

Acts 4

The Beginning of Persecution

Background & Setting

Act 3 told us of the healing of a lame man at the Beautiful gate of the Temple. The man, who was more than 40 years old had been lame since birth[7]. After the healing, Peter offered his second powerful sermon in the portico of Solomon. This is only the 2nd of twenty-two presentations or partial presentations of the Gospel in the Book of Acts. Did you notice how again, his use of the OT is foundational to his sermon? The end of Chapter 3 is not by any means the end of the story. Chapter and verse markings[5] were added over a thousand years later, and it might've been helpful had chapters 3 & 4 flowed together differently. Chapter 4 is but a seamless continuation of this historic event.

Summary:

Peter and John had been at the Temple preaching the Gospel of Jesus for about three hours, since 3PM (Acts 3:1 "the ninth hour) until v.3 "it was already evening", usually considered to be around 6PM. Their preaching had been very effective because v.4 tells us 5,000 males[3] came to faith. As a result, the first round of persecution of believers begins. It should come as no surprise that, just as salvation came from the Jews, so did the opening round of persecution. In v. 1 Luke tells us that the persecution began with "...the priests, the captain of the temple[1], and the Sadducees[6]." Peter and John are arrested and thrown into jail overnight. The next day, they are brought before the Sanhedrin where again, Peter unabashedly proclaims in his third recorded sermon that the Sanhedrin has culpability in the crucifixion of the Christ. By the Spirit, he preached that there is no other name by which men are to be saved. After being sternly warned by the council, Peter and John were released to rejoin their group. Together they prayed for boldness in their proclamation of the Gospel. Again notice the use of OT passages (Ps 2; 188) in his sermon and in the prayer. In the end, v.27 lays culpability on Jews and Gentiles alike for the death of Christ but in accordance with the foreknowledge and predestined plan of God. Then all believers begin a generous sharing of all things in common.

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Chapter Outline

- A. v.1-22 Peter and John before the council of priests
- B. The bold prayer
- C. They had all things in common

Vocabulary, Names & Cultural Influences

1. **v.1. "captain of the temple"** would have been the captain of the Temple police force (comprised of Levites) and would've been a Jew, himself. The Romans had left the policing of the Temple to the Jews. The significance of this is that everyone involved in this initial case of persecution would have been Jewish, not Roman.
2. **v.2. "Greatly Annoyed" - (διαπονούμενοι; diaponoumenoi)** This is a very strong word used only one other time in Scripture (Acts 16:18). Perhaps 'exceedingly outraged' would be another possible translation.
3. **5,000 men - (ανδρος; andros)** The use of this word specifically means 'males'. Greek has another word 'anthropos' which could signify 'males', 'men', or 'mankind'. This word was not used.
4. **v.24. "Sovereign Lord" - (δεσποτης; despotes)** is a very rare term used in reference to God. Also can be translated as 'Master' in that it Recognizes the absolute relationship of a master over his slaves. Speaks to the sovereignty of our Lord over all mankind.

GOD'S WORD IS KNOWABLE

Helpful Connections

5. Chapter and verse markings were not a part of any of the ancient manuscripts. Chapter divisions were added by Stephen Langton, an Archbishop of Canterbury in about AD 1227. Rabbi Nathan used Langton's chapter divisions and added verse markings to the Hebrew Tanakh (the Old Testament) in A.D. 1448. Robert Estienne (also known as Stephanus), was the first to subdivide Langton's chapter markings for the NT with numbered verses in 1555.

6. v.2. Sadducees - One of the two main religious sects within Judaism, the other being the Pharisees. Pharisees were more legalistic and held control over the teachings of the law in the synagogues across all Judaism. However, the Sadducees were the predominant force in the Temple Sanhedrin of Jerusalem. The Captain of the Temple and the chief priests of the Temple would most certainly have been Sadducees.

7. Lame since birth - This would've been powerfully significant to the Jews because in the culture of the day, being born with such a handicap would have been considered to be a curse from God.

Notes:

This image shows a full page of primary-ruled paper. It features approximately 30 horizontal dotted lines spaced evenly down the page, providing a guide for handwriting practice. The paper is otherwise blank, with no margins, text, or other markings.