

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely

ACTS 5:31-32

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Lesson # 16

COMMENTARY ON: 4:1-7

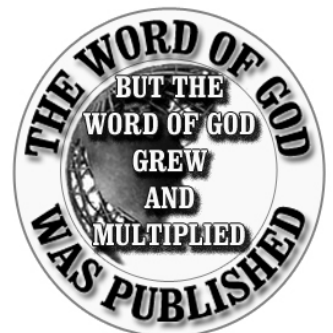
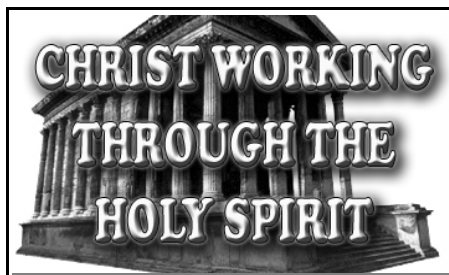
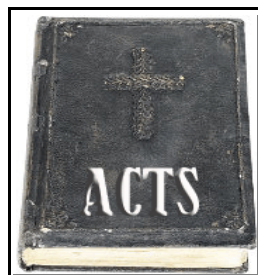
THE LEADERS GRIEVED WITH PETER AND JOHN

Although the Gospel is "good news" and "glad tidings of good things," it is not so perceived by those who have embraced a lifeless religious system. For those who are weary and heavy laden under the burden of the Law, the Gospel of Christ brings a message of hope and deliverance. However, for those who are intent upon being saved by works, and have judged their condition only by their ability to meet outward requirements, the Gospel is a threat. It is offensive because it places no value on empty ceremony, but rather offers consolation to those who have a "broken and contrite spirit," and are seeking for mercy. Now, we will see the reaction of the Jewish officials to Peter's teaching in the Temple. They will actually be grieved by what he is saying, even though he has spoken of sins being blotted out, Jesus being sent, and times of refreshing.

ACTS 17:26-27

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

"... and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

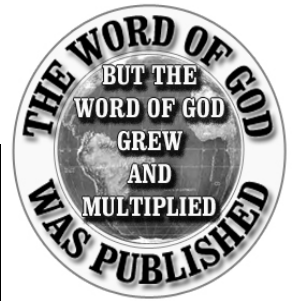


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Book of Acts

Lesson Number 16



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ALT = Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV = English Revised Version (1885), ESV = English Stand Version (2001), GNB = Good News (1966), GWN = God'S Word (1995), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), L.ITV = **Literal Translation of the Bible ((1976)**, LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MKJV = Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT =New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- **Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification** -----
LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

THE LEADERS GRIEVED WITH PETER AND JOHN

“ 4:1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, ² Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide. ⁴ Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand. ⁵ And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, ⁶ And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. ⁷ And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?” (Acts 4:1-7)

INTRODUCTION

Although the Gospel is “good news” and “glad tidings of good things,” it is not so perceived by those who have embraced a lifeless religious system. For those who are weary and heavy laden under the burden of the Law, the Gospel of Christ brings a message of hope and deliverance. **However, for those who are intent upon being saved by works, and have judged their condition only by their ability to meet outward requirements, the Gospel is a threat.** That is why those who attempt to serve God under a system

of law rarely speak of the Gospel, the promises, the New Covenant, or the glories of justification. They are occupied with other things, being snared by a mind-set that is focused on things that appear, for there is no other way to embrace a rules-and-regulation approach to religion. The Gospel is thus offensive because it places no value on empty ceremony, but rather offers consolation to those who have a “broken and contrite spirit,” and are seeking for mercy. Neither of these qualities are highly

esteemed by men, but are considered to be signs of personal weakness and inferiority. They are the opposite of loving one's self, and thinking more highly of self than is appropriate. Yet in God's sight, they are of great price, and draw His attention to the individual possessing them.

Even though the Law said nothing of faith, God confirmed its priority in Abraham. Moses wrote that Abraham “believed in the Lord, and He

Although Good News is being preached, the Temple leaders are much grieved by what is being said— by Given O. Blakely

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counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6). Later, in being prepared for deliverance from Egypt, Aaron spoke to the people, telling them everything that God had told Moses about that deliverance, while doing the signs that God had commanded to be done before them. It is written, *“And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped”* (Ex 4:31). Later, when they had walked out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, they saw their enemies strewn on the shore the Red Sea. At that time, *“Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and His servant Moses”* (Ex 14:31). **That was the last time Moses said anything about Israel believing** (Exodus through Deuteronomy).

Years later, Jehosaphat cried out to Judah *“Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper”* (2 Chron 20:20). However, there is no record of them ever having done so (1 Samuel through Malachi).

David, a man *“after”* God’s *“own heart”* (1 Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22), sensed

the priority of faith and acknowledged, *“I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living”* (Psa 27:13). He also said, *“I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted”* (Psa 116:10), and *“I have believed Thy commandments”* (Psa 119:66). The next person said to have believed God was Daniel, far removed from David: *“So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God”* (Dan 6:23). In a rare showing of the power of faith, after Jonah had preached to the city, it is written, *“So the people of Nineveh believed God”* (Jonah 3:5). Also, confirming the priority of faith, God said through the prophet Habakkuk who lived after Daniel *“the just shall live by his faith”* (Hab 2:4).

You see that, of old time, an emphasis was placed upon faith, yet it did not appear to be an emphasis. That is why people did not pick up on it. **Only sensitive hearts detected the priority of faith.** Because of this, for the most part, the religion of the people degenerated into nothing more than ritual. Owing to the repugnance of such an approach to God, He often rebuked Israel for their religious service (Isa 1:12-14; 66:3; Jer 6:20; Hos 8:13; Amos 5:21-23; Mal 1:6-8). Their religion became nothing more than a heartless external activity, and they were soundly and repeatedly rebuked by the prophets for it.

This manner continued into the time of Jesus. He also rebuked the religious leaders for their vain outward religion (Matt 23:27-28). He said that they *“worshiped”* in vain, being driven by traditions and the commandments of men (Matt 15:9). This was a trait among the people, and only those who broke away from mere tradition were any different.

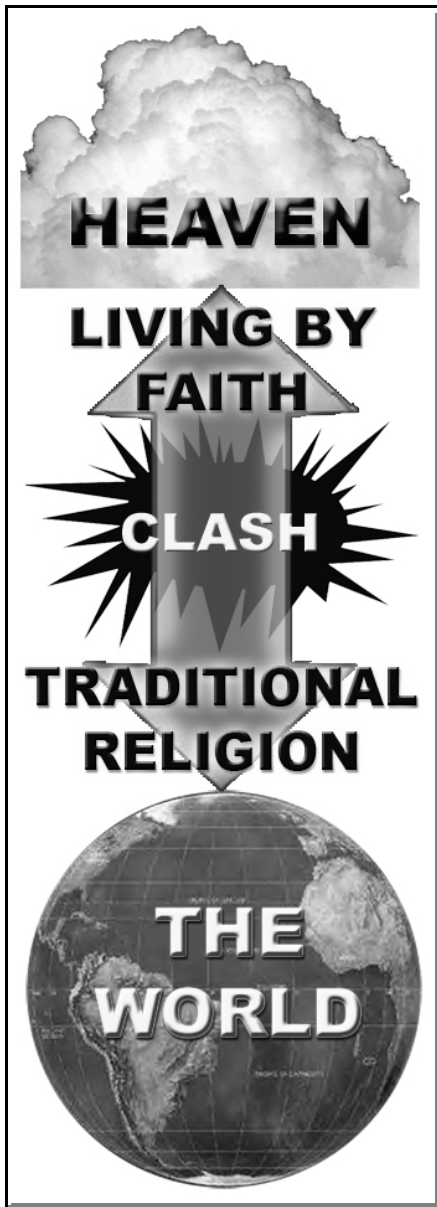
The Apostles will face the same dreadful mind-set in the book of Acts, and it will generate hostility toward them – religious hostility. Now, as an example, we will see the reaction of the Jewish officials to Peter’s teaching in the Temple. They will actually be grieved by what he is saying, even though he has spoken of sins being blotted out, Jesus being sent, together with times of refreshing. In preparation for this, I want to say a few words about the clash of truth with stereotyped and traditional religion.

It is important that we see what causes opposition to rise from the religious sector. Many young zealots for Jesus have been confounded when they faced opposition from professing Christians. Countless preachers have been discouraged by the lack of reception of the church itself to the word of God. The records and reports of men and women of God being rejected by the imagined leaders of the church and Christian institutions are voluminous and historical. Laborers for Christ have encountered opposition from those to whom they ministered, just as the holy prophets did (2 Chron 16:10; 24:20-21; 36:16; Neh 9:26; Jer 2:30; Jer 26:8, 21-23; Amos 2:12; Matt 5:12; Acts 7:52; 1 Thess 2:15). In fact, Jesus said, *“A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house”* (Matt 13:57).

Why is this so? Why has religious persecution historically been among the worst and most extended opposition of the people of God? Why must the messengers of God experience rejection from the people who say they are Christians? Who is the servant of the Lord who has not tasted of this rejection – if not in outright opposition, in being ignored and treated as though they had

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leprosy? There is a reason for it, even though it is often hard to bear.

THE CLASH OF TRUTH WITH STEREOTYPED AND TRADITIONAL RELIGION

There is an inevitable clash between “*the truth of God*” (Rom 15:8) and “*the tradition of men*” (Col 2:8) – between living by faith and living according to “*the works of the law*” (Rom 9:32). It is not possible to serve God and avoid this conflict. **Truth and tradition cannot live peaceably together, anymore than God can dwell among those who honor Him with their lips, yet their heart is “far from Him”** (Matt 15:8).

Moral corruption is evil, excluding one from the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9; Gal 5:21). However, religious corruption is even worse because it is not obviously wicked. **It lulls one into sleep, so that a claim of identity can be made, while the individual is immersed in sin.** Corrupt religion is like a noxious salve that, when applied to the conscience, causes the person to imagine God receives them, even while they possess no dominating appetite for His Son or His word.

When I speak of *religious corruption*, I am particularly referring to systems of thought among those who claim identify with the true God. As represented in Scripture, those embracing these systems of thought fall into two categories: those related to Judaism, and those professing identity with Christ. Wherever they are found, the truth of God clashes with their way of thinking, and therefore they oppose those who express that truth in words.

The following examples confirm that faithful ministers of God are often opposed by those who also claim to be the servants of God.

UNDER THE FIRST COVENANT

⇨ **ZECHARIAH.** “*And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, He hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD*” (2 Chron 24:20-21).

⇨ **JEREMIAH.** “*Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die . . . Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears*” (Jer 26:8,11).

THE LORD JESUS

⇨ “*And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine*” (Mark 11:18).

⇨ “*And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him*” (Mark 3:6).

UNDER THE NEW COVENANT

⇨ **PETER AND JOHN.** “*But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus*” (Acts 4:17-18).

⇨ **STEPHEN.** “*Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen . . . And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council*” (Acts 6:12).

⇨ **PAUL.** “*But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: but their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him*” (Acts 9:22-24).

All of these conflicts were with the professed people of God. **When the pure Word of the Lord was delivered, it sharply contrasted what others were saying, and thus opposition and even persecution followed.** Why do such conflicts arise?

This is because erroneous religion moves ones into the domain of “*this present evil world,*” and consequently into the vicinity of the devil himself (1 John 5:19). **God is “the God of truth”** (Isa 65:16), and can therefore can have no

part of a lie, misrepresentation, or delusion. Righteousness and unrighteousness cannot be co-mingled. Light and darkness can have no communion. There can be no accord between Christ and Belial. One who believes God and one who does not believe God can have no part with one another (2 Cor 6:14-15).

The clash of which I speak is **not** the result of two honest and good people disagreeing. It is **not** the outcome of two sincere people merely having differing opinions. **It is rather the outcome of men embracing conflicting views, and espousing perceptions of God and His purpose that are contradictory in nature.** When they are received, views that move one closer to the world cause a person to oppose those who declare the truth of God. This is a conflict that cannot be avoided, for being interlocked with this world puts one at variance with the God of heaven. That is, to be a “friend of the world” is to become “the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

There is form of friendship with the world that has the appearance of being very religious – even godly. It occurs when one chooses to embrace the traditions of men rather than the truth of God. This has a remarkable appeal. Jesus said of such people, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (John 8:44). Again, “And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not” (John 8:45). And again, “I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you” (John 8:37).

However amiable men may attempt to be, those who embrace and proclaim erroneous teachings cannot be at peace with those who “speak the truth in Christ.” When the truth of God is aggressively and consistently proclaimed, it will greatly agitate those who cling to mere religious tradition.

John said of self-professing Christians who had neither embraced n o r declared the truth, “They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them” (1 John 4:5). Paul said of them, “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things” (Phil 3:19). Speaking of their influence, Peter wrote, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet 2:1). Jude said of them, “These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame: wandering stars, to

whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” (Jude 1:12-13).

However amiable men may attempt to be, those who embrace and proclaim erroneous teachings cannot be at peace with those who “speak the truth in Christ” (1 Tim 2:7). When the truth of God is aggressively and consistently proclaimed, it will greatly agitate those who cling to mere religious tradition.

Some, seeking to promote fleshly accord, compromise the truth, tone it down, or altogether cease to proclaim it. In order to avoid the conflict, they may even choose to speak in traditional jargon in order to maintain peace. **However, the truth of God will not do its work if it is not declared.** When, owing to neglect and even outright rejection, it falls in the street (Isa 59:14), it ceases to work on the hearts of men. **We have a case in point in our text. Peter and John continue their preaching, and at last the religious leaders can stand it no longer.** Their hearts are revealed as they burst forth in opposition to what is being said, and zealously seek to subdue it.

AS THEY SPAKE

“⁴¹ **And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them.**”

Peter and John have been speaking to the people, declaring that the miracle they have just witnessed was done through the exalted Christ – the One the people had “killed.” The Temple courts are ablaze with interest, as the

people witness a man leaping and praising God because he has been healed. Because this whole event has extended over some period of time, it now draws the attention of the religious authorities.

AS THEY SPAKE

“And as they spake unto the people . . .” Other versions read, “as they were speaking to the people,”^{NASB} “while they were speaking to the people,”^{NIV}

“While Peter and John were speaking to the people,”^{NRSV} “While they were still speaking to the people,”^{NAB} “While they were still talking to the people,”^{NJB} “While they were saying this to the people,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “While they were addressing the people.”^{MONTGOMERY}

Peter and John have **not** been introduced to crowd-drawing techniques, advertizing, and the likes. **It is the**

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effective work of the Lord that first captured the people's attention, and now they are hearing insightful and powerful preaching. Peter and John are not singing, or hyping up the people with some pretentious form of "worship." They are proclaiming Christ, bringing Him to bear upon the immediate situation. They have not only declared how God has exalted Christ, but how wrong the people were in delivering Him to be crucified.

These holy men knew nothing of abbreviated presentations, tailored for the disinterested. They know that faith "cometh by hearing," not by seeing, and therefore they are speaking the message through which faith "comes" – "glad tidings of good things" (Rom 10:14-17). Ponder the summation of what they have

- ⇒ Through Jesus' name, and faith in that name, the man had been healed (3:16a).
- ⇒ The faith by which the man was standing in perfect health before them had been given by the Lord (3:16b).
- ⇒ Peter said he knew the people, together with their rulers, had acted in ignorance (3:17).
- ⇒ God Himself had fulfilled what the prophets had said about a suffering Christ (3:18).
- ⇒ The people were admonished to repent and be converted in order that their sins might be blotted out

- ⇒ The people were the children of the prophets, and therefore were obligated to hear them (3:25a).
- ⇒ The people were children of the covenant God gave to Abraham, and could therefore receive the promise (3:25b).
- ⇒ God had raised up Jesus from among their brethren, just as Moses had said (3:26a).
- ⇒ God had sent the resurrected and enthroned Jesus to them first, in order to bless them (3:26b).
- ⇒ The blessing ministered by Jesus was summarized in turning them away from their iniquities (3:26c).

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The words "as they were speaking" indicate that Peter and John were continuing to elaborate on this subject. They parallel the description of Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost: "and with many other words he did testify and exhort" (Acts 2:40).

Here we are provided a glimpse of the manner in which the truth of the Gospel is presented. Notice that Peter does **not** speak in parables. He does not tell stories, give homespun illustrations, or deliver dark sayings. **Speaking as a man, he depends upon affirmation to get the point across – the bold and unmitigated proclamation of the truth.** In so doing, he has opened the door for the working of the Holy Spirit, for the word of God is "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6:17).

PRIESTS, CAPTAIN OF THE TEMPLE, AND SADDUCEES

"... the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees," Other versions read, "priests and captain of the Temple guard, and the Sadducees" ^{NASB} "the priests, the commander of the temple guard, and the Sadducees," ^{CSB} "the priests, and the officer of the temple, and the Sadducees," ^{DOUAY} "Some priests, the officer in charge of the temple guards, and some Sadducees," ^{GWN} "the priests and the Sadducees and the rulers of the temple," ^{MRD} "the priests... accompanied by the captain of the Temple and the Sadducees," ^{NJB} "the priests, and the

said to this point.

- ⇒ The people should not have been marveling at the healing of the Lame man (3:12a).
- ⇒ They should not have been looking at Peter and John as though this had been done through their own power or holiness (3:12b).
- ⇒ God had glorified His Son Jesus, whom they had delivered up and denied (3:13).
- ⇒ The people had denied the Holy One and Just, and desired the release of a murderer (3:14).
- ⇒ They had killed the Prince of life (3:15a).
- ⇒ God raised the Prince of life from the dead, and the apostles were witnesses of Him being alive (3:15b).

(3:19a).

- ⇒ Upon their sins being blotted out, they would receive "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" (3:19b).
- ⇒ When their sins were removed, God would "send Jesus" to them (3:20).
- ⇒ Jesus would remain in heaven until the times of "the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (3:21).
- ⇒ Moses had foretold of the coming of Jesus, affirming that the real people would hearken to Him, and those who did not would be destroyed from among the people (3:22-23).
- ⇒ All of the prophets, from Samuel and those who followed him, had spoken of the days of Jesus, and His great salvation (3:24).

magistrate of the temple, and the Sadducees,"^{YLT} "the chief priests, the captain of the Temple police, and the Sadducees,"^{LIVING} and "the high priests and the military commander of the temple and the Sadducees."^{AMPLIFIED}

Having been aroused by the events taking place, the Temple authorities enter the scene.

The Priests

Some versions read "chief priests,"^{LIVING} "Jewish priests,"^{IE} and "high priests."^{WILLIAMS/AMPLIFIED} These were Divinely appointed servants in the Temple (2 Kgs 23:4; 2 Chron 29:16; Matt 12:5; Heb 9:6). These were probably, what is called, "chief priests" – a term used sixty-four times in the Gospels and the book of Acts. This expression – "chief priests" – is generally taken to refer to the high priests, or the ones under whom the ordinary priests served. These are thought to be former high priests, and members of their families, who maintained significant authority among the Jews.^{THAYER} Others define "chief priests" as principal priests, most important priests.^{FRIBERG} or members of the high priest's family.^{UBS} At any rate, it appears as though "the priests" do refer to these "chief priests," who maintained significant authority within the Temple.

The Captain of the Temple

Other versions read, "captain of the Temple guard,"^{NIV} "commander of the Temple guard,"^{CSB} "officer of the Temple,"^{DOUAY} "the officer in charge of the Temple,"^{GWN} "rulers of the Temple,"^{MRD} "magistrate of the Temple,"^{YLT} and "the military commander of the Temple."^{WILLIAMS}

This office is mentioned again in chapter five: "Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow" (5:24). This is not an office defined in the Law, but was added some time later. According to history, the role of this "captain" was to maintain order in the Temple. A brief summary of the office is found in the box below.

The very existence of this office suggests the possibility of disruption and disorderliness in the Temple courts. In a

CAPTAIN OF THE TEMPLE

The "captain of the Temple," mentioned by Luke (Acts 4:1; 5:24) in connection, with the priests, was not a military officer, but superintended the guard of priests and Levites who kept watch by night in the Temple. The "captains" mentioned in Luke 22:4, were probably his subalterns. The office appears to have existed from an early date the "priests that kept the door" (Kings 12:9; 25:18) are described by Josephus (*Ant.* 10:8, 5) as "the officers guarding the Temple:" a notice occurs in 2 Macc. 3:4, of a praefect of the Temple; this officer is styled captain by Josephus (*Ant.* 20:6, 2; War, 6:5, 3); and in the Mishna (*Middoth*, 1, § 2) "the captain of the mountain of the Temple;" his duty, as described in the place last quoted, was to visit the posts during the night, and see that the sentries were doing their duty (comp. 1 Chronicles 9:11; 2 Chronicles 31:13; 35:8, 9; Jeremiah 20:1).
McCLINTOK AND STRONG ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE BIBLE

way, it is a kind of commentary on the nature of an administration of Law. Such a system cannot remove from men the propensity to unacceptable behavior.

When Jesus was arrested by soldiers in the Garden, it was not a Roman militia, but one from the Jewish high priest. "Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons" (John 18:3). "And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And He touched his ear, and healed him. Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves?" (Luke 22:50-52). Perhaps the "captain" of our text was involved in that night during which "the power of darkness" was given leave to act against the Son of God.

The Sadducees

The "Sadducees" are mentioned fourteen times in Scripture (Matt 3:7; 16:1,6,11,12; 22:23,34; Mk 12:18; Lk 20:27; Acts 4:1; 5:17; 23:6,7,8). Nothing good is ever said about this group of people. John the Baptist rebuked them for coming to his baptism, yet not having works "meet for repentance" (Matt 3:7-8). They tempted Jesus, desiring a sign from

heaven (Matt 16:1). Jesus told His disciples to beware of their doctrine (Matt 16:6,11-12). It is pointed out that they said there was "no resurrection" (Matt 22:23; Mk 12:18; Lk 20:27). They are referred to as a "sect" (Acts 5:17). They aligned themselves against Paul (Acts 23:6). Not only did they deny the resurrection of the dead, they also said there was "neither angel, nor spirit" (Acts 23:8). This party is believed to have originated after the dominance of Greece, which was after the time of Daniel the prophet. We first read of them when they confronted John the Baptist (Matt 3:7).

The spiritually depraved condition of the Jews is confirmed by the ready acceptance of the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, the existence of angels, and the reality of spirits. In our text, we find them consorting with the priests.

CAME UPON THEM

"... came upon them." Other versions read, "came up to,"^{NIV} "came to them,"^{NRSV} "confronted them,"^{CSB} "came up to them,"^{NJB} "came over to them,"^{LIVING} "came down upon them,"^{WILLIAMS} "moved towards them,"^{PHILLIPS} "arrived,"^{GNB} and "stood near them."^{LITV}

Seeing the activity in the Temple court, this motley group makes their way to Peter and John, who are in the process of speaking. To them, this is a disruption. By saying they "came upon them," Luke means they confronted Peter and John. This is not a casual expression, as though they were walking about in the Temple court and, quite by chance, "came upon" Peter and John.

From the standpoint of language, the words "came upon" mean, "to stand over one, place oneself above,"^{THAYER} "to stand near, be always alert to."^{FRIBERG} This means that the group intentionally came and stood in front of Peter and John, conducting themselves as though they were superior. This was a confrontation in which they imagined that these two men of God were accountable to them, even though they were only caring for the house of God. These men really were not in charge of it. Jesus referred the Temple complex as "My Father's house" (John 2:16), and "a house of prayer" (Matt 21:13). When but a boy, Jesus referred to activities within the Temple as "My Father's business" (Lk

2:49).

These men, however, did not view

this area in such a manner. Like many of our day, they had chosen to lord it over those who were in the Temple area,

imposing their own will and ignorance upon the people. They will thus oppose Peter and John.

THEY WERE GRIEVED THAT THEY TAUGHT THE PEOPLE

“ 2a Being grieved that they taught the people . . . ”

The Spirit will now explain why the priests, captain of the Temple, and some Sadducees confronted Peter and John. They lacked no boldness, even though an obvious display of power had been wrought in their presence.

BEING GRIEVED

“Being grieved . . . ” Other versions read, *“greatly disturbed,”* NKJV *“much annoyed,”* NRSV *“sore troubled,”* ASV *“greatly troubled,”* BBE *“provoked,”* CSB *“being distressed,”* DARBY *“taking it grievously,”* GENEVA *“These religious authorities were were greatly annoyed,”* GWN *“being angry with them,”* MRD *“extremely annoyed,”* NJB *“they were upset,”* TE *“highly incensed,”* WEYMOUTH *“Being vexed and indignant through and through,”* AMPLIFIED and *“thoroughly incensed.”* PHILLIPS

Those who have not *“received the love of the truth that they might be saved,”* are grieved by the truth. **Their lack of appetite for, and enjoyment of the truth causes it to be abrasive to them.** This is particularly true concerning the Gospel of Christ and its implications. It is possible to speak of the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and various moral requirements as specified in the Law, and enjoy a rather wide range of receptive people. **If you chose to speak of marital relationships, raising children, and employees being honest and industrious, you might find many people who would agree with you, or even support your cause.** However, in matters of the Kingdom of God and His great salvation, an entirely different set of circumstances arise. The Gospel of Christ is like a sword that divides the interested from the disinterested.

Many highly successful *Christian ministries* owe their popularity to the

lower nature of the work and their message. **While rescuing people from the street, relieving the socially deprived, and assisting in the good work of solidifying marriages are, in a sense, wholesome and good, they are not good enough to be a primary work.** They are not of such a magnitude as to require the

alms.

The word *“grieved”* is a very strong word. It means *“to be troubled, displeased, offended, and pained,”* THAYER and *“to be much grieved,”* LIDDELL-SCOTT The thing that grieves is like a thorn to the flesh – it hurts because it is a foreign object that

Those who have not “received the love of the truth that they might be saved,” are grieved by the truth. Their lack of appetite for, and enjoyment of the truth causes it to be abrasive to them. This is particularly true concerning the Gospel of Christ and its implications.

death, burial and resurrection of Christ. They do not demand an Intercessor in heaven or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God.

I understand that such statements are exceedingly difficult for some to believe, for they think we are set to oppose such works. However, this is not the case at all. **We oppose those things as an emphasis. We oppose them as being representative of the thrust of the ministry of the church.** We know this is the case because of the Scriptural accounts of how Jesus directed the church, what he told them to do, and how He is represented in the Word of God.

Take our text as a notable example of these things. As this group confronted Peter and John, they did not do so because they had healed a man who was lame from birth. If they had let the matter drop there, they would not have been opposed. The priests, captain of the Temple, and Sadducees, were not grieved because the former lame man was remaining with Peter and John, and was no longer at the gate Beautiful asking for

penetrates with great pain. It is something contrary to the heart and mind, and therefore it is offensive to hear, and obnoxious to consider.

THEY TAUGHT THE PEOPLE

“. . . that they taught the people . . . ” Other versions read, *“they were teaching the people,”* NASB *“continued to teach the people,”* WILLIAMS and *“that they should be teaching the people.”* PHILLIPS

As I have already stated, the grief of these men was not caused by the man who was leaping and praising God. **Here it is stated that they were grieved because Peter and John were teaching the people.** The word *“teach”* means *“to hold a discourse with others in order to instruct them, deliver didactic discourses,”* THAYER and *“to instruct.”* LEH This was not a discussion. It was not a question and answer session. It is not that either of those things is wrong, and God forbid that any should think so. Both of them, however, require some degree of understanding on the side of both parties. Either the person has some understanding of what is being discussed, or they are learned enough to

ask the right questions.

In the case before us, the people did not have sufficient understanding to contribute to a discussion. Further, their conduct toward *“the Prince of life”* confirmed they did not know enough to ask the proper questions. **Therefore, Peter and John were instructing them – bringing knowledge to them that they did not possess, and an understanding that was out of their reach.**

As used in this text, *“taught”*

carries the idea of delivering a discourse – not an academic discourse, but a spiritual with a sharp focus.

Technically, a discourse is a system of organized knowledge – facts that are interrelated, and contribute to the expansion of one’s understanding. In this case, the facts surrounded Jesus of Nazareth, where He came from, what He did, why He did it, and what He is doing now. Having a grasp of the facts, Peter was able to reason upon them, draw valid conclusions, and call upon men to

respond in a certain way.

Throughout the book of Acts we will be subjected to a Kingdom rationale – a spiritual way of thinking. In this manner of thought, there will be certain pillars that hold up sound conclusions. There will also be a focus, which holds all of the reasoning together, leading one to an inevitable conclusion. Sound words will be employed, for unsound words can neither support nor promote the truth. What is said will precisely depict the truth as it is in Jesus, and shed light upon the eternal purpose of God.

THEY PREACHED THROUGH JESUS THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD

“ 2b . . . and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”

The particular point of contention will now be mentioned. It is important that we note precisely what is here affirmed, for it will address an error in thinking concerning preaching and teaching that is common among many.

THEY PREACHED

“ . . . and preached . . . ” Other versions read, *“and proclaiming,”* ^{NASB} *“and preaching,”* ^{DARBY} *“spreading the message,”* ^{GWN} *“and announcing,”* ^{NET} *“were claiming,”* ^{LIVING} *“and declaring,”* ^{ISV} *“and should assure them,”* ^{PHILLIPS} and *“and announced”* ^{LITV}

The preceding verse said the opponents were grieved because Peter and John *“taught”* (διδάσκειν) the people. Now Luke affirms that they had *“preached”* (καταγγέλλειν). The word used here (preached) means to “announce, declare, promulgate, make known.” ^{THAYER}

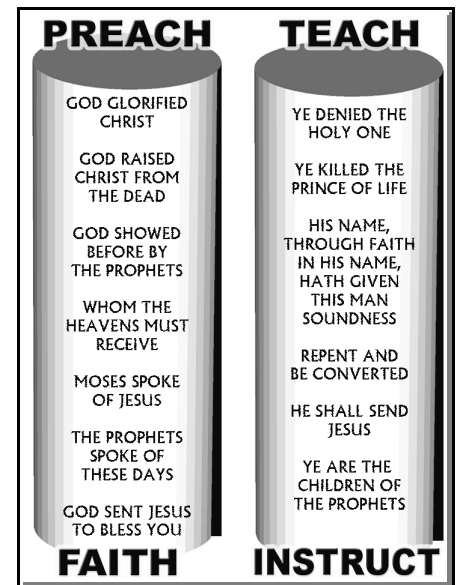
The movement with which I have been identified, as well as many purported scholars, have labored the point that preaching and teaching are two different kinds of speaking for two different kinds of people: preaching is for sinners, and teaching is for believers. Those who embrace this view say the Gospel is not preached to the church, but to sinners, and teaching is for the church, not for sinners. **The thought is that something that is proclaimed, or**

preached, is being made known for the first time. However, this is not the case. For example, this same word is used in Paul’s instruction concerning the Lord’s Table: *“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show [proclaim, ^{NKJV}] the Lord’s death till he come”* (1 Cor 11:26). Rather than being proclaimed only for the first time, this is a proclamation that takes place every time we eat at the Lord’s Table. Paul also used *“preach”* and *“teaching”* to describe his work among believers: *“Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus”* (Col 1:28).

In our text, the Holy Spirit uses both words to speak of the same discourse given by Peter and John. It was both preaching and teaching – proclaiming and instructing. **Preaching is the proclamation of a message through which faith comes and is maintained – an affirmation of accomplished, fixed, and unchangeable realities.** Teaching is instruction based upon those realities, yet it is not the means of obtaining and maintaining faith. Instruction declares the implications of the realities proclaimed, making an association between them and the responsibility of those who hear them.

Faith is based upon the affirmation of unchanging realities. It cannot be based upon commandments, exhortations, or admonitions. Correction does not produce or maintain faith. There

is a vital role for all of these things, but they necessitate faith, which requires a statement of things that cannot be changed. These relate directly with the Persons of both God and Christ, what



they have purposed, and what they have done.

The things that are grasped by faith are, by their very nature, offensive to the flesh – particularly religious flesh. This will be confirmed in the confrontation now described.

THROUGH JESUS

“ . . . through Jesus . . . ” Other

Although Good News is being preached, the Temple leaders are much grieved by what is being said– by Given O. Blakely

versions read, *"in Jesus,"*^{NKJV} *"Jesus as the example,"*^{BBE} *"in the person of Jesus,"*^{CSB} *"by Jesus,"*^{DARBY} *"in Jesus name,"*^{GENEVA} *"through Jesus,"*^{GWN} *"by the Messiah,"*^{MRD} *"through the power of Jesus,"*^{IE} *"in the case of Jesus,"*^{WEYMOUTH} *"in [the case of Jesus],"*^{AMPLIFIED} and *"had been proved through the rising of Jesus."*^{PHILLIPS}

Peter and John had been preaching something to the people that depended upon the Lord Jesus Christ. **He was the primary example of what they were affirming. He was, as well, the proof of it.**

Sound preaching and teaching is based upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. **The foundation of preaching and**

Him (Col 2:3). When dealing with the appropriation of resources and the attainment of goals, we are *"complete in Him, which the Head of all principality and power"* (Col 2:10).

What will be the subject of Apostolic exposition? What will be the point they seek to establish in the hearts of men? Why are the priests, the captain of the Temple, and the Sadducees grieved with what they are saying?

THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD

"... the resurrection from the dead." Other versions read, *"there is the resurrection of the dead,"*^{NRSV} *"the coming back from the dead,"*^{BBE} *"the*

dead." **They were setting forth Jesus as the cause and confirmation of all of the dead would be raised.** First, Jesus Himself was raised, proving that He was superior to death, and that *"the keys of hell [Hades] and death"* are in His hands (Rev 1:16). Death had no power over Jesus, and therefore could not retain Him in the grave. For that reason, all of the graves will yield to Him, giving forth their dead at His final command (John 5:28). Then, in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, *"the earth shall cast out the dead"* (Isa 26:19). This is the resurrection that Peter and John were teaching.

The Resurrection of the Dead

The resurrection of the dead will confirm that existence in this world is **not** the only existence. It will corroborate that what follows time in this world is **more** important than what occurs in this world. **Then all men will see, whether they are ready for it or not, that life in this world is the time of preparation for "the world to come"** (Mk 10:30; Heb 2:5). The resurrection of the dead will be a time when every person will be summoned before the Throne of God for the day of judgment, *"that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"* (2 Cor 5:10).

PREACHING & TEACHING

THE NAME OF JESUS

| | | |
|--------|------|---------|
| PERSON | WORK | EXAMPLE |
|--------|------|---------|

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

teaching cannot differ from the foundation of salvation. If the things being declared and expounded do not relate to Christ Jesus, they cannot possibly relate to the salvation that is in Him. *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ"* (1 Cor 3:11). And again, *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12).

Profitable preaching and teaching is not based upon impersonal laws or principles, just as salvation itself is not based on such an approach. **Doctrine must be ultimately traced back to the Son of God, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells "bodily"** (Col 1:19; 2:9). If teaching addresses the proper employment of knowledge, it must be remembered that *"all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"* are hidden in

resurrection from among the dead,"^{DARBY} *"the message that the dead will come back to life,"*^{GWN} *"the rising again out of the dead,"*^{YLT} *"people can rise from death,"*^{IE} and *"proved that the dead will rise to life."*^{GNB}

Peter had affirmed on the day of Pentecost, and here as well, that God had raised Jesus from the dead. *"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it"* (Acts 2:24). *"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses"* (Acts 2:32). *"And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead: whereof we are witnesses"* (Acts 3:15). **However, the preaching of Christ's resurrection itself is NOT the point of this text.**

Here, Peter and John were teaching the people concerning the dead being raised – *"the resurrection of the*

Revelation of the Fact of the Resurrection Before Jesus

Although the disclosures were few and far between, there were revelations of the coming resurrection in ancient times.

- ⇨ Before the law, Job was persuaded of the resurrection of the dead (Job 14:12-15; 19:25-27).
- ⇨ David testified to the coming resurrection of the dead (Psa 16:9-10; 17:15; 49:15).
- ⇨ Isaiah prophesied of the dead being raised (Isa 26:8,19).
- ⇨ It was revealed to Daniel that the dead would be raised (Dan 12:2-3,13).
- ⇨ Hosea prophesied of the dead being ransomed from the grave, and the grave being destroyed (Hos 13:14).

Although Good News is being preached, the Temple leaders are much grieved by what is being said— by Given O. Blakely

Jesus Spoke of the Resurrection

Commensurate with Jesus, there was an abundance of revelation concerning the resurrection of the dead. You may recall that during His ministry, a very prominent sect among the Jews – the Sadducees – did not believe there was a resurrection of the dead (Matt 22:23). Although familiar with Scripture, they passed over the few references to the resurrection. **Although other Jewish teachers and leaders did accept the fact of the resurrection, they had no difficulty receiving the Sadducees.** That confirmed the general perception that the resurrection of the dead was **not** a critical issue. However, Jesus dashed that notion to the ground in His teaching.

- ⇒ Jesus spoke of things that would occur *“in the resurrection”* (Matt 22:30).
- ⇒ He spoke of *“the resurrection of the dead”* (Matt 22:31).
- ⇒ He spoke of *“the resurrection of the just”* (Lk 14:14).
- ⇒ He spoke of *“the resurrection from the dead”* (Lk 20:35).
- ⇒ Jesus taught of *“the children of the resurrection”* (Lk 20:36).
- ⇒ He affirmed that *“the dead are raised”* (Lk 20:37).
- ⇒ He referred to the dead being raised *“unto the resurrection of life”* and *“unto the resurrection of damnation”* (John 5:29).
- ⇒ He said the day was coming *“in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth”* (John 5:28-29).
- ⇒ In His lengthy teaching about Himself being the Bread of life, Jesus thrice affirmed of those who believed on Him, **“and I will raise him up at the last day”** (John 6:40,44-54).

The Apostles Expressions Concerning the Resurrection

- ⇒ They preached Jesus **and** the resurrection. *“Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And*

some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a

*God hath both raised up the Lord, and **will also raise up us** by his own*

THE APOSTLES' DOCTRINE

REFLECTING THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD

DOCTRINE
EXAMPLE
DEATH
RAISED

THE FULNESS OF THE GODHEAD BODILY

THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD

*setter forth of strange gods: because **he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection . . .** And when they heard of **the resurrection of the dead**, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter”* (Acts 17:18,32).

- ⇒ The resurrection of the dead is clearly, by nature and necessity, tied to hope. *“And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that **there shall be a resurrection of the dead**, both of the just and unjust”* (Acts 24:15).
- ⇒ There is a certain logic in the fact of the resurrection that makes it unreasonable to refuse to acknowledge it. *“Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should **raise the dead?**”* (Acts 26:8).
- ⇒ God is identified as one that raises the dead. *“(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before Him whom he believed, even God, who **quickeneth the dead**, and calleth those things which be not as though they were”* (Rom 4:17). *“But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God **which raiseth the dead**”* (2 Cor 1:9).
- ⇒ The Gospel affirms that God raised Jesus from the dead, and that He will also raise us from the dead. *“And*

power” (1 Cor 6:14). *“Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus **shall raise up us also by Jesus**, and shall present us with you”* (2 Cor 4:14).

- ⇒ An extensive teaching about the necessity of the resurrection, and the different nature of the resurrection body is provided (1 Cor 15:12-57).
- ⇒ There is a strong affirmation of both the fact and the certainty of the resurrection. *“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and **the dead shall be raised incorruptible**, and we shall be changed”* (1 Cor 15:52).
- ⇒ In redemption, we are said to have been wrought by God to inhabit the resurrection body. *“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, **we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens . . .** Now He that hath **wrought us for the selfsame thing** is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit”* (2 Cor 5:1,5)
- ⇒ Paul stated his objective was to be profitably involved in resurrection. *“If by any means I might attain unto **the resurrection of the dead**”* (Phil 3:11).
- ⇒ Jesus shall *“change our vile body”* at

Although Good News is being preached, the Temple leaders are much grieved by what is being said– by Given O. Blakely

the resurrection, when he comes. *“Who shall **change our vile body**, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto himself”* (Phil 3:21).

- ⇒ Immortality will to be experienced at the resurrection. *“For **this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality**. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and **this mortal shall have put on immortality**, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, *Death is swallowed up in victory*”* (1 Cor 15:53-54),
- ⇒ Immortality has been brought to light through the Gospel. *“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and*

of Christ. *“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of **resurrection of the dead**, and of eternal judgment”* (Heb 6:2).

- ⇒ The resurrection of the dead will precede the day of judgment. *“And **the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works**”* (Rev 20:13)

A Word About Preaching and Teaching
Preaching and teaching that are not done with an acute consciousness of the resurrection of the dead will eventually go astray. If men preach and teach as though this life is the only life, or as though it was the primary or most

had been assigned the subject of the resurrection of the dead, and publicly declared that he regretted he did not have a subject with more relevancy. His statement had no apparent adverse impact on the audience. It also revealed that he had grasped very little, if any at all, of the truth of the Gospel.

It appears as though this is a very common way of thinking – that the resurrection of the dead is not germane to daily living for Christ. However, once in a while a man like the one just mentioned is ignorant enough to actually express such foolish thinking.

We know from the general condition of the churches that there is very little understood about the resurrection of the dead. The resurrection body, concerning which considerable is said in Scripture (1 Cor 15:12-37; 2 Cor 5:1-5; Phil 3:20-21), is a matter concerning which there is very little expressed interest. This is so because very little is being said about it. Contemporary issues and fads have no come to dominate what is called preaching and teaching, and the resurrection of the dead simply does not blend with such instruction.

There Is A Reason

There is a reason for the muted preaching and teaching of our day. **It is not possible to capitalize on the resurrection of the dead for earthly fame, gain, or other temporal benefits.** True faith moves a person to live with the aim of attaining *“unto the resurrection of the dead”* (Phil 3:11). That is, that the resurrection might prove to be a blessing (*the resurrection of life*), and not be unto cursing (*the resurrection of damnation*). If, when the resurrection takes place, our spirits have **not** been cultured for immortality, we shall be thrust from the presence of the Lord. **While we were in this world, if our minds were preeminently occupied with the things of this world, there will be no place in the glory for us.**

The resurrection of the dead will not transform our spirits. It has to do with our bodies. **There will be no change of character at that time.** If, while we were *“in the body”* of flesh and blood, we did not culture an appetite for God and

The resurrection of the dead will not transform our spirits. It has to do with our bodies. There will be no change of character at that time. If, while we were “in the body” of flesh and blood, we did not culture an appetite for God and the things of God, we will receive no such appetite at the resurrection.

*grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath **brought life and immortality to light through the gospel**”* (2 Tim 1:9-10).

- ⇒ A distortion of the understanding of the resurrection can overthrow one’s faith. *“And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, **saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some**”* (2 Tim 2:17-18).
- ⇒ The resurrection of the dead is among the principles of the doctrine

important life, they actually push men into a helpless state. Thus it is written, *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable”* (1 Cor 15:19). **If what is being declared to men in the name of Christ is not relevant in view of the resurrection of the dead, it cannot be from God.** Such declarations are not to be received, honored, or in any way dignified. If men cannot make a connection between what they preach and the resurrection of the dead, then they should be not be preaching.

It is alarming how very little is being said these days concerning the resurrection of the dead. I remember a message I heard in the late 1990’s by a young minister at a highly regarded preaching and teaching convention. He

the things of God, we will receive no such appetite at the resurrection. When the dead are raised, death will be swallowed up in victory (1 Cor 15:54). **There will no longer be anything present that is dead or dying.** The world shall have passed away, and everything that is in it. All temporal relationships will be gone. **For those who had primary appetites for such things, the resurrection of the dead will be the commencement of unimaginable pain and regret.** For the damned, all of the things they want will be gone, and yet their longing and preference for them will remain. Who is able to estimate the terror of such a condition?

Salvation Is To Be Seen Correctly

Men often view salvation with a mind for what can be realized in **this** world – and, indeed, there are present benefits to be realized. Lawful things include the remission of sins (1 John 1:7,9), times of refreshing (Acts 3:19; Tit 3:5), being taught to put off the old man and put on the new man (Eph 4:20-24), resisting and overcoming the devil (James 4:7; Rev 12:11), and receiving and enjoying lawful possessions and relationships (Mk 10:29-30). We have the opportunity to “do good unto all men, especially unto them which are of the household of faith” (Gal 6:10).

It is how you fare after the heavens and earth pass away that really matters. Your concern must be for what you will be when you are raised from the dead. It is your state after the day of judgment that should concern you. What will happen to you when Jesus comes, and you see Him as He is?

However, these things are only **benefits in view of what takes place AFTER the passing away of the present heavens and earth.** If there is no resurrection of the dead, there is no real point to forgiveness, renewal, profitable relationships, or overcoming the devil. All religion, and all attempts to be and do good are foolish and pointless if the dead are not raised. All of Divine benefits presume a conclusion to life in this world, the resurrection of the dead, and the day of judgment. **Behind them all there must be a keen awareness of the fact that we will give an account of ourselves to God.** The Divine appointments of death and judgment must not be forgotten (Heb 9:27).

It is how you fare **after** the heavens and earth pass away that really

matters. **Your concern must be for what you will be when you are raised from the dead.** It is your state **after** the day of judgment that should concern you. What will happen to you when Jesus comes, and you see Him as He is? Will you be fully conformed to His image then, or will you be targeted for “*everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power*” (1 Thess 1:9)? The coming of the Lord will be a time when all things are revealed.

These considerations, and more, are what move faithful men to teach through Jesus the resurrection. A lack of this awareness is what moves men to be silent about the resurrection, giving themselves to temporal matters, and things that are more pleasing to men.

THEY LAID HANDS ON THEM

“³ And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.”

We are witnessing the outworking of the Holy Spirit being within men. Some have imagined that once you are in Christ Jesus, that circumstance alters the whole of life, so that you will have no more trouble with your enemies. **Men must take care not to speculate in such a manner as to contradict the experience of holy men.** Our theology must not reflect mere human perception. It must rather be in perfect harmony with the life and doctrine of Jesus, and the life and teaching of those in whom He works.

THEY LAID THEIR HANDS ON THEM

“*And they laid hands on them . . . for it was now eventide.*” Other versions read, “*laid hands on them . . . for it was already evening.*”^{NKJV} “*They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening,*”^{NIV} “*they arrested them . . . for it was already evening.*”^{NRSV} “*they took them . . . for it was now evening.*”^{BBE} “*So the temple guards arrested them. Since it was already evening,*”^{GWN} and “*So they laid hands on them (arrested them) . . . for it was already evening.*”^{AMPLIFIED}

This is the first recorded persecution of Christ’s followers. It came from a collection of sinners: the religious sector (priests), the military sector (captain of the Temple), and the rationalizers (Sadducees). The priests held to corrupted religion, and were thus

intimidated by the truth. The military sector saw the enthusiasm of faith as causing disruption. The rationalizers, who used human logic to interpret Scripture, saw the truth as toppling their way of thinking. These were all enemies of the faith and contradictors of truth.

These ungodly men forcibly took Peter and John, laying their hands on them. They even did so within the confines of a sacred environment. They seized and led off as prisoners [for so the words “*laid hold*” mean] these two holy men. In fact, they did this “*as they were speaking.*”^{NASB}

These sinful men forced themselves upon Peter and John, so that, according to appearance, it looked as

Although Good News is being preached, the Temple leaders are much grieved by what is being said– by Given O. Blakely

though they were stronger than the Apostles.

We are told that these enemies arrested Peter and John because it was late in the day. That is, things were going to be winding down in the Temple area, and they considered it too late to examine them at that time. As you know, this is a consideration that Jesus was not given. In fact, His trial was during the night.

THEY PUT THEM IN HOLD

“ . . . and put them in hold unto the next day.” Other versions read, “and put them in custody until the next day,”^{NKJV} “and put them in jail until the next day,”^{NASB} “and put them in ward until the morrow,”^{ASV} “and put them in prison till the morning,”^{BBE} “jailed them overnight,”^{LIVING} and “put them under guard until the next day.”^{MKJV}

As if it was not enough to forcibly seize these righteous men, this triad of wicked persons confined them over night, putting them in jail until the next day. Then, they would have more time to examine them and make a determination concerning their state. Thus the Temple discourse was cut short – or, at least, that is how it appeared.

Why? Why? Why?

How is it that chosen men, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and sent on a mission by Jesus, could be

successfully opposed – at least according to appearance? How was it possible for their enemies to lay hands on them, arrest them, and place them in confinement? For those who are acquainted with the manner of the Kingdom, this is not difficult to process. **However, for others who have a view of life in Christ that accents status in this world, it is more comfortable to simply ignore the whole situation.**

Today we are faced with religious blusterers that speak of victory and triumph as though there really is no opposition at all. They remind us that “greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (John 4:4), but fail to accent how this is made known in overcoming opposition, **not** failing to have any of it. When the Lord asserts, “no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper,” and “every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgement thou shalt condemn,” **those conditions are not to be equated with smooth sailing and the absence of contradiction** (Isa 54:17).

Jesus had prepared His disciples for the stark realities of spiritual warfare. “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). And again, “But before all these, **they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before**

kings and rulers for My name's sake” (Luke 21:12). Now, the opposition begins. You will sense from the text that it does not surprise the apostles, nor are they hesitant to know what to do.

OUR REAL CONDITION

When men are saved, God has “delivered from the power of darkness, and translated . . . into the kingdom of His dear Son” (Col 1:13). **However, until they die, or Jesus returns, they remain in the very world from which they have been delivered, even though they are separate from it.** Their deliverance is seen in the change wrought in their character and the spiritual fellowship they have with Christ in the heavenly places (1 Cor 1:9; Eph 2:6). Yet, because they remain “in the body,” they are also in the presence of the ungodly. That circumstance sets the stage for opposition, suffering, and even persecution.

The world senses the enmity that exists between the redeemed and themselves, and therefore they lash out against them. The measure of the opposition will be as strong as the believer's insistence on maintaining his walk with the Lord. It will erupt to the extent that the believer declares the truth. While the opposition may take different forms, and vary in its intensity, it will always be present. Light and darkness cannot avoid each other.

IN SPITE OF THE LEADERS, MANY BELIEVED ANYWAY

“ 4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.”

Now, we will see if the opposition of men can cause the Word of God itself to cease to be effective. Can opposing the proclamation of the Gospel cause those with an ear for hearing to no longer profit from that word.

HOWBEIT

“Howbeit . . . ” Other versions read, “However,”^{NKJV} “But,”^{NASB} “How be it,”^{TNT} “and,”^{YLT} and “Nevertheless.”^{PHILLIPS}

“Howbeit” is like the flip side of the coin of Kingdom work. On the one side, there is aggressive opposition from



those who have **not** received the love of the truth. On the other side, the Word does its work in the hearts of those who **have** received the love of the truth.

The working of the Lord continued just as though no opposition was present.

MANY WHICH HEARD THE WORD BELIEVED

“ . . . many of them which heard the word believed . . . ” Other versions read, “many of those who heard the message believed,”^{NASB} “a number of those who gave hearing to the word had faith,”^{BBE} “many of those who had heard

the message became believers.^{GWN} “many of those who heard the word came to believe.”^{NAB} “many of those who had listened to the message believed.”^{NIB} “many of the people who heard their message believed it.”^{NLT} “many of the people who heard Peter and John preach believed the things that they said.”^{IE} and “many of those who heard the message believed (adhered to and trusted in and relied on Jesus as the Christ).”^{AMPLIFIED}

Even though the Temple authorities were grieved by what Peter and John were preaching, many who heard their words were pleased with them and believed. The word “howbeit” indicates that the believing came after the confrontation with the priests, captain of the Temple, and Sadducees. That is, the rift with the religious authorities had no impact upon the people. **They had a higher regard for the Gospel they had heard than for the officials who were opposed to it.** The Temple authorities were offended by what Peter and John said, but the multitude was not. Here the word of Jesus was being fulfilled: “And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me” (Matt 11:6).

It is possible for the Gospel that is preached to be so marvelous that those who believe it will not be turned aside by the enemies of the faith. There are gospels – other gospels (2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6) – that are not so characterized. They do not offer something that is transcendent to all that is in the world.

The Word Is Not Bound

Here is a wonderful example of the prevailing condition stated by Paul: “Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; **but the word of God is not bound**” (2 Tim 2:9). This is why Paul could say to the Philippians, “both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace” (Phil 1:7).

Do you have something from God – a word from God, an insight, an understanding of the Gospel? **Do not become discouraged if you face opponents, or those who attempt to curtail your influence.** The word of God is “not bound,” and as you speak it boldly, it will yield results. God Himself has

declared, “So shall **My** word be that goeth forth out of **My** mouth: it shall not return unto **Me** void, but it shall accomplish that which **I** please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto **I** sent it” (Isa 55:11).

Also, if faith comes “by hearing” (Rom 10:17), then Deity must be involved in the process, else no such statement could be made. **There can be no such guarantees on something that is wholly of man and through man.** Because the

impersonal principle. In the Kingdom of God, this is true of everything that is effective. **God has not set certain principles in motion that automatically function when certain criteria are met.** Men who represent the things of God as though this was the case have not told the truth. Take, for example, the matter of sowing and reaping – something that is being greatly corrupted in contemporary Christianity (which expression is really a misnomer).

| THE MANNER OF THE KINGDOM | | |
|--|--|------------------|
| PLANTING | WATERING | INCREASE |
| GOD GLORIFIED JESUS. | JESUS' NAME, THROUGH FAITH IN HIS NAME, MADE THIS MAN WHOLE. | DEVELOPED |
| GOD RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD. | REPENT AND BE CONVERTED, SO SINS WILL BE BLOTTED OUT, AND TIMES OF REFRESHING WILL COME. | |
| GOD FULFILLED THE WORD OF HIS PROPHETS. | GOD WILL SEND JESUS TO YOU. | |
| THE HEAVENS MUST RETAIN JESUS UNTIL THE WORDS OF THE PROPHETS ARE FULFILLED. | YOU ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE PROPHETS AND COVENANT. | |
| THE PROPHETS FORETOLD OF THESE DAYS | | |

circumstances of man himself are uncertain, everything he says and does obtain the same characteristics. **The only way to avoid this fluctuation and uncertainty is for the deeds to be “wrought in God”** (John 3:21). That is, if God is actually in the matter, His influence in it makes it certain. This is why “faith **COMETH** by hearing” – not that it may come, or is possible to so come, **but that is actually does.** It is the God-factor that makes this true.

Faith does not “come” according to some law of automation, or some

Sowing and Reaping

Some declare that if you sow this or that, it will yield an increase – no matter who you are. This is a law that God has set in motion, they affirm, and it cannot fail. They have forgotten that it is written, “Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt **not** reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt **not** anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt **not** drink wine” (Micah 6:15). And again it is written, “And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall **not** yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits” (Lev 26:20).

Although Good News is being preached, the Temple leaders are much grieved by what is being said– by Given O. Blakely

Again, it is possible to reap something you did not sow: *“They have sown wheat, but shall **reap thorns**”* (Jer 12:13). One can also sow a lot, but bring in little, or store an abundant harvest in a place where it deteriorates and wastes away: *“Ye have sown much, and **bring in little**; ye eat, but ye **have not enough**; ye drink, but ye are **not filled** with drink; ye clothe you, but **there is none warm**; and he that earneth wages earneth wages **to put it into a bag with holes**”* (Hag 1:6).

There are other factors entering into the equation that lie between sowing and reaping. Those factors relate personally to God Himself. First, the seed must be watered, or nurtured. Something must be done that assists the seed to do its work. Too, reaping does not come according to a law or principle, but according to the Living God. Here is how Paul stated it. *“I have planted, **Apollos watered**; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God **that giveth the increase**”* (1 Cor 3:6-7).

In our text, Peter and John both planted and watered. They planted the seed of the Gospel – things that were accomplished prior to their time. They watered that seed by interpreting what had happened before them, exhorting the people to act, and setting before them the promises of God.

Kingdom benefits cannot be realized without the planting of Kingdom seed. Such things as the blotting out of sin, times of refreshing, and the sending of Jesus will **not** be experienced if the Gospel is **not** preached. Men are not brought to a liberating knowledge of the truth (John 8:32) without the truth actually being proclaimed. Religious tradition cannot produce *“repentance unto life”* (Acts 11:18). The wisdom of men cannot induce people to believe *“unto the saving of the soul”* (Heb 10:39). Cunningly devised fables cannot move men to *“call upon the name of the Lord”* (Acts 2:21).

Additionally, there is no way for a man of God to *“water,”* or nurture, humanly devised seed. **Spiritual watering cannot be directed to the seed of traditional and lifeless religion.** The principles of a religious movement cannot be watered with Scripture. Psychological

appeals cannot be strengthened so that a person will believe the Gospel and call upon the name of the Lord. As rudimentary as these things may appear, they are not generally acknowledged.

From beginning to end, *“Salvation is of the Lord”* (Jonah 2:9; Psa 37:39). It is said to belong to the Lord (Psa 3:8). He is therefore referred to as *“the God of salvation”* (Psa 68:20). Because salvation is appropriately called an *“everlasting salvation”* (Isa 45:17), it can in no way be accomplished by *“man, whose breath is in his nostrils”* (Isa 2:22). It is God who begins the work, and it is God who will perform it *“unto the day of Christ”* (Phil 16). Faith itself has an *“Author”* and a *“Finisher”* as well – the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 12:2).

Now, increase will come – a harvest that will spring from the seed that was sown and watered. **In this record, we are to take due note of the**

“they were, in number, about five thousand men,”^{MRD} *“the total number of men had now risen to something like five thousand,”*^{NJB} *“so the number of believers now totaled about 5,000 men, not counting women and children,”*^{NLT} *“and the number of the men was about five thousand,”*^{TNT} *“There were about 5,000 men in the group of believers,”*^{IE} *“the number of adult men had now grown to be about 5,000,”*^{WEYMOUTH} *“their number grew and came to about 5,000,”*^{AMPLIFIED} and *“the number of men alone rose to about five thousand.”*^{PHILLIPS}

There are two ways of viewing this count, and the commentators are by no means in agreement on it. First, this could be the number of men who believed on this occasion. Second, it could be a summation of all believers up to this point.

There are occasions in the book of Acts when the growth in the number of total disciples is the point: *“the number*

| | OPTION 1 | OPTION 2 | |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Began | 120 | 120 | Individual Count |
| Sum came to | 3,000 | 3,000 | Individual Count |
| Sum came to | 5,000 | 5,000 | Individual Count |
| Grand Total | 5,000 | 8,120 | Grand Total |

means the Lord used to bring the people to believe. The words that Peter declared are the means.

ABOUT FIVE THOUSAND

“ . . . and the number of the men was about five thousand.” Other versions read, *“the number of men came to about five thousand,”*^{NKJV} *“the number of men grew to about five thousand,”*^{NIV} *“and they numbered about five thousand,”*^{NRSV} *“the number of the men came to be about five thousand,”*^{ASV} *“they were now about five thousand,”*^{BBE} *“and the number of the men had become about five thousand,”*^{DARBY} *“and the number of the men was made five thousand,”*^{DOUAY} *“and the number of the men was about five thousand,”*^{GENEVA} *“so the number of men who believed grew to about 5,000,”*^{GWN}

of disciples was multiplied . . . the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem . . . “so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily” (6:1,7; 16:5). There are other times when it is simply said that many believed, but no number is specified: *“many believed in the Lord . . . a great number believed . . . a great multitude both of Jews and also of Greeks believed . . . as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed . . . And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few . . . many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized . . . and many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds”* (9:42; 11:21; 13:46; 14:1; 17:4;

18:8; 19:16).

It is not the manner of Luke to provide a running total of believers, and there is no reason to suppose that he is doing so in this text. We have done no violence to the text by taking it to mean that the number of those believing on this occasion was five thousand.

We must not read this text through institutional eyes, supposing that an invitation was offered at the conclusion of Peter's discourse. We know

"many thousands" is an indefinite number similar to our word "myriad." It is translated "innumerable company" in Hebrews 12:22, and "ten thousands" in Jude 1:14).

I do not want to leave this point without accenting the remarkable and refreshing growth of the body of Christ throughout the book of Acts. It is a phenomenon that testifies to the power of the Gospel of Christ, and the nature of salvation as well. It is worthy of our attention.

It is not beyond reason to say that at this early stage of the work eight thousand men had believed the Gospel. It is as though Jerusalem was invaded with the Gospel – and to date, according to the record, it had only been formally declared in a "house" on the day of Pentecost, and in the Temple.

they entered into the Temple at "the hour of prayer." That was "the ninth hour," or three o'clock in the afternoon (Acts 3:1). At the time they were arrested it was "eventide," considered to be after the sun set. ^{McCLINTOK-STRONG} At the earliest, therefore, the arrest took place at 6:00 PM. There is reason to believe it could even have been later, after darkness was beginning to settle over the land. Peter and John had been speaking for a minimum of about three hours, possibly more. During this time, around 5,000 men believed what they were preaching. They did not change their minds when Peter and John were arrested.

It is not beyond reason to say that at this early stage of the work eight thousand men had believed the Gospel. It is as though Jerusalem was invaded with the Gospel – and to date, according to the record, it had only been formally declared in a "house" on the day of Pentecost, and in the Temple. Years later James will draw Paul's attention to the great number of Jews in Jerusalem who had believed. "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law" (Acts 21:20). The word translated

⇨ "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were **added unto them about three thousand souls**" (Acts 2:41).

⇨ "And the Lord **added to the church daily** such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47).

⇨ "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and **the number of the men was about five thousand**" (Acts 4:4).

⇨ "And believers were the more added to the Lord, **multitudes both of men and women**" (Acts 5:14).

⇨ "And in those days, when **the number of the disciples was multiplied . . .**" (Acts 6:1).

⇨ "And **the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith**" (Acts 6:7).

⇨ "But when **they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of**

Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12).

⇨ "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, **were multiplied**" (Acts 9:31).

⇨ "And the hand of the Lord was with them: and **a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord**" (Acts 11:21).

⇨ "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and **much people was added unto the Lord**" (Acts 11:24).

⇨ "But the word of God **grew and multiplied**" (Acts 12:24).

⇨ "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and **as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region**" (Acts 13:48-49).

⇨ "And so were the churches established in the faith, and **increased in number daily**" (Acts 16:5).

⇨ "And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. **So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed**" (Acts 19:18-20).

Why Did This Occur?

What was the reason for this remarkable burst of spiritual life? **Is this something intended only to characterize the beginning of the church?** Is it something that, by its very nature, would eventually wane? In the New Covenant is spiritual life at its strongest at the beginning? Is there anything about salvation that places the stress upon its start? Are spiritual beginnings noted for their largeness, only to be followed by decline and dissipation?

Although Good News is being preached, the Temple leaders are much grieved by what is being said– by Given O. Blakely

I must acknowledge that this is the nature of religious movements. They are their best in their beginning, but tend to diminish in both power and content. But that is not the subject of discussion here. In the book of Acts we are dealing with **real** beginnings, not fabled or traditional ones. The prophets foretold a this day of salvation as involving a Kingdom that would **continue** to increase. They did not make the slightest suggestion that it would be characterized by diminishment.

⇨ *“Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this”* (Isa 9:7).

⇨ *“Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession”* (Psa 2:8).

⇨ *“He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and His enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him”* (Psa 72:8-11).

⇨ *“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever”* (Dan 2:44).

The beginning of this Kingdom revealed its nature, or character. It would not wax and wane. Wherever its seed was sown, God would bring results.

Jesus also confirmed it was the nature of the Kingdom to **grow – to advance and to increase**.

⇨ *“The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man*

took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof” (Matt 13:31-32).

⇨ *“The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened”* (Matt 13:33).

Add to this the increasing nature of spiritual life. Those in Christ are *“being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another”*^{NRSV}

As soon as men attempt to mingle that Gospel with human wisdom, ignoble motives, and institutional objectives, the power is removed, and the results are not as they are in this text.

(2 Cor 3:18). Speaking of the era of the New Covenant, the Psalmist wrote, *“They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God”* (Psa 84:7). **The strength of those who wait upon the Lord is renewed, not depleted** (Isa 40:31).

All of this contradicts the notion that the life of the church itself, or the power of the Gospel, tends to degenerate. **I do not know how a person could substantiate the view that the church began strong, and the Gospel was unusually effective at first, only to have things decline to an imagined state of normalcy after some time.**

If there is a difference in the apparent success of preaching today, it cannot be owing to the nature of the Gospel or the manner in which the Lord works through that Gospel. It is not possible that those things could change!

The Effects of Institutionalism

By “institutionalism,” I mean a lifeless approach to religion that relies

upon human organization, rules, and regulations. Today, the power of religion is thought to be in its external structure and hierarchical authority. It is characterized by form without power, and does not require the involvement of the heart.

Institutionalism has greatly impacted how men think about the power of the Gospel. Because God is left out of the reasoning process, men overlook what the Gospel can do. The whole city of Samaria, for example, gave heed to the preaching of Philip *“with one accord”* (Acts 8:5-8). **All of this happened with opponents, adversaries, and even**

persecution. Yet, because the message was pure, and those delivering it were holy, it yielded great increase.

It is good for us to behold what takes place among believers and opponents when the pure Gospel is preached. As soon as men attempt to mingle that Gospel with human wisdom, ignoble motives, and institutional objectives, the power is removed, and the results are not as they are in this text. When men *“turn away their ears from the truth,”* embracing *“fables,”* they also abandon its power (2 Tim 4:4). When *“after their own lusts,”* them *“heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears,”* the work of God will no longer be done among them (2 Tim 4:3). Then, truth will fall in the streets, and integrity will not be able to enter (Isa 59:14).

The Identity of the People

Note how these people are identified: *“many of them which heard the word believed.”* This was not a preliminary, or preparatory activity, for a count was taken of them. This would

not be acceptable language among many professing Christians. On the day of Pentecost it was stated, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). Here, however, "believed" describes the response of the people. It is a precise, accurate and comprehensive description of the people.

Peter had previously told these people, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you" (Acts 3:19-20). By saying the people "believed," we are to understand that they did what Peter had commanded them to do.

The word "believed" is not descriptive of a step in a procedure or

believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common" (Acts 4:32).

⇒ "But when they **believed** Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12).

⇒ "And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many **believed** in the Lord" (Acts 9:42).

⇒ "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who **believed** on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:17).

⇒ "And the hand of the Lord was with

(Acts 17:4).

⇒ "Therefore many of them **believed**: also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few" (Acts 17:12).

⇒ "Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and **believed**: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them" (Acts 17:34).

⇒ "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, **believed** on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing **believed**, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8).

⇒ "And many that **believed** came, and confessed, and showed their deeds" (Acts 19:18).

Those in Christ are also referred to as "believers" (Acts 5:14; 1 Tim 4:12).

Why Mention This?

This is so elementary some might wonder why I have mentioned it at all. However, within the average American and European church, people are not noted for being "believers" – firmly convinced of the Person of Christ, and cleaving to Him with purpose of heart. The obedience that was characteristic of believers in Scripture is not all characteristic of contemporary Christians. It is not evident in their lives or their assemblies. Further, it does not appear that there are many efforts being expended to produce believers and strengthen faith.

By its very nature a law-mentality is opposed to believing, for "the law is not of faith," or, "is not based upon faith"^{NIV} (Gal 3:12). Wherever there is a reliance upon rules and procedures, there is an abrasiveness to anything that requires or promotes faith. A system of thought that does not require faith will not allow the one embracing it to live by faith. Such a posture becomes impossible.

Also, this unacceptable condition exists wherever there is reliance upon human wisdom. In such a case, there is no perceived need for much of the word of God, or assemblies devoted to the edification of the saints. That, in my judgment, is the primary reason for the

However, within the average American and European church, people are not noted for being "believers" – firmly convinced of the Person of Christ, and cleaving to Him with purpose of heart. The obedience that was characteristic of believers in Scripture is not all characteristic of contemporary Christians.

plan. It rather depicts a response in which the message is heartily embraced. In such a case, the individual is eager to do whatever the Lord requires, and always does so.

The word "believed" is used to describe those who became aligned with the Lord Jesus Christ.

⇒ "And all that **believed** were together, and had all things common" (Acts 2:44).

⇒ "Howbeit many of them which heard the word **believed**: and the number of the men was about five thousand" (Acts 4:4).

⇒ "And the multitude of them that

*them: and a great number **believed**, and turned unto the Lord" (Acts 11:21).*

⇒ "And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks **believed**" (Acts 14:1).

⇒ "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they **believed**" (Acts 14:23).

⇒ "And some of them **believed**, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few"

Although Good News is being preached, the Temple leaders are much grieved by what is being said– by Given O. Blakely

great difference between the preaching and responses in the book of Acts and our

times. In Acts, there was a very real unity of the people with the Christ.

Through the Spirit, they were in Christ, and Christ was in them.

THE OPPONENTS GATHER TOGETHER

“⁵ And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, ⁶ And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.”

Now, in a remarkable display of unity, the wicked join together to oppose the truth of Christ and those who are proclaiming it. However, as Solomon well said, *“Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered”* (Prov 11:21). We will see how their efforts will fall, and whether or not they will be able to stop the spread of the Gospel.

The nature of the flesh is to gather the wicked together against the things of God. However, the amalgamation of the wicked can never remove the truth of God from a people or society. If truth falls in the street, or fails (Isa 59:14-15), it will not be because of its enemies! Such a condition can only come if those responsible for carrying the truth cease to do so, no longer being **“the pillar and ground of the truth”** (1 Tim 3:15). No law can effectively cause the Gospel to cease to be preached, or prayer to be made. It is only when the professing church becomes weak and emaciated that it will become powerless. Our text will confirm that this is the case.

The answer to a godless society is not Christian politicians, for government has not been charged with the dissemination of the truth of God. There is certainly nothing wrong with rallying Christians to vote for noble causes and good men. However, if the church remains in a weakened, ignorant, and lifeless state, it is all for nought. Government cannot compensate for that.

THEIR RULERS, AND ELDERS, AND SCRIBES

“And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders,

and scribes . . .” Other versions read, *“rulers, elders, and teachers of the Law,”* ^{NIV} *“rulers and those in authority and the scribes,”* ^{BBE} *“their princes, and ancients, and scribes,”* ^{DOUAY} *“the Jewish rulers, leaders, and scribes,”* ^{GWN} *“their rulers, elders, and experts in the law,”* ^{NET} *“the council of all the rulers and elders and teachers of religious law,”* ^{NLT} *“the leading members of the council, the elders, and the scribes,”* ^{WILLIAMS} *“their magistrates and elders and scribes,”* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *“members of the council, the elders and scribes.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

These three classes composed the Sanhedrin, ^{ROBERTSON} This was “the supreme council of the Jewish nation in and before the time of Christ.” ^{McCLINTOK & STRONG} The basis for its formation is said to be Numbers 11:16. *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me **seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.**”* The members of the Sanhedrin, seventy in number, represented three classes of people: priests (24), elders (24), and scribes (22). The priests had expertise in holy procedures and the Temple activities. The elders were noted for their godly wisdom. The scribes were noted for their expertise in the Law and its application.

This group of people is frequently referred to as a gathering of the priests, elders, and scribes (Matthew 26:3, 57, 59; 27:41; Mark 8:31; 11:27; 14:43; Luke 9:22; 20:1; 22:66; Acts 5:1; 6:12; 22:30; 25:15). It is also referred to as *“the council”* (Matt 26:59; Acts 4:15; ; 5:21,27, 34; 6:12,15).

With all of its deficiencies, it ought to be noted that wisdom and Scriptural expertise was required in this body of people. **There seemed to be an overriding awareness that there was a unique body of knowledge within the Old Covenant Scriptures and ceremonies.**

Although that knowledge was greatly corrupted by the leaders, it represents a perspective that has been largely lost in the modern church.

ANNAS, CAIAPHAS, JOHN, AND ALEXANDER

“⁶ And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander . . .” Other versions read, and *“with Annas the*

SANHEDRIN QUALIFICATIONS

The qualifications for membership were both very minute and very numerous. The applicant had to be morally and physically blameless. He had to be middle aged, tall, good looking, wealthy, learned (both in the divine law and diverse branches of profane science, such as medicine, mathematics, astronomy, magic, idolatry, etc.), in order that he might be able to judge in these matters. He was required to know several languages, so that the Sanhedrin might not be dependent upon an interpreter in case any foreigner or foreign question came before them (*Menachoth*, 65 a; *Sanhedrin*, 17 a; Maimonides, *lad Ha-Chezaka, Hilchoth Sanhedrin*, 2, 1-8).

McCLINTOK & STRONGS CYCLOPEDIA

high priest, Caiaphas, Jonathan, Alexander.” ^{NJB}

Annas and Caiaphas

Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas (John 18:13), and was the previous high priest. Their tenure as high priests overlapped, as confirmed by Luke 3:2: *“Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests.”* Caiaphas was considered to be the official high priest (Matt 26:3,57; John 11:49). When Jesus was placed on trial, Annas, the outgoing high priest, had sent Him bound to Caiaphas, the new high priest (John 18:24).

John and Alexander

We are not told any more of these two men. It is certain that they were Jews, being member of the Jewish high council. Some commentators identify

them as two rabbis, or teachers of the law, that were prominent among the people at that time. The Scriptures, however, provide no further details concerning them.

However, there is something to be seen here. It is as though the Holy Spirit is confirming that this council, together with all of its members, was duly noted in the heavens. They shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account for their involvement in this event.

AS MANY AS WERE KINDRED OF THE HIGH PRIEST

“ . . . and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest . . . ” Other versions read, “as many as were of the family of the high priest,”^{NKJV} “and all who were of high-priestly descent,”^{NASB} “and other man of the high priest’s family,”^{NIV} “and all the relations of the high priest,”^{BBE} “the rest of the chief priest’s family were present,”^{GWN} “all who were of the high-priestly class,”^{NAB} “all who were of high-priestly descent,”^{NAU} “all the members of the high-priestly families,”^{NJB} “everyone from the high priest’s family was there,”^{IE} and “all others who belonged to the high priestly relationship.”^{AMPLIFIED}

This is a continued explanation of those who made up the categories of priests, elders, and scribes. It particularly expands on “the priests,” identifying them as being chosen from among the relatives of the high priests,

Once again, I want to emphasize the hostility that exists between the Spirit and the flesh, between truth and error, and between believers and unbelievers . . . Whatever causes a person to be an enmity with God also produces hostility against His people.

Annas and Caiaphas. As was characteristic under the Old Covenant, fleshly lineage was of great significance. Under Christ, however, it counts for nothing.

GATHERED TOGETHER AT JERUSALEM

“ . . . were gathered together at Jerusalem.” Other versions read, “met in Jerusalem,”^{NIV} “assembled in Jerusalem,”^{NRSV} “came together in Jerusalem,”^{BBE} “assembled,”^{MRD} and “held a meeting in Jerusalem.”^{NJB}

It is apparent from the text that this meeting was called especially to deal with Peter and John. This is no doubt why those who arrested Peter and John put them in jail overnight, waiting until this group convened. They thought nothing of the comfort of Peter and John, but thought only of their own convenience. Flesh thinks like that.

Some of these people, if not all of them, had probably been among “the

rulers” who had “gathered together against the Lord and His Christ” (Acts 4:26-27). At that time, they had fulfilled the second Psalm: “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Psa 2:3). Their gathering had been in vain at that time, and it would be the same on this occasion.

Once again, I want to emphasize the hostility that exists between the Spirit and the flesh, between truth and error, and between believers and unbelievers. Paul stated the case well when he wrote, “for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” (2 Cor 6:14-16).

Whatever causes a person to be an enmity with God also produces hostility against His people.

BY WHAT POWER OF NAME HAVE YOU DONE THIS?

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

With the Jewish council now convened, Peter and John will be questioned as though they were inferior to their judges. Their critics will present themselves as having authority over the situation.

THEY SET THEM IN THE MIDST

“And when they had set them in

the midst . . . ” Other versions read, “placed them in the center,”^{NASB} “had Peter and John brought before them,”^{NIV} “made the prisoners stand in their midst,”^{NRSV} “sending for Peter and John,”^{BBE} “after they had Peter and John stand before them,”^{CSB} “they made Peter and John stand in front of them,”^{GWN} “brought them into their presence,”^{NAB} “made the prisoners stand in the middle,”^{NJB} “brought in the two disciples,”^{NLT} and “They had the apostles brought in to stand before them.”^{PHILLIPS}

This group had convened to examine Peter and John, and now they have them brought before the council. This is what they did to Jesus Himself (Lk 22:54). Later they would do the same thing to Stephen (Acts 6:12). There were some in the church at Corinth that dared to examine Paul (1 Cor 9:3). Jeremiah was brought before Pashue, chief governor in the house of the Lord, as though Jeremiah was subject to him (Jer 20:1-3).

Although Good News is being preached, the Temple leaders are much grieved by what is being said— by Given O. Blakely

Speaking of this kind of phenomenon Paul once wrote, *“For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men”* (1 Cor 4:9). **Jesus did not choose the apostles and endue them with power in order that they might become famous, or be approved of men.** Those who seek a career in religion must take this into consideration. In Christ, the *ministry* is not about obtaining financial security and becoming a celebrity of some sort. Those who faithfully serve the Lord

Among other things, this confirms that God does not give power to men in order to get the attention of people or break down hostilities against the truth. Heaven’s intent is the promotion of the glory of God, and the exposition of the Lord Jesus Christ. Where men entertain little or no interest in either of these, Christ’s co-laborers will be viewed as intruders, and enemies of the religious systems that have been embraced.

THEY ASKED

“ . . . they asked . . . ” Other versions read, *“they began to inquire,”*

name, have ye done this?” Other versions read, *“By what power, or by whose authority have you done this,”* ^{LIVING} *“How did you ,make this crippled man well? What name did you use? By whose authority did you do this?”* ^{IE} *“By what sort of power and authority have you done this?”* ^{WILLIAMS} *“By what sort of power or by what kind of authority did [such people as] you do this [healing]?”* ^{AMPLIFIED} *“How did you do this? What power do you have or whose name did you use?”* ^{GNB} and *“By what sort of power, or by what sort of name did you do this?”* ^{LITV}

The language speaks of a vigorous interrogation, not the asking of a few casual questions. Further, there is a sense in which what they are asking is not honest. They are seeking an occasion to condemn, and do not have so much as a spark of interest in the truth.

Keep in mind that this event was preceded by approximately three and a half years of Christ’s ministry. It was one in which He was *“approved of God”* among them *“by miracles and wonders and signs”* (Acts 2:22). Jesus had gone about *“doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil”* (Acts 10:38). Jesus ministry was public – in the Temple, in the synagogues, and among the people. Himself a Pharisee, Nicodemus had told Jesus *“no man can do these miracles that Thou doest except God be with Him”* (John 3:2). Great multitudes had followed Jesus *“because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased”* (John 6:2). During Jesus’ ministry, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered in a council, *“and said, What do we? for **this man doeth many miracles**”* (John 11:47). Yet now, they speak as though they had never been privy to a miracle such as the one wrought by Peter and John.

might very well find themselves brought before the tribunals of men, and treated as though they were subject to institutional assessments.

Referring to the frequent reaction of religious men to his labors, Paul wrote, *“And labor, working with our own hands: being **reviled**, we bless: being **persecuted**, we suffer it: Being **defamed**, we entreat: **we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day**”* (1 Cor 4:12-13). Paul alluded to a statement made by Jeremiah: *“Thou hast made us as the offscouring and refuse in the midst of the people”* (Lam 3:45). Jeremiah referred to the punishment of Israel for walking in their own sinful ways. Paul was speaking of the effect of his ministry and message upon Jewish leaders.

In our text Peter and John are being treated as though they were the *“filth of the world,”* having dared to come into the Temple area preaching a Christ-centered message, and doing works to which the leaders were not accustomed. It will appear on the surface as though they had no power at all, even though they had just healed a man who was crippled from his mother’s womb.

^{NASB} *“began to question them,”* ^{NIV} *“they asked the question,”* ^{CSB} *“they interrogated them,”* ^{MRD} *“questioned them,”* ^{NAB} *“began to interrogate them,”* ^{NJB} *“demanded,”* ^{NLT} *“they were inquiring,”* ^{YLT} *“the Council demanded,”* ^{LIVING} *“asked them again and again,”* ^{IE} *“began asking,”* ^{ISV} *“repeatedly inquired of them,”* ^{WILLIAMS} *“repeatedly demanded,”* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *“they asked them formally.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

The language speaks of a vigorous interrogation, not the asking of a few casual questions. Further, there is a sense in which what they are asking is not honest. They are seeking an occasion to condemn, and do not have so much as a spark of interest in the truth.

The hypocrisy of this council will be seen in the questions that they ask. The Temple authorities were grieved because Peter and John *“taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead”* (Acts 4:2). That is what occasioned this whole event. Yet, they will not ask a word about the resurrection of Christ, or the resurrection of the dead – not a word.

BY WHAT POWER?

“By what power, or by what

The issue here was really not the miracle. This is only a subterfuge. **Peter and John have broke with religious convention, and it has upset those who did not have faith.** It will become evident that these men have no interest in the man upon whom this miracle was wrought. They have not been relieved to see the oppressed liberated. They did not welcome his praise in the Temple courts. They found not one spark of delight in the earnest inquiry of the multitude, and were even agitated that they had dared to believe in the Temple courts.

They did not deny that a mighty work had been done. The *“this”* to which they refer is the healing of the lame man. They did not even insinuate that there was anything fake about it. This was a

real healing, and they knew it.

When Jesus was among men, no doubt some of the very ones who were interrogating Peter and John, He was charged with doing miracles through the power of Satan. *“But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils”* (Matt 12:24). And again, *“But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils”* (Luke 11:15). They could not deny that a mighty work had been done, so they sought to associate it with an evil source.

By what Power?

A similar inquiry was made of Jesus by the chief priests and elders, who also asked the question when Jesus was teaching the people. *“By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority?”* (Matt 21:23). Jesus exposed their hypocrisy by refusing to answer their question. *“And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell Me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; He will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And He said unto them, **Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things**”* (Matt 21:24-27).

The very asking of this question confirmed that the Jewish leaders could not merely dismiss the healing of the lame man as though it did not occur. Later these very men will observe, *“What shall we do to these men? for **that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it**”* (Acts 4:16). That is why they did not question the reality of the work. They rather asked about the power and authority through which this work was done.

These men knew the authority had **not** come from them, and yet they assumed that all rights to teach the

people should originate with them. **They could not accept an authority outside of their own.** I do not doubt that they were seeking to intimidate Peter and John, causing them to back away from their work because of a fear of this council. The

Jesus rescued me from lifeless religion.

There are countless ministers of the Gospel who have been ordered not to preach on this or that subject – or perhaps, not to preach at all. Councils of

They did not deny that a mighty work had been done. The “this” to which they refer is the healing of the lame man. They did not even insinuate that there was anything fake about it. This was a real healing, and they knew it.

thought did not seem to occur to them that the miracle itself confirmed that Peter and John were empowered by the God of heaven.

Thus these men sought to silence God’s messengers by pressing their own imagined authority upon them. They sought to conform them to religious protocol and institutionalism. The council, or Sanhedrin, felt that only they could authorize people to speak in the name of the Lord, or teach the people. **If we find any element of the fear of man in Peter and John, they will succumb to their interrogators.**

This kind of trial did not end with the ministry of the apostles. To this very day, this spirit is found within the churches and *Christian* institutions. Men set themselves up as authorities, and seek to bind their own depraved wills upon servants of the Lord. I remember my own encounter with such a tribunal when but a young preacher. I was summoned before these judges to give an account for preaching on the street without being given official approval to do so. It was an intimidating and embarrassing experience for me. I was treated as though I was seeking to destroy their imagined kingdom, even though there was not a fragment of truth in their supposition. The outcome of the whole affair was my expulsion from the institution, and the successful barring of my presence from any of the churches sanctioned by that institution. That ostracization lasted for thirty years. Yet, it proved to be the means through which

elders, church boards, and the likes, have sat in judgment upon men who declared truth that was perceived as threatening to the institution. This is so common that anyone who has labored in preaching and teaching has confronted some form of this kind of opposition. Like Peter and John, they have confronted men who could not conceive anything being valid that was at variance with their own stunted views.

We must learn from this text that it is never appropriate to yield to such men, as though their pretentious authority was sanctioned by God. **When it comes to the body of Christ and the preaching and teaching of the Gospel, God recognizes no authority that seeks to neutralize or forbid the propagation of the truth.** No God-ordained office has any authority to suppress the truth. It matters not if we are speaking of the Sanhedrin or a board of elders.

Peter’s response to these men will display how faith reacts to opposition. It will confirm that **it is never right to yield to those who are opposed to the truth.** God’s servants must speak boldly against such men in order that the truth be not blasphemed. That is why Paul wrote to young Timothy, *“Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear”* (1 Tim 5:19-20). The **Amplified Bible** reads, *“Listen to no accusation [presented before a judge] against an elder unless it is confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses. As for those who are guilty and persist in*

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sin, rebuke and admonish them in the presence of all, so that the rest may be warned and stand in wholesome awe and

fear."Strong words, indeed, and yet they are to be strictly heeded.

No religious man is worthy honored who is opposed to the truth and those to speak it.

CONCLUSION

We are being exposed to Kingdom realities. When men of God are granted insight into the truth, and are empowered by Jesus to preach it with power, opposition will be encountered. **Whatever you may think about Satan fleeing, do not entertain the notion that he is afraid of you, or will back away from you, allowing you to freely preach.** God can cause this to happen, to be sure, but he does not always do so, as our text confirms. It is true that He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4). However, that does not mean your enemies will never have any influence over your circumstances. Peter and John may be arrested while they are speaking the truth to the people (Acts 4:3). Stephen may be stoned by a religious body (Acts 7:59). Paul may be

incarcerated and chained, and eventually beheaded (Acts 24:27; 2 Tim 1:16; 2 Tim 4:6-7). Peter may be arrested and finally put to death (2 Pet 1:14-15). John may be exiled on the Isle of Patmos because he was preaching the Word of God (Rev 1:9). Timothy may be put into prison (Heb 13:23).

We must purge from our thinking the notion that well being equals blessing. While we do not seek to be opposed, we must not be alarmed when we are. Even though we endeavor to be peaceable (1 Pet 3:11), and not to intentionally offend the people (1 Cor 10:32), the truth has an abrasive effect upon all who do not love it.

Let all who seek to speak for

Christ come to an understanding of the enmity of religious institutionalism – when the promotion of the organization supercedes a quest to glorify God. When life in this world is unduely exalted – for whatever reason – at some point, the truth of God will be opposed, together with those who declare it.

These observations are not theoretical. They are actually lived out in the book of Acts. We are made privy to the conduct of the tares when they are in the field with the wheat. It will become apparent what happens when good and bad fish are caught in the same net. **When the children of the wicked one and the children of the kingdom confront each other, there is always friction, opposition, and conflict.**

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 12/8/2006. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Seventeenth lesson will cover verses 8 through 14 of the fourth chapter: "PETER RESPONDS TO THE LEADERS." Peter and John are not intimidated by the opposing leaders. This is because they have embraced the message they are delivering, and have proved by their own experience that it is everything they have affirmed. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

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WORD OF TRUTH Website: <http://wotruth.com>

WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP Website: <http://wotruth.com/wotf/wotindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Hebrews: <http://wotruth.com/hebindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Revelation: <http://wotruth.com/revelationindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on First John: <http://wotruth.com/1stjohnindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Romans: <http://wotruth.com/Romans.htm>

COMMENTARY on Daniel: <http://wotruth.com/Daniel.htm>

COMMENTARY on Colossians: <http://wotruth.com/Colossians.htm>

COMMENTARY on Second Corinthians: <http://wotruth.com/2Corinthians.htm>

COMMENTARY on Acts: <http://wotruth.com/Acts.htm>

THE MINISTRIES OF THE WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP

Presently, our local preaching and teaching is covering the books of Mark, Acts, Romans, Ephesians, Hebrews, James, Philippians, 2 Peter, and First John. Additional subjects include, "Joseph, A Type of Christ," "The Kingdom of God," and "What Is Jesus Doing Now." Persuaded that what we have been given to see must be declared as widely as possible, we also have an extensive outreach ministry. This ministry includes the following.

- The Refreshing Waters Renewal – an annual gathering of three full days. These include 13-15 sermons, 5-7 testimonies, an audience discussion, and specials. Each Renewal is devoted to a specific theme. In 2006, we had our seventeenth gathering.
- Annual Preaching Festival. This is a two day gathering held each November, is devoted to a particular theme, and includes eight messages.
- Annual Table in the wilderness. This an annual Spring gathering beginning Friday evening, and concluding Lord's Day evening. It is devoted to a particular theme, and includes 7-9 messages.
- Publishing and Distributing "The Word of Truth," a 40 page quarterly. Present distribution is 2,600.
- Publishing and Distributing "The Builder," a 24 page Monthly Magazine for Pakistani preachers, teachers, and leaders. This is translated into the Urdu language. Present distribution is 4,000.
- Translating, Publishing and Distributing "The Word of Truth" quarterly in India in Malayalam. Present distribution is 10,000.
- Twelve Books written, translated, published, and distributed in the Urdu language in Pakistan.
- One book written, translated, published, and distributed in the French language to eight nations. Two more are in works
- Distribution of all printed lessons and bulletins from the Word of Truth Fellowship. This includes lessons on Mark and the book of Acts, and includes recipients throughout the States and several foreign countries.
- Preparation and Distribution of audio media of our meetings (CD-ROM MP3 recordings, and cassette tapes). These include all sermons, teachings, classes, introductions, callings, exhortations, and Lord's table meditations.
- Preparation and Distribution of video media of our meetings (DVD). These include Lord's Day morning and evening messages, Refreshing Waters Renewal messages and specials, Preaching Festival messages and specials, and Table In the wilderness messages and specials.
- The Word of Truth Website. As of 2006, over 900,000 people are accessing this site.
- IPOD Ministry – Downloading of Fellowship Messages and teachings from Internet to IPODs.
- Question and Answer Ministry via the Internet.
- Prayer Ministry via the Internet.
- Internet Forum and Blog Ministry.
- Thought for the Day, a daily email devotion. This is presented in a series format, and consists of 800-1000 words. It is sent to several thousand people throughout the world.
- Weekly live Internet teaching sessions with Christian leaders in Pakistan.
- Weekly live Internet teaching sessions with a Christian College in India.
- We will soon begin live Internet teaching sessions in Burkina Faso, West Africa

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