

Week beginning Monday 11th January 2021

Prepared by Anne Jackson....

Acts 5. Trouble in the fellowship and in the community.

What do you think Ananias & Sapphires motives were? An uncomfortable story showing the importance of honesty and integrity in a Christian fellowship. The crowds flocked to hear the apostles' teaching in the temple precinct [note the contradictions in vv13 & 14] much to the jealous anger of the temple leaders. Cf. Matthew 27:18.

Enjoy the drama of the apostles' arrest, escape and re-arrest!

Note the reasons for their foolhardy boldness vv 29-32 and Gamaliel's caution.

Acts 6. Two languages and two cultures creates problems and opportunities.

The fellowship included Aramaic Jews from Palestine and Greek-speaking Jews from outside Palestine. Seven administrators were appointed to supervise the distribution of food to the poor so that the apostles could concentrate on evangelism, teaching and prayer.

Note the qualities needed for administrators. v 3. Do we make appointments on this basis?

Stephen's powerful preaching led to complaints to the Supreme Court. Cf. the accusation against Jesus in Matthew 26:59-61.

Acts 7. Stephen's skills and enthusiasm lead to death.

Stephen's address, the longest in Acts, is part defence vv 48-50 part sermon concluding that the religious had killed God's promised Righteous One / Messiah [Hebrew] / Christ [Greek].

The Sanhedrin responded with fury and when Stephen proclaims that Jesus is standing beside God in heaven [Luke 22:69] they rush out and stoned him to death.

Note Stephen's two prayers as he is dying. Cf Luke 23:34 & 46.

SECTION TWO: JUDEA AND SAMARIA

Acts 8. The Good News is taken to Judea and Samaria.

To escape persecution Christians relocate taking the good news with them.

Phillip's ministry led to many being baptised, which was supported by the laying on of hands from Peter and John when the believers received the Holy Spirit. Cf. the Methodist Service of Confirmation and Reception into Membership.

Simon's assumption about God's gifts bring a fierce response from Peter.

Let Philip's meeting on a desert road encourage us in our "God-instances" and opportunities.

Acts 9. A turnabout: Twice Saul is helped to escape by those he previously persecuted.

Saul/Paul with the High Priest's authority is on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christians; when God intervened. Paul frequently retells his story. Acts 22 & 26 and others.

God tells Ananias his plans for Paul. vv 15-16.

Note: Barnabus's role v 27ff. and Peter's teaching & healing mission in Judea.