

Multitudes of Men & Women

Acts 5:14

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. An Overview of the Events Leading to the Conversion of Multitudes of Men and Women in Jerusalem—

1. Acts 4:5-22 records the hearing of Peter and John before the Sanhedrin.
 - a. Peter by the Holy Spirit makes another defense of Jesus of Nazareth (4:8-12).
 - b. The Sanhedrin goes in to closed session to consider their predicament (4:13-16).
 - c. Peter and John are threatened and commanded to stop preaching in the name of Jesus (4:17-22).
2. The first recorded prayer meeting is held in Jerusalem (4:23-31).
 - a. Common prayer on behalf of the whole church is made (4:24).
 - b. Their prayer is well seasoned with Scripture (cf. Gen. 1:1; Psa. 2:1-2).
 - c. Their prayer recognized the working of God's providence (4:27-28).
 - d. They prayed for the Holy Spirit to come upon them (4:29-30).
 - e. They prayed for boldness (4:29).
3. The church undertakes a work of benevolence on behalf of the poor saints (4:32-5:1).
 - a. The believers do not consider their possessions their own (4:32).
 - b. This generosity occasions great influence among the people of Jerusalem (4:33-35).
 - c. Barnabas is set forth as an example (4:36-37).
 - d. This great outpouring of love is an occasion for Satan to corrupt some in the church (5:1).
- 4) God purges the church of two liars (5:2-11).
 - a) Ananias and Sapphira lie about their gift (5:2-3, 8).
 - b) The Holy Spirit reveals their duplicity (5:4, 9).
 - c) Ananias and Sapphira die for their pride, greed and lying (5:5, 10).
- 5) The season of miracles continues in Jerusalem by the Holy Spirit in the Apostles (5:12-16).
 - a) Multitudes come to Jerusalem (5:15-16).
 - b) Peter works special miracles (5:15).
 - c) The people are fearful of the Apostles and the church magnifies them.

B. The Significance of These Conversions in Jerusalem:

1. These conversions indicate the increased spread of Christianity in keeping with OT promise and prophecy (Genesis 15:5, 22:17; Daniel 2:35).
2. These conversions indicate that the expectation of trial, adversity, commitment and self-denial are not hindrances to the growth of the church (Luke 14:25-33). Rather, materialism, greed, covetousness and selfishness impede the progress of the gospel.
3. These conversions demonstrate that the fervent practice of Christianity cannot and will not be ignored (Acts 5:17-18). Accordingly, conversions increase and the persecutions against the church accelerate Acts 5:33).

II. DISCUSSION:

A. The Conversion of These Men and Women Began with the Powerful Preaching of "Unlearned and Ignorant Men"—

1. Peter and John were so regarded by the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:13).
 - a. *Strong's Concordance:*
 - (1) Unlearned, "62. agrammatos {ag-ram-mat-os}; from 1 (as negative particle) and 1121; unlettered, i.e. illiterate: -unlearned."
 - (2) Ignorant, "2399. idiotes {id-ee-o'-tace}; from 2398; a private person, i.e. (by implication) an ignoramus (compare "idiot"): -ignorant, rude, unlearned."
 - b. *Thayer's Lexicon:*
 - (1) Unlearned, "illiterate, without learning: Acts 4:13 (i.e., unversed in the learning of the Jewish schools, cf. John 7:15 ..." (p. 8).
 - (2) Ignorant, "a private person, opposed to a magistrate, ruler, king ... in the NT an unlearned, illiterate man, opposed to the learned and educated" (p. 297).
 - c. Gareth L. Reese, "And understood that they were uneducated and untrained men—The word translated 'uneducated' means without technical training in the school of Hillel or the school of Shammai. Jesus himself was regarded as 'uneducated' (John 7:15) for He, like His apostles, had not attended the schools of the rabbis. 'Untrained' speaks of one who is from a private place in life, as opposed to one who is used to appearing and speaking in public."
2. However, "they had been with Jesus".
 - a. Peter, John and the other apostles had spent three years in the "school of Jesus" being taught and observing how to teach. Their training under the "master teacher" often involved the entire day in His company and under His instruction.
 - b. Concerning this it has been observed, "If actual hours were counted, we might find that they had more semester hours of training under the greatest Teacher of all time than the average degree man of today."
 - c. Peter and John did not meet the human standards of qualification for being teachers of the people, but they obviously knew what they were talking about (4:20). Their boldness was not attributable to "the arts of rhetoric, but was the native, ingenuous and manly

exhibition of a deep conviction of the truth of what they spoke, and that conviction could have been obtained only by their having been with Jesus, and having been satisfied that He was Christ" (Albert Barnes).

3. The church will grow today with this kind of man and this kind of teaching.
 - a. Genuine conviction that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God is of far more value in preaching than all the letters any school may be able to attach after one's name.
 - b. We are again reaching in "our" history a time when too much emphasis is placed upon a particular school or preacher rather than upon Jesus and His word.
 - c. When we look back upon those whom God selected as his spokesmen we see among them herdsmen, fishermen, carpenters, farmers, clerks and tentmakers. There were the learned and trained men whom God was able to use. However, I wonder if it were not in spite of their learning and training instead of because of it?

B. The Conversion of These Men and Women Was Effected by the Sincere Commitment of Former Converts—

1. Notice the affect of the lives of saints upon the unconverted in (Acts 4:31-33; cf. 2:47).
 - a. Twice in these early chapters the benevolent spirit of the New Testament church is singled out as being responsible for improving the gospel's opportunities for being heard among the people.
 - b. The benevolence which characterized the early church was altogether different and superior to anything that had been previously seen in Jerusalem or the rest of the world.
 - (1) The Jews were required to lay aside in their gates a tithe for the poor (Deuteronomy 12:28-29). However, the Jews were notorious for neglecting this duty (Malachi 3:8).
 - (2) There were provisions in Jewish society for indentured servitude for the payment of debts (Leviticus 25:35-55).
 - (3) There were laws governing the transfer of property in order to relieve personal poverty (Leviticus 25:23-34).
 - (4) The poor were given the right to glean the fields and corners (Leviticus 19:9-10; Deuteronomy 24:19-22).
 - (5) However, there were no provisions for a Jew to sell his possessions and make provision for those that were not of his household. Yet, this is what Barnabas and others did for their brethren (4:32-37).
2. Too much cannot be said about the importance of living Christianity before men as an aid to evangelism.
 - a. Jesus taught that the cause of the kingdom was advanced by the influence of its citizens (Matthew 5:13-16; 13:33; 26:6-13).
 - b. Paul taught that Christians were to be ready to do good works by which others were influenced (Titus 3:8; Ephesians 2:10; II Corinthians 3:2-3; I Corinthians 7:16).
 - c. Other apostles taught the same truth (James 3:13-18; I Peter 3:1ff; 4:1-4, 13-16; I John 3:1-10).

- 3) The devil knew the power of this influence and sought to undermine it through the sin of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

C. The Multitude Was Converted as the Result of Corrective Discipline in the Local Church—

1. The occasion of giving to the relief of the poor saints was an opportunity for Satan to tempt with greed, pride and dishonesty.
 - a. The example of the righteous (Acts 4:36-37).
 - b. The sin of Ananias & Sapphira (Acts 5:1-2, 8).
 - c. The divine punishment of such sin (Acts 5:5, 10).
2. These events had a positive influence on the converted and the unconverted (5:5, 11).
 - a. They were learned to fear God.
 - (1) They had seen the effects of God's grace in the lives of Christians (4:33).
 - (2) However, they also needed to learn about God's severity (Romans 2:4-6; Acts 17:30-31; II Corinthians 5:9-11).
 - (3) It is not enough to preach grace, mercy and love. We must also preach God's justice, righteousness and hatred of sin.
 - b. They learned that Christ expects something of His people.
 - (1) Christ expects that our service come from the heart freely (Acts 5:4, cf. II Corinthians 9:6-7, John 4:24).
 - (2) Christ expects that we deal with our sins honestly (Acts 5:3, 8; cf. Acts 8:20-22 1 John 1:7-9; 2:1-2).
 - (3) Christ expects that we love each other more than things (Acts 4:32, cf. I John 3:16-20).
 - c. They learned that the church must be kept free of the influence of impenitent sinners.
 - (1) God will not fellowship sin (I John 1:6-10).
 - (2) Those who fellowship sin lose their fellowship with God (Acts 5:5, 10, cf. I Corinthians 5:7-11).
 - (3) Keeping the church pure does not hamper its growth (Acts 5:14).

D. Their Conversion Required Baptism in Water for the Remission of Sins—

1. Their baptism though not expressly stated is necessarily implied.
 - a. Objection: Nowhere in the context does it say they were baptized or even mention any water!
 - b. Answer: Nowhere in the context does it say they repented or confessed faith in Christ, but you surely contend that they did on the basis of evidence in the text and express statements elsewhere in Scripture. Likewise, I contend that they were baptized in water.
2. The proof of the contention—
 - a. The saved believer is always a baptized believer (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 16:33-34).

- b. The saved believer is always an obedient believer (James 2:14-26; Hebrews 10:38-11:7; 5:8-9; Acts 10:48).
 - c. The saved believer is always an added believer (Acts 5:14; 2:41, 47).
3. If the fact that their baptism is not expressly stated proves that it is not essential, then the fact that their repentance or confession is not expressly stated proves that they are not essential.
- a. Passages elsewhere in the Bible state the necessity of repentance and confession (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30, 31; 3:19).
 - b. Passages elsewhere state the necessity of water baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21).
 - c. Therefore, repentance, confession and baptism are all essential to salvation and implied in the text under consideration.

III. CONCLUSION:

A. Conversion Of Multitudes Of Men And Women Is Effected by...

- 1. Powerful preaching and not by popular preachers.
- 2. Committed people and not by a colossal building.
- 3. Maintaining purity in the fellowship and not by maintaining fellowship and party rooms.
- 4. Obedience to the faith and not at the point of faith without obedience.

B. Will You Be Converted?