

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS 4

Ver. 1. *And as they spake unto the people*, etc.] For though only mention is made of Peter’s preaching in the preceding chapter, yet doubtless John preached as well as he; either in turn, or to a part of the people at some distance: and this shows their diligence, faithfulness, and integrity, in the ministration of the word; and it is recorded to their honour, that whilst they were about their master’s business, and discharging the duty of their office, *the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them*; by agreement, with great violence, and at unawares: the “priests” might be those who kept the watch in the temple; for

“in three places the priests kept watch, in the house of the sanctuary; in the house of Abtines, in the house of Nitsots, and in the house of Moked, and the Levites in one and twenty places ^{f158}.”

And it now being eventide, they might be about to take their stands; “and the captain of the temple” might be he, whom they call, **tyb rh çya**, “the man of the mountain of the house”; who was **rç**, a ruler, or governor, and **hnwmm**, a president over all the wards ^{f159}; he is sometimes called **rmçm çar**, “the head of the ward” ^{f160}; and of him it is said ^{f161},

“the man of the mountain of the house goes his round through every ward, with burning torches before him; and every ward that does not stand (is not on his feet), the man of the mountain of the house, says to him, peace be to thee; and if he observes that he is asleep, he strikes him with his staff, and he has power to burn his garments.”

The Vulgate Latin and the Oriental versions read in the plural number, as in (see Gill on “~~22:4~~ Luke 22:4”), (see Gill on “~~22:52~~ Luke 22:52”). The Sadducees were a sect among the Jews, that denied the resurrection of the dead; of their rise, name, and tenets, (See Gill on “~~3:7~~ Matthew 3:7”).

Ver. 2. *Being grieved that they taught the people*, etc.] Any doctrine, and especially that which follows, and which particularly gave uneasiness to the Sadducees, they were exceedingly distressed by it; it pained them to the very heart, and they were filled with wrath and indignation:

and preached through, or in Jesus, the resurrection of the dead; they not only preached the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead in general, but gave an instance and proof of it in the resurrection of Christ, affirming that he was risen from the dead; and they also preached up the resurrection of the dead in his name, and asserted, that he would be the author of it, and it would be erected by his power: so that their doctrine was equally disagreeable to the Pharisees and Sadducees; to the Sadducees, who denied that there was, or would be any resurrection of the dead; and to the Pharisees, who though they believed it, yet were highly offended that it should be said, that Jesus was risen from the dead; and that the general resurrection of the dead should be attributed to him.

Ver. 3. *And they laid hands on them*, etc.] The Arabic version renders it, “on both”; on Peter and John; seized them by force, and drew them out of the temple:

and put them in hold unto the next day; not in the common public prison, as in (~~445B~~ Acts 5:18) but they put them into the hands, and under the care and custody of a set of men, to keep and guard them; that they might not go away, until they had an opportunity of bringing them before the sanhedrim, to be examined and punished by them:

for it was now eventide; it was at the ninth hour, or about three o’clock in the afternoon, when Peter and John went up to the temple, where they healed the lame man; after which, both of them preached to the people; so that it must now be evening; at least, as the Syriac version renders it, “the evening was near”, or was drawing on.

Ver. 4. *Howbeit, many of them which heard the word*, etc.] The doctrine of the Gospel, preached by Peter and John:

believed; the report of it, and in Christ, as risen from the dead, which was the sum and substance of it: and this they did, notwithstanding the opposition made by the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadduces, and the violence they used to the apostles; for though they kept their persons in hold, they could not stop the free course of the word, which ran and was glorified:

and the number of the men was about five thousand; or “was five thousand”, as the Alexandrian copy, the Vulgate Latin, and Ethiopic versions read; that is the number, not of the hearers, but “of them that believed”, was so many; and so read the Arabic and Ethiopic versions: there were so many persons converted at this time; for this number does not include the three thousand that were converted under the first sermon, but regards those who now became true believers, and were added to the church; so that there were now eight thousand persons added to it; a great increase indeed! now had Christ the dew of his youth, and now were these fishermen fishers of men indeed: that our Lord’s feeding five thousand men with five barley loaves and two fishes, should have any regard to the conversion of these five thousand men, is but a conceit.

Ver. 5. *And it came to pass on the morrow*, etc.] The disciples being kept in custody all night:

that their rulers, and elders, and Scribes; that is, their ecclesiastical rulers; the chief priests, who, with the Scribes, and elders of the people, made up the great council at Jerusalem, consisting of seventy one persons, so they are called in (^{ARB}Matthew 26:3,57 27:1 ^{ARB}Mark 14:53 15:1).

Ver. 6. *And Annas the high priest*, etc.] So called, either because he had been an high priest, though he was not now, but Caiaphas his son-in-law; or because he was the Sagan of the high priest, and had all the other priests under his government; and is mentioned first, because he was father-in-law to Caiaphas; (see Gill on “^{ARB}Luke 3:2”) he could not be called so, because he was *ayçn*, “prince”, or president of the council; for not he, but Gamaliel, was president at this time. And

Caiaphas; who was properly high priest, and continued so for three years after the death of Christ:

and John; who is thought by Dr. Lightfoot to be the same with Jochanan, or John ben Zaccai; a famous Jewish Rabbi, who lived at this time, and until, and after the destruction of Jerusalem: this Rabbi was *ḥk*, “a priest”^{f162}, as this John was, of the kindred of the high priest; he lived also at Jerusalem; for it is said of him^{f163}, that he sat in the shadow of the temple, and expounded all the whole day; and a very remarkable story is told of him, which happened just about this time^{f164}; which is, that

“forty years before the destruction of the temple — the doors of the temple opened of themselves, when Rabban Jochanan ben Zaccai reproved them, saying, O temple, temple, wherefore dost thou fright thyself? I know thee, that thine end shall be, to be destroyed; for so prophesied of thee Zechariah, the son of Iddo, (~~310B~~ Zechariah 11:1). “Open thy doors, O Lebanon”, etc.”

The chief objection to him, as that learned writer observes, is, that he lived and died a Pharisee, whereas this John seems to have been a Sadducee; (see ~~4157~~ Acts 5:17). This puts me in mind of John the high priest, who ministered in the high priesthood fourscore years, and at last became a Sadducee ^{f165}: Beza’s ancient copy reads “Jonathan: and Alexander”; whose surname was Lysimachus, and had the title of “Alabarcha”; he was a very rich man ^{f166}: after Alexander the great had been at Jerusalem, this name became frequent among the Jews; and it is said ^{f167} to be promised him, and was fulfilled, that every son that was born to the priests that year he entered Jerusalem, should be called Alexander; and therefore it is no wonder to hear of an Alexander among the kindred of the high priest; frequent mention is made of *yrdnski a ybr*, “Rabbi Alexander”, in the Jewish writings ^{f168}:

and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest; by whose means they were become members of the sanhedrim:

were gathered together at Jerusalem; where the great council only sat, until the destruction of it; it seems by this, that some of the members of it lived in the country; it may be in some of the villages adjacent, where they might be easily and quickly sent for, upon any occasion, as they very likely now were; the Syriac version leaves out the words “at Jerusalem”.

Ver. 7. *And when they had set them in the midst*, etc.] Of the assembly, as the Ethiopic version adds; in the middle of the sanhedrim, which sat in a semicircular form; or as the Jews express it, as the half of a round corn floor, or as a half moon, and not in a perfect circle; because it was necessary that the contending parties, and the witnesses, might go in and speak before them all ^{f169}; so that those that were set before them, were placed in the middle of them: and here Peter and John were set; so the Arabic version renders it, “when they set both”: they sent for them out of the hold, or custody, where they had been all night, and ordered them to be brought before them, to be examined about their doctrine and practice:

they asked, by what power, or by what name have ye done this? they inquired of them, whether it was by a natural, or by a divine, or by a diabolical power, that they had wrought the cure upon the lame man? whether it was by the use of medicine, or by the help of magic art, and the assistance of the devil, which they were very ready to charge Christ and his disciples with? or whether they pretended to a divine and supernatural aid? and also what name they had made use of, and by whose authority they acted?

Ver. 8. *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost,* etc.] At that very instant, having received a fresh measure of the gifts and graces of the Spirit, besides what he had poured forth upon him at the day of Pentecost; so that he had great courage and presence of mind, and freedom of speech, as Christ had promised his disciples they should have, when they were brought before governors and magistrates, (~~1008~~ Matthew 10:18,19,30, ~~2214~~ Luke 21:14,15). The case was much altered with Peter, he who but a little while ago was frightened by a servant maid, now stands before the Jewish sanhedrim, with undaunted courage and resolution:

and said unto them, ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel; he addresses them in a very handsome manner, and gives them their proper titles as magistrates; which ought to be done by men and Christians; honour should be given, to whom honour is due: the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions, and some copies, add “hear”, which seems very necessary; he called for audience, or desired to be heard a few words, in the defence of himself and fellow apostle, and in answer to their questions.

Ver. 9. *If we this day be examined of the good deed,* etc.] Or “seeing” we are; for it was not a matter of doubt, but a clear case, that they were brought into court, and were passing under an examination, about the cure of the lame man; which the apostle rightly calls a

good deed, it being done in faith, and to the glory of God, and for the good of the man; and hereby tacitly suggests, that they were dealt very hardly with, to be seized and kept in custody, and be called in question, for doing an action so beneficent and kind, as this was, which was

done to the impotent man; who could not help himself, nor get his bread any other way, than by begging:

by what means he is made whole; restored to perfect health, and the proper use of his limbs; that is, by what power, and in what name this was done; the answer is ready, and it is as follows.

Ver. 10. *Be it known unto you all*, etc.] The members of the sanhedrim:

and to all the people of Israel; who might hear of this affair; for the apostle was not ashamed of what he had done, nor of the person in whose name he had done it:

that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth; by calling, on that name, and by making use of it, and by the power and authority of Jesus Christ, who by way of contempt was called the

Nazarene: whom ye crucified; for though Pilate delivered him to be crucified, and the Roman soldiers did crucify him, yet this was at the request and instigation of the chief priests, Scribes, and elders; and therefore it is ascribed to them, who were bent upon his death; and no other would satisfy them, but the shameful and painful death of the cross:

whom God raised from the dead; of which the apostles were witnesses, having seen him and conversed with him after his resurrection; and this was the doctrine they were sent to publish, and for which they were apprehended and detained in custody; but this did not deter them from preaching it, no, not before the sanhedrim; which was an instance of great courage and faithfulness: and this is the rather mentioned; to show, that it was not by the name of one that was dead, but of one that was alive, that this cure was performed; as well as to observe to them, that their efforts against Christ were vain and fruitless:

even by him doth this man stand here before you whole; from whence it appears, as well as from (⁴⁰¹⁸Acts 4:18) that the man that was healed, was now present: and either he was laid hold on, and detained in custody with the apostles, in hope to discover fraud if they could; or hearing that the apostles were before the sanhedrim, and examining on his account, might come of himself, in order to attest and prove the matter of fact, and to vindicate them.

Ver. 11. *This is the stone*, etc.] That is, this Jesus of Nazareth, by whose name the lame man was made whole, is that stone spoken of in (⁴¹⁸⁰Psalms 118:22) by whom is meant the true Messiah, comparable to a stone, for his

strength and duration, and usefulness, as a foundation and corner stone, in the spiritual building of the church; and yet notwithstanding is the stone

which was set at nought of you builders: the priests, elders, and Scribes; who were fond of being called builders, but made miserable work of it; despising and rejecting the stone of Israel, and instead of him as a foundation, built themselves, and others, on the traditions of the elders, and their own righteousness: but though Christ was rejected by them, both in person and in doctrine, and was ignominiously treated, and at last put to death, yet he was raised from the dead, and exalted at the right hand of God; and is the stone,

which is become the head of the corner; or the chief corner stone, that adorns, strengthens, knits, and keeps together, the whole building; in which Jews and Gentiles, saints in all ages and places, even all the elect of God, are united together; (See Gill on “^{421D}Matthew 21:42”).

Ver. 12. *Neither is there salvation in any other,* etc.] Meaning not corporeal healing, but spiritual and eternal salvation; the Syriac version renders it, neither is there **anqrwp**, “redemption in any other”: Christ is the only Saviour and Redeemer, who was promised and prophesied of as such; who has saved and redeemed his people from the law, sin, and Satan; nor is salvation to be sought and hoped for from any other; not in a man’s self, nor in any other creature, angels or men; not in and by his own works, and legal righteousness; not by obedience to the law of Moses, moral or ceremonial; nor by the light of nature, much less by an observance of the traditions of the elders:

for there is none other name; thing or person, be it ever so great, or whatever show of power and strength, of holiness and religion, it makes; as the name of kings, princes, and the great men in the world; or of ministers and preachers in the church; or even of Christians and believers, which may be only a name to live; none but the name of Jesus, his person, blood, and righteousness:

under heaven: throughout the whole earth, in all the nations and kingdoms of it; nor even in heaven itself, among all the mighty angels there, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers; none but the Father and the Spirit, who are one with Christ: there is none but he

given among men; and he has been freely given by his Father, as an instance of his matchless love to the world; and also freely given by himself, to be a sacrifice for the sins of his people; and is freely preached among men, as the only Saviour of them; for there is no other,

whereby we must be saved: God resolved in his purposes and decrees, in his council and covenant, upon the salvation of his chosen people; and he appointed his Son to be the salvation of them, and determined he would save them by him, and by no other, and in no other way; wherefore, whoever are saved, must be saved by him, (see ~~2XIII~~ Hosea 1:7) the Arabic version adds, “unless by him only”.

Ver. 13. *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John*, etc.] With what courage and intrepidity they stood before them, the presence of mind they had, and the freedom of speech they used, as the word properly signifies: they observed their elocution, the justness of their diction, the propriety of their language, and the strength and nervousness of their reasoning; as well as their great resolution, constancy, and firmness of mind; not being afraid to profess the name of Christ, or to charge them with the murder of him; and that they seemed to be determined to abide by him, at all events; to assert him to be the true Messiah, though rejected by the Jewish builders; and that he was risen from the dead; and not only to ascribe unto him the miracle now wrought, but the salvation of men; and to declare, that there was none in any other but him: the Syriac version renders it, “when they heard the word of Simeon and John, which they spoke openly”: and freely, without any reserve: they answered readily to the question, that it was by the name of Jesus of Nazareth that they had done this miracle; they dealt freely with the Jewish sanhedrim, and told them in so many words, that they were the crucifiers of Christ, and the rejecters of that stone, which God had made the head of the corner, and that there was no salvation for them in any other: it appears from hence, that John spoke as well as Peter, though his words are not recorded:

and perceived that they were unlearned ignorant men; not by what they now said, but by what they heard and understood of them before: they were informed that they were “unlearned” men, or who did not understand letters; not but that they had learned their mother tongue, and could read the Scriptures; but they had not had a liberal education; they had not been brought up at the feet of any of the doctors, in any of the schools and universities of the Jews; they were not trained up in, and conversant with,

the nice distinctions, subtle argumentations, and decisions of the learned doctors, in the interpretation of the law of Moses, and the traditions of the elders: and understood that they were also “ignorant” men, **ιδιωται**, “idiots”, or private men; for men might be unlearned, and yet not be such; it seems the high priests themselves were sometimes unlearned men: hence, on the day of atonement,

“they used to read before him, in the order of the day, and say to him, Lord high priest, read thou with thine own mouth; perhaps thou hast forgot, or it may be, **tdml al**, “thou hast not learned”
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The Jews have adopted the word here used into their language; and express by it, sometimes a man that is mean, abject, and contemptible: thus instead of “children of base men”, or “without a name”, the Targumist on (~~Job~~ Job 30:8) reads, **^yj wydh ynb**, “the children of idiots”, or “private men”: and in the Targum on (~~1 Samuel~~ 1 Samuel 18:23 24:14) it is used for one lightly esteemed, and comparable to a flea: it sometimes designs persons in a private life, though men of learning and knowledge, in distinction from those that are in office; so we read^{f171}, that

“three kings, and four **twj wydh**, “private” persons, have no part in the world to come; the three kings are Jeroboam, Ahab, and Manasseh; the four “idiots”, or private men, are Balaam, Doeg, Ahithophel, and Gehazi.”

And so a bench of idiots, or private men, is distinguished from a bench of authorized and approved judges^{f172}; and sometimes the word is used of such, as are distinguished from doctors, or wise men; so when it is said^{f173},

“the command of plucking off the shoe, is done before three judges, and though the three are “idiots”;

the note of Maimonides upon it is,

“not wise men, but that know how to read the language,”

the Hebrew language: and such were the disciples, in every sense of the word; they were mean and abject, poor fishermen, men of no name and figure, that were in no office, and exalted station of life, nor versed in Jewish learning, but common private men: so that

they marvelled; the sanheddrim were astonished to hear them talk with so much fluency and pertinence:

and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus; looking wistly upon them, they knew them again, and remembered that; they were persons that were the disciples of Jesus, and whom they had seen in company with him; not in the high priest's palace, when Jesus was arraigned, examined, and condemned there; though Peter, and some think John was there at that time, yet not to be observed and taken notice of by the sanheddrim; but in the temple where Jesus taught, and where the chief priests, Scribes, and elders came, and disputed with him about his authority, and cavilled at him, (^{f175}Matthew 21:15,23).

Ver. 14. *And beholding the man which was healed*, etc.] Who either was taken into custody, and brought before the sanheddrim, along with the apostles; or rather, who came here of his own accord to be witness for them: for he was

standing with them; in company with them, and close by them, and on their side; and so they could, and did point and appeal unto him, who was ready to justify, that it was not by the use of medicine, or of magic art, or in the name of Satan or Beelzebub, but by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, that his cure was wrought:

they could say nothing against it; they could not gainsay the fact, for the man was before them, perfectly well, whom they personally knew, by his lying so long at the gate of the temple; they knew that he had been lame from his mother's womb, who was now above forty years of age; and they could say nothing against the manner of his cure, who was present to attest it; nor could they say anything against them; the apostles, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read; they could not blame them for doing it, it being a good deed, nor charge them with fraud and imposture.

Ver. 15. *But when they had commanded them*, etc.] That is, when the sanheddrim had ordered the apostles; or "commanded that both", as the Arabic version reads, both Peter and John; and, it may be, the man that was healed too:

to go aside out of the council; or place where the council, or sanheddrim sat; which, whether it was in the chamber "Gazith", in the temple where they used to sit ^{f174}, or in the shops, or in the city, whither they removed, is not certain. We are told ^{f175}, that

“the sanhedrim removed from the chamber Gazith, to the shops, and from the shops to Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem to Jabneh;”

that is, after the destruction of the city. And the first remove was much about this time; for it is said ^{f176}, that

“forty years before the destruction of the temple, the sanhedrim removed, and sat in the shops.”

Not in the shops where things were sold for the use of the temple, but in a court adjoining to them, which took its name from them.

They conferred among themselves; what was proper to be done, the apostles being withdrawn.

Ver. 16. *Saying, what shall we do to these men?* etc.] Whether they should punish them by scourging them, or detain them longer in custody, or commit them to prison, or dismiss them:

for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them: they were convicted that a miracle was wrought; that it was a clear case, a well known thing, of which there was no room to doubt, and that it was done by the apostles; but this was not all the difficulty, had it been a thing only within their knowledge, and which they could have concealed, it would have given them no uneasiness; but, as they observe,

it is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem: for the man having been so long lame, and had lain so long at the temple, where all the inhabitants frequently went, he was known and took notice of by them; and his cure being wrought so openly, and in such a miraculous way, it was the common talk of the city: so that there was no smothering it:

and we cannot deny it; the fact is so certain and evident; nor hide it, as the Ethiopic version renders it, it being so notorious and public.

Ver. 17. *But that it spread no further among the people*, etc.] Meaning not in Jerusalem; for the fame of this miracle was spread among all the inhabitants of that city; but in other parts of the nation:

let us straitly threaten them; or “in threatening threaten them”; that is, severely threaten them with imprisonment, or with the scourging of forty stripes save one, or with death itself.

That they speak henceforth to no man in this name; which through indignation and contempt they do not mention, but mean the name of Jesus: and their sense is, that the apostles, from this time forward, should not teach, or preach the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, or any other doctrine of the Gospel, in the name of Jesus, to any man, Jew or Gentile; or perform any miracle in his name, or call upon his name, and make use of it, for the healing of any person, or doing any miraculous work. The Ethiopic version is a very odd one, and quite contrary to the sense of the sanhedrim, “that they should not speak any more but in the name of the man Jesus”.

Ver. 18. *And they called them*, etc.] From the apartment where they were; or ordered their servants to call them in to them:

and commanded them not to speak at all; either privately or publicly, in the ministry of the word, or in working of miracles, in the city, or in the country:

nor teach in the name of Jesus; any doctrine whatever; or “the name of Jesus”, as the Arabic version reads; that is, the doctrine of Jesus, that which respects his person, his carnation, his offices, his sufferings, death, and resurrection from the dead.

Ver. 19. *But Peter and John answered and said unto them*, etc.] With great boldness and courage, and without any fear of man, but in the true fear of God

whether it be right in the sight of God; who is omniscient, and sees, and knows all things, all the actions of men, and the springs of them; who is holy, just, and true, and sits and judges among the gods, that which is right:

to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye: it is not denied that magistrates are to be hearkened to, and obeyed: but not more than God, or in things that are contrary to his nature, will, law, honour, and glory: whatever is agreeable to the law and will of God, commanded by magistrates, should be attended to, and cheerfully obeyed; but what is not should be disregarded, whatever follows upon it: and this was so just and reasonable, that the apostles appeal to the sanhedrim, or council itself, to determine.

Ver. 20. *For we cannot but speak*, etc.] It was not physically, but morally impossible; or it was not lawful, and therefore they would not speak any other, and they could not avoid speaking, say they,

the things which we have seen and heard; as the miracles and doctrines of Christ, his resurrection from the dead, of which they were eye and ear witnesses. This shows their great fidelity and integrity, their inviolable attachment to Christ, and their fearlessness of the displeasure and wrath of men.

Ver. 21. *So when they had further threatened them*, etc.] Either repeated the same, as before; or added some more severe ones, to terrify them, if possible; not being able to answer their arguments, or invalidate their reasoning:

they let them go; they did not acquit them as innocent persons, but dismissed them from custody:

finding nothing how they might punish them; not being able, though they sought most diligently for it, to fix anything upon them, which might be a cause, or occasion, or pretence of inflicting any punishment upon them:

because of the people: they would not have stuck at the injustice of it, or have been under any concern about offending God; but they were afraid of the people, of losing their credit among them, and lest they should rise up against them, and on the side of the apostles:

for all men glorified God for that which was done; they saw the hand of God in it, and ascribed it to his mercy, goodness, and power, and gave him the glory of it; and therefore to punish the instruments of so great and good a work, would have been esteemed barbarous and wicked, and would have been highly resented by them; since, on the contrary, they judged them worthy of great honour and respect.

Ver. 22. *For the man was above forty years old*, etc.] So that the miracle was the greater, that a man born lame, and who had been so above forty years, should have a cure; and he was the more known to the people, and his testimony met with more credit:

on whom this miracle of healing was showed; both for the good of men, for the glory of God, and for the confirmation of the Gospel of Christ.

Ver. 23. *And being let go*, etc.] Or dismissed from custody, by the order of the sanhedrim:

they went to their own company; or “to their own men”, as the Ethiopic version reads; or “to their own brethren”, as the Syriac; either to the other ten apostles; or to the hundred and twenty, who first met together; or the whole multitude of them that believed, (^{<40E>}Acts 4:32) the eight thousand that had been added to them, the whole church. Saints love to be together, and delight in the company of each other; and especially when they have anything to communicate, that may be for their mutual good, or for the honour of God:

and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them; what commands and injunctions they had lain upon them, and what threatenings they had given them, and, no doubt likewise, what answers they had returned to them.

Ver. 24. *And when they heard that*, etc.] The whole of the report the apostles made; and which they heard with patience, and without making any unworthy reflections upon the sanhedrim; and being, on the one hand, not over much terrified, and cast down, and, on the other hand, not sluggish, careless, and secure; they betake themselves, not to plots, conspiracies, and seditions; nor to arms to defend and avenge themselves, though their numbers were large; but to prayer, that they might not be deterred by threatenings, from speaking boldly the word of the Lord:

they lift up their voice to God with one accord; being inspired by the Holy Ghost, they not only agreed in the matter of their petitions, which agreement is of great avail with God; for whatever two or more agree in to ask of God, shall be given to them; but also in the very words which were vocally expressed by them, and that in a very loud and sonorous way, to signify the vehemency and ardour of their minds and affections:

and said, Lord, thou art God; or, as in one of Beza’s copies, “Lord our God”; or, as in the Ethiopic version, “Lord, thou art our God”; addressing God, the Father of Christ, as appears from (^{<40E>}Acts 4:27) as their own God, their covenant God and Father in Christ, from whom they might hope for help, and in whom they might expect safety, and every supply of grace:

which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; and which is a full proof of the omnipotence of God; an attribute of singular use to the saints in distressed circumstances; for what is it he

cannot do, who made all things that are? and what is it he will not do for his saints, for the accomplishment of his purposes, the making good of his covenant and promises, the fulfilment of prophecies; the good of his people, and the glory of his name?

Ver. 25. *Who by the mouth of thy servant David has said*, etc.] In (^{<9111>}Psalm 2:1,2) from whence we learn, that that psalm, though it is without a title, and does not bear David's name, yet is one of his and so Kimchi says, that David composed it at the beginning of his reign; though Aben Ezra thinks, that it was composed by one of the singers for him, on the day he was anointed; yet he afterwards seems to doubt of it, and on (^{<9111>}Psalm 2:7) says, they are the words of David, or the words of the singer. And certain it is, that in the apostles' time this psalm was reckoned to be David's by the Jews in common; and therefore they speak of it as such: and it was the sense of the ancient doctors of the synagogue, that this psalm is to be understood of the Messiah. Jarchi says, our Rabbins expound the business (of this psalm) concerning the King Messiah; and Kimchi observes, that there are some that interpret this psalm of Gog and Magog^{f177}, and the Messiah, or anointed, that is the King Messiah; though one of these writers was of opinion, that it is best to understand it of David himself; and Aben Ezra says, that it was composed either for David, or for the Messiah, and to understand it of the Messiah, the thing is more clear. The verses (^{<9111>}Psalm 2:7,8) are particularly applied to the Messiah in some of their most ancient writings^{f178}, and also in modern ones^{f179}, as is (^{<9111>}Psalm 2:2) to Messiah ben Joseph^{f180}: and indeed the whole psalm belongs to the Messiah, as appears from the express mention of him, and the vain attempts of the kings of the earth against him; from the decree and resolution of God to make and declare him king of Zion, notwithstanding their utmost efforts; from his having the Gentiles for his inheritance, which is true of no other; and especially from that reverence, adoration, and worship, which were to be given to him, and that trust and confidence to be placed in him, which can by no means agree with David, nor with any mere creature. The Syriac version reads, "who in the Holy Ghost, by the mouth", etc. and so read Beza's most ancient copy, and five other manuscripts of his; and the Vulgate Latin, and Ethiopic versions, read, "who in the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of our father David", etc. and the Alexandrian copy, but does not seem to be a genuine reading; since the Jews were not used to call David, but Abraham, their father; nor is it, with

propriety, expressed, that God the Father said in, or by the Spirit, what follows,

why did the Heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? that is, the Gentiles, and the people of the Jews, Pilate, and his council, with the Roman soldiers, and the Jewish sanhedrim, with the common people; who raged against Christ, seized him in a furious manner, led him as a malefactor, and hurried him from bar to bar, in a tumultuous way, and with great noise and clamour urged the crucifixion of him; nor did their rage cease until they had put him to death: yet it was a vain thing in them to imagine he should be held under the power of death; or that this would put a stop to the spread of his doctrine, and the enlargement of his kingdom and interest; since he rose from the dead, as a triumphant conqueror, over all his enemies, and pouring forth his Spirit, in an extraordinary way, he spread his Gospel, and his glory throughout the earth.

Ver. 26. *The kings of the earth stood up*, etc.] Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, sometimes called a king, (⁴⁰⁶⁴Mark 6:14) and Pilate the Roman governor, who represented his master Caesar; these stood, or rose up in an hostile manner, and set themselves against, and opposed themselves to the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth:

and the rulers were gathered together; the Jewish rulers, Annas, Caiaphas, and the rest of the members of the sanhedrim, who met together more than once; and particularly at the high priest's palace, to consult how they should take Jesus and put him to death; and who also gathered together at the same place, when he was taken, to arraign, examine, and condemn him. And this opposition, and these conspiracies and consultations, were

against the Lord: Jehovah, the Father of Christ, who sent him, and anointed him; so that what was done against Christ, was done against the Lord, their views and designs, their interest and glory, being the same:

and against his Christ; or anointed one, who was anointed by him, with the Holy Ghost, from his birth, and at his baptism, to be prophet, priest, and King.

Ver. 27. *For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus*, etc.] This is the interpretation of the above passages in (⁴⁰⁰⁰Psalm 2:1,2) and the application of them to Jesus; who is called the "child" of God, because the human nature of Christ was taken into union with the second person, who is the Son of God: unless the word should rather be rendered "servant", as it is in

(^{<40C5>}Acts 4:25) and which is a character that belongs to Christ, and is often given him as Mediator, who, as such, is God's righteous servant; and he is called "holy", because he was so in his conception and birth, and in his life and conversation, being free both from original sin, and actual transgression; and which is an aggravation of the sin and guilt of these men, that they should rise up, and gather together against him; and yet it was a clear case, a notorious fact, a certain truth, that could not be denied: and for the further aggravation of their crime, as well as for the sake of explaining the phrase "his, Christ", it is added,

whom thou hast anointed; with the oil of gladness, above his fellows. Christ was, in some sense, anointed to be prophet, priest, and King, from eternity, being so early set up as Mediator, or called unto, and invested with that office; (see ^{<31K2>}Proverbs 8:22, 2:6) and he was anointed in time, both at his incarnation and baptism, having the Spirit without measure given unto him, which is that anointing, that teacheth all things.

Both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together. This Herod was Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the great, and who beheaded John the Baptist; and Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea, at the time of Christ's death; the Gentiles were those of Pilate's council, and the Roman soldiers;

and the people of Israel, were the Jews, both the rulers, and the common people; the Syriac version renders it, "the synagogue of Israel": and these, though they were of different nations, and of different interests, yea enemies to one another, as the Jews and Gentiles in general were; and as were Herod and Pontius Pilate in particular; yet all gathered, consented, and agreed together to mock, scourge, and crucify this innocent and holy person. The Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions add, "in this city"; and so the above copies of Beza's, and others; meaning, in the city of Jerusalem, where the apostles now were, and where the above persons met together, and from whence a prophet could only perish. The Alexandrian copy reads, "in this thy city": which was called the city of God, and the holy city; and yet in this was this wicked convention, and all this wickedness done.

Ver. 28. *For to do whatsoever thy hand,* etc.] It was not the end of their gathering together against Christ, or it was not their intention and design, to fulfil the purposes and decrees of God, but to fulfil their own lusts, and satiate their rage and malice against him; but it was so in the event,

according to the wise disposal of providence, that by their gathering together, by their consultations and conspiracies, they brought about what God in his everlasting council had decreed. By “the hand” of the Lord here is not meant, the grace and favour of God; or the power and providence of God; or his word of precept, his revealed will; but his secret will, the counsel of his will, the hidden purpose of his heart, the wise consultation of his mind, which is formed according to his infinite wisdom: so in (~~1049~~2 Samuel 14:19) it is said, “is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this?” that is, the head of Joab, the wise counsel of Joab; and so the Jewish writers interpret it, **wt×** [, “his counsel”^{f181} : and so the word is explained here immediately; for it follows,

and thy counsel determined before to be done: God’s decrees are from eternity; there is nothing comes to pass in time but what he has beforetime determined should be done, either by effecting it himself, or doing it by others, or suffering it to be done, as in the case here. Whatever was done to Christ, either by Jews or Gentiles, by Herod or Pontius Pilate, was according to the secret will of God, the covenant he made with Christ, and the council of peace that was between them both: what they wickedly did, God designed for good, and hereby brought about the redemption and salvation of his people: this neither makes God the author of sin, nor excuses the sinful actions of men, or infringes the liberty of their wills in acting.

Ver. 29. *And now, Lord, behold their threatenings*, etc.] Meaning not with his eye of omniscience, which he could not but do; but that he would so take notice of them, as in his providence to rebuke them for them, or restrain them, or make them fearless of them:

and grant unto thy servants; the apostles, and all the ministers of the word, who are the servants of the most high God, and who serve him in the Gospel of his Son, with great cheerfulness and faithfulness:

that with all boldness they may speak thy word; and not their own, or another’s; the Gospel, which is God’s speech, or a word, a message of grace and mercy from him to sinful creatures. The request of the whole church is, that the ministers of the word might not be intimidated by the menaces of the sanhedrim; but go on to declare it with all freedom of expression, with all boldness, courage, and intrepidity of mind, and all openness and faithfulness, and in the most public manner. And such a

petition shows, that as it is gift of God to speak his word, or preach his Gospel, so it also is, to speak it freely, boldly, and faithfully, as it should be spoken.

Ver. 30. *By stretching forth thine hand to heal*, etc.] That is, by exerting his power in healing sicknesses, diseases, and lameness, as in the above instance, by the hands of the apostles; which, as it would be contrary to the schemes of the Jewish sanhedrim, and would confirm the doctrines of the Gospel; so it would animate the preachers of the word to preach it with more readiness, cheerfulness, and firmness of mind;

and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus; as had been done already, and by whose name particularly the lame man at the temple had received a cure, and in whose name the sanhedrim had forbid the apostles to preach, or to make use of it, in doing any other miracle.

Ver. 31. *And when they had prayed*, etc.] Either while they were praying, or as soon as they had done; for sometimes, as here, prayer is immediately heard, and an answer is returned, whilst the saints are speaking, or as soon as prayer is ended:

the place was shaken where they were assembled together; which, whether it was a private house, or the temple, is not certain: the latter seems more probable, because their number was so great, that no private house could hold them; and since this was the place where they used to assemble; this was now shaken with a rushing mighty wind, as on the day of Pentecost, and was a symbol of the divine presence, and a token that their prayers were heard, and an emblem of the shaking of the world by the ministry of the apostles:

and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost; with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, even with extraordinary ones, such as speaking with divers tongues, as before on the day of Pentecost; (see ~~Act~~ Acts 2:4) and this was the case not only of the apostles, but of the other ministers of the word, and it may be of the whole church:

and they spoke the word of God with all boldness; that is, the apostles, and preachers of the Gospel, spoke it with great freedom, and without fear, not only privately, in their community, but publicly, in the temple: this was what was particularly prayed for, and in which they had a remarkable answer.

Ver. 32. *And the multitude of them that believed,* etc.] The Gospel, and in Christ, the substance of it; and a multitude they were, for they were now about eight thousand persons. And though their number was so great, they

were of one heart and of one soul; there was an entire consent and agreement in doctrine, in matters of faith they were all of one mind and judgment, and there was a perfect harmony in their practice, they all performed the same duties, and observed the same commands and ordinances; and all pursued the same interest, and had the same ends and views; and there was a strict union of their affections to each other; their souls were knit to one another; so that there was, but as it were, one soul in this large body of Christians. Aristotle, being asked what a friend was, answered, one soul dwelling in two bodies^{f182}: and so the Jews say, it is fit and proper that lovers or friends should be *dj a çyak dj a bl b*, “of one heart, as one man”^{f183}; and such friends and hearty lovers were these.

Neither said any of them, that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; though he had a peculiar right unto them, yet he did not claim that right, nor insist on it, nor so much as speak of it, nor make use of his substance as if it was his own, reserving it for himself, or even disposing of it himself; but exposed it to the free use of the whole body, to enjoy it equally with himself:

but they had all things common; which was what they were not obliged to, but it was a free and voluntary action of their own, and so is not binding on others; nor indeed is their practice to be imitated, in the direct manner in which they did it, for their case was peculiar. They were not only every day liable to persecutions and to have their possessions seized, and their goods confiscated; but they also knew, that in process of time, Jerusalem would be destroyed, and they could not tell how soon; and therefore judged it right to sell off their possessions, and throw the money into one common stock, for their mutual support, and for the carrying on the common cause of Christ.

Ver. 33. *And with great power,* etc.] Either in a very powerful way, with great fervency of spirit, and ardour of mind, and uncommon zeal; or with great efficacy on the souls of men; or with many miracles, and powerful operations in healing the sick, casting out devils, etc.

gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; which they were chosen to be witnesses, and were eyewitnesses of; and which is a

fundamental article of the Gospel, and was what the Sadducees were particularly disturbed at, and on account of which they forbade them to preach any more in Christ's name.

And great grace was upon them all; not only upon the apostles and ministers, but upon the whole church: and which may be understood either of the large gifts of the Spirit of God, which were poured out upon them, and plentifully bestowed on them; or of the gracious protection of God over them, preserving them from the rage and malice of men; or of that grace and favour which they had among thee people in common; or of that charity, liberality and beneficence, which were among them, which sense is confirmed by what follows; though it may be all these senses may be taken in.

Ver. 34. *Neither was there any among them that lacked*, etc.] Bread to eat, or clothes to wear, or any of the necessaries of life; which shows their great charity, and gives a reason why they were in so much favour with the people, because they took so much care of their poor; and this flowed from the grace of God bestowed upon them:

for as many as were possessors of lands and houses; or “vineyards”, as the Ethiopic version reads, whether in Jerusalem or elsewhere;

sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold; whether lands, houses, or vineyards.

Ver. 35. *And laid them down at the apostles' feet*, etc.] Showing great veneration and respect to the apostles, and a sort of neglect and contempt of their worldly substance; and signifying that they entirely delivered them to the apostles, and subjected them to their disposal:

and distribution was made unto every man, according as he had need; though they had all things in common, yet there was an order observed; a man might not go to the common stock and take out of it what he would; but as all was committed to the care of the apostles, and was in their power; the distribution was made by them, to every man, to the original proprietors, as well as to others, and that not as much as a man would have, or he might crave; but as much as he needed, for the present, of which the apostles were the judges.

Ver. 36. *And Joses*, etc.] The Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions, read “Joseph”, and so do Beza's most ancient copy, and two of his

manuscripts, and the Alexandrian copy, and others; for “Jose”, or “Joses”, is only an abbreviation or contraction of “Joseph”; though according to others it is the same with “Josiah”: there is one of this name, who was the sort of Alphaeus, and brother to two of the apostles, James and Jude, (^{<4135>}Matthew 13:55) and another called “Joses Barsabas”; and it may be to distinguish the one from the other this is called “Joses Barnabas”; for so it follows,

who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas: his name before his conversion was “Joses”, or “Joseph”, or “Josiah”; and afterwards, or at least after he came to be acquainted with the apostles, and to be in their company, they called him “Barnabas”; The Arabic and Ethiopic versions read, “who was of the apostles”; and so Barnabas is spoken of as if he was an apostle, (^{<4095>}1 Corinthians 9:5,6)

which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation; or “of exhortation”; from the excellent gift and talent he had at exhorting; (see ^{<4112>}Acts 11:23 14:22) and from the use he was of for the comforting of distressed minds; for *abn*, “Naba, to prophesy”, includes both exhortation and comfort; and he having the gift of prophecy or preaching the Gospel, was called *abnr b*, “Barnabas”, a son of comfort, or a comforter, or an exhorter: and so Jerom^{f184} interprets it, “the son of a prophet”. Drusius conjectures that his right name was *amj n rb*, “Bar Nachama”, and by contraction “Barnama”, and with a Greek termination “Barnamas”; which properly signifies, in the Chaldee and Syriac languages, “the son of consolation”, as it is here interpreted; and he observes, that the letters “M” and “B” are sometimes used one for an other: thus one and the same man is called “Berodach” and “Merodach”, (^{<12012>}2 Kings 20:12, ^{<2391>}Isaiah 39:1) and the same river is called “Abana”, (^{<11512>}2 Kings 5:12) and in the margent “Amana”; but others think he had his name from the same word that Noah had his, and which signifies rest and comfort, as appears from the reason of his name. “This same shall comfort us”, etc. And so the name of this man in the Chaldee or Syriac language was *aba j n rb*, which may be literally rendered “the son of the fathers’ rest”, or “comfort”. And this man is said to be

a Levite; of the tribe of Levi, and of the priestly race:

and of the country of Cyprus; or “by birth”, or “nation, a Cyprian”; for though he was a Jew, as is clear from his being of the tribe of Levi, and was born of Jewish parents, yet in Cyprus, and so was a native of that

place. The Ethiopic version renders it, “of the city of Cyprus”; but Cyprus was not a city, but a country; wherefore the Syriac version renders it, “of the place, or country of Cyprus”, as we do: it was an island in the further part of the Mediterranean sea; it had its name from the plant Cyprus, and is now by the Turks called “Kibris”. According to Pliny^{f185}, it lay to the east and west of Cilicia, and was opposite Syria, and was formerly the seat of nine kingdoms; its circumference was three hundred and seventy miles, and had been called by various names; as Acamantis, Cerastis, Aspella, Amathusia, Macaria, Crypton, and Colinia; in it were fifteen towns or cities, which were Paphos, Palsepaphos, Curias, Citium, Corineum, Salamis, Amethus, Lapethos, Solce, Tamaseus, Epidarum, Chytri, Arsinoe, Carpasium, and Golgi. According to the same writer^{f186}, it was by an earthquake divided from Syria; and that part of it which lay to the east from Syria, is said to be less than a hundred miles distant from it. And according to Mela^{f187}, its chief cities were Salamis and Paphos, mentioned in (~~4135~~ Acts 13:5,6). And according to Ptolomy^{f188}, it had on the west Pamphylia, on the south the Egyptian and Syrian seas, and on the east the Syrian sea, and on the north the straits of Cilicia: it was inhabited by people of various nations, and, among the rest, by Jews; and R. Benjamin makes mention of Jewish Rubbans in Cyprus, in his time^{f189}.

Ver. 37. *Having land, sold it*, etc.] Whether this was in Cyprus, or in Judea, is not certain; nor how he came by it, whether he had bought it, as the priests and Levites might, and as Jeremiah, who was of the priests, bought a field at Anathoth, (~~2309~~ Jeremiah 32:9) or, whether it was his wife’s dowry; for the Levites had nothing by inheritance: they had forty two cities, and the six cities of refuge to dwell in, and the field of the suburbs of these cities; which field or land was never to be sold, but to be a perpetual possession, (~~0234~~ Leviticus 25:34) but now the ceremonial law was abolished, and this precept was not attended to, if the land was of this sort. Moreover, the Jewish doctors interpret the above law otherwise; and understand it only of changing, and not of selling, which they allow of; one of their canons runs thus^{f190},

“the priests and Levites, *μῦρκωμ*, “sell” always, and redeem always, as it is said, (~~0232~~ Leviticus 25:32), “the Levites may redeem at any time”.”

Upon which canon, one of their commentators^{f191} says,

“they sell always; and not as an Israelite, who cannot sell less than two years before the jubilee; — but these “sell” even near the jubilee; “and they redeem always”: if they sell houses in walled towns, they are not confirmed at the end of the year, as the houses in the walled towns of Israelites; and if “they sell fields”, it is not necessary that they should remain in the hands of the buyer two years, but they may redeem them immediately, if they will.”

And another of them ^{f192} has this observation,

“all agree that the Levites may not change a city, or suburb, or field, which are theirs, because it is said, (~~Leviticus~~ Leviticus 25:34) “but the field of the suburbs of their cities may not be sold”; and the wise men of blessed memory say, the meaning of it is, it shall not be changed, for they do not change anything from what it was before.”

And agreeably to this is what Maimonides ^{f193} elsewhere says,

“they do not make in the cities of the Levites a city a suburb, or a suburb a city, or a suburb a field, or a field a suburb, as it is said, (~~Leviticus~~ Leviticus 25:34) “but the field of the suburbs of their cities shall not be sold”; from report (or tradition) we learn, that that is said, “shall not be sold”, means, shall not be changed; but the field, suburbs, and city, everyone of these three shall be as they are for ever. Priests and Levites who “sell” a field, of the fields of their cities, or an house of any of the houses of their walled towns, do not redeem according to this order (i.e. as the other Israelites), but “they sell fields”; and even near to the jubilee, and redeem them immediately.”

So that if this land of Barnabas lay in Judea, as is most likely, it might be sold, and much more, if in Cyprus. But, be it what and where it will, he sold it:

and brought the money; from Cyprus or Judea, or that part of the land of Canaan where it lay, and where he had sold it:

and laid it at the apostles’ feet; perhaps he might be the first person that did so, and set an example which was universally followed; however, he is particularly mentioned, being a man of note among the apostles, and of great usefulness in after times, and of whom frequent mention is made in other places.