

Acts 5:27 - 32
Psalm 150
Revelation 1: 4 - 8
John 20: 19 - 31

Notes on the Lesson from the Acts of the Apostles

The Jewish Council (or Sanhedrin) held their positions of authority by the grace of the Roman governor, Pilate. They were responsible to Rome to keep the peace and if they failed to do so, would be summarily removed from their powerful and prestigious positions. It was their fear that Jesus was stirring up the people that led them to wish his death (John 11:47 - 50). This passage demonstrates that they felt the same fear in connection with Jesus' followers.

Other than Peter, the text does not explicitly say which apostles were brought before the Council. The only indication is in verse 12 where it says that the apostles "were all together" and in verse 18 where it states that the high priest "arrested the apostles". This implies that at least the Twelve (Matthias having replaced Judas), if not more, were involved in the events described in this passage.

Notes on the Lesson from the Revelation to John

The phrase "grace and peace" was a common blessing of the early Christian church. It appears in all of the Pauline epistles (1 and 2 Timothy add "mercy" to the blessing.)

Although there has been debate over the exact identity or nature of the seven spirits mentioned in verse 4, we do know that the number seven was considered to be perfect and to be associated with God.

The quote in verse 7 combines one phrase from Daniel 7:13 with Zechariah 12:10 - 12.

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. (Revelation - and all of the New Testament - was originally written in Greek.) The phrase, "who is and who was and who is to come" refers to the proper name of God: YHWH which, although it translates as "I am", infers "I am and have been and will continue to be".

Notes on the Gospel Lesson

The event described in this passage is the same event that is described in Luke 24: 36 - 49. The accounts vary widely because Luke is stressing the fact that Jesus ate food (proving the Resurrection), while John has other points to be emphasized.

The moniker of "Doubting Thomas" is unfair to this disciple. When the other disciples hesitated to follow Jesus to Jerusalem, it was Thomas who said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

It is curious on the surface that the disciples were still in Jerusalem a week after the Resurrection (verse 26). However, there is a reasonable hypothesis to explain this fact. Remember that the disciples feared that they would be arrested, just as Jesus had been (verse 19). The population of Jerusalem had quadrupled for the festival of Passover which lasts one week. A group of people leaving the city at the end of the Festival would be lost in the multitudes that would be leaving the city at the same time. The disciples most likely waited for Passover's conclusion to slip out of the city.

The author of John is very straightforward about the purpose of this gospel. Verse 31 states, "But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name." In reality, this purpose applies to all four of the gospels.