ACTS 5

We Must Obey God Rather Than Men

a lie at the apostles' feet, a shadow in the street, an opened prison, and men who rejoiced to be flogged

> *"But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."*
> ACTS 5:29

A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · FOUR VOICES: GUZIK · SPROUL · SPURGEON · HENRY

Where Luke has brought us

1. Acts 4 ended on a high note.

2. Outside the church the pressure was rising.

3. F. F. Bruce, quoted by Guzik, draws the Old Testament line: “The story of Ananias is to the Book of Acts what the story of Achan is to the book of Joshua.”



Lying to the Holy Spirit

A borrowed reputation, a price kept back, and great fear on the whole church

ACTS 5:2

and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet.

DAVID GUZIK

Pride wanted Barnabas's praise; God acted, not Peter; their salvation is God's to know.

R.C. SPROUL

A conspiracy to pass part as whole; they lied to the Spirit — and robbed God.

MATTHEW HENRY

Satan filled the heart; fatal to profess more than the heart carries.

νοσφίζομαι
NOSPHIZOMAI · "KEPT BACK"

To set apart for oneself, to embezzle.

Two gifts at the apostles' feet

TWO GIFTS LAID AT THE APOSTLES' FEET

	BARNABAS · 4:36–37	ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA · 5:1–10
sold	"a tract of land"	"a piece of property"
brought	"the money"	"a portion of it"
kept back	nothing claimed as his own	"some of the price" (v2)
laid it	"at the apostles' feet"	"at the apostles' feet"
known as	"Son of Encouragement"	"lie to the Holy Spirit" (v3)
the end	trusted, sent, used (9:27; 11:22)	carried out, buried (vv6, 10)

The land was theirs to keep (v4). The sin was the pretense: "You have not lied to men but to God."

Compare the two columns: the outward act is the same; what differs is what was kept back and what was pretended.

Signs in Solomon's Portico

One accord, high esteem, multitudes added — and Peter's shadow in the street

ACTS 5:12

At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico.

DAVID GUZIK

Unity is itself a miracle; a pure church, a powerful church; no power in a shadow.

MATTHEW HENRY

God returns from punishing to mercy; Peter between them and the sun.

σκιά

SKIA · "SHADOW"

A shadow or shade. Seven New Testament uses; Paul and Hebrews use it of the Law as "a mere shadow of what is to come" (Colossians 2:17).

The Prison Doors Opened

Jealous rulers, an angel by night, and an empty jail with the guards at the doors

ACTS 5:17

But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy.

DAVID GUZIK

Locked doors are nothing to God — but they were not always delivered.

R.C. SPROUL

The genuine exposes the counterfeit; jealousy drives the clergy.

MATTHEW HENRY

No prison too dark for God; persecutors embarrass themselves.

Ζῆλος
ZĒLOS · "JEALOUSY"

From zeō, to boil. The word can be good ("zeal" for God, John 2:17) or bad, as here: the high priest and the Sadducees "were filled with jealousy" (v17).

We Must Obey God

The high priest's charge and Peter's answer — the cross, the throne, repentance and the Spirit

ACTS 5:28

saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."

DAVID GUZIK

An explanation, not a defense; submission to men is never absolute.

R.C. SPROUL

Bold preaching of Christ; never say doctrine does not matter.

C.H. SPURGEON

He deserves "Saviour" most on His throne; repentance and pardon are His gifts.

MATTHEW HENRY

No Saviour without the Prince; rage instead of repentance.

πειθαρχέω
PEITHARCHEŌ · "OBEY"

From peithō (to persuade, obey) and archē (rule): to obey one in authority.

If It Is of God

Gamaliel's counsel, the lash, and joy at being counted worthy

ACTS 5:39

but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God."

DAVID GUZIK

Fence-sitting; success is not the measure of truth; the lash did no good.

R.C. SPROUL

Good but not perfect advice; the only glory is the cross.

C.H. SPURGEON

Whatever we fail to preach, we must preach Him.

MATTHEW HENRY

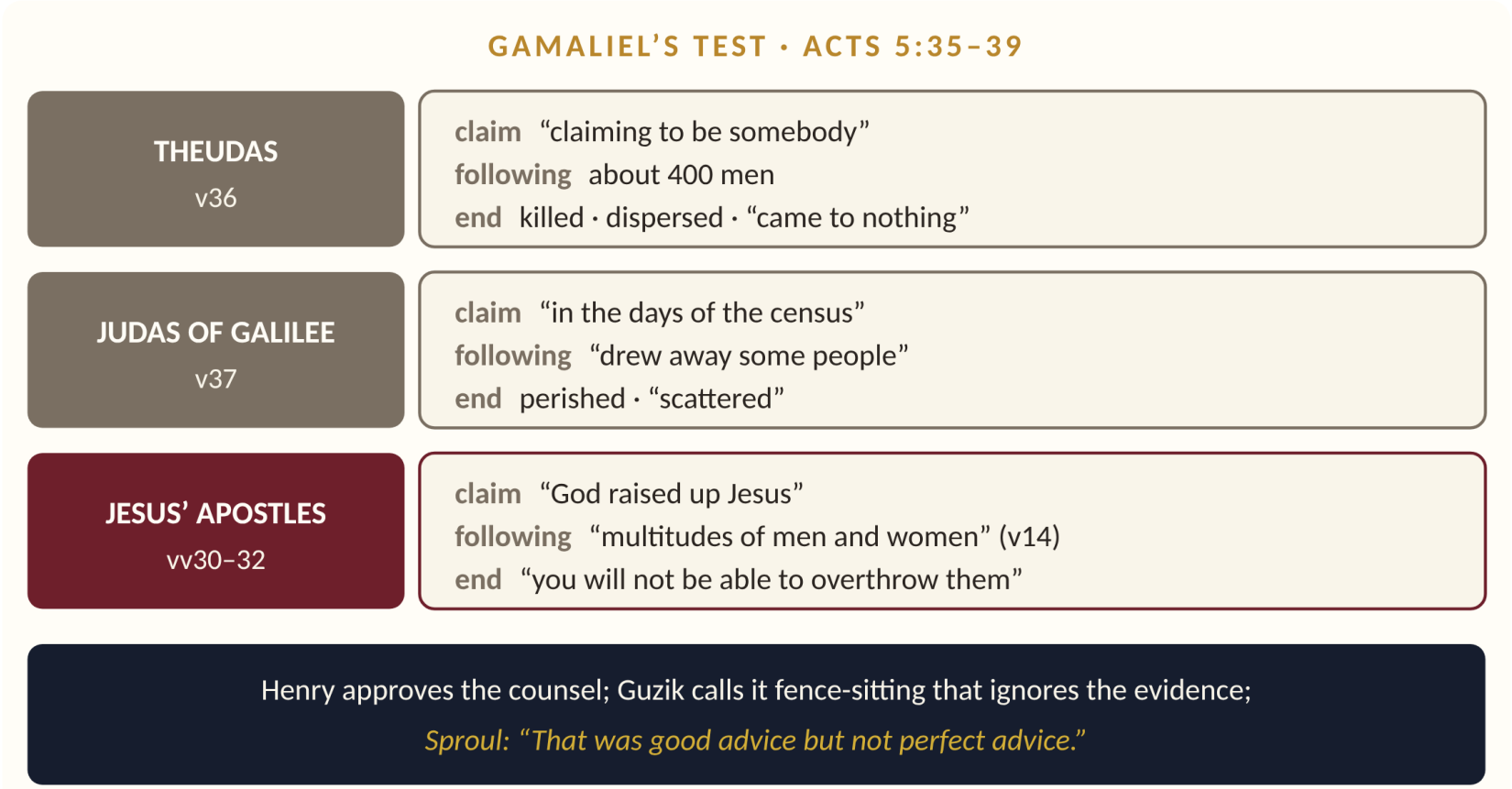
Needless power is abuse; reproach for Christ is true preferment.

διεπρίοντο

DIEPRIONTO · "CUT TO THE QUICK"

From diapriō, to saw through.

Gamaliel's test



Gamaliel sets the apostles beside two failed movements; notice that only the third has a risen leader, and that our teachers weigh his counsel differently.

What to carry from this chapter

1

The first named church learns God is holy.

Verse 11 is the first time Acts calls the believers ekklēsia, and it is followed by “great fear” — the fear of the Lord, not panic.

2

The sin was the pretense, not the price.

“While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own?”

3

Achan’s verb.

Luke’s “kept back” (nosphizomai) is the verb the Greek Old Testament uses for Achan in Joshua 7:1.

4

Lying to the Spirit is lying to God.

Verse 3 says “the Holy Spirit”; verse 4 says “God.”

More to carry

5

Pride corrupts fastest.

Guzik: “Pride corrupts the church more quickly than anything else.”

6

Every heart is full of something.

Satan “filled” Ananias’s heart (v3); jealousy “filled” the rulers (v17); the apostles “filled Jerusalem” with teaching (v28).

7

The genuine exposes the counterfeit.

Sproul: “Nothing exposes the counterfeit faster than the appearance of the genuine.”

8

Obedience to men is real but not absolute.

The word for “obey” (peitharcheō) also commands obedience to rulers in Titus 3:1.

Talk it through

1. Ananias wanted the reputation Barnabas had without paying what Barnabas paid. Where am I tempted to look more spiritual than I am?

2. Peter says the land was Ananias's to keep (v4). Why is a lie about a good deed so serious to God — and what lie of mine needs to come into the light?

3. "Great fear" came on the church (vv5, 11), and yet the church grew (v14). How can the fear of God make a church more attractive instead of less?

4. Where in my life — work, family, the yard, the unit — does obeying God put me against what men expect of me? How do I tell real conflict from mere stubbornness?

5. Jesus is "a Prince and a Savior" (v31). Do I want Him as Savior but resist Him as Prince? Where?

CLOSING

Acts 5 shows the church guarded from both sides: God will not let it rot from a lie within, and He will not let it be silenced by the rulers without. The same holiness that struck Ananias opened the prison and filled the flogged apostles with joy. Tell the truth, obey God first, and keep preaching Jesus as the Christ — every day.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study and reflection journal: see the Acts study page.