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**A0819 – May 11, 2008 – Acts 3:12-4:4 – The Rise Of Persecution**

**Acts 3:19-4:4** μετανοήσατε οὖν καὶ ἐπιστρέψατε εἰς τὸ ἐξαλειφθῆναι ὑμῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας, <sup>20</sup>ὅπως ἂν ἔλθωσιν καιροὶ ἀναψύξεως ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ἀποστείλῃ τὸν προκεχειρισμένον ὑμῖν χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν, <sup>21</sup>ὃν δεῖ οὐρανὸν μὲν δέξασθαι ἄχρι χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων ὧν ἐλάλησεν ὁ θεὸς διὰ στόματος τῶν ἁγίων ἀπ’ αἰῶνος αὐτοῦ προφητῶν. <sup>22</sup>Μωϋσῆς μὲν εἶπεν ὅτι *προφήτην ὑμῖν ἀναστήσει κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν ἐκ τῶν ἀδελφῶν ὑμῶν ὡς ἐμέ· αὐτοῦ ἀκούσεσθε κατὰ πάντα ὅσα ἂν λαλήσῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς.* <sup>23</sup>ἔσται δὲ πᾶσα ψυχὴ ἣτις ἐὰν μὴ ἀκούσῃ τοῦ προφήτου ἐκείνου ἐξολεθρευθήσεται ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ. <sup>24</sup>καὶ πάντες δὲ οἱ προφήται ἀπὸ Σαμουὴλ καὶ τῶν καθεξῆς ὅσοι ἐλάλησαν καὶ κατήγγειλαν τὰς ἡμέρας ταύτας. <sup>25</sup>ὕμεῖς ἐστε οἱ υἱοὶ τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῆς διαθήκης ἧς διέθετο ὁ θεὸς πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ὑμῶν λέγων πρὸς Ἀβραάμ· *καὶ ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου [ἐν-]γενλογηθήσονται πᾶσαι αἱ πατριαὶ τῆς γῆς.* <sup>26</sup>ὕμῖν πρῶτον ἀναστήσας ὁ θεὸς τὸν παῖδα αὐτοῦ ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν εὐλογοῦντα ὑμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἀποστρέφειν ἕκαστον ἀπὸ τῶν πονηριῶν ὑμῶν. <sup>1</sup>Λαλοῦντων δὲ αὐτῶν πρὸς τὸν λαὸν ἐπέστησαν αὐτοῖς οἱ ἱερεῖς καὶ ὁ στρατηγὸς τοῦ ἱεροῦ καὶ οἱ Σαδδουκαῖοι, <sup>2</sup>διαπονούμενοι διὰ τὸ διδάσκειν αὐτοὺς τὸν λαὸν καὶ καταγγέλλειν ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ τὴν ἀνάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν, <sup>3</sup>καὶ ἐπέβαλον αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας καὶ ἔθεντο εἰς τήρησιν εἰς τὴν αὔριον· ἦν γὰρ ἑσπέρα ἤδη. <sup>4</sup>πολλοὶ δὲ τῶν ἀκουσάντων τὸν λόγον ἐπίστευσαν καὶ ἐγενήθη [ὁ] ἀριθμὸς τῶν ἀνδρῶν [ὡς] χιλιάδες πέντε. (NA27)

**Acts 3:19-4:4** Repent (2PAAImp) therefore and return (2PAAImp) so that your sins are blotted out, <sup>20</sup>in order that times of relaxation may come (3PADepSubj) from the presence of the Lord and He may send (3SAASubj) the chosen one (PerfDepPart) to you, Christ Jesus. <sup>21</sup>whom heaven must (of necessity; 3SPA) receive until the times of restoration of all things which God spoke (2SAAI) by the mouth of His holy ancient prophets. <sup>22</sup>Moses said that, “THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE (3SFAI)

UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BROTHERS. YOU WILL LISTEN (2PFDepI or MI) TO HIM ACCORDING TO WHATEVER HE SAYS (3SAASubj) TO YOU.” (Literal Prophecy + Literal Fulfillment, Deut 18:15, 18, Act 7:37) <sup>23</sup>And it will be (3SFAI) that every soul who does not listen (3SAASubj) to that prophet will be rooted out (3SFPI) from the people. <sup>24</sup>And all the prophets who spoke (3PAAI) from Samuel and those who succeeded him also announced (3PAAI) these days.” <sup>25</sup>You are (2PPAI) the sons of the prophets and the covenant that God ordained (3SAMI) with your fathers, saying to Abraham, “AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH WILL BE BLESSED (3PFPI).” (Literal Prophecy + Literal Fulfillment, Gen 22:18). <sup>26</sup>God, having raised (AAPart) up His servant, sent Him to you first (emphatic), to bless (PAPart) you by turning (PAInf) each one of you from your wickedness.” <sup>1</sup>And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon (3PAAI) them, <sup>2</sup>very angry because they were teaching the people and proclaiming (PAInf) in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. <sup>3</sup>And they bound (3PAAI) their hands and placed them in prison until the next day for it was (3SIAI) by this time evening. <sup>4</sup>But many of those having heard the word believed (3PAAI) and the number of the men came to (3SADepI) about five thousand. (**Author’s Translation**)

**Acts 3:19-4:4** “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; <sup>20</sup>and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, <sup>21</sup>whom heaven must receive until *the* period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. <sup>22</sup>“Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you. <sup>23</sup>‘And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ <sup>24</sup>“And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and *his* successors onward, also announced these days. <sup>25</sup>“It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ <sup>26</sup>“For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one *of you* from your wicked ways.” <sup>1</sup>As they were speaking to the people, the priests

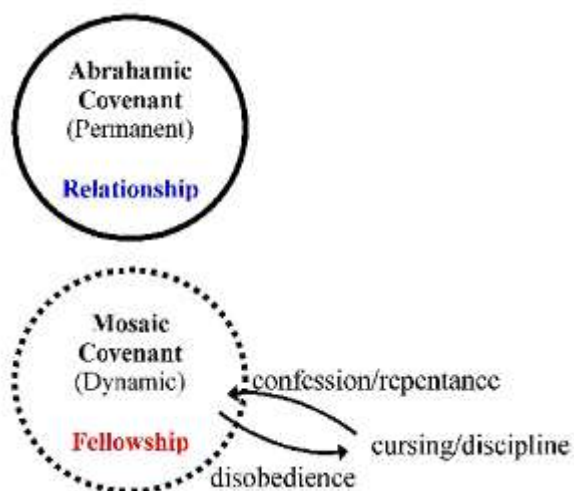
and the captain of the temple *guard* and the Sadducees came up to them, <sup>2</sup>being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. <sup>3</sup>And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. <sup>4</sup>But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. (NASB95)

Alright, let's summarize what Peter has said, there's been a rush to the portico of Solomon and the Jews are staring at Peter and John in an idolatrous fashion. So they've seen a fact but they've misinterpreted the fact. Peter knew the difference between facts and the interpretation of facts. They had a pagan mindset and so Peter rejects two possible human view point interpretations. He denies the mystical interpretation, that he and John had unlocked the keys to the universe and discovered the powers to accomplish this, and he denies the religious interpretation, the idea that he and John were spiritual giants and therefore able to do miracles. Neither of those explanations is the divine view point interpretation of the fact. We have to wait till v 16 to get that. In the meantime in vv 13, 14 and 15 he indicts the nation for rejecting Jesus as the Messiah and as such they rejected the covenant God of Israel, YHWH. And in a very politically incorrect fashion Peter convicts the nation by way of contrasts. You delivered and disowned Him, Pilate decided to release Him. You asked for a murderer, one who takes life, He is the Author of life. You put Him to death, God raised Him to life. They are guilty, guilty, guilty. Then in v 16 after disposing of human view point and indicting them he gives the divine view point interpretation. "And on the basis of faith in His name," and the name refers to Jesus' authority first of all but secondly also to the fact that Peter somehow realized that Jesus was with him in a spatial, geometric way, and it was "by Him that this man was saved," not by Peter and John, but Jesus gave perfect health to this man in a public setting. And this was all providentially arranged for Peter to get a hearing. Vv 17 and 18 highlight the nation's spiritual ignorance. If they had truly been well-trained in the Scriptures then they would have recognized Jesus as the Messiah because v 18, "God had announced beforehand by all the prophets that His Messiah would suffer," but by means of their spiritual ignorance God fulfilled all that He had spoken. It's simply not true that the nation as a whole was spiritually with it. They were spiritually out of it. Time and time again you see Jesus chiding the national

leaders of Israel for failure to know the Scriptures. As Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Are you the teacher of Israel and you don’t know these things? C’mon, it’s the blind leading the blind around here.” One of the objections to learning Bible doctrine is that the Pharisees knew Bible doctrine and Jesus condemned the Pharisees. Granted it’s true that we don’t want to be like the Pharisees, but in what way do we not want to be like them? What Jesus was condemning was not Bible doctrine but their misinterpretation of Bible doctrine whereby they developed the false system of Judaism and it was this system of religion that Jesus kept rejecting in His earthly ministry. They used the Scripture to support a false system, thereby missing the true message of Scripture. They were not consistent literalists. That’s why Jesus chides them, that’s why Peter chides them here. How could you miss the fact that all the prophets announced the Christ would suffer unless your religious bifocals blinded you to the true intention? So they weren’t being chided for having too much Bible doctrine. They were being chided for setting up a non-biblical religious alternative that used parts of Scripture but not the whole. Example: Sermon on the Mount, What does Jesus say over and over and over, “You have heard it said...” where did they hear it said? In the synagogues where Judaism was taught, and then He quotes some part of the OT law and says, “But I tell you...” and what Jesus is doing is saying, “Now, here’s the interpretation of the OT you’ve heard in the synagogue from your religious leaders, but it’s wrong, and here’s what it meant.” They had reduced the Scriptures to a set of external laws to abide by that had nothing to do with the inner man and by that they missed the true point. So, it’s a lesson in Bible study, how we are to interpret the Scriptures and the danger of setting up a false religion and then interpreting Scripture to fit your religion. If we do that we’ll be spiritually ignorant as they were and miss what all the prophets have spoken.

Alright, let’s pick up in verse 19, still in Peter’s sermon, still in the portico of Solomon. What is the nation to do in light of their guilt? “**Repent and return**,” obviously parallel in many respects to Acts 2:38, except there’s no baptism which just shows you that Peter didn’t always preach baptism. If it’s required for eternal salvation why is it absent? Why is all that is mentioned in 4:4 “belief”? So, “Repent and return” is national here, both are 2<sup>nd</sup> Person Plurals, they are commands directed at the nation of Israel. By virtue of their elect status as the people of God via Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, by virtue of that election they had a permanent relationship with God. This is how we

diagram Israel's covenant relationship with God. This top circle represents the Abrahamic Covenant.



The bottom circle represents another covenant called the Mosaic Covenant; Moses is mentioned a few verses later. It's interesting that Peter's sermon is saturated with these two covenants. Well, the command to **repent** is related to the Mosaic covenant. The Mosaic Covenant involved the blessings and cursings, "If you are good boys I'll bless you but if you're bad boys I'll curse you." So, this contract controlled the dynamic aspect of their relationship with God, the nation could go in and out of fellowship. At this time they were clearly out of fellowship, they'd been out for centuries but the crucifixion of Jesus, the Messiah, was their ultimate transgression. Numerous times in the OT Israel is said to commit "the transgression," or "the iniquity," it is the sin that stands out above all others, so Peter's command here is directed to the nation. "Men of Israel, will you repent? Here's your big chance. If you do then you'll be restored to national fellowship and **the times of refreshing** will come. **Repent** about what? Same thing as Acts 2:38. Repent is *metanoeo* and just means "change of thinking," they need a change of thinking about the identification of Jesus, He is not demon possessed, He is the Messiah of God. Now the **turning**, coupled with repentance is *epistrepho* and refers to a "change in conduct" that follows repentance, it's not a part of the repentance; it's what's supposed to happen as a result of genuine repentance. To see this more clearly turn to Acts 26:20. This is the only other place you have these two used in conjunction with one another. So, what we're arguing is that repentance has to do with the mind and the will, repentance does not involve the emotions, repentance involves the mind and will but the **return** has to do with the conduct, external behavior that should naturally follow from genuine repentance. Now in Acts 26 Paul giving his defense before King

Agrippa for his past evangelistic ministry, how he's done nothing wrong in this ministry and in verse 20 he says, "but *kept* declaring both to those of Damascus first, and *also* at Jerusalem and *then* throughout all the region of Judea, and *even* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance." There are certain deeds that are appropriate or should naturally follow repentance, that's the turning to God. So Peter is saying in Acts 3, nation, repent, mentally change your thinking about Jesus, He is the Messiah and then perform deeds appropriate to repentance.

What are the results? Two result, the first is the near result, indicated by the purpose clause *pros to*, namely, **so that your sins will be forgiven**, if they individually repent they will be forgiven of their sins and then the far result, if the whole nation repents then *hopos*, **the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord and He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you**. So you have a near result that is individual, individual repentance will result in the forgiveness of sins, and you have a far result that is national, national repentance will result in **the times of refreshing coming and the Lord will send Jesus. Now, the times of refreshing** is obviously the earthly kingdom of Messiah. So this is about as excellent a definition of the kingdom as you can find in Scripture and it's an expansion of Acts 1:6 when the apostles kept asking, "Lord, is it at this time you're restoring the kingdom?" Clearly it had not come yet but Peter believes it could come if Israel repents. That's the main point. The kingdom is contingent; contingent on Israel's repentance. Jesus said, you will not see Me until you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." The nation has yet to say that so Jesus has not returned and the kingdom has not come. The offer is a standing offer for Israel and if she meets the requirement today then the kingdom would come. People don't like this interpretation since it places the kingdom offer within the church but the book of Acts is *transitional* and though the church has begun it does not hit center stage until AD70. There's no case for ultradispensationalism, just a case for transition. Peter and these guys didn't realize what's going on with the church yet, we have hindsight, we have 20-20, they didn't see till later so Peter, in addition to the gospel message is offering the kingdom to Israel. If the nation will repent the times of refreshing will come. That refreshing is defined in terms of **the presence of the Lord**, that's an expression referring to the Shechinah Glory, a visible manifestation of the presence of the Lord.



And also that **He may send Jesus**. So, in the kingdom you'll have Jesus present and Shechinah Glory present.

Pressing on Peter refers to this as **the times of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time**" Prophet after prophet after prophet revealed the kingdom, it's an ancient doctrine, never to be superseded, always in contingency awaiting the nations repentance. Going back how far? To Moses. So the next verse deals with Moses. Acts 2:22, For **Moses said, "THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED to everything He says to you** <sup>23</sup>**AND IT WILL BE THAT EVERY SOUL THAT DOES NOT HEED THAT PROPHET SHALL BE UTTERLY DESTROYED FROM AMONG THE PEOPLE.** That's a quote from the OT. We said the NT authors quote the OT in four different ways. This one is a Literal Prophecy + Literal Fulfillment, very straightforward, that's what we have here. It's a quote from Deut 18:15 and 19. Moses predicted that eventually the great prophet would come. What does he mean, "like me?" How is Jesus like Moses? This goes back to Numb 12 where Moses was not like the other prophets, the other prophets had visions and dreams but Moses spoke to God face to face and mouth to mouth. So, the Messiah would be a prophet like Moses. He too would speak to God the Father face to face and mouth to mouth. Therefore Jesus is the great prophet, He would be so great that when He walked the face of the earth any person who disobeyed that prophet would be killed.

Now this prediction obviously has reference to heaven and hell in the larger sense, but in this immediate sense it has reference to an historic example. Remember what it was? What happened in history that fulfilled that? What did Jesus, in His last hours when He addressed the nation, over on the Mount of Olives as He looked over at the wall of Jerusalem He said, officially to the people, "Jerusalem, I would have gathered you, like a hen gathers their chicks, but you would not." So Jerusalem, there shall not be a rock left upon it, and He warned the people of Jerusalem; He said when the armies surround the city you better get out of town. That was the last word of Jesus to the people in Jerusalem. And in 66 AD after the revolt broke out the armies of Rome came around the city, and in the city of Jerusalem there was one group of people that patiently waited, particularly on the eastern wall during the siege; they waited to have an opportunity to apply what Jesus

said, "Get out." They saw the army surround the city, they couldn't get out of the city, and then for a historically unexplained reason the Roman commander thought that he didn't have enough supplies to continue the siege so he broke siege of the city of Jerusalem, went back to Caesarea and one group of Jews left the city of Jerusalem. Do you remember who they were? The Hebrew Christians; they left. They went across the Jordan and up to Pella where they waited the war out. Three historians report that 20,000 Jewish Christians left Jerusalem alone. In the meantime 1.1 million Jews were killed in that war but not one Jewish Christian was killed. Thus it was fulfilled, every soul who did not listen to the great prophet Jesus Christ was killed.

Now verse 24, the prophecy of the great prophet, of course, was repeated by Samuel. Samuel was the last judge and the first prophet not like Moses and Peter says **all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days.** <sup>25</sup>**It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant,** notice the singular, not covenants but a particular covenant, defined as **the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham,** and he quotes Gen 22:18, **And in your seed,** so this is the Abrahamic covenant and Peter sees it as on the brink of fulfillment, if the nation will repent. What you want to notice is the two singulars, **covenant** and **seed**, it's not **And in your seeds** but **in your seed** singular, a reference to the Messiah, the **seed** of Abraham through whom **all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**" This is a Literal Prophecy + Literal Fulfillment. Turn back to Gen 22 where this comes from. This is the chapter where Abraham takes his only son Isaac. And it's remarkable that not only was Jesus supernaturally brought into this world but wasn't Isaac naturally brought into this world? Sarah was well passed her childbearing years and the Bible is setting up with Isaac a type of Christ, that just as Isaac was brought in supernaturally so the Messiah would be brought in supernaturally. Further, the language of John 3:16 is developed from Gen 22 when Abraham calls Isaac His only son. Verse 2, "Take now your son, your only son" and you say, "But I thought Abraham had another son, Ishmael, why then does it say Isaac is his "only son?" And that's because the idea here is not only in the numeric sense but only in the unique sense. Isaac had a unique birth, a supernatural birth. And this brings John 3:16 into full blossom because this is the language of John 3:16, For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten or unique Son into the world," that's referring



to the supernatural birth of Christ. He was like Isaac and John relied on Gen 22 to write that verse. Now, notice verse 18 which Peter quotes, "In your seed" singular "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." This goes back to the seed promise made to Adam and Eve in the Garden, Gen 3:15, then narrowed down to Abraham in Gen 12 and 22 and to Isaac in Gen 25 and to Jacob, later to the tribe of Judah and finally to David, the seed would come through that line and that's why the NT opens up in Matt with a genealogy. The Jews had records in the Temple and all they had to do if someone claimed to be the Messiah was to go check the records and see if they checked out. Were they of the house of David and Jesus Christ was of the house of David so He qualified in that respect. So, that's what Peter is talking about, they could walk over to the Temple and check out Jesus' lineage. He was the seed the OT spoke about. Now, when the Temple was destroyed in 70AD the records were lost and this is an argument that the Messiah must have come before 70AD because after that his lineage can't be verified. Verse 26, **For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning everyone of you from your wicked ways.** The resurrection was first for Israel and He was sent via Peter and John when they healed the lame man, sent to the nation **to bless** them and to cause them to **turn from their wicked ways**. That's the purpose of the miracle. God is addressing the nation. Will you repent?

Now, what's the response to this sermon? We're going to see two responses in the first four verses of chapter 4. Whenever the word of God is taught accurately you get one of two responses; positive volition or negative volition and that's what you see here. So the principle of this section is that as the word of God goes out there's a positive response but the opposition will start to persecute. So clearly Satan is threatened by this sermon and this is his counterattack. We want to look at the persecution. That's one of the reasons we suffer, we suffer because of our identification with Jesus Christ. So let's start with a review of the Doctrine of Suffering. The Doctrine of Suffering is divided into two categories, direct and indirect. Direct suffering is due clearly to creature choices. Indirect suffering is not due to some particular choice by the creature but occurs for other purposes. Let's start with Indirect Suffering patterns. There are six reasons we suffer indirectly, we don't always suffer because we did something, there are other things going on that we can see for no reason why we have to face this adversity. Let's start with indirect.

First, it could be that God brings suffering into an unbeliever's life as a **Wake-up Call**, to get them out of their self-imposed trance and shock them into belief. God may shatter unbelievers lives. This is what He did with Paul. Everything was going along just fine until the Lord hit him with blindness and this shocked Paul out of his arrogant self righteousness and he believed. Second, God sends believers suffering to **Prepare for Future Service**. We have to suffer through things so we grow up spiritually, advance to maturity. No pain, no gain. So you get a handful of adversity to stimulate growth and prepare for future service as a believer. Third reason we suffer, God sends believers adverse situations as an **Example to Unbelievers**. You didn't do a thing yet some difficulty surrounds you and unbelievers are watching how you handle it and that convinces them of the truth of the gospel. Alright, fourth, we suffer for the **Edification of other Believers**. You face some difficulty and everyone sees the Grace of God in your life and how you patiently endured and years later someone else faces a similar situation and your prepared to comfort them. Fifth reason for indirect suffering, these have nothing to do with some sin in your life, okay, these are for unknown reasons, this one is real obvious, **Resolution of Angelic Conflict**, example, Job, Job didn't do a thing wrong to deserve the suffering, and we're talking extreme suffering, all ten children crushed by a roof, his own personal health, yet God was using Job to resolve something in the angelic conflict between Himself and Satan. Lastly, some of our suffering is due to our **Association with Unbelievers or Carnal Believers**. Let's face it, a family member, a friend, a co-worker does something stupid and we suffer because of their stupidity. So for the indirect reasons we suffer we have six, Wake-Up, Preparation, Example, Edification, Resolution and Association.

Now we want to turn to the six direct suffering patterns and conclude with why Peter and John suffer here in Acts. First, all these are direct consequences of creature choices. First, and most importantly, **The Fall of Man**. Adam disobeyed the command of Gen 2:17 and death resulted, both spiritual and physical. The results spread to man and nature. So, people get sick, people have cancer, people die, that's all because of the Fall of Man. Second, "**Self-Induced Misery**," sheer stupidity, about 95% of our personal suffering is due to dumb choices, we know better but we do it anyway and we experience physical, spiritual and mental anguish as a result. All it does is compound the effects of the Fall. Example, the existentialist who wants to have a good time so he goes out, has lots of sex with multiple partners, drinks

a lot, etc...result, misery upon misery upon misery. We simply were not designed to live that way; it's contrary to who we are, therefore we suffer. Third, **Sin Patterns**. this affects families and nations. Families have sin patterns and these get passed from father to son, father to son and so forth. God lets this go for three to four generation and then he says that's it, I've given you grace, grace, grace but now I'm going to judge. So eventually there's familial and national suffering for failure to repent from rebellious sin patterns. Fourth reason humans suffer directly, **Rejection of the Gospel**. Obvious result, eternal punishment in the lake of fire. Not as a result of predestination to hell, not as a result of Jesus' failure to atone for all sin, but as a result of refusal to believe the gospel. Therefore every person who finds himself in hell will do so because of his own personal rejection. Fifth, believers are **Discipline for Spiritual Rebellion**. When we rebel against God's authority, he disciplines us by physical illness, even physical death as well as church discipline. The goal is confession of sin and restoration to fellowship. Sixth reason for direct suffering, for **Bad Works** at the judgment seat of Christ. All believers will stand before Jesus Christ and have his fruit evaluated as to whether it was produced in the energy of the flesh or by obedience to the Spirit. Finally, **Identification with Jesus Christ**. Jesus said, "in this world you will have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world." When a believer reveals his identification with Jesus Christ in a public setting he will suffer for that identification because Satan hates Jesus Christ. This is the category of suffering Peter and John face here. They're preaching in a high profile location, the Temple Compound, in the face of high profile leaders, the priests and Sadducees, to a lot of people as we're going to see and they identify themselves openly with Jesus Christ and they use the word of God to prove their guilt for crucifying their Messiah, Jesus. So the persecution which rises here is a result of Peter and John's identification with Jesus Christ. So let's see this in v 1.

*Verse 1, **And as they were speaking to the people**, this group of people came upon them, that is, Peter was interrupted, he was not done saying all he wanted to say and these people charged in and cut him off. So you can clearly see that Satan detects a deep penetration into his territory and he rapidly goes on the counter attack. The Greek text literally says "the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees rushed upon them with hostility. So you have the people, they're listening to Peter's message, then you have three groups in the power structure on the Temple Mount who are angry. You have the **priests**, these were the 24 chief priests, at this time they were all*

*Sadducees. Then you had the **captain of the temple**, he was also a Sadducee, he was the chief of police and responsible for keeping order in the Temple Compound. He had a lot of authority; he was second only to the High Priest and a member of a priestly family. Lastly you have the **Sadducees** and this is the sect members in general. So everyone here who's antagonistic to Peter and John are **Sadducees**. We want to understand a little about the Sadducees because there were five different Jewish sects in the Gospels and Acts. We already saw some about the Zealots because one of the 12 apostles was Simon the Zealot, that's one of the major Jewish sects in the NT. This is the next one in Acts, the Sadducees. It's essential to understand their basic framework of thinking and see how Jesus, Peter and Paul handle them. We're called to the same thing in our age, to be ready to give a defense of the gospel in light of competing claims. The Sadducees had two competing claims. One they accepted only the Torah as authoritative, the first five books of the OT, Gen, Exo, Lev, Numb and Deut. They rejected the rest of the OT. The second thing the Sadducees denied was the resurrection. That's why they were sad-u-see. This becomes the central issue in Acts when the Sadducees are involved. This is the issue that sets them off against Peter and John here in the Temple Compound. These were wealthy aristocratic Jews who had a lot of power and they were very jealous of their authority in the Temple Compound. So when they see these Galilean Jews teaching and proclaiming the resurrection on their turf that really ticks them off. So let's look at the reasons in verse 2. First they were extremely angry for **teaching**, Peter was teaching but Peter was not qualified to teach in their opinion. Peter hadn't been to their schools and Peter was a Galilean Jew. Socially the Jews from Galilee were considered second rate because they had moved into the regions of the northern kingdom and as a result they took on some of the stigma associated with the northern kingdom. So the first problem was that these uneducated Galilean's were teaching on their turf and this threatened their power and control over the people. Second problem was the content of their teaching, They were **proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead**. This was a doctrine they rejected. To add insult to injury the 24 priests had instigated the crucifixion of Jesus just months before so now the Jesus problem resurfaces.*

*Verse 3 you really see the persecution rise, **And they laid hands on them** or literally, "bound their hands," they put handcuffs on them and **put them in jail**. This is the same procedure they used with Jesus, this is what you see in Communist China and Sudan with believers who openly identify themselves with Jesus Christ. There is an antagonism to Jesus Christ and because of their identification with Him they will arrest them, torture them, murder them to silence the name of Jesus.*

*Now, where were Peter and John taken? The Temple Compound had chambers used as prison cells where those who were disturbing the peace of*

*the Temple Compound could be jailed (Acts 5:18). They were locked up for the night because it was already evening and by Jewish law no trial could be held in the evening. That's the negative response to the word of God. There's always a response, no one is neutral to the word of God. The word of God does not return void, it will never return void. God's word will get a response so don't be surprised when you put the word out. You may be ostracized, you may be mocked, you're fellowship may dry up, you may lose your career...but that's the nature of the word of God in the gospel. It's powerful, it's convicting, and it's offensive to the natural man. You can't be worried about offending people with the gospel, the nature of the gospel is contrary to the autonomous man who suppresses the truth. So there's always the negative response **But**, verse 4, here's the positive, **But many of those who heard the message**, literally that's the word, the logos of God, they heard the word of God and **believed**. Now we've seen this before and we'll see it again, always in Scripture faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Last time we saw it on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2:37, there they heard the word and it pierced them to the heart, that is, it broke through the suppression and they believed. Peter didn't use some kind of pressure tactic, he didn't lead them in 40 stanzas of Just as I Am, he didn't ask them to sign a commitment card or come rolling down the aisle, he proclaimed the word of God, the word of God, the word of God because the word of God is the power of God unto salvation.*

*Now when it says **the number of men came to about five thousand** it's a word used of men only in contrast to women. So, not only are we seeing a rise in persecution but also a rise in believers. You start the Book of Acts with 120 in the upper room, then as a result of Peter's sermon on Pentecost the number rose to 3,000 and now the men number about 5,000, so we could easily have 10-15,000 believers counting all the women and children. So you can see how this is getting to be a threat, you can see why Satan counters so quickly, this is a movement gaining momentum. You can also see how many people must have heard this sermon in the Temple Compound, there were literally thousands of Jews listening to this sermon and 2,000 men responded. That highlights the Spirit's work not the apostles work because He's the orchestrator of all this. He synchronized the contact between the lame man and trained believers, Peter and John, He worked the miracle through the hands of Peter and Peter used the word of God which is revealed by the Spirit of God; he did not use human rationalism, he did not go to Greek philosophy or something, he quoted the OT word of God from a divine view point perspective and that precipitated belief by over 2,000 men, aside from the women and children. So the church took a giant leap forward in number due to this sermon and that's one of the purposes of Acts as it moves forward, to record that the nation as a whole rejected the word but individuals did respond and this resulted in the growth of the church.*

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