

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE EARLY CHURCH

RLJ-2003

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FEBRUARY 23, 2025

PART 7: THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

SPIRITUAL BONFIRE

The Jewish leadership was shocked when the Holy Ghost cranked up the supernatural power in the followers of Jesus. They thought Peter and John had effectively been silenced, but were ignorant of the fact that the third person of the Godhead can work through anyone who is born again.

The apostles preached around Jerusalem and miracles followed everywhere they went. **Acts 5:12**

The men working for the high priest did not dare to get close to the apostles, but the common people in the city were praising God. This time it was both men and women that heard the Gospel and were saved. **verse 13-14**

When one sick person after another was healed, word spread that the followers of Jesus possessed the same healing power. The power of Holy Spirit was so strong that the sick were laid out on the streets and Peter's shadow brought instant healing. God honored their faith and thousands were healed. **verse 15**

News spread to the surrounding areas and even more people streamed into Jerusalem to be healed from their infirmities, and just like with Jesus, demons were cast out. **verse 16**

THE DEVIL'S RESPONSE

With all the healings and the amount of people being born again, Lucifer was upset because he did not know how to contend with the Holy Spirit's power. The humans were becoming like Jesus with the help of the Holy Spirit.

He ordered evil spirits to stir up the high priest and his underlings and plant the thought that the Jesus people were taking over Jerusalem and the cities around it. The high priest ordered his soldiers to arrest and imprison all the apostles. **verses 17-18**

DIVINE INTERVENTION

Jesus was overseeing events in Jerusalem from heaven and ordered an angel to open the prison door and release the apostles. The angel instructed them to return to the temple ground and keep preaching about Jesus. The following morning saw the apostles enter the temple ground again and preach Jesus crucified and resurrected. **verses 19-20**

THE SANHEDRIN

Caiaphas called the Sanhedrin together that same morning to once and for all deal with the apostles. But when they ordered the prisoners brought before them, the soldiers



returned and stated the prison was securely locked and guarded, but the apostles of Jesus could not be located. **verses 21-23**

The Jewish leadership was ignorant of what had taken place and did not know what to make about the matter. Had the apostles orchestrated a jail break? If so, how? They were at a total loss to explain how they had lost control of these men. **verse 24**

As the members of the Sanhedrin milled around, someone entered the room and informed them that the followers of Jesus stood teaching to a large crowd in the temple. **verse 25**

Caiaphas immediately ordered the captain of the temple guard to arrest the apostles and bring them to the courtroom. They saw the large crowd gathered and quickly realized that it could go very badly for them and this is why they politely asked Peter and the rest to come with them. **verse 26**

FACING THE SANHEDRIN

This time it was the twelve apostles – which included Matthias – that stood in front of the Jewish leadership. Caiaphas looked at the Galilean men and sternly told them that they were forbidden to speak the name of Jesus. They were polluting minds with their doctrine and endangering the ungodly leadership. Caiaphas wanted to know if they intended to bring the charge of Jesus' death against the council? **verse 27-28**

Peter and the other 11 apostles fortified by the Holy Spirit resolutely told the Sanhedrin they were obeying God – not men! **verse 29**

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had raised Jesus from the dead. The innocent God-man was unjustly condemned to hang on the cross by the same religious vermin that now pretentiously wanted to deal harshly with the apostles. **verse 30**

Jesus had been exalted by God the Father to be a Prince and Savior so that Israel could be forgiven of its sins. **verse 31**

The apostles declared they were eyewitnesses of these things and so was the Holy Ghost, given to those people who obey God and repent. **verse 32**

Caiaphas and his Sadducee cronies were furious for the following reasons:

1. Peter and John had disregarded their previous command.
2. The apostles had charged them with colluding with the Romans in the murder of the Messiah.
3. They continued to affirm the resurrection of Jesus, which was contrary to the doctrine of the Sadducees, who did not believe in life after death.

They angrily conferred amongst themselves how to kill the apostles. This was not in an open and judicial manner, but by hiring an assassin or inciting a group like the zealots to do the dirty work on their behalf.¹ **verse 33**

¹ The Romans were the useful idiots with the crucifixion of Jesus.

GAMALIEL'S WISDOM

Gamaliel was a Pharisee and doctor of the Mosaic law. The Bible does not state that he became a follower of Jesus, but it is clear that he was impressed with the God-man and the apostles. He was respected by the Jewish leadership and the rabbis in Israel and he ordered the apostles removed from the courtroom to discuss what should be done with the other Jewish leaders. **verse 34**

Gamaliel cautioned them to be careful in what they did with the apostles. He reminded them of Theudas who proclaimed himself to be the messiah and accumulated a following of men. **verses 35-36**

Theudas was a Jewish rebel executed by the Romans in 46 A.D. Theudas proclaimed that he was a prophet and persuaded 400 men to follow him. He claimed to have supernatural powers and was going to show it by dividing the Jordan River so he and his followers could walk across on dry land. Cuspius Fadus, the Roman procurator of Judea, discovered what was going to take place and his soldiers killed Theudas along with a number of his men. Theudas' head was put on display in Jerusalem and his movement came to an end.²

Gamaliel also mentioned Judas of Galilee as another messiah contender. **verse 37**

Judas of Galilee was a Jewish rebel who started a tax revolt against the Romans in A.D. 6. Together with a Pharisee named Zadok, they founded a movement known as the Zealots. Simon, one of Jesus' apostles was recruited from this group (Luke 6:15). History does not reveal when Judas of Galilee was killed, but we know that his two sons, James and Simon, were executed in A.D. 46 by an Egyptian Jew who served as procurator of Judea, Tiberius Julius Alexander. There are no records of how many followers Judas of Galilee amassed, but they scattered afterwards and this movement also came to an end.³

He advised the Sanhedrin to leave the apostles alone. Their movement would fizzle out in the same way as Theudas and Judas if God was not with them. However, if the repentance and miracles were real, then it was impossible to stop the spiritual freight train because the Sanhedrin was directly opposing God and their actions would only end in disaster. **verses 38-39**

Caiaphas and the rest of the Sanhedrin could not refute the wisdom of Gamaliel, but before they released the apostles, they vindictively instructed the temple soldiers to scourge the followers of Jesus in order to satisfy their malevolence and hate for the men who had embarrassed them. Trying to add insult to injury, the council ordered the apostles not speak about Jesus anymore. **verse 40**

*“But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and **they will scourge you** in their synagogues...” (Matthew 10:17)*

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theudas>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judas_of_Galilee

This type of punishment is what Paul was referring to in his letter to the church at Corinth.

“Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.” (2 Corinthians 11:24)

The apostles left with the pain of their injuries, but also rejoicing, counting it an honor to suffer for the name of Jesus. Knowing the Holy Spirit was with them, they resumed their daily preaching in homes and on the temple ground. **verses 41-42**

SUMMARY

The church of Jesus was born in the belly of the beast. It was a dangerous situation that saw Jesus willingly railroaded and sentenced to death.

Satan exercised complete control over Judaism when Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

The Devil controlled the high priest, Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, Herodians, and the Roman occupation government.

John the Baptist came as the forerunner to Jesus and it did not take long until he was beheaded.

Jesus began His ministry in the province of Galilee, and the moment He moved south and entered Jerusalem to preach on the temple ground, Satan moved upon the Jewish leadership and Governor Pontius Pilate, and between these two groups, Satan was able to crucify the God-man.

The redemption plan that God would pay for the sins of the human race was unknown to the Lucifer and his minions. Had Satan known what was going to take place, he would have ensured that Jesus died of old age.

*“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”
(1 Corinthians 2:7-8)*

It was into this swirling cauldron that the Holy Spirit birthed the church on the day of Pentecost. The early church would have quickly been brought to a humiliating end without supernatural intervention and the Godhead showed their power in birthing the church in Satan’s stronghold!

The same power that was available to the early church in Jerusalem some 2,000 years ago is still available to each believer in Christ today.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. (Hebrews 13:8)

Remember, it’s not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!