

GREAT POWER/GREAT GRACE

ACTS 4

*"And it shall come to pass afterward
That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your old men shall dream dreams,
Your young men shall see visions.
And also on My menservants and on My maidservants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.
"And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth:
Blood and fire and pillars of smoke.
The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD."
Joel 2:28-31 (NKJV)*

The Gospel is to the Jew first, now what will they do?

*"Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the
captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon
them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people
and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead."
(Acts 4:1-2)*

While Jesus was on earth His primary opposition was from the Pharisees.

They didn't like His application of the Law and disregard for their tradition

WHO ARE THE PHARISEES?

Alexander the Great conquered the Middle East, bringing Greek culture and philosophy to Israel.

By 200 BC, Greek philosophy and its worldview called Hellenism were significantly impacting Jewish young men.

More and more of them were abandoning the Hebrew faith and embracing the perceived superiority of Greek thought and ways.

This created a crisis in Judaism. Would the "faith" and its covenant responsibilities survive in the generations to come?

The Pharisees was born in response to this alarming Hellenistic trend. Its two-fold purpose was to call young Jewish men back to the tenants of the Hebrew faith and to a priest-like life.

There may have been no more than 6,000 Pharisees in the Jesus' day. Pharisees who increasingly stood in opposition to Jesus, we're primarily talking about the Pharisees in the south, particularly those in Jerusalem who were aligned with the Sadducees and together constituted the Sanhedrin, the Jewish "Supreme Court" ruled over religious matters and controlled the worship and ministry of the Temple.

WHO ARE THE SADDUCEES?

The Sadducees were an aristocratic class connected with everything going on in the temple in Jerusalem. They tended to be wealthy and held powerful positions, including that of chief priests and high priest, and they held the majority of the 70 seats of the ruling council called the Sanhedrin.

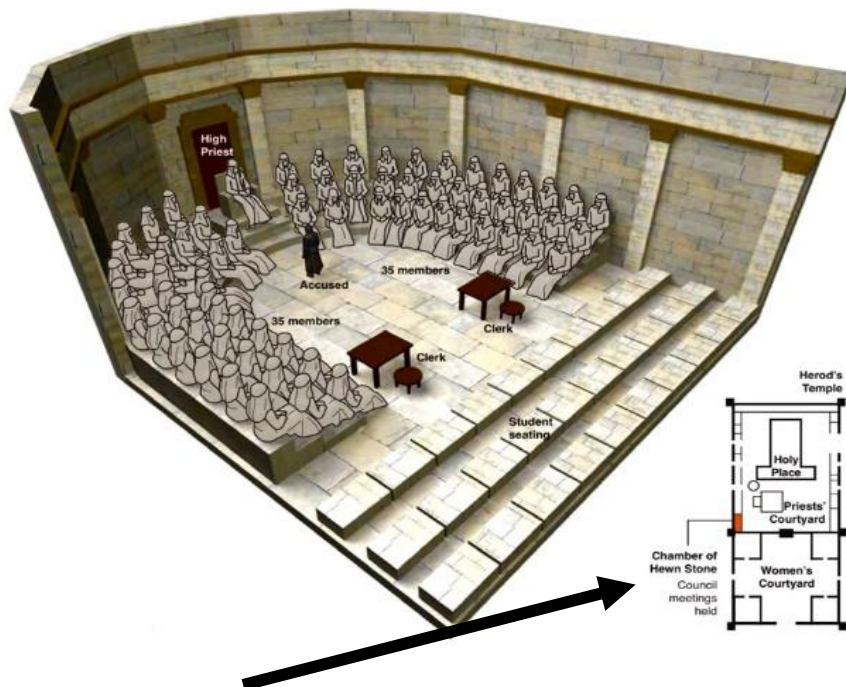
Because the Sadducees were basically a political party rather than a religious sect, they were unconcerned with Jesus until they became afraid, He might bring unwanted Roman attention. At that point the Sadducees joined with the Pharisees and conspired to put Christ to death.

The Sadducees ceased to exist as a group in AD 70, when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by the Romans.

WHAT WAS THE SANHEDRIN?

THE SANHEDRIN

The Jewish high court consisted of 71 men and was led by the high priest. The Sanhedrin council could decide almost any fate of its people—except the death penalty, which was decided by the Romans. The courtroom of the Sanhedrin was located within the Chamber of Hewn Stone inside the Temple.



The **Hall of Hewn Stones**, also known as the **Chamber of Hewn Stone**, was the meeting place, or council-chamber, of the Sanhedrin during the Second Temple period (6th century BCE – 1st century CE)

ARRESTED BY THE SADDUCEES

The early Church preached Jesus' resurrection so they were opposed by a sect of Jews called the Sadducees.

These rabbis were anti-supernatural. They rejected the notion of miracles and the afterlife. Thus, they opposed any talk of a literal resurrection.

- When Jesus was preaching, his opposition came mainly from the Pharisees, but now the Sadducees are conducting the persecution.

"Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them," Acts 4:1

The captain of the temple: This refers to the police force of the temple precincts. The **captain**, together with the **priests** and the **Sadducees**, all came together to arrest Peter and John

"...being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead." Acts 4:2

Being greatly disturbed: The **Sadducees** *would* be **greatly disturbed** that Peter and John **taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead**; they did not believe in the afterlife or the resurrection at all

"They laid hands on them (that is, on Peter and John), and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. " (Acts 4:3-4)

Why in custody until the next day?

- **Because according to the Jewish Talmud, the Sanhedrin was forbidden from convening between the times of the evening and morning sacrifice...**

EXPLOSIVE GROWTH

Many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand." The church's leaders were arrested, but its numbers exploded

The growth rate, in a matter of days the early church went from 120 in the Upper Room, to 3000 at Pentecost, to 5000 men here - which doesn't include women and children - possibly 15,000 total.



OPPOSITION TO THE GOSPEL

The Jewish people were converted, but the leaders were obstinate

"And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem." Acts 4:5-6

WHO WAS ANNAS?

- Annas in the Bible was a powerful high priest who played key roles in the execution of Jesus Christ and in the persecution of the early church.
- Annas was appointed high priest of the Jerusalem temple
- Annas was born into an affluent and influential family
- As leader of the Sanhedrin, Annas sat at the height of Jewish aristocracy. He was wealthy, well-educated, and in league with the ruling Roman authorities.
- Even when he no longer formally held the title of high priest, Annas continued to command the power of the office.

Annas was the patriarch of a powerful Jewish family

Jesus was tried before Annas and his son, Caiaphas. Five of Annas' sons were High Priest at one time or another.

WHO WAS CAIAPHAS?

Ruled from AD 18 to 37

Joseph Caiaphas was his full name

He was a strong opponent of Jesus and His message.

He played a key role in the trial and execution of Jesus Christ

Caiaphas was the son-in-law of Annas

CAIAPHAS'S STORY IS A TRAGIC ONE

Caiaphas was someone who was faced with the reality of who Jesus is and yet denied the Truth that literally stood before him. As high priest Caiaphas had wealth, an honorable position, and the respect of the people, but he was deficient in the one area that truly matters: saving faith in Jesus Christ

WHO PERFORMED THE MIRACLE?



"And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" Acts 4:7

It was the job of the Sanhedrin - the Jewish Court - to ask in whose name a miracle was performed.

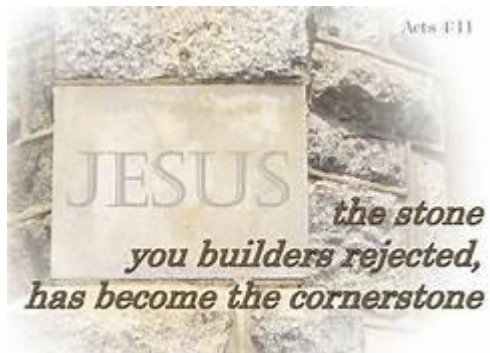
Deuteronomy 13 warns that a false prophet with demonic powers can work miracles to draw people away from Yahweh, the one true God

PETER'S BOLDNESS!

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit (And it happens to him again! He's baptized with the Spirit), said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole." Acts 4:8-10

COURAGE TO SPEAK THE TRUTH!

Got to admire Peter's boldness. He assigns guilt: "whom you crucified." This is what the filling of the Holy Spirit brings to a Christian - courage to speak the truth! But Who they crucified, God raised up, and it is that Jesus who gave the lame man back his ability to walk!



Acts 4:11

*Psalm 118:22 "The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone."*

**Jesus was the stone rejected by the architects or
leaders of Judaism,
yet He will become the foundation stone of
the Church**

*"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name
under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
Acts 4:12*

- Peter makes it crystal clear that without Jesus a person is lost and damned forever.

*"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and
perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they
marveled." Acts 4:13*

- Annas' sons studied theology in the elite yeshivas.
- Peter and John were blue-collar fishermen. This was the Harvard scholars versus the High School dropouts.

**Yet the disciples were the ones who spoke with clarity and
authority. The elites were stunned. How can it be? Then
"they realized that they had been with Jesus."**

THIS IS THE



A mastery of original languages, proficiency in theology,
knowledge of ancient history all have some value, but it pales
compared **to spending time with Jesus**

“Spending time in the halls of higher learning is not nearly as important as spending time at the feet of Jesus.”

What Peter and John possessed made what they lacked irrelevant

“And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.” Acts 4:14



The lame man himself -
wiggling his toes, and bouncing
about - was irrefutable
evidence!

“But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, “What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a ^[a]notable miracle has been done through them is evident^[b] to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name.”

So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” Acts 4:15-20

Peter says he has no choice. He’s commanded by God to add speech to his faith.



QUESTION?

And let me ask you, what goes through your mind when the world tries to intimidate you into silence?



QUESTION?

Is it ever right to listen to man more than God? How can we be silent when God has told us to speak?

PETER AND JOHN LET GO FROM THE SANHEDRIN

"So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed. And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them." Acts 4:21-22

BACK TO THE UPPER ROOM

They returned to the Upper Room - it was serving as their headquarters.

"So when they.." (other disciples) heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said..." Acts 4:24

And pay attention to what they do when threatened? They don't protest, or boycott, or file a lawsuit... **they pray!**

THE CHURCH COMBATED OPPOSITION WITH PRAYER

THEY PRAYED

*"Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea,
and all that is in them..." Acts 4:24*

They get their eyes on God. Their starting point isn't their fears or their enemy - it is their God. He made all things! He knows all things! He can do all things!

Lord GRK despotes (des-pot'-ace) (eng. "despot") Ruler Absolute. THE Supreme Master. (THE ONE, ALL)

God GRK theos (theh'-os) theology, or theologian THE Supreme Divinity. THE one magistrate, THE Exceeding, God.

Who Made GRK poieo (poy-eh'-o) Creator God the one who makes. the designer and cause, the one who ordains, executes, performs. That's a Shot in Faith !!!

CS Lewis once said, "The first prayer of all prayers is... may it be the real God to whom I pray, and may it be the real me who prays."

The Church reminds itself that their God is sovereign over every situation. There's nothing He can't do

THEY TURN TO THE WORD

"Who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: (and they quote Psalm 2) 'Why did the nations rage, and the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the LORD and against His Christ.'" Acts 4:25-26

- God already knew how the rulers would gang up on Jesus
- They were fulfilling God's purposes.
- God had been and now is calling the shots!

"For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done." Acts 4:27-28

"Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." Acts 4:29

- They pray for boldness - in their speaking and in God's doing

They didn't ask for protection, they asked for power

This is not how we usually pray. When we face persecution, we ask God to take it away or shelter us from it.

Some folks even ask for wisdom to appease the authorities.

But that's not how this church prays

Winston Churchill

"An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile - hoping it will eat him last."

- Winston Churchill

Rather than pray for safety or appeasement, this church prayed for **boldness and miracles!**

"Lord, look on their threats, but make us a greater threat in speaking Your Word!" Acts 4:29

There was a man named Richard Wurmbrand who began the ministry called Voice of the Martyr's.... He lived with this mindset, as did many who were imprisoned and tortured with him in Communist Romania.... Excerpt from Richard Wurmbrand's, Tortured for Christ.

P a g e | 24 It was strictly forbidden to preach to other prisoners. It was understood that whoever was caught doing this received a severe beating. A number of us decided to pay the price for the privilege of preaching, so we accepted their terms. It was a deal; we preached and they beat us. We were happy preaching. They were happy beating us, so everyone was happy. The following scene happened more times than I can remember: A brother was preaching to the other prisoners when the guards suddenly burst in, surprising him halfway through a phrase. They hauled him down the corridor to their "beating room." After what seemed like an endless beating, they brought him back and threw him—bloody and bruised—on the prison floor. Slowly he picked his battered body up, painfully straightened his clothing and said, "Now, brethren, where did I leave off when I was interrupted?" He continued his gospel message. I have seen beautiful things

Rather than lay low, these men want to rise up

"Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men and women. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks."

- Philip Brooks

WHO IS PHILIP BROOKS?

Descended from the earliest Puritans of Massachusetts, Phillips Brooks studied at Harvard. After teaching for a short time in Virginia, he was ordained in the Episcopal Church about five years before the American Civil War began; then he threw himself with whole heart into the Union cause, although never losing sympathy for Southerners.

On this day, January 23, 1893, Christians throughout the world mourned the death of Phillips Brooks. Yet sorrow soon turned to songs of triumph and praise of God for Phillips Brooks' life. Over his tomb they would erect these words: "A preacher of righteousness and hope, majestic in stature, impetuous in utterance, rejoicing in the truth, unhampered by the bonds of church or state, he brought by his life and doctrine fresh faith to a people, fresh meanings to ancient creeds."

Today Phillips is probably best remembered for one of those hymns: "O Little Town of Bethlehem", written in 1868

**The Young Church was Praying, & Studying the
Word and the result of it was unity among
the believers.**

**You will always know when Unity is present,
Because Jesus will be the only one in sight**

God answers their prayer emphatically

*"And when they had prayed, the place where they were
assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the
Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness."*

Acts 4:31

The room shook. The walls wobbled.

The floor did the wave.

The disciples caught another spiritual gust and were
again filled with the Spirit.

It resulted in a renewed desire to speak boldly!

DIVINE MATHEMATICS

"The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." Acts 2:47

"The Word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly." Acts 6:7

- THE LORD ADDED TO THE CHURCH DAILY
- THE WORD OF GOD SPREAD

GOD ADDS (Acts 2)

GOD MULTIPLIES (Acts 6)

BUT GOD NEVER DIVIDES

GOD DOES DO SOME SUBTRACTION (Acts 5)

"Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common." Acts 4:32

- Everyone pooled their resources because of love and unity

FAMINE STRIKES JUDEA

The Gentile Churches called on to take up an offering for the
believers in Jerusalem

But the time of sharing and love was contagious and God was
working powerfully

GREAT POWER AND GREAT GRACE

*'And with great power the apostles gave witness to the
resurrection of the Lord Jesus.
And great grace was upon them all". Acts 4:33*

Great Power and Great Grace are sustained by Great Purity

*Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were
possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the
proceeds of the things that were sold,
and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each
as anyone had need." Acts 4:34-35*

**Wealthier Believers Came To The Rescue To Help
The Jewish Pilgrims**

WHO WAS JOSES?

"And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet."

Acts 4:32-36

BARNABAS LAYS THE MONEY AT THE APOSTLES' FEET

- Joses or Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus
- Apostles named him Barnabas
- Barnabas means "Son of Encouragement"
- Had a proper perspective on money and property
- Barnabas plays a key role in the spread of the Gospel
- Barnabas eases Paul's entry into the church (Acts 9)

Joses (Barnabas) is an example of a generous spirit when it comes to giving sacrificially to the work of the Lord

The Old Testament prohibited the Hebrew tribe of Levi from owning land – their inheritance was to be the Temple service..

BUT not Barnabas, God's Law had been unable to tame Barnabas' heart. He had insisted on ownership.

BUT WHAT THE LAW FAILED TO DO, THE LOVE OF JESUS HAD ACCOMPLISHED