

Lesson V.

THE FIRST PERSECUTION

February 2, 1902

Acts 4: 1-12. Study Acts 4: 1-22. Commit to memory vs. 8-10. Read ch. 4: 1-31.

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 An'nas, 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

Revised Version—Sore troubled because; 2 Proclaimed in; 3 Ward; 4 Morrow; 5 But; 6 Came to be; 7 Were gathered together in Jerusalem; 8 Was there; 9 Omit to end of verse; 10 Inquired; 11 In; 12 Omit of Israel; 13 Are; 14 Concerning a; 15 An; 16 This man; 17 Margin, saved; 18 He; 19 The builders; 20 Was made; 21 And in none other is salvation; for neither is there any other; 22 That is; 23 Where'n.

EXPLANATION

Connection—After the miracle of the healing of the lame man, while Peter was preaching to the multitudes who had run together in Solomon's porch (3: 11), charging them with the death of Jesus, but telling them that, as they did it in ignorance they might yet be saved if they would repent and believe (vs. 12-26), the rulers suddenly appeared and arrested him and his fellow apostle John.

1, 2. **As they spake.** John had probably taken part, too. **The priests;** who were on duty in the temple. The margin of the Rev. Ver. says "chief priests." **The captain;** the commander of the temple police, whose duty it was to keep order there. **The Sadducees;** one of the two larger sects of the Jews. "They were the aristocratic priests occupying influential positions" and siding politically rather with their Roman rulers, by whose support they were kept in power. Religiously they believed neither in the resurrection nor in angels nor spirits. **Came upon them;** to arrest them. 2. **Being grieved.** The meaning is annoyed and vexed. **That they taught.** The priests claimed the sole right to teach. **Preached through Jesus the resurrection.** The Sadducees denied this doctrine (23: 8), whilst the Pharisees, who believed in it (23: 8), would hate to hear it proclaimed through Jesus, whom they abhorred.

3, 4. **Laid hands on them;** arrested them. **In hold;** in prison, because it was now eventide. The lame man had been healed at about 3 p.m. It was illegal to try a person after sunset; so they waited till the morrow (v. 5). **Howbeit.** Persecution, as so often later, seemed to fan the flame and spread the word. **Many . . . believed;** trusted Christ as their Saviour. The Gospel makes friends as well as enemies (2 Cor. 2; 16). **The number of the men.** The word for "men" means men, as distinguished from women. **About five thousand.** This is the total of men who had come out on the Lord's side up to this time. They were also many women.

5, 6. **Their rulers;** the rulers of the people, the priestly members of the Sanhedrim, or chief Jewish council, made up of 70 members. Before this court Jesus had been brought (Matt. 26: 3; Mark 14: 53;

10 asked. By what power, or 11 by what name, have ye done this?

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;

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.

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

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

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

Luke 22: 66). **The elders and scribes** were the lay members of the council. The "scribes" were the students and expounders of the law. **Annas.** He had been deposed by Roman authority A.D. 14, but was still high priest by right, as the office was for life. **Caiaphas;** the son-in-law of Annas and acting high priest. They had tried Jesus (John 18: 13, 14); they now try His followers. Nothing is known of John and Alexander. **The kindred.** The relatives of Annas seem to have made up a good part of the Sanhedrim.

7. **In the midst.** The members of the Sanhedrim sat in a semi-circle, the prisoners in the centre. **They asked;** seeking for information upon which to base a charge against them. **By what power?** their own or God's. (Deut. 13: 1-3.) **By what name?** By what right or authority.

8, 9. **Filled with the Holy Ghost;** as Christ had promised (Matt. 10: 19, 20). **Ye rulers.** See on v. 5. **If we this day,** etc. There is a touch of fine irony in His words. A religious council was trying them as criminals for doing a religious act. **Impotent**—means powerless, helpless.

10. **Be it known, etc.;** now no longer denying his Lord (Matt. 26: 70.) Peter will speak with courage. **In the name;** by the authority of Christ. **Whom ye crucified;** a fearless charge of their guilt. **Whom God raised;** proving His Messiahship. **Whole;** in body and in soul.

11, 12. **This is the stone, etc.;** a quotation from Ps. 118: 22. He had heard Christ use it (Matt. 21: 42.) **The builders** were the rulers. The rejected stone is Christ, but He has become the most important Stone in the building of His Spiritual Kingdom. **Neither is there salvation in any other:** a solemn proclamation, every word fraught with life or death.

Peter's spirited defence surprised the rulers (v. 13.) They could not deny the miracle, so in private consultation they decided to warn them against preaching Jesus (vs. 14-18). But Peter courageously replied that he would obey God rather than man, and the rulers with a threat dismissed them (19-22).