

# Acts

## Bible Study

### United by the Holy Spirit Acts 4:31—5:11

There are some interesting things going on in this portion of Scripture. We are seeing things continuing to happen that we just don't see happening in this Dispensation of Grace. These events are often explained away by saying that miracles were being done to authenticate the message that God was beginning a new work of establishing His church. Others would say that miracles are not happening today because we do not believe that they will happen. Still others claim that miracles are happening, we are just not looking for them.

The one thing that most people miss in early Acts is the connection, not to the church, but to Israel. Miracles, signs and wonders were given to Israel to cause them to believe the message and the messenger (John 2:11, 23; 3:2; 4:48; 7:31). These supernatural events in the Gospels and early Acts were closely associated with the Gospel of the Kingdom. They were pointing Israel to Jesus Christ as her Messiah. Later, after the beginning of the Church in Acts 9 with the raising up of the Apostle Paul, miracles were used to show Israel that Paul was now God's messenger who was carrying His message of Grace. All these supernatural events faded away with the completion of Scripture (1 Corinthians 13:8—10).

Many do understand that miracles validated the message (Exodus 4:1—9; John 2:23). The problem is that the Holy Spirit is needed in order for people to discern whether or not a miracle is coming from God instead of from Satan. This will be especially true during the seven-year Tribulation when Satan and his minions will be performing deceiving miracles (Matthew 24:11, 24; Mark 13:6; Revelation 13:14).

As we continue, we will see more things occurring that are not happening today.

#### **Replay of Pentecost** (verses 31—32)

Right after their prayer for boldness, the place where they were praying was shaken and the Holy Spirit took control of them as He did on the Day of Pentecost. This shows that the filling of the Holy Spirit was a temporary phenomenon that may occur several times. It was not the forever indwelling of the Holy Spirit that the believer experiences upon believing today. The verses that follow show how the Holy Spirit affected those who had been praying. They were given the ability to come together with a unified heart and soul, even to the point of being able to sell their possessions and share them with all the believers.

It should be obvious, to even the casual observer, that these things do not happen in this dispensation. Where two or more are gathered together there will be disagreement. We certainly are not going to willfully sell our belongings to share with others. Those who have tried to do so, without the working of the Holy Spirit, know it only ends up in disaster. The believers in early Acts were moved spontaneously to sell and share by the power of the Holy Spirit, and it was done in preparation for the coming Tribulation.

#### **All things in common**

It is humanly impossible for a group of people put everything into a common pot and keep everyone happy. This is, however, exactly what happened amongst the members of the Little Flock as they united in perfect harmony by the power of the Holy Spirit. This idea of selling all possessions is found in the gospels.

Jesus taught His followers to take no thought of tomorrow. They were not to be making any long-term plans. They were to be focused on the coming Kingdom, while God would supernaturally take care of

them (Luke 12:22). Just a few verses later, Jesus tells them to sell what they have (Luke 12:33). They were to make it their priority to seek the Kingdom of God first, and if they did they would be blessed (Matthew 6:25—34). In fact, the promise was made that those who gave up their worldly possessions would receive much more than what they gave up when the Kingdom will be brought to earth (Matthew 19:29). At this point, the Disciples have already given up all their possessions. This was made clear by Peter when he asked Jesus about what they stand to gain by following Him, since they had forsaken all, including family, houses and possessions (Matthew 19:23—30). Jesus proved that He was capable of supplying their needs with the feeding of the 5,000 and later of the 4,000 men (Matthew 14:21; 15:38).

Although these teachings from Jesus are usually passed over or reinterpreted to mean we should be willing to sell all, the believers actually sold all and followed Jesus Christ. There was no vacillating in the meaning of what Jesus taught. In this dispensation, man seems to inherently know that selling all and putting everything into a common pot will not work. Unfortunately, most Bible teachers do not know how to properly divide Scripture, and so they need to reinterpret the actual interpretation into one that fits their theology, thus losing the truth being presented.

#### **Good example** (verses 4:36—37)

We are given two examples of those giving their possessions to the group of believers. The first one is good example, while the second is a bad example. The good example is Barnabas selling land and bringing the money to the apostles. He was doing what the Holy Spirit was prompting the believers to do. Notice that they were not told specifically to sell their possessions, but began to happen after the Holy Spirit filled them, as seen in verse 31. They were being supernaturally controlled by the Holy Spirit, who was preparing them for the coming Tribulation. This was a learning experience for these believers, learning to put their full trust and confidence in God to supply their needs. The believers were to take no thought of tomorrow and were to store their treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:20; 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 12:32—33; 18:22). Those who do not do this are pictured in James 5. These unbelieving rich men in the Tribulation will ultimately see their treasure of riches being eaten away and destroyed, while those who have stored up their treasure in heaven will enjoy the physical riches of the Kingdom.

#### **Bad example** (verses 5:1—11)

Ananias and Sapphira are given as bad examples to demonstrate the actions and consequences of unbelievers who are stepping out of line. They were attempting to appear as believers, and outwardly they did fit in with all the other believers. However, Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and was able to discern that their hearts were not right with the Lord. The sin they committed was not one of keeping back part of the proceeds of selling their property, it was that they both lied to the Holy Spirit. Verse 3 shows that Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, knew immediately that Ananias was lying. I believe this was a demonstration of the spiritual gift of knowledge (1 Corinthians 12:8). A word of knowledge is having supernatural knowledge given to a person by God through the Holy Spirit.

Both Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead by God. When Jesus Christ is ruling from Jerusalem in the Millennial Kingdom, He will be ruling with a rod of iron (Psalm 2:9; Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). He will need to do this because sin has not yet been eradicated, and men still have the Adamic nature. Those who step out of line in the Millennial Kingdom will experience swift retribution for their sin. This is further proof that these people were not living in the Dispensation of Grace. Paul speaks of this dispensation as living in this present evil world (Galatians 1:4). We are currently living in a time where God has given sinful man a long leash. The Millennial Kingdom will be time when mankind will be expected to obey God's rules or else suffer immediate retribution.

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