposed to the belief system of the Pharisees regarding angels, the resurrection of the dead, etc. Their motivation of jealousy is seen in them having the most to lose with the rise of the early church.

Peter and John were the only two apostles arrested in Acts 4, but now the persecution has spread to all the apostles.

b. The apostles set free (5:19)

The Greek word for “angel” means messenger and could refer to a human or a divine being. Due to the authoritative nature of the communication, it likely refers to a divine being.

c. The apostles sent (5:20-21a)

The apostles were not just set free but they were sent for a purpose. The apostles responded promptly by arriving at the temple at dawn.

d. The Jewish leaders stumped (5:21b-24)

The guards were guarding an empty jail

The council were presiding over no one.

Those on trial were presently doing the very thing they were ordered not to do when the trial convened.

e. The apostles seized again (5:25-26)

The apostles did not resist their arrest because they were following the example of Jesus (Luke 22:52-53; 1 Peter 2:21-23).

f. The apostles summoned (5:27-28)

The high priest once again refused to even speak the name of Jesus (cf. Acts 4:17).

g. The apostles speak (5:29-32)

Christians must obey the governing authorities (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17), except when they are commanding us to sin.

Importantly, we must distinguish between what the government allows and what it commands., and we must distinguish between when the government limits religious freedom and when it negates religious freedom.

The death on a “cross” (literally, “wood”) was a form of shame (cf. Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 12:2), which is in stark contrast Christ’s true exalted position.

Jesus was called “Prince,” which includes the root word “ruler” in Greek. The very council that they addressed was often referred to as “rulers” (e.g. Acts 4:5,8), so this title made the point that Jesus was the true authority over Israel.

Not only did the apostles testify to the resurrection, but the Holy Spirit did as well (John 15:26), through miraculous events, through fulfilled prophecy and through God’s people.

May God give us the grace to be resolved to courageously speak of the resurrecting Christ.