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### 3. He will see Acts 3:1 – 4:31; The Outbreak of Persecution

Luke sees the outbreak of persecution as a fulfillment of Jesus' own predictions which he has outlined in his gospel.

1. Luke 6:22,26- His disciples would be hated and rejected
2. Luke 12:11- they would be brought to trial before rulers and authorities
3. Luke 21:12- they would be persecuted and imprisoned on account of His name

#### 1. A Cripple is Healed – Acts 3:1-10

- The Apostles continued to live as observant Jews... They approached the Temple at 3pm in order to be present in the Court of Israel for the service of prayer which accompanied the evening sacrifice.
- Gate Called Beautiful: The Nicanor Gate, seventy five feet high with huge double doors, and was the main eastern entrance.
- "Thomas Aquinas once called on Pope Innocent II when the latter was counting out a large sum of money. 'You see, Thomas' said the Pope, 'the church can no longer say silver and gold have I none.' 'True Holy Father' was the reply, 'neither can she now say rise and walk.' The moral of this tale may be pondered by any Christian body that enjoys a fair degree of temporal prosperity." (F.F. Bruce)
- Dr. Luke's Medical Interest: A congenital cripple who was over forty. The word "walking" repeated three times in succession.

#### 2. Peter Preaches to the Crowd – Acts 3:11-26

- He ascribes all the credit to Jesus whom God honored
- In contrast he describes the fourfold dishonor the Jerusalem audience showed Jesus (Luke 23:13-25)
  1. You have handed Him over to be killed.
  2. You disowned Him before Pilate though he had decided to let Him go.
  3. You disowned Him in place of a murderer.
  4. You killed the Author of Life (who God raised and we've seen!)
- The cripple had availed himself of the power of Jesus' name by the exercise of faith. "The cripple would have known no benefit had he not responded in faith to what Peter said." (F.F. Bruce) "He directed the crowd's attention away from both the healed cripple and the apostles to Christ... whose name, having been appropriated by faith, was strong enough to heal the man completely." (Stott)
- What happened to Jesus was the fulfillment of prophecy.
- They must repent... then three successive blessings would take place.
  1. Their sins would be wiped out. Exalepho means to wash off, erase, obliterate (Rev. 7:17, 21:4, 3:5)
  2. Times of refreshing would come from the Lord. Anapsyxis means rest, relief, refreshment. "God does not wipe away our sins without adding His refreshment for our spirits." (Stott)

3. He will send Jesus. Apokatastasis refers to the eschatological restoration – when nature will be liberated from its bondage to pain and decay, and God will make a new heaven and earth (Stott) “Peter’s words mean this: The gospel blessings destined to flow from Jesus’ death and resurrection must spread throughout the world; then and not ‘till then, will He return from the right hand of power.” (F.F. Bruce)

### 3. Before the Council – Acts 4:1-22

- It’s clear the persecution was initiated by the Sadducees (Acts 4:1, 5:17)
- As the ruling class of wealthy aristocrats, they politically ingratiated themselves with the Romans. They also denied the resurrection of the dead. Thus they saw the Apostles as both agitators and heretics.
- The Sanhedrin consisted of 71 members, both elders and scribes, and was presided over by the High Priest.
- The irony that Luke specifically mentions Annas and Caiaphas (John 18:12ff) “Not many weeks had passed since these two men had taken part in the arrest and condemnation of Jesus. If they hoped they had got rid of them, their hope was short-lived.” (F.F. Bruce)
- Similarly, memories of the trial of Jesus must have flashed back to the Apostles. Was history to repeat itself? They could hardly expect justice from the same court that had listened to false witnesses and unjustly condemned Jesus. Would they suffer the same fate? Would they be turned over to the Romans and crucified?

What changed Peter and his fellow Apostles?

- Luke 21:14-15
- The Risen Lord
- Peter preaches repeating his formula: You killed Him, but God raised Him (Acts 2:23-24, 3:15)
- He bases his argument on one of the earliest Messianic testimonies (Ps 118:22) as Jesus had done Himself (Mark 12:10-11) (Luke 20:17)
- The implication of verse 12? “The founders of the great world-religions are not to be disparaged by followers of the Christian way. But of none of them can it be said that there is no saving health in anyone else; to one alone belongs the title: The Savior Of The World.” (F.F. Bruce)
- vs. 20 “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Luke 19:40, John 20:31)
- How would you answer the liberal critics who question how Luke could have known what went on in the Sanhedrin’s closed deliberations?

### 4. The Church Prays – Acts 4:23-31

- They return and report what was said, immediately turning to prayer.
- Their first word was Despotes (Sovereign Lord). A term used of a slave owner and of a ruler of unchallenged power. “The Sanhedrin might utter warnings, threats and prohibitions, and try to silence the church, but their authority was subject to a higher authority still, and the edicts of men cannot overturn the decrees of God.” (Stott)