

The Acts of the Holy Spirit

Acts 5:27-6:15

Last week, we ended with the apostles' imprisonment, release from prison at the hands of angels, and subsequent re-arrest (though with great caution) by the Temple police. This time the Temple authorities are very careful about how they treat the apostles, they get more pointed in their message. Of what do they accuse the apostles, and how do the apostles reply?

Acts 5:33-39 brings into the story Gamaliel, a figure famous both in Rabbinic Judaism and in Christianity. What does this famous teacher of the Torah have to say about the followers of Jesus? About what do the apostles rejoice in 5:41? How does this rejoicing link up with the initial commission that Jesus gives to His followers in Acts 1? How does 5:42 wrap up this episode?

Acts 6 begins with a dispute over the resources that Acts 2 and Acts 4 talk about as being shared. Where is the fault line in the community, and who is getting the short end of the stick? When the twelve respond to the situation, what about their attitude is most striking? When the apostles lay their hands on the men chosen to be servants (Greek *diakonoi*, Latin *ministri*), what does that act signify? Who significantly joins the Jesus group in 6:7?

When Stephen proclaims the word in Acts 6:8-15, what ethnicities constitute the main audience? What is their affiliation in terms of Jewish factions? What conspicuous echo happens in 6:11-14? What does the Greek word *angelos* mean, and why is Stephen's angelic demeanor significant?