

LESSON FOUR

(3:1 - 4:31)

At the Gate Beautiful, 3:1-10

3 *Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. 2 And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at that gate of the temple which is called Beautiful to ask alms of those who entered the temple. 3 Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms. 4 And Peter directed his gaze at him, with John, and said, "Look at us." 5 And he fixed his attention upon them, expecting to receive something from them. 6 But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." 7 And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. 8 And leaping up he stood and walked and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 and recognized him as the one who sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what happened to him.*

V. 1 - **the ninth hour** - morning, about 9:00 a.m. if Roman time, afternoon, about 3:00 p.m. if Jewish time. See 4:3. Apparently many of the Christian Jews kept the customs of their culture (perhaps even some regulations, as in ch. 21) through habit, if not through duty. As is evident elsewhere, many had trouble discerning clearly where the two covenants parted company (including the apostles, as ch. 10 shows).

We note in passing that no hour of prayer was commanded in the law. However, the early Church seemingly had this custom. However, some of the Christians may have gone to the temple for the purpose of evangelism, as well as to pray.

Ch. 2:43 had mentioned wonders and signs being done by the apostles. Luke brings one of these into the spotlight for our attention.

V. 2 - **Beautiful gate** - It may have been the Nicanor gate on the east side, facing the Kidron valley, as many think. If so, Peter and John were coming into Jerusalem and the temple from outside the city wall.

alms - The Greek word is a derivative of the word for mercy. See Acts 9:36; where Dorcas did such, and 10:2 with Cornelius. Jesus talked about this subject in Matthew 6:2-4.

V. 5 - Peter had looked intently upon the man, and the man responded to Peter's command by fixing his attention upon the two men.

V. 6 - **what I have** - For the man, what Peter had was far more significant than money. What was true about the lame man we know not, but it is somewhat sobering to think that most people in the world's history would have been more interested in material things than spiritual things because they did not know better. Even for Christians there is a constant tendency to be so wrapped up in the temporal that the eternal is overlooked.

in the name - The common idiom for the Jewish people by which was meant the person represented by the name (see Acts 1:15), and the power/authority of said person. Luke 9:49; 10:17; Acts 4:7; have this idea. Jesus had worked miracles in his own name's authority; but the apostles did not do anything in their name. Some thought the name of Jesus could be used to work miracles, but it did not work, Acts 19:13ff.

V. 7 - **he took him by the right hand** - Peter gave a physical impetus to the command in v. 6 to walk. The lame man may have had no reason to obey Peter (he may not have known about Peter like we know of Peter).

V. 8 - **walking, leaping** - Clearly healed, especially since he had never walked, being lame

from birth. This is a typical healing by the apostles, quite unlike the pseudo-attempts of our day. The man was immediately (as in Matt. 21:19; Luke 1:64; Acts 13:11) and completely cured. It would be hard to imagine the man's feelings, wouldn't it?

praising God - Whether he remembered or considered what Peter had said to him is unknown. He just praised God. It may be of interest that Luke's Gospel has more about praise and glorification in it than any other Gospel.

V. 10 - **they were filled** - Those who saw the man and recognized him perceived immediately a great miracle had occurred (4:16): the man had received something more important than alms!

wonder - This was the reaction of the synagogue crowd in Luke 4:31-37 when Jesus healed a demonized man and of Peter in Luke 5 at the catch of fishes.

amazement - When Jesus raised from the dead the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:35-43), the onlookers reacted this way.

QUESTIONS

26. Does the text specifically say why the two apostles were going to the temple?

27. What did Jesus teach about giving of alms?

28. Do you think that the apostles did not want to give things of a material nature, or had to substitute, or what?

29. For what reason did Luke describe the man's actions after the miracle?

30. Do you suppose that the apostles were offended when the man praised God rather than Jesus or them?

On Solomon's Porch, 3:11-26

11 While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's, astounded. 12 And when Peter saw it he addressed the people, "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we made him walk? 13 The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. 14 But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. 16 And his name, by faith in his name, has made this man strong whom you see and know; and the faith which is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

17 "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 21 whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old. 22 Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. 23 And it shall be that every soul that does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' 24 And all the

prophets who have spoken; from Samuel and those who came afterwards, also proclaimed these days. 25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God gave to your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your posterity shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' 26 *God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness."*

V. 11 - **while he clung** - The man was unwilling to let the apostles go, probably because he was appreciative of their kindness.

Solomon's porch/portico - Along the temple courtyard's east side accessible to all, Jew or Gentile. It was a large area, covered over and provided an excellent location for meetings of the church.

V. 12 - **Peter addressed** - Their amazement was obvious, as was their question about how the miracle was performed.

our own power or piety - This was a disclaimer of any personal possession of power by the apostles. Here is a good point to view the text of Hebrews 2:4; and to recognize the direct part God played in the working of miracles through the lives of the apostles. It is also worthy of note that the miracle did what miracles of God were basically intended to do: get attention so that something more important than the miracle could be given them, and given with the clear knowledge that God was the giver of it.

V. 13 - **The God** - A direct connection of their deity with the deity of the new covenant was an important correlation to make. It was exceedingly difficult for the Jews to get that basic idea. Check the argument in Rom. 3:27-31.

his servant Jesus - The Greek term translated servant is that for child or boy, Luke 2:43. However, see its usage in Luke 1:54, 69; Acts 4:25; then Matthew 8:6, 8, 13.

Note how much Peter develops the nature of the Messiah: holy, righteous, greater than Moses, fulfillment of Abrahamic covenant; all of which were important concepts to tie together.

he had decided - The Greek term is the term for judge, as in Matthew 7:1. Pilate, having considered the prisoner, and the people who had brought him concluded it was only for envy that they had brought charges against Jesus, and decided to release Jesus. The point is then quite clear: the Jews were guilty of Jesus' death.

V. 14 - **you denied** - Note how Peter indicts both nation and rulers for murders. The demoniacs referred to Jesus as the "holy one of God" in Mark 1:24. Ananias referred to Jesus as the "just one" in Acts 22:14; but the Jews said: We will not accept this man Jesus as our Messiah, so kill him.

V. 15 - Consider the antithesis: the author or life being killed! The word translated "author" appears in Hebrews 2:10 and 12:2; also in reference to Jesus. Of course, Bible students know that Jesus was with God in the beginning when life was first given; that Jesus has life in himself, John 5:26; that no one could actually take Jesus' life from him except he would allow it, John 10:18; that in Jesus all "hold together" or consist, Colossians 1:17, and that he upholds the universe by his "word of power," Hebrews 1:3. Yet notice that it was God who raised Jesus. The point needed to be made to the Jews that their own personal God had caused Jesus' resurrection, and so was inextricably involved with the doctrine based upon that resurrection.

we are witnesses - As Jesus commanded in Luke 24:48 and Acts 1:8. The Greek word is commonly transliterated as martyr. The term meant a witness, one who testifies, but came to include dying for one's faith.

V. 16 - The source of the miracle was not the lame man's faith, but the apostle's faith in Jesus, who was primarily the power behind the miracle.

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Consider what this implied about Jesus' character: he could do what mortal men could not do.

perfect health - A complete renewal, in their presence. It was evidently miracles like this that convinced the apostles of the deity of Jesus, and that also helped people see that God was with them in their work.

V. 17 - **you acted...as did your rulers: in ignorance!** - Again the guilt is laid at the feet of the Israelites. It wasn't that they had not had opportunity to know; contrariwise, they had every chance to know of Jesus, and consider his claims. As Jesus said in John 15:22, they had no defense for their sin.

V. 18 - **God foretold** - Jesus often pointed this fact out, though it was not believed (as in Matt. 16:21ff.) that he was destined to be crucified. Of course, to the Jews, this was an enigma and paradox: so great a problem that they often pondered it (as did the disciples) for understanding. The inability and unwillingness to resolve the matter made it a matter of sin (stumbling) to them, Romans 9:33. It was not until after Jesus had explained to the two men on the Emmaus road from their scriptures about the true nature of the Messiah, that of suffering and crucifixion, that they put the pieces all together. Once the fact was accepted that the Messiah was destined to die for the sins of man, things fell into place. As Paul the converted Jew said in II Cor. 3:12-17, when one turned to Jesus, one saw clearly.

all the prophets - This very plain fact could only have escaped the notice of the Jews because they were unwilling to accept it. See Rom. 3:21. (Don't miss the value of citing fulfilled prophecies - Jesus and the apostles made extensive use of this great apologetic point.)

V. 19 - **repent** - change your mind, renew it, and be then transformed in life.

It is somewhat of a pity that the Greek term got stuck with the English word "repentance" which

often has been colored with the Roman Catholic idea of penitence (i.e., "doing penance" as in works, etc.). It is not being sorry and attempting to undo what has been done, or even being sorry (i.e. grieving, mourning, etc.). It is, in fact, simply and only a change of mind, that may/may not be produced by sorrow. Moreover, it has to do with changing one's future (ref. Luke 3:8-14) rather than the past (the past is history and can't be retraced), and therefore looks forward much more than backward. The future may well be, and should be, in contrast to the past; but it is the future with which repentance is concerned - all the future. The repentant mind is to be a constant for the Christian. It should be noted that (godly) sorrow, II Cor. 7, is not repentance, however good the sorrow might otherwise be. The command in the N.T. is not "be sorrowful" but rather "change your mind." Consider the same idea in Rom. 12:1-2.

Repentance is the means by which we receive the grace of God for our sins, and by which we maintain that relationship. We must see that it is necessary to do more than just get earthly relationships right. We must get right with God.

turn - Their conduct was to become new, following or resulting from their change of mind. The past life of sin was essentially guilty of murder. Such sin must be forgiven, and redemption brought about.

blotted out - Note Colossians 2:14. The verb means to erase, or smear, or rub off. The purpose for which the Messiah came was this: to bring salvation from sin, to blot out completely the old life (even murder!) and bring about a completely new being, restored to a right relationship with God, heavenward bound!

time of refreshing - This phrase is descriptive of the new life in Christ, the new age of redemption in and through Christ, which all could find by accepting Jesus as Savior, Messiah, and Lord.

V. 20 - **he may send the Christ (Messiah)** - i.e., that Jesus (Christ) may come and dwell with them, as in John 14:23; etc. This is equal to, a corollary to, seasons of refreshing, v. 19, the express time in which they were then living. They needed to join up. Jesus was to come from the presence (= face) of the Lord (God). Consider then that Jesus is also identified as “Lord” and “God”.

V. 21 - Jesus was in heaven, to remain there until his second coming. There is little, if anything, in the O.T., that we know, that directly talks of Jesus second coming. The verse is better understood as referring to the establishment of the church, etc., prophesied by the O.T. spokesmen. We must consider, in addition to the blessings now available for every Christian, that there is yet a salvation to be revealed, I Peter 1:4-5, for every Christian.

V. 22 - **you shall listen to him** - Peter now points out the biggest reason why the people needed to act: because of the nature of Jesus, of whom their own Moses had spoken. Of course, if Moses had prophesied such a time to come then he had also necessarily prophesied about the end of his law, and the necessity to honor the word of the one succeeding him, even Jesus, the prophet that God had raised up, replacing Moses.

V. 23 - The consequences of failure to repent are here spelled out.

every soul - The whole man/person, as in Acts 1:14.

shall be destroyed - Note this same idea in Exodus 30:33; 31:14; Numbers 15:31. The basic Greek word is in I Cor. 5:5; I Thess. 5:3; II Thess. 1:9; I Tim. 6:9. It bespeaks a total loss of everything rightfully belonging to every person, and a punishment in hell received that could have been avoided, since God did not intend that any should go to hell.

V. 24 - **these days** - The days of repentance to God and faith in Jesus (Acts 20:21), the times of

refreshing. How often the message had been given to them! However, God himself described the nation as both wicked and contrary, Rom. 10:21.

V. 25 - **sons of the prophets** - Followers of what the prophets had prophesied, and sharers in the promises to Abraham, which were the blessings of God; further described in v. 26 as God’s provision to turn everyone from wickedness unto righteousness.

V. 26 - The blessings of God were theirs if they turned from their sinful ways. Peter had commanded them to repent, because of their sins, which would bring forgiveness and further blessing. Jesus came to save his people from their sins, Matt. 1:21, but he could only do so if they were willing to receive him. John wrote in 1:11 that the nation of the Messiah had not, as a nation, received him. Jesus wept over Jerusalem because he had often extended an invitation to them but they were unwilling, Luke 19:41-44.

QUESTIONS

31. How did the apostles utilize the miracle?
32. Who was given credit by Peter for the power to work the miracle?
33. Of what sort of “life” was Jesus the author?
34. How many people were ignorant? Did ignorance release them from being charged with murder?
35. If the Jews were not guilty (as some say), why the command to change their mind and have their sins blotted out?

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36. How many years had God been telling Israel about the events then happening?

37. What was the reason that God sent Jesus to the Jews?

In the Prison, 4:1-4

4 *And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they arrested them and put them in custody until the morrow, for it was already evening. 4 But many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to about five thousand.*

V. 1 - **as they were speaking** - Apparently Peter and John were interrupted. The preaching following the miracle, brought about the conversion of at least 2,000 almost as many as in chapter 2.

Sadducees - This group was a “mixed bag.” They held to the literal word of God (especially the Pentateuch), rejecting all the Jewish rabbinical literature, which the Pharisees held. However, they also disbelieved in life after death, and other matters as seen in chapter 23. This is an interesting turn of events from the Gospels, where the Pharisees and scribes were especially prominent. However, most of the priests were Sadducees, and much involved in the affairs of the temple, and the political life of the nation.

V. 2- **teaching...preaching...resurrection** - Of course, the message not only caused some to be converted, but some contradicted as in John 11 (where Caiaphas and company were concerned about the influence of Jesus among the people). We should pay attention to this fact: the apostles never got in trouble for preaching immortality nor for speaking about a so-called “spiritual” resurrection; but rather for proclaiming the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the tomb.

V. 3 - Note here that Jewish regulations of jurisprudence were kept, in that no trial was to be held at night. This is the reason for the “official” trial of Jesus, as recorded in Luke 23, after the unofficial trial before Annas had been held prior to daybreak.

already evening -The men had gone to the temple at the ninth hour (3:1). Since it seems unlikely that the events following the miracle would last all day, it is more likely that the time was about 3:00 p.m., and evening would soon occur.

V. 4 - **of men** - The Jewish custom was to number only the men in any census, since the man was, in God’s order, considered the head of the household. This primary order was not changed in the New Testament revelation of God, as I Cor. 11 clearly shows. This is not to say that women were unimportant, just affirming what God plainly revealed to the church for its members.

QUESTIONS

38. Into what gate and at what hour did the two apostles go to the temple?

39. What explicit point did the apostles make about Jesus?

40. Was the temple area large enough to accommodate a large number of people? At least how many?

Before the Sanhedrin, 4:5-22

5 On the morrow their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem, 6 with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high priestly family. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what

name did you do this?” 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a cripple, by what means this man has been healed, 10 be it 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 is standing before you well. 11 This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, but which has become the head of the corner. 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they wondered; and they recognized that they had been with Jesus. 14 But seeing the man that had been healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. 15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred with one another, 16 saying, “What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is manifest to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to any one in this name.” 18 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” 21 And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people; for all men praised God for what had happened. 22 For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.

V. 5 - rulers, elders, scribes - Some suggest that the Jewish Sanhedrin was composed of 22 scribes, 24 priests/rulers, 24 elders. In Jewish literature, and in N.T. usage, this group was variously called: the elders, the senate/council, great law-court, great court, and court of the seventy. Its actual origin is unknown, but seems

probably to have arisen after the return from Babylon. The Greek word for “elders” is the same term as was applied to the men who were chosen to lead local congregations, as in Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2; etc.

V. 6 - Annas - He was actually high priest from the Jewish point of view, but Caiaphas, his son-in-law, was the officially appointed high priest by the Romans. Annas had been deposed from the position (which he was to hold for life by Jewish law), but through sons and relatives who were appointed high priest, still was the power behind the position.

V. 7 - Their questioning may have been an attempt to follow Deuteronomy 13:1ff.

power...name - These terms were about synonymous, and referred to the source of the apostles ability.

V. 8 - filled with the Holy Spirit - Several different people are said in the N.T. to have been filled with the Holy Spirit such as John the Immerser, Elizabeth, Zechariah, Jesus, the apostles, Peter, Stephen, Paul, Barnabas, the disciple in Antioch of Pisidia. It was a major factor in the selection of the seven in Acts 6. Evidently, from this list, the “filling” did not result in the same effects always.

Jesus had promised guidance to the apostles for such situation: Matthew 10:17ff, and his promise to them was kept.

V. 9 - examined - The Greek word is that used for questioning or interrogation, as in a law court. Note 12:19; 24:8; 25:26; 28:18 for other uses of the word.

good deed - Not a bad work, but a deed done by a benefactor. Peter’s implication: Why are we being tried for a good deed?

a cripple - The Greek term is descriptive of one weak/sickly, and is often used figuratively.

V. 10 - The actual intended use of the miracle by God was to provide an audience to which the apostles could proclaim facts about Jesus. This miracle, or any miracle, is meaningless apart from a revelation as to its basic purpose. All miracles had some purpose (even if unknown to us), since they were not performed indiscriminately.

Peter and the rest will pray for (continued) boldness, v. 29, but it was plain to his auditors that he and John were bold (already).

by the name - The very person, Jesus of Nazareth, whom they thought had been crucified, now arises to haunt them.

you crucified...God raised - Peter was unequivocal, allowing the chips to fall where they may. The die was cast!

this man is...well - Complete and well. As the council observed, v. 16, the facts were all too clear.

V. 11 - **This stone...rejected** - Jesus had quoted this text from Psalms 118:22 some weeks earlier in speaking to Jews in the temple. See Matthew 21:33-46; Rom. 9:33. The same old problem was yet present: the divine/human personage named Jesus, and the inability of the Jews to accept him as such.

V. 12 - **salvation** - As the man had been “saved” in the physical realm through Jesus’ power, so it was necessarily in the spiritual realm: only in Jesus could wholeness be found. Of course, the Jews expected salvation by the Messiah (Christ), so he was saying nothing but what Moses and the prophets said (as Paul in Acts 23:6; 26:22-23). The difficulty lay in just what salvation included. It is always important to recognize just how exclusive Christianity claims to be, and this verse states it plainly.

V. 13 - **they saw** - Actually, the tables are turned, and the council is on trial.

boldness - Originally, the word meant freedom of speech, then freedom to act, confidence to act, etc. Peter used it in Acts 2:29, and Paul asked for prayer that he might speak in such a way, Ephesians 6:19. Other places of interest are John 16:29; Acts 28:31; II Cor. 3:12; Eph. 3:12; Phil. 1:20; Colossians 2:15; I Tim. 3:13 Hebrews 3:6; 4:16; 10:19; I John 2:28; 3:21; 5:14.

uneducated - No rabbinical training was meant, no education at the feet of the Jewish teachers, etc.

common - The Greek word means something not in office, not skilled in some matter (here, in religious matters), so a commoner.

with Jesus - No halo or shining face was meant, but rather two men who were part of a movement they had earlier sought to destroy. Hence they took note of this evidence from the lips of Peter, given in response to their question in v. 7. Their preaching and defense was done upon the basis that they committed their lives to the service of Jesus as their Lord.

V. 14 - The physical evidence of the one-time cripple made the case open and shut, since the people had obviously accepted the apostles and what they stood for (v. 21), because it was undeniable (v. 16), which led many of those who were willing to honestly consider the evidence to become Christians.

V. 15 - **they conferred** - The matter was of great importance in many ways, and needed careful thought. However, the Lord brought all their planning to naught, as chapter 5, for instance, shows.

V. 16 - **notable sign** - From our perspective in time, we wonder how they could have missed so greatly. However, in Jewish history, many had worked miracles but had not been received. Moreover, their whole way of life was at stake, and that was not easy to give up. They had been at this

point in John 11 over the resurrection of Lazarus, and may also have been those who, seeing Jesus' miracles accused him of being in league with the devil, Matt. 12:22-45. They were quite unable to deny it and have any effect on the people who had seen it. So, the only thing left was to silence the apostles.

V. 17 - **it may spread** - The Greek term means to distribute, or scatter among.

let us warn - Threaten, intimidate, so that they will be silent. See v. 18, where they are emphatic and specific.

V. 18 - **charged them** - Ordered them to quit doing what they were doing, speaking and teaching about Jesus. The issue was made clear: stop at once! We should notice that the issue really was not preaching, per se, working miracles, per se, but doing these things in the name of and for the sake of Jesus. If the apostles had preached Judaism, etc., no problem would have arisen.

V. 20 - In consideration of the well-known (and oft-quoted) reply by the apostles, it is interesting to meditate upon I Peter 2:13ff. We never find Jesus disobeying the laws, or Paul doing so. Conversely, both taught obedience to the government and those in authority, as Jesus in what belonged Caesar, or Paul in Rom. 13. One's understanding of what constitutes acceptable obedience to God is a very individual matter. How we may justify our right to disobey man's laws that God through inspiration commanded us to keep is unclear, and impossible to decide for anyone but one's self. Stated differently, we will urge obedience to the laws of the land, and punishment for offenders; but as soon as a law is made that seems to oppose God's laws, we cite this text and justify our disobedience. It may be right to do so, but the matter is most difficult to settle.

It should be noted here that Peter and John's response is put in a sort of question form: "What would you men do? Here is all we (i.e., Peter and John) can do, be it judged correct or incorrect."

V. 21 - **further threatened** - The same root term as in v. 17. The apostles' response did not move the men at all. It may have its effect later, however, as some of the Jewish leaders became converted.

to punish - The word in Greek is of interest, because it relates to the concept some hold of annihilation. Here is evidently meant some form of punishment, and did not mean a cessation of existence. Hence, those who teach that to destroy means to bring to extinction incorrectly hold that this word (and related terms) means only and always annihilation. The usage in I John 4:18 argues clearly against such doctrine, as does the text in II Peter 2:9. The Scripture simply does not teach the doctrine at all, though it does teach punishment for non-believers after judgment.

praising God - Apparently the council saw that their case was lost, since the people were holding the contrary view. Such was the case of their leaders and John, then Jesus and now the apostles of Jesus: the multitudes (often) heard gladly, and responded in great numbers to God's messengers. No wonder the rulers were upset.

V. 22 - As with the man in John 5, the woman in Luke 13:10ff, and the man in John 9, the miracle was of such nature that it could not rightly be denied. So, one either accepted it, or irrationally opposed it.

QUESTIONS

41. Who came to arrest the apostles? Why these and not the Romans?
42. What "word" did the 2,000 believe?
43. Was it right to inquire of the apostles how the miracle was done?

44. Did Peter “give” more than was expected?

holy servant, Jesus.” 31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

45. How did the Sanhedrin find out the origin of the apostles?

V. 23 - The chief priests would include Annas and Caiaphas (perhaps John and Alexander). The elders probably includes all the rest of those gathered in the meeting.

46. How do you decide when to disobey the authority of the land in order to obey the authority of God?

V. 24 - **Sovereign Lord** - NIV and RSV. The Greek word is the word transliterated as “despot” and occurs in the following texts: Luke 2:29; I Tim. 6:1,2; II Tim. 2:21; Titus 2:9; I Peter 2:18 II Peter 2:1; Jude v. 4; Rev. 6:10. They used “slave” as a contrasting term in v. 29. Note carefully their understanding of God as creator. Paul thought likewise in ch. 17:22ff.

The same mindedness (they lifted their voices together) of their prayer reflects the fellowship they shared. The Greek term used occurs ten times in Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 7:57; 8:6; 12:20; 15:25; 18:12; 19:29; once in Romans 15:6. It indicates a commonness of mind. To some extent, our word amen should mean that the (uttered) prayer we heard by someone also expressed our sentiments, and we express our agreement by saying “amen.”

In the Upper Room, 4:23 - 5:11

23 When they were released they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, 25 who by the mouth of our father David, thy servant, didst say by the Holy Spirit, ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples imagine vain things? 26 The kings of the earth set themselves in array, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’ 27 for truly in this city there were gathered together against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever thy hand and thy plan had predestined to take place. 29 And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, 30 while thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy

V. 25 - **by the mouth...by the Holy Spirit** - This is just one of various ways that the method of inspiration is “spelled out” in the N.T. It is important to note that what the Holy Spirit said, through the mouth of a human, David, is also what God said. What was said in Psalms 2 was predictive, and to be understood as fulfilled by the treatment accorded Jesus in his trials and crucifixion, even though it seems to us to be more general in nature. This was the same point in the comments on Acts 2:17-20: the prophecy was fulfilled, even if we do not perceive exactly how it was fulfilled.

The intriguing point: how do the facts, which include what is in verses 27, 28 relate to their prayer and need?

imagine - The Greek term has the idea of meditation, thinking, purposing.

vain - Meaning empty or foolish; useless, thoughtless. Examples of it would be in Luke 1:53; I Cor. 15:10, 14; Gal. 2:2; Eph. 5:6; Phil. 2:16; Col. 2:8; I Thess. 3:5; James 2:20.

V. 26 - As the prayer indicates, the thought of those who were praying was this: God had predicted the sufferings of the Messiah (which was indicative of his greatness). Since they were serving in behalf of the Messiah, would God also protect and/or give them words of boldness to speak about the Messiah? They reasoned that if God's will was accomplished in the life of Jesus, despite what men might do, they only needed help of God to prevail over men.

This particular Psalm is quoted often in the N.T., always with reference to Jesus, the Messiah. See 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5.

V. 27 - Herod's part in Jesus' trial is mentioned by Luke. Here is an interesting example of their understanding of the fulfillment of the prophecy from the Psalmist.

holy servant - Matthew used the term in 17:18; John used it in John 4:51; Peter in Acts 3:26.

anoint - This term is to be understood figuratively, in the sense that God set Jesus apart for a particular task, even as priests, prophets and kings were set apart for their special tasks. The noun form is translated Christ (= Messiah).

V. 28 - **predestined** - The Greek term means planned or prophesied to take place. The same basic idea is presented in Acts 2:23; 10:42; I Peter 1:2, 10-12, 20; 2:4-6. Paul mentions the same idea in Eph. 1:3ff. God had foreknown the future and could plan to send Jesus on that basis, while

allowing men to make their own choices in regard to Jesus, and bear their guilt for any wrong choices.

V. 29 - **their threats** - The apostles often present God as aware of their lives and the problems therein, whether great or small. We may not be apostles, but God is nevertheless interested in us as individuals.

with boldness - The Greek term originally meant freedom to speak, then of speech. It was not the privilege of a slave to so speak, but Christian slaves were not necessarily like other slaves: freedom was a hallmark of Christianity. The Hebrew writer urges all Christians to be bold in going to God, 4:14ff.

thy word - A characteristic description by Luke and Paul of the Gospel message. Note v. 31; 6:7; 8:4, 14, 25; 10:36, 44; 11:1; etc. It also was applied to Jesus in John 1:1.

V. 30 - Note that they did not pray to be relieved of their problems necessarily, but to be able to handle it adequately. Their prayer, excluding the various extras was this: God, grant us boldness (the opportunities are many, men's threats are real, and we need divine help).

From an O.T. perspective, the hand or arm of God (God and his power) was often evident, as in Exodus 3:20; 7:5; Deuteronomy 2:15; Ruth 1:13; or the arm of the Lord, as in Exodus 6:6; II Kings 17:36; Job 40:9; Psalms 77:15.

signs and wonders - As the record reveals, God answered their prayer. People glorified God (as in v. 21), and became followers of the way, 5:12-13.

V. 31 - **when they had prayed** - At the conclusion of this united prayer request, God visibly answered. The place was shaken (the Greek term describes a powerful occurrence, as in Matt. 11:7; Acts 16:26; Heb. 12:26), and they spoke the word with boldness.

QUESTIONS

47. How many ways did the apostles and company use to describe their deity (God)?
48. What was the gist of their prayer?
49. What does this text tell us about the subject of inspiration?

LESSON FIVE

(4:32 - 5:11)

Fellowship in the Church

32 Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold 35 and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need. 36 Thus Joseph who was surnamed by the apostles Barnabas (which means, Son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, 37 sold a field which belonged to him, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

5 *But a man named Ananias with his wife Sapphira sold a piece of property, 2 and with his wife's knowledge he kept back some of the proceeds, and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has*

Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. 6 The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.

7 After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." 9 But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Hark, the feet of those that have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." 10 Immediately she fell down at his feet and died. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things.

V. 32 - The disciples continued to share in many things as mentioned above, not just material things. The material sharing was just one way they had things in common.

As chapter 5 will show, a forced sharing was in direct antithesis to the concept they had of sharing. Their sharing was free-will in nature, and done because the need was evident.

The sharing was strictly voluntary on the part of everyone (as is seen in II Cor. 8-9), and private ownership of property continued. It was not a joint ownership of land, or production, but only a common sharing with others as motivated or needed. To have made any sharing compulsory would have been in direct contrast to the principle in Christianity.

common - The term is in antithesis to one's own. It was the term used by Peter in Acts 10 in reference to what he had shared or not shared with