



Last week we finished chapter 3 where we saw Peter give his second recorded sermon, which followed on

the heels of the astounding healing of a well-known beggar who had been born unable to use his legs. The sermon was delivered to the massive crowd of Jews who were assembled in the Temple Courts for the afternoon prayer and sacrifice.

They recognized the man, now standing, walking, and jumping for joy, as the very same crippled man who had been begging at the Temple Gate for decades. The crowd was astonished and so quite interested in what Peter, John, and the once immobile man, had to say.



Acts 4:1–12, 1As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, 2being greatly disturbed

because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3And they laid hands on them and put them in prison until the next day, for it was already evening. 4But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. 5On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; 6and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. 7When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, “By what power, or in what name, have you done this?” 8Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers and elders of the people, 9if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, 10let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. 11He is the Stone which was Rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief cornerstone. 12And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among mankind by which we must be saved.”



As we have seen over the past few weeks, the second daily sacrifice conducted by the priests, on the altar in the Temple, was attended by thousands of Jews. That second sacrifice, along with a time of prayer, took place each afternoon at 3 pm.

At the eastern gate of the Temple Courts, God, through Peter, miraculously healed the beggar in breathtaking fashion. Entering through the gate together, Peter, John, and the healed man, were immediately surrounded by amazed and curious people. So, while still in the outer courts, inside Solomon's Portico, which was along the eastern wall, south of the eastern Shushan gate, Peter began to explain.

We can imagine that after his initial speech the ministry of leading people to a salvific knowledge of Christ began. John, and perhaps other disciples, joined Peter in “teaching the people and proclaiming Jesus.” This work went on for a couple of hours, drawing the attention and then the ire of the Jewish leadership. We can also imagine that for quite some time the Jewish authorities had wanted to put a stop to it but were waiting for the opportune moment.

These situations were delicate. The last thing the powers that be wanted was a bigger problem by unnecessarily riling up the crowd and starting a riot. They couldn't just walk up and arrest the disciples while thousands of their fellow countrymen eagerly wanted to hear what they had to say, not without causing an uproar. Remember, in the Roman Empire the primary responsibility of leaders at every level was to keep the peace. When there's peace, people work, they produce, they buy, and they pay taxes. Just to make explicit what you're already thinking... Yes, the goal of government, all forms of government, even here and now. It is to maintain a relatively peaceful populace so the rich and powerful can remain rich and powerful. To be really effective government also needs

a certain degree of disunity among the people, in order to keep them from uniting against the rich and powerful. It's a balancing act that we'll see again in a moment.

So, the authorities were biding their time and making their plans. The courts started to clear out a bit as evening approached and the people left the Temple to go home and excitedly share the afternoon's events with family and friends.



While Peter and John were still speaking to the few remaining people the “captain of the Temple guard,” sensed that it was time and he along with a bunch of

his troops and some priests and some other Sadducees arrested the trio.

Peter, John, and the formerly lame man were taken into custody and held overnight, which was standard practice. The Sanhedrin, or Jewish Ruling Council and Court, never met at night, unless it was to secretly railroad the Messiah during Passover.



The “captain of the temple guard” wasn’t merely some lacky, he was, by all ancient accounts, second only to the High Priest in power and authority. He was responsible for the Temple and all that went with it, including the treasury. As such, he was always a guy

hand-picked by the High Priest and typically a close relative of his.

We can't be certain who this particular guy was because he's not named, but we know that a guy named Ananus served as captain around that time. He was a son of the former High Priest Annas, brother-in-law to the present High Priest Caiaphas, and would eventually go on to become High Priest himself. In fact, he was the High Priest who murdered James, the brother of Jesus, the eventual leader of the Christian church, and author of the eponymous Bible Book.

A better candidate was another "captain of the temple guard" at about the same time named Jonathan. He was also a son of Annas and also went on to become High Priest following the reign of Caiaphas. Both Ananus and his brother Jonathan, like everyone else in their extended family were aristocratic Sadducees.





The arresting party included, along with the captain and his officers, a number of priests and other Sadducean officials. Further proof that this effort to stop the disciples had been in the works for a few hours. Here we find out that those Jewish officials had become greatly annoyed for a considerable amount of time. The Greek word, διαπρονέομαι (dē-ä-pö-ně-ö-mī), means to be “thoroughly worn out.”

All of them, with the possible exception of some of the policemen were Sadducees. You might remember a Jewish High Priest named Zadok, (zā-dōk), in Hebrew, זָדוֹק (tzä-dōk). He served during the reign of King David and his son King Solomon. As such Zadok was

the first High Priest to officiate in the original Temple. Well, when you transcribe his name into Greek it is Σαδωκ (Sä-dōk). Very close, but the Tsade “tz” sound in Hebrew becomes a Sigma “s” sound in Greek and the stressed syllable changes. Sadducees were the descendants of Σαδωκ, Zadok. They were the High Priestly clan and as such had, over the millennia, intermarried with the royal family and so many of them were of noble birth.

The Sadducean sect, that we might call a denomination, did not believe in the afterlife. They were also kind of like Deists in that they didn't really believe that God intervened supernaturally in our world. Miracles and messages from God were highly suspect and they did not believe in angels or demons. They also rejected the Pharisees endless interpretations of Scripture with all the attendant rules and regulations. Their main doctrinal principle was to appease God by performing the rituals that He established through Moses so that they could live a prosperous life in the present and then just cease to exist.

That explains why they were extremely materialistic and willing to be very cruel if it would benefit them or their descendants.

As such these Sadducees had several problems with what Peter and John were doing. First, they were proclaiming the resurrection of the dead. That, in and of itself was maddening to the Sadducees because people who believed that they had an afterlife were far harder to control than people who thought that this life was all you got.

Second, they were teaching that through national repentance they could inaugurate the end of the present system and the Messiah would return to establish the perfect restoration of all things. Once again, it is much harder to control people who believe that the Messiah is on His way.

Third, they were not merely teaching that there was supernatural healing, that there was a resurrection of the dead, and that there was an imminent end to human government, they were teaching that it was all in the name of Jesus. None of this was theoretical, or hypothetical, or illusory, this was firmly established reality. Jesus, Whom the Sadducees murdered, was the Messiah and in Him was healing, eternal life, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

There are more subtleties that we could talk about, but you get the idea. This was potentially very dangerous stuff for the governing authorities politically speaking. This kind of hope could lead to rebellion, perhaps revolution, perhaps holy war.

The Jewish people of the first century were a very difficult group to govern to begin with. The oppressive rule of Rome and of their own religious leaders didn't sit well with people who truly believed that they were God's very own children.

When you couple that with the poverty of the people and their myriad prophecies about a leader appearing among them to lead them in holy war you can see why they were hard to control. Historically, we know of over 100 uprisings by Jews in the first century that had to be violently put down by the Romans.

So yes, the Sadducees who only enjoyed their power and prestige, as well as their authority and wealth, because they kept relative peace for Rome, were thoroughly worn out by what they saw going on in the Temple courts that afternoon. I'm sure that they thought, "Here we go again."

One objection to the historicity of the authorities' various encounters with Jesus and now with his disciples is that other insurrectionists of the time were immediately met with military force. The difference is that neither Jesus, nor any of His disciples ever fomented insurrection. Never once did Jesus or any of His followers try to physically push out the Romans or overthrow the Sadducees, or rebel against the government. Nothing in the New Testament is political. On the other hand, all the false prophets who led Jews to their deaths were political. They all called for the physical change of government.

While the authorities were highly annoyed and seriously concerned about the potential direction of what Peter and John were doing, so far there wasn't any overt threat to anyone from them.

Once the crowd thinned out enough, the captain and his entourage swooped in and arrested their main antagonists. As it was probably getting close to 6 pm they put the guys in jail for the night. Again, this was the customary practice then and still is today. Get yourself arrested in the evening and you'll spend the night in jail until a judge can look at your case the next morning.



Jail in those days was usually a natural cave or a place cut into bedrock, often below grade. Some, like this one under the High Priest's complex in Jerusalem were fairly elaborate with several rooms and underground passages. Think more of a dungeon than a jail cell. They didn't typically have bars and so, prisoners were tied to the walls or ceiling by ropes or chains.

Generally, it was an unpleasant experience. There wasn't going to be any washing up, no bed, nor blanket, and being tied to the ceiling or wall, sometimes the person had to stand all night. If they had enough slack to get off their feet it was a cold, rough stone floor. For a number of reasons, prisoners were not

usually untied and given bathroom breaks – don't think about that one too long – oops, too late. They would not receive any food, and if water was available, it would have been disgusting. Beyond all of that, the type of people guarding the prisoners overnight, were not known for their empathy.

In verse 4 we see God at work in Luke's parenthetical comment. The church added a bunch of people and now numbered about 5,000 men, as well as women and children. In a few months, the Christian community had grown to well over 10,000 people, all of whom were Jews who accepted their Messiah.



Now, that's the glass half full, but if you only looked at the fact that Peter, John, and the healed man had all

been taken into custody by the very same people who had recently taken Jesus into custody, things would seem pretty bad. Certainly, you could say that the glass is half empty. Based on the outcome of the healing and the preaching to this point, it was a disaster. Yet, this is the method by which God builds His Kingdom.

It is through the selfless ministry to others by His true children and it often comes at tremendous personal cost to those children. Why is that? Why does God reach people through other people – through His very Own people? And why do His Own people have to suffer in the process?

God uses Christians to minister to others, both non-Christians and Christians alike, because we are the physical body of Jesus Christ on earth. Jesus is able to corporeally give someone a shoulder to cry on, to hold someone's hand, to give someone a hug, to help someone with a chore, and to personally share the Gospel face-to-face through His Holy Spirit filled friends.





Why must ministry be so difficult, why must there be so much opposition, what must God's ministers suffer? Well, the simple answer is that we would experience what Jesus did – we would follow in His footsteps. Sure, I suppose, but the bigger and I think better explanation is that God uses ministry to affect both the ones He ministers to and the one He ministers through.

When you, as a proper Christian, do your job by allowing the Holy Spirit to use you to minister to another person, God wants to bless you whether the other person allows Him to bless them or not. Get what I'm saying, when you share the Gospel with a nonbeliever, as an example, that person gets to choose

whether they will allow the encounter to bless them. We get that. What do we mean by blessing? It is always that they person would move closer to God – that's the blessing.

Here's my point, you, as the Christian vessel through whom God operates, also have a choice of whether you will allow God to bless you. Now, that's a fairly simple proposition when the encounter goes well. Peter was moved by the Holy Spirit to reach out to the crippled man and the next thing you know the man is no longer crippled! Wow, that's big. Of course, Peter was blessed by God through that encounter. Peter took that positive experience and moved closer to God.

Now, we see Peter being roughly arrested and held overnight with the specter of facing the severe judgment of the Sanhedrin in the morning. He and John and the dude who can now walk are soon going to be walking towards a potential death sentence. God will bless Peter through that as much, and probably far more, if, if, if Peter will choose blessing. If he will choose to move even closer to God.

Why does God use Christians to minister to people? Because He wants to personally touch those people.

Why do God's ministers suffer in the process? Because we learn very little, if anything, from success. Success can even breed distancing from God as we begin to think that we've got this.

I've mentioned some of my personal impressions from God. Once in a while God speaks single words, or phrases to me that impact me greatly. One such time I was very fervently and earnestly praying that God would deliver to the congregation an incredibly impactful insight from Him through my sermon. That I would be able to preach a message that God would use to blow the church's socks off.

God simply asked, would you be equally enthusiastic if, in order to serve My purposes, I had you completely bomb and make an absolute fool of yourself? What if I used your preaching to upset and anger the listeners to the point that they threatened you with physical violence, would you still pray for that? See, it takes no faith at all to minister God's grace to others if you're going to be a hero. Try to do it when it may cost you everything, and then we'll talk about faith, and we'll talk about being close to God.



You've probably heard the quote, "The church is built on the blood of the martyrs." It was written by Tertullian in Carthage, on the coast of modern-day Tunisia, in 197 A.D. What he actually wrote is more literally, "We multiply when you reap us. The blood of Christians is seed." Why is that true? You're no doubt aware that the word martyr means someone who is murdered for their faith. The word martyr comes to us directly from the Greek word μάρτυς (mā-r-tūs) meaning "witness." To give your testimony about Who Jesus is to you and what Jesus has done for you is to bear witness. Throughout history Christians have borne witness to the point of vicious torture and brutal execution. They are martyrs.

The reason that it is so is that there can be no more powerful witness to the Truth of a claim than one's willingness to suffer anything and everything for it. God knows that it hurts, but He knows that it has a tremendous impact on others, that it bears out and refines the faith of the martyr and that He will rescue the martyr and hold them close to Himself forever. Would you trust that?

I've heard many American Christians say that they think martyrs were misguided, that if they were put in that situation that they would falsely reject Jesus. Pretend to repudiate Him, denounce their Savior, while keeping their fingers crossed behind their back. They would avoid the pain and then go on being secret Christians, no harm, no foul.

The ploy has been tried. Those using it certainly didn't advance the Kingdom of God, and they certainly didn't draw closer to Jesus, and there's some question, of course, as to whether they will join the martyrs in eternity.

Bottom line, how much do you believe? What you believe is vital, but how much you believe it will easily

be seen by all – it's the testimony and witness of your life.



The next day the Sanhedrin convened. The Mishnah tells us that the ruling council was made up of 71 men, including the current High Priest, in this case, Joseph, son of Caiaphas, but always just called Caiaphas in the Bible. The 71 men were seated on chairs forming a semi-circle with the High Priest in the middle.

Extending in a semi-circle on the opposite side were three rows of elders. When a ruler of the 70 needed to be replaced they would pick an elder from the front row, a man from the second row would take his vacated spot and a man from the third row would

advance to the second row and a new elder would be appointed from the people to the third row.

Annus was High Priest from 6-15 A.D. As noted earlier, he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas and the patriarch of the family that also put five of his sons in the center chair of High Priest. The Romans kept changing High Priests to keep the Jews off balance. Biblically, it was a lifetime appointment, but under the Empire it was a revolving door creating a certain level of disruption, getting men to jockey for position, encourage political intrigue, and promote general disunity in the Jewish ruling class.

John was likely Jonathan, a son of Annus, who was soon to replace Caiaphas as High Priest in 36 A.D. Alexander is uncertain, but it was a high-born Greek name that was really only used by the Jewish royals, so he was probably a well-known Jewish prince. Like I said, all of the Sadducees were aristocrats, minor nobles, or at least related to the aristocracy, but Alexander would have likely been a royal.

Anyway, they and the rest of the leaders convened a formal inquest. The three prisoners were brought into the middle of the circle and asked them “By what

power, or in what name, have you done this?” It’s two related questions, the first seeks to know what supernatural force was at work in the dramatic healing and the second seeks to know by whose authority they were teaching and proclaiming.

Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit. When a person is genuinely Saved, they are transferred from the eternally dead existence into the eternally alive existence and are filled with the Holy Spirit. Subsequent to that, there are times of special anointing by the Holy Spirit strictly for the purpose of conducting ministry through a Christian to others.

The infilling is to conform the person. It is to enable the free flow of Agapê to and from the Christian and to renew their mind and so transform them so that externally they are the same as they are internally.

The anointing, or one could say the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, is when God chooses to use a Christian to build His Kingdom in some way. That’s why the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are not personal possessions that a Christian gets to use at their discretion, but always an outpouring through a Christian at the discretion of the Holy Spirit. As such, it is a mistake to think of the



Baptism as a single event and wrong to think of the Gifts as permanent attributes of a particular individual.

Under the impetus of the Holy Spirit Peter was spectacular. After his polite address he rhetorically asked them if he and his companions were in their present predicament because of the benefit to the city and the society wrought through them.

It was brilliant. In those days there was a degree of honor that we no longer understand. If a person did a beneficial thing, then honor dictated gratitude to that person. In other words, Peter was sarcastically asking, is this your way of saying thank you?

But they had given him the floor and so without missing a beat he continued with a phrase that was very powerful, translated here as “let it be known.” That was a segue meaning, “pay attention, I will now reveal how things really work.” Talk about confidence. Peter was speaking to over 100 of the most important and powerful people in the nation of Israel and he was basically saying, “listen up! I’ll explain how things work.”

Peter said, by the name of Jesus... that's the power that enabled a man born with useless legs to stand before you today and it is also by Whose authority we taught and proclaimed. It wasn't by way of a magical incantation of speaking the name Jesus – it was specifically Jesus Himself. Our faith is in Him.

Now, that was difficult because these same guys had recently murdered Jesus. Because of that Peter was incredibly specific, Jesus Christ the Nazarene. There were not two guys that could be described that way. Peter went on to confirm, yes, exactly the same Jesus Whom you yourselves crucified.

Peter was saying, make no mistake, I didn't misspeak, we're talking about the same Jesus and guess what... Almighty God Yahweh, the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the One and Only True God vindicated everything that Jesus stood for, everything that He said and did, by bodily raising Him from the dead.

It is that Jesus by Whom this once crippled man now stands in perfect health.

As if that were not enough Peter went on to quote the very well-known Messianic passage from Psalm 118. Here's the incredible part... Peter personalized the quote by equating the Stone with Jesus and the builders with the Jewish leaders in the room.

He said, "the Stone, which was Rejected by you, the builders." The implication is that the building the Jewish elites were building was not the Temple of God, but the temple of their own idolatry. Ancient builders rejected a stone because they deemed it unsuitable for their purposes. Everyone since who has rejected Jesus has done so for the exact same reason. They have weighed God and found Him wanting.

The letters 'I AM' are rendered in a large, three-dimensional, metallic font. The letters have a weathered, bronze-like appearance with some darker shading and highlights, giving them a sense of weight and texture. They are set against a plain, light-colored background.A dark, textured horizontal band, possibly representing a stone or metal surface, contains the text 'THE WAY, THE TRUTH, & THE LIFE' in a white, serif, all-caps font. The text is centered within the band and has a slight shadow, making it stand out against the dark background.

Finally, Peter put all the pieces together and plainly declared that “there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among mankind by which we must be saved.”

Verse 12 is difficult to render in English with the same impact that it has in Greek. There are three words of negation in rapid succession for extreme emphasis declaring the exclusivity of Christianity. There is no such thing as Salvation any other way from a Biblical perspective. A lot of people don't like these kinds of absolutes, but verse 12 goes to extraordinary lengths to repeatedly say that Salvation of the human soul is found only in the completed work of Jesus.

Jesus Himself declared that there was no way to the Father except through Him. Here Peter literally said, as close as I can come to it, “Not in anyone else, no way, is salvation, for no name is there under heaven that is given among people which can possibly save them.” It is the most thorough statement of absolute exclusivity possible.

According to the Bible, no one will be saved – no one will enter the Kingdom of Heaven – apart from total

reliance upon Jesus Christ as Savior. He's the only way.

It really gripes people when I point out that Biblical Truth because it is so exclusive – only Jesus can Save, period. But here's the same human problem Eve exhibited back in the Garden of Eden. God said eat from any tree in the entire garden save this single tree in the middle, and all she can think about is the restriction, not the absolute generosity of any other tree at all. The same here, people get offended at the exclusivity of Jesus alone, but entirely miss the generosity that anyone and everyone is equally welcome to fully participate in Christ. Christianity is the most inclusive family under heaven and in Heaven.