

A lame man, asking alms at one of the Temple gates, is healed by God, through Peter, who then goes on to preach the Gospel to all who have gathered to see the miracle.

Acts 3:1: *'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.**'*

Since this is happening at the Temple, many priests, Pharisees, Sadducees and the Captain of the Temple have also seen and heard what has happened and they don't like it.

The two main religious/political groups were the Pharisees and the Sadducees who made up the ruling authority over the Jews. We might liken them to our two political parties. The 70-member Sanhedrin might be like our Senate, containing some from each branch. The Sadducees were more conservative, religiously, insisting on a literal interpretation of Scripture with the Pharisees choosing to give equal authority to their oral tradition. If the Sadducees couldn't find a command in the written Word of God, they dismissed it as man-made.

On the other hand, the Pharisees taught the Truth of Scripture in several very important areas. They believed in the spiritual realm with angels and demons; they taught the reality of a resurrection and an afterlife with every person receiving appropriate rewards and punishment.

The Sadducees were wealthier, more elite, holding more seats in the Sanhedrin; their place of power was the Temple. The Pharisees were more representative of the common people; they controlled the synagogues.

Jesus engaged the Pharisees more often because of their hypocrisy in adhering to oral tradition even above the Law. He said: *'Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. ⁸ For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men... And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.'* Mark 7:7

Here, at the Temple, we see, especially, the Sadducees being 'grieved' at Peter's preaching because he *'...preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.'* whereas the Pharisees did believe in the resurrection. Later, Paul even used this as a wedge in procuring his escape from their clutches: *'But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. ⁷ And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. ⁸ For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. ⁹ And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.¹⁰ And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.'* Acts 23:6

The fact that the Sadducees are 'grieved,' is not good news... at least in the short run but, again, this is going to lead to more persecution which will finally result in the Gospel being forced, by God, out into the World.

But, once again, the Lord Jesus Christ will continue to build His Church through the inspired preaching of Peter and the other Apostles:

Verse 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.'*

Peter and John are arrested and kept overnight but God uses Peter's preaching to once again grow His Church by miraculously high numbers: 5000 men and surely as many women and young people.

Thousands upon thousands of Jerusalemites have been convicted by the Holy Spirit, during the previous months over their individual parts in the rejection and murder of Jesus Christ; they all knew who He was, what He had said and done and, especially, that He was innocent of anything, let alone, something as terrible so as

to deserve the death penalty. Remember: these are just regular people like you and me who, like us, would be loathe to see, let alone be party to an innocent man being sentenced to death. Their consciences, as ours would be, were grieved which is ripe and fertile ground for the Holy Spirit's work.

Verse 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.'*

This is the very same crowd who, just a couple of months before, hated and knowingly crucified their supposedly long awaited Messiah. I say 'supposedly' because judging by their words and actions, they must not have really been awaiting the Messiah after all. Their own power and position were far more dear to them than the Messiah. The same can be said for many false teachers and pastors of today; their power, position, wealth, houses, boats and cars are far dearer than the soon coming Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, for many, today, just the love and acceptance by the World is that for which they strive.

Verse 7: *'And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?'*

They are choosing to do the very same thing, to Peter and John, which they had done to Jesus Christ: attack, persecute and condemn for nothing more than miraculously healing someone, for doing good. They knew exactly by what power and by what Name this had been done; it was never secretive, unlike themselves. This is their evil: unlike those whose consciences were softened and convicted by the Holy Spirit, these had so hardened their hearts that they were willing to see the miraculous working of God and, rather than give God glory, they chose to blaspheme the Holy Spirit, sealing their fates to the Lake of Fire.

Of Jesus, we read: 'Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. ²³ And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? ²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils... (Jesus said) He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. ³¹ Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.' Matt 12:22

Verse 8: *'Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, ⁹ If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole...'*

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, is about to simply tell the truth again.

Verse 10: *'Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.'*

Earlier, Peter had said, 'You killed the Prince of Life!' Everything these rulers had done, a few weeks past, was brought into the light in one sentence and they were not going to stand for it.

Verse 11: *'This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.'*

This statement meant far more to these religious rulers than it might to us, at first read... Jesus said:

'A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winevat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. ² And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. ³ And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. ⁴ And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. ⁵ And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. ⁶ Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. ⁷ But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. ⁸ And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. ⁹ What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. ¹⁰ And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: ¹¹ This was the

Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? ¹² And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.' Mark 12:1

And all these knew, as well, just what Peter was saying of them:

Here is the salient line: *'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.'* If they allowed Jesus to live, they believed that all their power and authority would be lost; they rejected Him; so, He became the cornerstone of all God's work and His Kingdom would eventually fill all the Earth and then, all the Universe.

Jesus and Peter were quoting from the Psalms, which these authorities knew very well:

'The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. ²³ This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.' Psalm 118:22

They were also referring back to Daniel; this, too, they all knew, very well:

In Daniel chapter 2, King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which bothered him greatly but he couldn't remember what, exactly, it was. Finally, Daniel is brought in who then reveals the dream to Nebuchadnezzar and to us:

Daniel says: *'Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. ³² This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, ³³ His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. ³⁴ Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. ³⁵ Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth... 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. ⁴⁵ Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.'*

After these successive World kingdoms, Babylon, Medes and Persians, Greece, Rome divided and finally a revived Roman Empire... another will rise, that of the Antichrist, which will then be destroyed by the everlasting Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ which will fill all the Earth and then throughout all the Universe.

These who interrogated Peter and John, knew and understood all these things which then made their guilt so much more acute. They knew the entire Old Testament far better than we... except for one crucial difference: we have the 'mind of Christ' with the Holy Spirit, living within, Who is always faithful to give us good and Godly wisdom and understanding... these religious leaders, for the most part, had none. I say, *'for the most part,'* because we know that some of them did in fact believe on the Lord Jesus Christ unto Salvation; Nicodemus, for one, was, in fact, a believer and there is nothing to suggest that he ever resigned his office and we know there were others as well.

Verse 12: *'Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.'*

There is no Salvation available in any name, under Heaven, given by or among men... none! Remember: Jesus' Name was not given by men or by Mary; God's angel, Gabriel, told her to name Him Jesus.

There is Salvation only in the Lord Jesus Christ: faith in Him and faith in His Name.

Mohammed is the most popular boy's name in the World... but there is no salvation for anyone in the name of Mohammed nor is there in the name of Allah.

Peter unashamedly and forcefully names the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. All of us would like to know that we would as boldly say His Name... Practice! Practice is how it comes naturally and easily. I practice saying His Name; whenever I refer to Him, I never say, 'the Lord'... I try to always say: **'the Lord Jesus Christ!'** The more we say His Name, the more readily and easily His Name just rolls off our tongues. It's a dangerous thing

when we are reluctant, in front of others, to clearly and openly name Him before Christians and non-Christians alike.

Verse 13: *'Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. ¹⁴ And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.'*

Isn't this exactly how the World continues to view true Christians? *Unlearned and ignorant* and, anymore, any true Believer, who is the least bit patriotic, has been labeled a 'potential terrorist!', a White Nationalist! They don't give a second thought to all of the millions of military aged men from China and various terroristic countries but they label us as potential terrorists; they are watching us, make no mistake about it... and there's not a thing we can do but continue to trust wholly on God; He, alone is our Salvation, our protection, our strength and our deliverer and He will, one day soon, come for us in the clouds, unleashing all the evil of the kingdom of darkness which has, heretofore, been held back by the restraining power of the Holy Spirit.

Notice that He says, they could see the healed man, an obvious and mighty miracle had been done, and *'they could say nothing against it!'* A lame man has just been healed; the ones healing him did so in the Name of Jesus and their only response is: that they want to say something against it! That is exactly the World's response to us! True Christians are the best citizens and neighbors in the World! They are honest, they are hard-working, they are quick to help those in need and on and on and on... but the World hates us; we are the ones of whom they would most like to be rid.

Verse 15: *'But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, ¹⁶ Saying, 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.'*

A notable miracle... everyone has seen this same man whom everyone knew had been lame from birth; no one could deny that he had always been lame and no one could deny that he was now completely healed walking, leaping, rejoicing and giving God the glory... they could not deny it however much they did want to do so. God was being glorified; these Pharisees and Sadducees lived for the praise and honor from people:

'But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: ³⁸ That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, 'Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?' ³⁹ Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, ⁴⁰ He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. ⁴¹ These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. ⁴² Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: ⁴³ For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.' John 12:37

These are those who persecuted and finally crucified the Lord Jesus Christ; these are those who sought to kill Peter, John, Paul and every true Believer and these are those who hate and would condemn us, as well.