

Acts 4

1 Captain of the Temple Guard was an official second in authority to the chief priest. He did oversee Levites who handled security on the Temple Mount and he could make arrests, but this was not his main function. The captain stands at the chief priest's right hand during the Day of Atonement and for the daily sacrifices. In 66AD the Captain of the Temple Guard was made a General in the Jewish revolt.

The Sadducees were the most liberal of the Jewish groups and believed the soul perished with the body at death. They cooperated with the Romans to maintain control of the Temple and Jewish ruling council called the Sanhedrin. The council was made up of 70 of the leading figures of the Jews. Some were Scribes (those in charge of copying, studying, teaching and interpreting the Law). They were influenced by the Pharisees. Some were the wealthy nobility of Jerusalem. Their decisions affected legal affairs of the Jews like a Senate would, but they also decided on interpretations of Scripture that affected the whole Jewish world.

2-3 The Sadducees main objection was that they were teaching resurrection from the dead. The Captain saw it as an "out of order" meeting because these unqualified men were teaching an idea with Messianic overtones that the Sadducees were opposed to theologically and that threatened their secure position. He locked them up overnight. John 16:2 Theological liberals were the first to persecute the church.

4 I have long misunderstood this passage as well. The Greek implies that 2000 more men were added to the believers, meaning there are now a total of 5000 men (aner), not counting women and children. There could easily have been 20,000 believers total!

5-6 Annas was High Priest from 6 to 15 A.D. Caiaphas was his Son-in-Law and he served from 18 to 37 A.D. He was head of the Sanhedrin and over saw the 70 elders that served as the political head of the nation. Both were involved in trying and condemning Jesus to death. John and Alexander and the others mentioned were probably part of the Sanhedrin. There is a recently discovered ossuary with John's name on it. He is the son of High Priest that took Caiaphas place in 37 A.D.

7 As others were said to perform miracles or healings in the name of their gods, the disciples were asked what name they called on. The fact that a miracle had taken place was not denied. This gives us a sense of the importance placed on a name. Deut 13:1-5

8-10 The once cowardly Peter does not hesitate to give all the glory to Jesus Christ. But he doesn't stop there. He accuses them of killing him and declares God raised him (the particular point they were upset about) and that it was this resurrected Jesus that healed the man!

11 He cites Psalm 118:22 as his proof text to support his statement that they killed him, the rejected cornerstone. (See Matthew 21:42) Scribes are compared to builders in rabbinic literature. The capstone is a great cornerstone that joins two walls bearing great loads. These were usually some of the largest and best quality stones. Eph 2:19f

12 Peter declares in power of the Spirit that Jesus is the only way to be saved. God gave Him for our redemption and no other name has the power to save. John 14:6 saved/healed = sozo (see healed in verse 9)

13 The wording in Greek brings out a contrast between the trained scribes and these men who did not have their training. Boldness like this unusual. Scribes even refused to make an original point but would quote Rabbis of the past to bring forth an issue. The religious leaders wondered of the effect of Rabbi Yeshua on the common person.

14 – 18 They couldn't deny what had happened, but they didn't want the accusation of murdering the Messiah to spread. They ordered the disciples to stop using Yeshua's name. John 3:19

19-20 Peter boldly challenges them with his statement. The Jews had a long history of ignoring the prophets and even God. Their stories exhorted them over and over again to take a stand for God. That is what Peter and John were doing. Though we are taught in the Scriptures to submit to the government, we must obey God first and foremost. If they contradict one another, we must be faithful to follow God.

21-22 The Sanhedrin was powerful, but not powerful enough to buck thousands of people who had just seen an unexplainable miracle. They had a fear of man and operated like most politicians.

23 –24 They immediately went to report to family of God. Under face of those threats they went to prayer. I don't think they prayed in unison, but with one heart, unanimously. They addressed God as *despota*, the One who controls everything, the One who made everything. It's a good place to start when the powerful threaten you.

25 – 26 They apply Psalm 2:1,2 to their situation. The psalm speaks of those in power opposed to the Messiah (anointed one). Surely their minds went on to the theme of the psalm, that God laughs at man's feeble attempts to oppose Him.

27 They saw in the psalm the "kings of the earth" as the Herod and Pilate. The rulers were the Sanhedrin and the people plotting in vain, the Jewish people.

28 But God had determined that this would happen. Power= hand Psalm 138:7 See hand in verse 30. They could resist the Lord, but His will was being done in the process.

29-30 Instead of asking for protection, they prayed for boldness and for more signs to be given. They weren't going to cower; they were going on the attack. They had the truth.

31 The Lord gave them a sign that their prayer was heard. Psalm 46:6-7; 114:7 They were filled again with the Holy Spirit. Their prayer was answered and they spoke boldly!