

Confrontation with the Status Quo !

V 1-2 Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them,

being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

“Captain of the temple.” Chief of the temple police force (comprised of Levites), second in command to the High Priest. The Romans had allowed the Jews to do their own policing of the temple grounds.

“Sadducees.” A rather secular, and wealthy, branch of Sanhedrin rulers; they denied the possibility of the Resurrection because they thought it was not taught in the first five books of Moses.

“Greatly disturbed.” The rulers had accused Jesus of blasphemy because he claimed to be the Son of God, so naturally they were *“disturbed”* that Peter and John were now proclaiming His resurrection and Messiahship and convincing everyone of the very thing they had condemned as blasphemy and justification for His execution; Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God was being accepted far and wide now as the truth.

V 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

“It was already evening.” Jewish law did not allow trials to be held at night, so Peter and John had to be kept in prison until morning.

V 4 However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

The most important thing was not the man’s healing, but that Peter saw the opportunity to witness and preach the Gospel! He preached them a pretty stiff sermon, and what happened?. . . They got tossed in jail for their trouble!. . .

“Howbeit many of them which heard the Word believed!” You mean they believed these two guys the cops came and arrested? Apparently 5,000 people were so thrilled, that they didn’t care whether they went to jail or not! - They believed!

[from lecture by [David Berg](#) - 14 May, 1967]

V 5-6 And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

“Annas the high priest. . . and. . . the family of the high priest.” Annas was not the official high priest; he had been deposed by the Romans several years earlier. But because of his senior position and the fact that five of his sons, and Caiaphas his son-in-law, held the office at different times, he was still considered by the Jews to be the real high priest.

This ruling council of the Jewish people was known as the Sanhedrin. It consisted of the high priest plus 70 members (according to the pattern that the Lord established with Moses in Numbers 11:16). In the Roman empire Israel's form of government was unique, being the empire's one and only theocracy, a nation where the religious leaders were also the political rulers.

V 7-8 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, “By what power or by what name have you done this?”

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:

“Filled with the Holy Spirit.” The benefit of receiving the Holy Spirit: It gave Peter the power he needed to courageously stand up to his accusers, this elite group of rulers and elders. What a transformation from the former, cowardly man who, just a short time earlier, had denied having any association with the Lord in the hours preceding the Crucifixion.



V 9-10 “If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

The previous day before the crowd, Peter had declared that the lame man’s healing came not “*by our own power or godliness*” (3:12), and again in this more dangerous situation, he continues to give credit to the Name that these powerful rulers had come to hate. In fact, Peter turns the tables on them completely and puts the Sanhedrin on trial, accusing them of committing the gravest crime of all, that of killing their own Messiah. The best defense is an offence.

V 11 “This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’

“*The stone. . . rejected by you builders.*” Quote from Psalm 118:22. Jesus also quoted this Scripture (Matthew 21:42). As far as most of the rulers were concerned, Jesus was just some insignificant carpenter from Nazareth, someone with a lot of strange delusions who had posed a serious, even dangerous, threat to their established religious-political system of which they were the leaders. Unbeknownst to most of them, however, Jesus was the One who was the real Leader and was now

in the process of becoming the “*chief cornerstone*”.

On the Significance of the Resurrection

Jesus was executed because the Jewish leaders rejected Him as the Messiah, and because the Romans said no unauthorized king could live. Yet the extraordinary and unexpected event of His resurrection reversed the verdicts of both the Jewish and the Roman courts. [from N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 576.]

Despite Rome’s rules that would-be kings must die, and the Jewish leaders’ belief that Jesus was not the Messiah, God Himself overturned their judgments, validating Jesus as both King and Messiah by raising Him from the dead. God gave His stamp of approval.

This in turn validated all that Jesus taught about Himself and about God the Father, about the kingdom of God and salvation. The resurrection, which proved that Jesus was in fact the Messiah, coupled with the coming of the Holy Spirit, established a new understanding about God. The significance of the resurrection in Jesus’ day was that it validated that Jesus was who He said He was.

(from “[Easter—Yesterday, Today, and Forever!](#)” by Peter Amsterdam - March 26, 2013)

V 12 “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

“*No other name under heaven.*” (See also John 14:6, Matthew 7:13-14.) Peter really understood the full magnitude of Who Jesus was, something his accusers were struggling with and having a hard time to accept. Later on many of the priests came around to accepting Christ (Acts 6:7) - perhaps as a result of this very testimony presented so dramatically before them. As stated in verses 13, 14, and 16: “*they marveled*”, “*they could say nothing against it*”, and “*we cannot deny it*”.

V 13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

“*Uneducated and untrained men.*” Peter and John had not been trained in the rabbinical schools. However, like most Jewish children, probably their early education had been steeped in the study and memorization of the Old Testament. And, of course, Jesus must have taught them a great deal. At the least, it seems

they had committed several passages to memory since, as we can see in Peter's declarations before the people, he was able to quote from the Old Testament quite easily. Although Peter and John were *"uneducated and untrained"*, others of the disciples did fall more into the "educated" category - Matthew, and later on, the apostle Paul and Luke the physician.

But obviously, in their witnessing, their lack of education did not matter. What really counted was their *"boldness"* - their conviction, their zeal, the Spirit of God emanating from them. For the purposes of leadership, sometimes a certain amount of education is helpful. But in the realm of witnessing, as the very educated apostle Paul once said, *"My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."* (1Corinthians 2:4-5 - KJV)

V 14-17 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, "What shall we do to these men?"

For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name."

"Council." The Sanhedrin, the Jews' national ruling body and supreme court of 71 members, including the High Priest.

"They could say nothing against it." There was the evidence standing right in front of the rulers; a great work of God had transpired. . . without their approval in what they thought was supposed to be their domain of influence.

"Evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem." It would have been risky to punish the apostles when they had broken no laws and done a miracle that had captured everyone's attention. But to protect themselves, the council wanted the apostles to stop preaching *"in this Name"* since that would further incriminate them as the ones responsible for executing the Messiah, and at the least, cause them to lose the respect and authority they had always enjoyed before the people.

"We cannot deny it." One wonders why anyone would want to deny such a wonderful, life-giving miracle. But the rulers concerned themselves narrowly with

how the ripple effect of it might damage them and their influence among the people.

V 18-21 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.

“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.

Peter redirects the council’s threats, which were based on their own self-interest, into an issue of “*whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God*”. This should have convicted the council since they were supposed to be God’s representatives to the Jewish people. And much as they wanted to find some “*way of punishing them*”, they couldn’t very well do so. Since everyone “*glorified God*” over the miraculous healing, then to punish the Apostles would, in the eyes of the people, cast them into the role of the enemies of God.

V 22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

“*Over forty years old.*” Having been lame for so many years “*from his mother’s womb*” (3:2), and being well known in the community, made his healing stand out all the more; everyone knew it had to be genuine and not a hoax.

V 23 And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.

“*Chief priests.*” A small group within the Sanhedrin composed of former High Priests and members of influential priestly families.

V 24-26 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: “Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them,

“who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:

‘Why did the nations rage,

**And the people plot vain things?
The kings of the earth took their stand,
And the rulers were gathered together
Against the LORD and against His Christ.’ [“against His Anointed” in Psalm 8]**

“Lord.” This particular version of *“Lord”* (*despotes*) was used only five times in the New Testament, but here it stresses Jesus as the “absolute Master” (i.e. over their enemies). The Greek word commonly used is *kurios*.

The disciples were exhilarated by this persecution, knowing that it was in line with certain Scriptures in the Old Testament (Psalm 2:1-2). It was a sign too that they were obeying and pleasing God by having to go through the same type of difficulties Jesus had gone through during His earthly ministry.

“Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely.” - Mat 5:11. . . But “rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in Heaven!” - Mat 5:12. Not here always. Of course, if you live in the continual Heaven of His peace & joy, you get a lot of that reward right now, don’t you? You’re already in Heaven in Spirit. “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you”, so great is that reward of Heaven in your heart, and great is your reward in the Heaven hereafter. (from lecture by [David Berg](#) - Dec/1969)

V 27-28 “For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together

“to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

“Determined before to be done.” Although we have free choice, there is still quite a bit of pre-destination in history. God has His overall plan that will be fulfilled.

V 29-30 “Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,

“by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.”

The persecution had only strengthened their resolve, not weakened it. But they

knew they would need more “*boldness*” to “*speak Your Word*” and more power to “*heal*” and do “*signs and wonders*” in the face of the persecution that was now brewing.

V 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

More Holy Ghost power! “*The place. . . was shaken.*” As on the day of Pentecost, there was a physical manifestation (an earthquake). Interestingly, we learn here that the infilling of the Holy Spirit doesn’t have to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience but can happen more than once during a person’s life.

V 32-35 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

God’s financial plan of sharing, similar to Acts 2:44-45

God had a marvelous plan for His church, didn’t He? - This Book of Acts! - A blueprint for the Church! This is the pattern for missions! This is the way the Church ought to be and the way it ought to act and the way it ought to build and spread and evangelise! This is a pattern, an example! That’s why it was an unfinished book - it’s still going on!

. . . God had a spiritual pattern for them: Prayer, praise, study, teaching, discipline, doctrine and witnessing activity. But, “what shall we eat and what shall we drink and wherewithal shall we be clothed?” (Matthew 6:25). . .

Do you think God has a financial plan for the Church? He sure has! We’ve already mentioned it in the 2nd chapter, 44th and 45th verses, “*all that believed were together, and had all things common*” or shared! . . .

“From each according to his ability” - whatever he had - “unto each according to his need” - whatever he needed! That was God’s financial plan

for the Church! . . .

“Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own!” You’ve got to have one heart and one soul to share like that! *“But they had all things common.”* (verse 32) They shared all things! And what was the result? *“With great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.”* (verse 33) They had power and they had grace!

If you can share with others, you’ve got a lot of grace and God will give you a lot of power! Amen? If you don’t care about your possessions, as long as they’re used by the Lord! What was the result, economically, for the Church? *“Neither was there any among them that lacked!”* (verse 34) They may not have had all they wanted, but none of them lacked anything he needed! . . .

The Apostles distributed [the wealth] according to every man’s need! *“From each according to his ability, unto each according to his need.”* Nice little Communist philosophy, stolen from the Church! . . . The Christians said, *“What I’ve got is yours and I’m going to give it to you!”* The Communists say, *“What you’ve got is mine and I’m going to take it away from you!”* Get the difference?

One is voluntary and the other is violent! One is of your own accord, ‘cause you’re of one Spirit; and the other is because you want to get what the other guy’s got, and you take it away from him! . . .

Do you think it’s scriptural to share? Was that a good method? Did it get results? It sure did . . .

It’s right there in the Bible: This was God’s plan and it worked! 33rd verse, *“They had great power and they gave witness, and great grace”*. That’s the way the Early Church operated and it worked!

Of course, they say, *“Yes, but that wouldn’t work today! Things are different today!”* . . . The only reason they call it old-fashioned is because they like the new-fashioned idea of just being selfish and living for themselves!

[from lecture by [David Berg](#) - 14 May, 1967]

V 36-37 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

“Barnabas. . . a Levite.” Levites were not supposed to own land according to Old

Testament law, but either the law was not in force anymore, or it didn't apply in this case because the land was owned in Cyprus, not in Israel.

The translation of Barnabas' name, "*Son of Encouragement*", was quite fitting. As we find out later, he was indeed a great encouragement to the new apostle Paul and to the new Gentile believers in Antioch.

Food for Thought: Why don't we always see thousands of disciples won as in the days of the Early Church?

God seems to have made it so that what we achieve in life comes by consistent working at a task or project while at the same time trusting him for the result. Seldom do we accomplish great things overnight. On the rare occasion when that does happen, it is meant as a "kickstart" to a project, or it is the final result of a long period of patience.

(Jesus, speaking in prophecy:)

I've made it so that most accomplishments in life come by consistently putting in the work that something requires and trusting Me for the result. Very rarely do you accomplish great things overnight. Or when you do, usually it's either the kickoff of a project or the culmination of a long period of patience.

Look at the early church, for instance: I poured out mighty power on the Day of Pentecost, and within a couple of weeks I gave the first disciples thousands of converts. But then for years afterwards the progress was slower and steadier, as they gradually advanced by sharing My message one city and one soul at a time.

(from publication of [The Family International](#) - February 7, 2013)

(Continue to ACTS, chapter 5)