

# ***Satan's Attacks Against The Church***

Acts 5:1-11

## ***Introduction***

- Lessons from the Book of Acts: Beginning of the church; Fulfillment of O.T. prophecies; examples of conversion; First century sermons; Examples of non-conversion
- Amazing growth and spread of the gospel; Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; etc.
- The gospel grew and multiplied in the face of great difficulty. Intense opposition from those intent on stopping the spread of the gospel and growth of the church. Enemies whose purpose was to destroy the church.
- Why did the Holy Spirit include accounts of such difficulties, danger and opposition?
  - We can anticipate the same kinds of challenges that they faced.
  - We can be encouraged and instructed when we see how they handled those difficulties and persevered.
- We have the same mission – spread the gospel. Take the gospel to the lost.
- As we go about our duty we find that we face the same enemy that they did. SATAN.
  - As the gospel is being spread, the devil is really busy in the book of Acts.
  - Works to hinder, upset, and destroy the work of God. (I Pet. 5:8)
  - Lesson: Satan's attacks in the first century, today, and how the early church dealt with it and kept doing the Lord's will.

## ***I. Persecution of Christians***

- Perhaps the most obvious attacks from the outset:
  - Jews upset at the preaching of the resurrection (Acts 4:3) imprison them, threaten them (4:17; 5:40), beat them, kill Stephen (Acts 7), and Saul launches a fierce attack on the church. (Acts 8) As time passes the Romans begin to persecute Christians.
- Satan is the real enemy. (Rev. 12:13-17); The persecutors are tools he uses to accomplish his mission.
- We should anticipate persecution today: (II Tim. 3:12)
  - We don't face the violent persecution they did.
  - More difficult times may lie ahead.
  - When we teach, preach the truth, we will make enemies. (Gal. 4:16)
- In the face of opposition, how should we respond?
  - Tone down? Back away? Compromise? Some have done that.
  - We need to be reminded that our battle is with Satan. (Eph. 6:10ff) That he wins when we retreat.
  - How did the early Christians respond?
    - They were bold and kept on teaching and preaching the word. (Acts 4:23-24,29-31)
    - They went everywhere preaching the word. (Acts 8:4)

## ***II. Discouragement By Disappointment in One Another***

- Acts 5:1-11 → Amazing scene here. An ugly example of sin in the midst of the church.
  - Wonderful example of benevolence. (Acts 4:32-37)
  - The contrasting example of Ananias and Sapphira who were liars and hypocrites.
    - They sold a property
    - Brought money to the Apostles
    - But not all of it, as they indicated. They lied. They appear to be more concerned about impressing the brethren than helping the needy.
    - God strikes them dead.
  - On closer examination, we see that Satan is the real – the ultimate enemy here, and they are doing his bidding in attacking the work of the Lord in Jerusalem. (Acts 5:3)
  - Other examples:
    - The fornicator in I Cor. 5
    - Peter in Gal. 2:11-15

- Sometimes we see Satan attacking the church by involving Christians, in sin, and in the process many others suffer, and some become weak or simply fall through discouragement.
- We need to be ready and anticipate the same today:
  - It happens today. Brethren we know, love and trust, fall prey to the devil (unfaithful, immoral, dishonest or just quit following Jesus)
  - What happens it is an attack on the Lord's work by the Devil. (II Tim. 2:24-26)
    - Some become so disappointed, disheartened they quit or
    - Lose the zeal that had characterized them.
- How did the early church respond?
  - Sin was dealt with.
    - Acts 5 → God dealt with it directly.
    - Gal. 2:11ff → Paul rebuked Peter personally and publicly. (Gal. 6:1-2; Jn. 5:19-20)
    - I Cor. 5:4-5; 13 → The church at Corinth dealt with the fornicator. He repents.
  - They continued to carry out the work of the Lord. (Acts 5:14; 6:1)

### **III. The Opposition of False Teachers**

- Jesus had warned of:
  - Matt. 16:6,12 → Beware the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.
  - Matt. 7:14ff → Beware of false prophets...
- The early church faced this attack of the Devil:
  - Acts 13:6-12 → Elymas the false prophet...
  - Acts 15:1ff → Judaizing teachers
  - Acts 20:27-32 → Paul warns of those inside and out of the church
  - Gal. 1:6, II Pet. 2:1-2
- The ultimate attacker is the Devil. (Acts 13:10; II Cor. 11:13-15). False teaching is an attack of the devil vs. the work of the Lord.
- What purpose is served by telling us about this attack?
  - We can anticipate the same.
  - We see how false teaching was handled in the first century.
    - Acts 13 → Elymas is rebuked and Paul continues to preach the truth.
    - Acts 15 → The will of God is ascertained and proclaimed.
    - Acts 17:11 → What is taught is compared with the teaching of God's word to see if it is so.
    - Rom. 16:17 → False teachers were marked. (II Tim. 2:17-18); and not fellowshiped. (II Jn. 9-11)
  - The gospel is to be preached without compromise or alteration. (II Tim. 4:1-4)

### **Conclusion**

- The first century church faced many difficulties and dangers as they went about their work of proclaiming the truth.
  - The devil was their real enemy. The attacks that were launched were ultimately his.
- We face dangers and difficulties today:
  - We can anticipate those as we read and study God's word.
  - We can take courage and be instructed as we see how they are to be handled as we look at the early church.