

WITNESSING IN JERUSALEM!
ACTS CH4:1-7

ILLUSTRATION

Can we play our DVD re the Church buildings in Morriston? How well do we understand the progress of the Gospel in Morriston, Wales and the UK?

THE COMPLAINERS!! V1-3

Considering the accusations and warnings from Peter in Ch3:12-26, it should not be surprising that the Temple officials were **“greatly disturbed”** (only used here and in Acts Ch16:18), literally meaning that they were **worn out, unable to put up with it any more!**

What disturbed them the most was the fact that the apostles were proclaiming in Jesus the **“resurrection of the dead.”** This went completely against the beliefs of the Sadducees!

The Sadducean party which was made up of chief priests, elders and nobles (land owners) denied that on the last day there would be a general resurrection from the dead (Luke Ch20:27; Acts Ch23:7-8).

The early opposition against preaching the Gospel is shown by Dr Luke as coming chiefly from priestly and Sadducean ranks “the priests and captain of the Temple guard and the Sadducees.” The “Captain of the Temple guards” was the commanding officer of the TPF (Temple Police Force). He was considered inferior in rank only to the High Priest, Annas, and had the responsibility of maintaining order in the Temple precincts!

The Sadducees were descendants of the Hasmoneans, who looked back to Mattathias, Judas, Jonathan and Simon (168 – 134 B.C.) as having inaugurated the Messianic Age and saw themselves as perpetuating what their fathers had begun. As Priests from the tribe of Levi, they claimed to represent ancient orthodoxy and were uninterested in innovations! Thus, they opposed any developments in Biblical Law (Oral Law), things like Angels and Demons and the Doctrine of the Resurrection!

Likewise, the Sadducees rejected what they considered to be vain hopes for God's heavenly intervention in the life of the nation and for a coming Messiah.

Furthermore, as political rulers and dominant landlords they stressed cooperation with Rome and maintenance of the status quo. Most of the Priests were of Sadducean persuasion, with the TPF being entirely composed of Levites, with the Temple Police Captain of the guard always a high ranking-caste Sadducee, along with each of the high Priests!

The Priests and Sadducees were “greatly disturbed” about two matters:

1. First, the apostles were teaching the people, an activity those of the Sadducean ranks saw as a threat to the status quo.
2. Secondly, Peter and John were annoying the Sadducees because they were proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead! The fact that Jesus had been resurrected, proved the doctrine of resurrection, for those who trusted in Jesus!

So Peter and John were arrested and taken into custody for the night.

THE CHRISTIANS!! V4

Not everyone agreed with the Sadducees view of the activities and the message of the apostles. Later in Acts Luke will speak of the general tolerance of the people, the moderation of the Pharisees and the desire of Rome for peace in the land as each having a part in restraining the Sadducees from doing all they might have done to oppose the gospel and its early missionaries. Here, however, he tells us that many who heard the message **believed** with the result that the Jerusalem congregation grew to a total of 5,000!

Luke wants his reader (and readers) to be immediately reassured, that despite Peter and John being initially arrested and locked up, the Gospel cannot be restricted or chained!

Look how big the Church is now!

THE COUNCIL!! V5-7

The “Sanhedrin” meaning “council” were the governing body and supreme court of the Nation! The Sanhedrin consisted of the High Priest – The President, and 70 others, made up of Pharisees and Sadducees and their family members. It was dominated by the Sadducees and was usually called at their request!

In stressing that the early opposition to Christianity arose principally from among the Sadducees, Luke make the point that the Sadducean element was especially well represented in the first trial of the apostles - “Annas the High Priest was there (high priest for 9 years A.D. 6-15), and so were Caiaphas (His son-in-law and high priest for 18 years A.D.18 - 36), John (possibly Annas' son), and Alexander. Annas is presented in the New Testament as the real influencer and power behind the throne (**Luke Ch3:2; John Ch18:13-24**).

It was before such a council, probably set in a semi circle, that Peter and John were brought. The man who had been healed was also there (v14), not sure whether he had been in jail for the night. The apostles were called to account for their actions and they used the occasion for witnessing and evangelism.

“By what power or what name did you do this” is so similar to Luke Ch20:1-8, when Jesus was questioned, probably by many of the same people! By what super natural power are you doing these things?

APPLICATION

Any Church that fails to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, and instead proclaims a false gospel, can be like the Sadducees, Pharisees and the Captain of the Temple, who are more concerned about keeping “the religious trappings”, associated with power, status and riches, along with ensuring that the “status quo” continues! If we look closely enough, we will see that this type of opposition, “keeping the trappings and status quo” still continues against the authentic Gospel Church today!

At The Mission Church (TMC) in order to guard against such false teaching we are committed to living out and offering through discipleship:

- *Theological Clarity*
- *Cultural Engagement*
- *Missional Innovation*

How are you understanding the DVD?