

Acts 5:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

Analysis

Gamaliel cites historical precedent—Theudas's failed rebellion. His argument follows a pattern: false movements collapse without divine support. While Gamaliel's theology is incomplete (suggesting a 'wait and see' approach), his providential reasoning contains truth: God-ordained movements cannot be stopped by human opposition. This principle undergirds Christian confidence in the church's eventual triumph despite persecution.

Historical Context

Theudas led a messianic revolt sometime before 6 AD, claiming prophetic authority. Josephus records a different Theudas around 44 AD, creating chronological questions. Many messianic pretenders arose in first-century Judea, exploiting Roman occupation resentment. Most ended in violence and followers' dispersion.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does the collapse of false religious movements throughout history testify to the divine origin of Christianity's endurance?
2. What dangers exist in Gamaliel's 'wait and see' approach to religious truth rather than active investigation?

Interlinear Text

πρὸ	γὰρ	τούτων	τῶν	ἡμερῶν	ἀνέστη	Θευδᾶς	λέγων
before	For	these		days		Theudas	boasting
G4253	G1063	G5130		G2250		G2333	G3004
εἰναί	τινα	έαυτόν	ὅς	προσεκολλήθη	άριθμὸς		
to be	somebody	himself	to whom	joined themselves	a number		
G1511	G5100	G1438	G3739	G4347	G706		
ἀνδρῶν	ώσει	τετρακοσίων·	ὅς	ἀνηρέθη	καὶ	πάντες	
of men	about	four hundred	to whom	was slain	and	all	
G435	G5616	G5071	G3739	G337	G2532	G3956	
ὅσοι	ἐπείθοντο	αὐτῷ	διελύθησαν	καὶ	έγένοντο	εἰς	
as many as	obeyed	him	were scattered	and	brought	to	
G3745	G3982	G846	G1262	G2532	G1096	G1519	
οὐδέν							
nought							
G3762							

Additional Cross-References

Acts 8:9 (Parallel theme): But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

2 Peter 2:2 (Parallel theme): And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

Revelation 17:5 (Parallel theme): And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Acts 21:38 (Parallel theme): Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

Galatians 2:6 (Parallel theme): But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me:

Jude 1:16 (Parallel theme): These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.