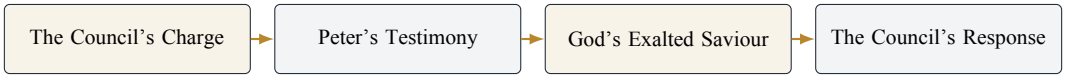
Session 21 Obeying God Before the Council

Acts: The Book That Explains Everything

Session 21 | Acts 5:27-33



Before You Read

Big idea: The apostles place God's command above the council's prohibition and testify that God has raised and exalted Jesus to give repentance and forgiveness to Israel. The council responds to this testimony by taking counsel to kill them.

Where we resume: An angel released the imprisoned apostles and commanded them to speak in the temple. The officers have now brought them before the council without violence (Acts 5:19-26).

Follow the hearing

- **The council's charge (vv. 27-28):** The high priest accuses the apostles of disregarding the prohibition against teaching in Jesus' name.
- **The apostles' testimony (vv. 29-32):** Peter appeals to God's authority and declares Jesus' resurrection and exaltation, repentance to Israel, forgiveness, and the Holy Ghost's witness.
- **The council's response (v. 33):** The hearers react with hostility and take counsel to kill the apostles.

The ministry in view: Jerusalem, Israel's council, the Twelve, and the temple remain central. Peter's words identify Israel as the recipient of the repentance and forgiveness offered through the exalted Messiah. Paul's later epistles unfold his distinctive ministry to the Body of Christ.

Acts 5:27

> *And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,*

What does the passage say?

- The officers present the apostles before the council.
- The high priest questions them; his accusation continues in verse 28.
- Peter's answer will be addressed to the leadership assembled for this hearing.

Words to notice

- **Council** - The governing assembly, commonly called the Sanhedrin.
- **Set them before** - Presented them for the hearing.

Cross-references worth marking

- **Acts 4:5-7** - The earlier inquiry into Peter and John's authority.
- **Luke 12:11-12** - Jesus prepares His followers for testimony before authorities.

Key observation

- The identity of the audience helps explain Peter's references to "our fathers" and "Israel" in verses 30-31.

Acts 5:28

> *Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.*

What does the passage say?

- The high priest recalls the strict command against teaching in Jesus' name.
- He acknowledges that the apostles have filled Jerusalem with their doctrine.
- He objects to the responsibility for Jesus' death laid upon the leaders by their testimony.

Words to notice

- **Straitly** - Strictly; emphatically.
- **Doctrine** - Teaching.
- **This name … this man's blood** - The high priest's references to Jesus, whom Peter names in verse 30.

Cross-references worth marking

- **Acts 4:17-18** - The council's original prohibition.
- **Acts 4:10-11, 27** - The rulers' rejection of Jesus and the participants in the opposition to Him.

Key observation

- The council's complaint confirms the reach of the teaching. Peter's reply will join responsibility for Jesus' death with the provision of repentance and forgiveness.

Acts 5:29

> *Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.*

What does the passage say?

- Peter answers with the other apostles.
- Their obligation to obey God takes precedence when the council's command contradicts God's command.
- The angel had explicitly directed them to return to the temple and speak (v. 20).

Words to notice

- **Ought** - Are under obligation.
- **Obey God** - The controlling duty behind their continued public witness.

Cross-references worth marking

- **Acts 4:19-20** - Peter and John previously appealed to God's authority.
- **Romans 13:1-7** - Paul teaches subjection to governing authorities; Acts identifies a specific conflict with God's revealed command.

Key observation

- The apostles explain their conduct by reference to a command God has actually given them. "Obey" returns in verse 32.

Acts 5:30

> *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.*

What does the passage say?

- Peter identifies God as the God of Israel's fathers.
- He charges the addressed leaders with killing Jesus by hanging Him on a tree.
- God's raising of Jesus reverses their rejection and leads into His exaltation in verse 31.

Words to notice

- **Our fathers** - The ancestors shared by Peter and his hearers within Israel's history.
- **Raised up** - In this resurrection testimony, God raised Jesus from death.
- **Tree** - The wood of the cross, carrying the scriptural association of shame and curse.

Cross-references worth marking

- **Acts 3:13-15** - The God of the fathers glorifies the Jesus whom the rulers rejected.
- **Deuteronomy 21:22-23; Galatians 3:13** - Hanging on a tree and Paul's explanation of Christ bearing the curse.

Key observation

- Peter's testimony rests on God's action in history: the Jesus rejected by these leaders has been raised by their fathers' God.

Acts 5:31

> *Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.*

What does the passage say?

- God has exalted Jesus as Prince and Saviour.
- The stated purpose is to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
- The leaders hear an offer of divine mercy alongside the charge concerning Jesus' death.

Words to notice

- **Prince** - Leader; the title expresses His authority.
- **Saviour** - The One who delivers.
- **Repentance to Israel** - God's provision for Israel to turn in response to its exalted Messiah.

Cross-references worth marking

- **Acts 2:33-36** - Jesus' exaltation and Psalm 110.
- **Acts 3:19-26** - The earlier call to Israel to repent and receive the promised blessing.

Key observation

- Prince and Saviour join authority and deliverance in one Person. The phrase "to Israel" keeps the audience and prophetic setting explicit.

Acts 5:32

> *And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.*

What does the passage say?

- The apostles testify as witnesses of the events proclaimed.
- The Holy Ghost also bears witness; God has given Him to those who obey Him.
- Peter's appeal to obedience in verse 29 now includes the Spirit's witness among those receiving God's message.

Words to notice

- **These things** - Jesus' death, resurrection, exaltation, and the provision just announced.
- **Them that obey him** - Those responding to God in the setting of this Jerusalem testimony.

Cross-references worth marking

- **Acts 2:32-33, 38** - The apostles witness the resurrection; the Spirit is poured out, and Peter calls Israel to respond.
- **Ephesians 1:13-14** - Paul later describes believers sealed with the Holy Spirit upon believing the gospel of their salvation.

Key observation

- Peter presents both apostolic testimony and the Holy Ghost's attestation. Reading Peter and Paul in their respective settings preserves the actual words of each.

Acts 5:33

> *When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.*

What does the passage say?

- The council hears the apostolic testimony and reacts with intense hostility.
- The members take counsel to kill the apostles.
- The hearing reaches a crisis: the testimony of God's mercy is answered with a plan for violence.

Words to notice

- **Cut to the heart** - Deeply cut or enraged in the response described here.
- **Took counsel** - Deliberated about their intended action.

Cross-references worth marking

- **Acts 2:37** - Hearers pricked in heart ask what they should do.
- **Acts 7:54** - Similar cutting language describes the anger directed at Stephen.

Key observation

- The response after hearing reveals the direction of the heart: the Pentecost hearers ask for instruction, while these hearers plan violence.

Text And Translation Helps

- **Straitly in verse 28:** Strictly. The KJV's "Did not we" follows the negative question in the Textus Receptus; Westcott-Hort 1881 begins with an emphatic statement of the command. Both recall the prohibition. See the Greek texts of Acts 5:28.
- **His witnesses in verse 32:** The Textus Receptus includes "his," preserved by the KJV; Westcott-Hort omits the pronoun. The apostles and Holy Ghost bear witness in both readings. See the Greek texts of Acts 5:32.
- **Took counsel in verse 33:** The Textus Receptus describes deliberation about killing; Westcott-Hort describes wanting to kill. Both express murderous intent. See the Greek texts of Acts 5:33.

Session Summary

- The high priest's complaint acknowledges that the teaching has filled Jerusalem.
- The apostles place God's command above the council's prohibition and testify to the risen and exalted Messiah.
- Peter explicitly announces repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins, with the apostles and Holy Ghost as witnesses.
- The council responds with hostility and takes counsel to kill the apostles. The contrast with the hearers in Acts 2:37 highlights two very different responses to apostolic testimony.

Questions to carry through Acts

1. Who is speaking, and who is being addressed?
2. What has God commanded, and what response does the passage record?
3. How do the temple, Israel, the Twelve, and the kingdom promises shape this ministry?
4. What does the next event reveal about the progress of God's purpose?