

THE ARREST

Acts 4:1-4 "While they were speaking to the people, the priests, the superintendent of the Temple and the Sadducees came upon them. They were annoyed because they were teaching the people, and proclaiming, through Jesus, the resurrection from the dead. So they laid hands upon them and put them under arrest until the next day, for by this time it was evening. But many who heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand."

The healing of the lame man (Chapter 3) had taken place within a part of the Temple area which was continually thronged with people.

The Gate Beautiful led from the Court of the Gentiles into the Court of the Women.

The Court of the Gentiles was the largest and the busiest of all the Temple Courts

Anyone could enter the court as long as ordinary laws of decency and decorum were observed.

The money-changers and sacrifice sellers had their booths and stalls in that court.

Around the outer boundary of the Temple area two great colonnades met at a right angle in the corner of the Court of the Gentiles.

The Royal Porch

Solomon's Porch.

The whole area of the Court of the Gentiles was the busiest, most public and most crowded area of the Temple.

The man whom the King James Version calls the captain (superintendent) of the Temple was an official called the Sagan.

He was the High Priest's right-hand man.

He had the oversight of the good order of the Temple.

When an unexpected, unusual crowd had gathered he and his Temple police always went to the scene.

Several of the Sadducees were with him.

The teaching annoyed them in particular.

They did not believe in resurrection from the dead

The apostles were proclaiming that Jesus was risen and alive.

The Sadducean party was collaborationist.

They tried to keep on friendly terms with the Romans to protect their wealth and comfort and prestige and power.

The Roman government was very tolerant; but on public disorder it was merciless.

The Sadducees were sure that, if the apostles were allowed to go on unchecked, riots and civil disorder could follow, with disastrous consequences to their status.

They had to nip this movement in the bud; so Peter and John were promptly arrested.

Pre-resurrection opposition to Christ was from the Pharisees.

They claimed Jesus and His disciples violated their rituals and traditions. Pharisees were the legalists.

Post-resurrection opposition to Christians was from the Sadducees.

In Acts, the Sadducees are the primary opponents of the Church.

Materialists through and through, they were upset with the Church because of the stories of miracles and resurrection, angels and healing which circulated throughout Jerusalem.

Since the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ just a few months earlier, the Pharisees appear to have begun a fall from favor and power among the people,

Not wishing to expose themselves further, the Pharisees appear to be laying low – staying out of the public eye.

Besides, the new Christian sect was teaching a fact that undermined the basic tenant of the Sadducees – the resurrection.

The Sadducees (the opposition party – much like Republicans and Democrats) were ascending in status as the Pharisees declined.

Sadducees were the rationalists, the modernists; they did not believe in the resurrection.

Sadducees were the aristocrats, the money people.

Sadducees were the wealthy, aristocratic class.

There were not many of them.

They were rich and of great influence.

They were the modernists,
They did not believe in the supernatural,
They did not believe in the resurrection.
They had a strong emphasis on free will.
They were very oriented into the ethics, rather than the theology.
They held the Pharisees in contempt.

The Sadducees were particularly upset with the idea of Jesus resurrection.

The Pharisees were not as upset,

While they did not want to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the whole emphasis on His resurrection is something that the Pharisees tended to side with.

Later you will see Paul taking advantage of that.

For the Sadducees the idea of the resurrection went against everything that they believed.

So they arrested Peter and John.

Both had run and hid and Peter had denied Christ to avoid arrest. Now indwelt and empowered and completely committed to the Lord they neither feared it nor changed their actions to avoid it.

1Jo 4:16-19 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. 17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. 19 We love him, because he first loved us.

Being late in the day (Peter and John entered the Temple at 3PM – the day ended at 6PM), the leaders put Peter and John into custody until the next day.

It was illegal under Jewish law to have a trial by night, though this is what the Jewish rulers did to Jesus.

From the Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4.1: "Judgments about money may be commenced in the day and concluded in the night, but judgments about life must be begun in the day and concluded in the day."

There was nothing wrong in the way that the Jewish leaders were investigating the matter; it was their responsibility to do so.

What they did after they found out the facts was wrong.

This 5000 new believers is on top of the 3000 from Chapter 2.

Now, that's a Bible study...

BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

Acts 4:5-12 "So on the next day it happened that the rulers and the elders and the scribes were assembled in Jerusalem, together with Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander and all those who belonged to the priestly families. So they set them in the midst and asked them, '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, if today we are being examined about the good deed done to the infirm man, if you are asking us by what means he has been restored to health, let it be known to all of you and to all the peoples of Israel that it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead--it is by this name that this man stands before you in sound health. This is the stone which was set at naught by you builders, which has now become the head of the corner; and in no other is there salvation; for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved.'

The court before which Peter and John were brought was the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the Jews.

Even in Roman times it had the right of arrest.

The one thing it could not do was to pass the death sentence, except in the single case of a Gentile who trespassed on the inner courts of the Temple.

They are following the injunction of Deut 13:

...if there is a teacher doing miracles, they must question whether is he drawing them towards or against Jehovah.

They are following what Deut 13 tells them to check the prophets.

The Sanhedrin had 71 members; 24 was a quorum.

The high priest was ex officio president.

The membership included rich, influential Sadducees.

The one desire of the Sadducees was to preserve the status quo that their own emoluments might not be lessened.

There were scribes, who were the experts in the traditional law.

There were Pharisees, who were fanatics for the law. There were elders, who were respected men in the community.

There were also those described as being of "the priestly families"; these are the same people who are sometimes called chief priests.

They consisted of two classes.

There were ex-high priests.

In the great days the high priesthood had been hereditary and for life; but in the Roman times the office was the subject of intrigue, bribery and corruption and high priests rose and fell so that between 37 B.C. and A.D. 67 there were no fewer than 28.

But even after a high priest had been deposed, he often remained the power behind the throne.

Although the high priesthood had ceased to be hereditary, it was still the prerogative of a very few families.

Of the 28 high priests already mentioned all but 6 came from 4 priestly families. The members of these families had a special prestige and it is they who were known as the chief priests.

Annas and Caiaphas are present – the same guys that plotted Jesus death and ultimately questioned and condemned Jesus,

Annas was of the Aaronic priesthood, but he had been deposed by the Romans, and Caiaphas (Annas son-in-law) was put in his place as high priest by the Romans.

Caiaphas was not of the line of Aaron and not really accepted by the Jews.

Annas was still of powerful influence, even though not officially in power.

Remember to whom Peter was speaking.

It was an audience of the wealthiest, the most intellectual and the most powerful in the land,

This was the very court – or at least a portion of it (a quorum) – which a few months earlier had condemned Jesus to death.

Peter and John must have thought they would suffer the same fate - it did not stop them this time.

The ideas behind their question

By what power and by what name are virtually the same;
in their thinking, the power resided in the name, because the
name represented the character of the person.

Peter, the Galilaean fisherman, stands before them as their judge rather
than as their victim.

Peter knew that he was taking his life in his hands.

Peter, among all men, knew the peril he was in when he stood
and spoke; nevertheless he went for it.

Peter quotes Ps 118:22; the Hallel Psalm that they sang on Palm
Sunday, Ps 118:26

Psa 118:26 Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: ...

*Psa 118:22 The stone which the builders refused is become the head
stone of the corner.*

He is pointing out that this miracle tying Jesus Christ and the worship of
Jehovah.

There is only one way to be saved – to be 'righteous' - right with God !

NO LOYALTY SAVE TO GOD

Acts 4:13-22

*"When they saw how boldly Peter and John spoke, and when they had
grasped the fact that they were men with no special knowledge and no
special qualifications, they were amazed; and they recognized them for
men who had been in the company of Jesus.*

*So, as they looked at the man who was cured and who was standing
with them, they could find no charge to make. They ordered them to
leave the Sanhedrin, and they discussed with each other,*

*'What are we to do with these men? For, that, through them, a
notable sign has happened is plain to all who live in Jerusalem, and
we cannot deny it. But, in order that this may not spread any further
throughout the people, let us forbid them with threats to speak any
more in this name to any man.'*

*So they summoned them in and ordered them absolutely to abstain from
teaching in the name of Jesus.*

But Peter and John said to them,

*'You must judge whether, in the sight of God, it is right to listen to
you rather than to God; for we are unable not to speak the things that
we have seen and heard.'*

*But they added still further threats and let them go because they could
find no means of punishing them because of the people, for everyone
glorified God at what had happened, for the man on whom the sign of
healing had taken place was more than forty years old."*

How did Luke know the private discussions of the Sanhedrin?

In all likelihood, there was a dynamic, brilliant young rabbi present
among the Sanhedrin named Saul of Tarsus - who later told Luke.

Even though Saul himself did not know it, God was working in
his heart through Peter and John; they had no idea they were
preaching to a future apostle and the greatest missionary the
church would ever see.

The enemy's attack:

There is contempt.

They regarded Peter & John as unlearned ignorant men.

Unlearned = they had no kind of technical education, especially in the intricate regulations of the law.

Ignorant means that they were laymen with no special professional qualifications.

Not ignorant in the sense of dumb, but common, of the street.

The Sanhedrin regarded them as men without a college education and with no professional status.

Academic and professional snobbery.

1Co 1:27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

Threats.

The Christian knows that anything man does to him is but for a moment whereas the things of God last forever.

Mat 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

"They saw that they had been with Jesus" - that is always the impression given if you are filled with the Spirit.

Peter and John's defence.

Unanswerable fact.

That the man had been cured it could not be denied.

If you've been healed, you should be standing with them!

The most unanswerable defence of Christianity is a Christian man.

It can also be Christianity's greatest accuser...

Utter loyalty to, love for God.

If it was a question of choosing between obeying man and obeying God, Peter and John were in no doubt as to what course to take.

"(John Knox) He feared God so much that he never feared the face of any man."

Personal experience, first hand knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They didn't know about Jesus – they knew Him.

They knew at first-hand that their message was true

They were so sure of it that they were willing to stake their life upon it.

The Sanhedrin never denies the miracle.

They never deny the resurrection.

They don't challenge it, they can't deny the miracle as the guy is right there.

Later they will consult Gamaliel for advice on how to handle these Christians.

These Jewish leaders are completely unmoved by God, yet they are responsive to public opinion;
they obviously care far more about man's opinion than God's opinion.

This whole situation started out looking pretty bad:

Peter and John were on trial before the same court that sent Jesus to Pilate for crucifixion.

Satan meant it all for great evil, but before it is all over, look what God does.

- Two thousand more people come to Jesus
- Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit
- Peter gets to preach Jesus to the leaders of the Jews
- A miraculous healing is confirmed by hostile examiners
- The enemies of Jesus are confused
- Peter and John are bolder for Jesus than ever
- God is glorified
- The early church prays for boldness

THE TRIUMPHANT RETURN

Acts 4:23-31 "When they had been released, they came to their own people and they told them all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they had heard the story, with one accord, they lifted up their voice to God and said, 'O Sovereign Lord, thou who hast made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them, thou who didst say, through the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David, our father, thy servant, 'Why did the nations rage and the people set their thoughts on empty things?' The kings of the earth stood around and the rulers assembled together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. For in truth in this city they were assembled against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint--Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel--to do all the things which thy hand and thy purpose foreordained should be done. So now, O Lord, look upon their threats and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with boldness, whilst thou dost stretch out thy hand to heal and whilst signs and wonders happen through the name of thy holy servant Jesus.' And when they had prayed, the place in which they were assembled was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and kept on speaking the word with boldness."

Prayer of praise.

Lord = absolute ruler, final sovereignty.

"Hast made heaven, and earth..." - different opening than they usually did, why?

The Sadducees are materialists. They put their faith in the material world.

So the disciples pray to God who made the very material world to which the Sadducees relied upon.

"Holy child" - should be "servant."

"Herod" - the Hebrew authority.

"Pilate" - the Roman authority.

"The nations" - the Gentiles.

"People of Israel."

All sides of the coin: Jew and Gentile, ruler and group.

Whatever was decided was determined before to be done.

The crucifixion of Christ did not surprise God, it was ordained before the creation of Adam.

Their prayer is based on:

- 1) The Sovereignty of God
- 2) The Wisdom of God
- 3) The Active Government of God

They are conscious of the danger, but they take it and they give it to God.

Notice the reaction of the Christian Church in the hour of danger.

You might expect a deep doom and depression would have fallen on the Church, as they looked ahead to the troubles which were now bound to descend upon them.

It never even occurred to them to obey the Sanhedrin's command to speak no more.

Rather, at that moment came certain great convictions and into their lives came a tide of strength.

They had the conviction of the power of God.

With them was he who was creator and sustainer of all things.

2Ki 6:16 And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

1Jo 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

They had the conviction of the futility of man's rebellion.

rage = the neighing of spirited horses. They may trample and toss their heads; in the end they will have to accept the discipline of the reins.

Men may make their defiant gestures against God; in the end God must prevail.

They remembered Jesus.

How he suffered and how he triumphed; and in that memory they found their confidence,

For it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Lord.

They prayed for courage.

They did not pretend that they could face this in their own strength; they turned to a power that was not their own.

Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

The result was the gift of the Spirit.

The promise was fulfilled; they were not left comfortless.

So they found the courage and the strength they needed to witness when their witness might well mean their death.

“Boldness” - the sign of the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

First Realization of Fellowship

ALL THINGS IN COMMON

Acts 4:32-37 "The heart and soul of the crowd who had believed was one; and no one used to say that any of his possessions was his own, but they had all things in common. And the apostles kept on bearing witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power, and great grace was on them all. Nor was anyone in need amongst them, for all who were owners of lands and houses made a habit of selling them and of bringing the proceeds of what they sold and of placing them at the apostles' feet. It was distributed to each, just as a man needed. "Joseph, whose surname was Barnabas, one of the apostles (the translation of the name is Son of Consolation), who was a Levite and a native of Cyprus, possessed a field, and he sold it and brought the price and laid it at the apostles' feet."

Praise and prayer must lead to Performance

Immediately before this all things were moving in the most exalted atmosphere.

There were great thoughts of God;

There were prayers for the Holy Spirit;

There were exultant quotations from the Old Testament.

Without warning or explanation, the narrative changes to the most practical things.

Prayer was supremely important,

The witness of words was supremely important,

But the culmination and proof was the love of and for the brotherhood.

They had an intense sense of responsibility for each other.

This awoke in them a real desire to share all they had.

This sharing was not the result of legislation; it was utterly spontaneous.

It is not when the law compels us to share but when the heart moves us to share that society is really Christian.

2Co 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

This intimacy did bear fruit.

They were of one mind, one soul.

They were so effective, not because they pooled their goods, but because they were that unified as a powerful fellowship.

Joses - the brother of Mary, the wealthy mother of Mark, probably, Mark's uncle.

His property was in Cyprus, premium land.

He invested it in Jerusalem, which was in deep trouble.

The city was ready to be judged.

Mat 6:31-34 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Mat 6:19-21 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

"Nabas" = consolation, paraclete..

Because of their unity,

They regarded people more important than things.
They recognized God's ownership of everything;
it all belonged to Him and His people.

There is a contrast between communism and koinonia;

"Communism says, 'What is yours is mine; I'll take it.'
'Koinonia says, 'What is mine is yours, I'll share it.'" "

The Greek here does not mean that everyone sold their property at once. Rather, from time to time this was done as the Lord brought needs to their attention."

Barnabas was a notable example of this giving spirit.

Great power: this is both the result and the root of the attitude in the previous verse –

putting God first, people second and material things a distant third.

Gave witness to the resurrection:

notice again the central place the resurrection of Jesus holds in the message of the first Christians.

Great grace was upon them all:

God's favor - His smile from heaven - was evident everywhere.

This sort of radical giving was absolutely necessary to meet the needs of this rapidly growing church, of which many members came as "refugees" from abroad, having responded to the gospel on Pentecost.

People didn't wait for someone else to give; when a need arose, they gave of their own possessions to help someone else.

This generosity of the early Christians soon began to be abused, and Paul had to give strict instructions to the churches on who should be helped and how.

Paul's directions are:

- that the church must discern who the truly needy are (1 Timothy 5:3),
- that if one can work to support himself, he is not truly needy and must provide for his own needs (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12; 1 Timothy 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:11),
- that if one can be supported by family, he is not truly needy, and should not be supported by the church (1 Timothy 5:3-4),
- that those who are supported by the church must make some return to the church body (1 Timothy 5:5, 10),
- that it is right for the church to examine moral conduct before giving support (1 Timothy 5:9-13), and
- that the support of the church should be for the most basic necessities of living (1 Timothy 6:8).

