

Week 11

THE JERUSALEM CHURCH IN ACTION – PT 5

The Establishment vs the Church

Depending on one's political viewpoint, when you hear the words, 'The Establishment', it may be positive or negative. In every age there is the 'haves' and the 'have nots', the 'in crowd' and the 'outs', the 'mainstream culture' and the 'counterculture'.

As we study the beginnings of the Christian church movement, it quickly becomes obvious that the church is the 'counterculture' of its day. The real question to us today is, is the church still 'counterculture' and should it be? To answer that question, we need a bit of history.

Throughout the first two centuries of the church, it was for the most part, an illegal entity that one joined at their own personal risk. Christians were often hunted down, imprisoned, and even tortured and killed for their faith, as we shall soon see in chapter seven.

However, with the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine to the Christian faith, in 312 A.D., the church was elevated to mainstream status, soon after. Church buildings were built in the town square, so the congregations no longer had to meet in their homes in secret. But that was not for another couple hundred years.

In the second half of chapter five, we see the apostles ministering among the people with great respect and awe. Great signs and miracles were done at their hands, and always in the name of Jesus. The threat of punishment on the apostles, if they continued to preach in Jesus' name had no effect on them. There isn't even a hint that they were nervous about what might happen to them. They were living in the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, and they knew that God was with them, no matter what; even imprisonment couldn't hold them. After all, the powers that be killed Jesus, but God raised him from the dead. They knew that God was Lord over all creation, even over death. The apostles lived in the fulfillment of Psalm 27...

***The Lord is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the strength of my life;
Of whom shall I be afraid?***

Psalm 27:1

At trial before the Great Sanhedrin, once again Peter speaks for the apostles as he proclaims their allegiance to God and ministry in the name of Jesus. Interestingly there is one among the Sanhedrin, Gamaliel, who sees the hand of God may be with the Christians. He was one of the

great teaching Rabbis of his day, and in chapter 22 we learn that Paul grew up under Gamaliel's teaching.

Indeed, Gamaliel's words are quite wise. He keeps the council from lynching the apostles, then and there, by reminding them that there have been other 'messianic movements' that amounted to nothing. So too, shall this movement be, if indeed it is not of God. But if it is of God, they will not be able to stop it.

D. Deception in the Church

- a. The deceit of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11)
 - 1. To lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God
 - 2. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira
- b. Fear inside the church & outside
 - 1. The power of Apostolic Ministry (5:12-16)
 - 2. The unity of the church is unbroken
 - 3. Some begin to keep away from the church
 - 4. The church continues to thrive under duress
- c. The Sanhedrin and the apostles (5:17-42)
 - 1. The arrest and imprisonment
 - 2. The Trial before the Sanhedrin (5:22-32)
 - 3. The Verdict (5:33-42)
 - The wisdom of Gamaliel

