

GOD OR MEN

“We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29)

The issue was quite simple. Jesus commanded them to preach and the Jewish Council commanded them not to. Peter and the other apostles correctly concluded that it was better to obey God rather than men.

The apostles were well aware of the consequences of their decision. These powerful rulers were responsible for the death of Jesus, and Peter and John had already been arrested for preaching (Acts 4:1 - 22). The night before this present confrontation all the apostles had been arrested and placed in the common prison.

Let us endeavor to see this decision from the standpoint of the apostles.

- They had been constantly with Jesus for the last 3 years. The many miracles He performed convinced them that He has the Christ, the Son of the Living God (Jn. 20:31).
- After His resurrection Jesus had shown Himself alive to them by many infallible proofs and for the next 40 days spoke to them about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).
- He told them to wait in Jerusalem until they received power from the Holy Spirit. After receiving that power He commanded them to preach in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).
- After receiving this command they saw Him ascend into heaven and disappear (Acts 1:9).
- Then two men stood by them in white apparel and promised that Jesus would return to earth in the same manner that He had been received up into heaven (Acts 1:10, 11).
- They had seen the power of the Holy Spirit demonstrated at Pentecost (Acts 2).
- They knew that Peter and John had healed a man over 40 years old who had never walked.
- They had seen Ananias and Sapphira drop dead for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1 - 11).
- All the apostles worked great signs and wonders among the people (Acts 5:12).
- Multitudes came from around Jerusalem and all were healed. Apparently Peter’s shadow even had healing power (Acts 5:15, 16).
- They night before they had been miraculously delivered from prison by an angel of the Lord and that angel had commanded them to go preach in the temple (Acts 5:19, 20).
- One of the many things the Holy Spirit was to do for the apostles was to call to remembrance everything Jesus had said to them (Jn. 14:26).
- Here is one thing that Jesus said to them: **“Be not afraid of them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him” (Lk. 12:4, 5).**
- The standard for making decisions in modern courts is “beyond a reasonable doubt”. Theoretically, everything is possible. In reality everything is not reasonable.
- If you were an apostle standing before the Sanhedrin, what decision would you make? Based upon all the evidence, what decision would seem reasonable to you? It seems obvious the decision to obey God rather than men was reasonable then. It is still reasonable now!
- Repeatedly we are told that the Jewish officials “feared the people” (Mk. 11:32; 12:12; Lk. 20:19; 22:2; Acts 5:26, Etc.). How sad! How irrational! The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Prov. 1:7).
- Paul wrote: **“If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10).**
- What is your decision? What seems “reasonable” to you? Today you have the choice of pleasing God or pleasing men. Which will it be?