

And They Continued Steadfastly

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The video version is available at: <https://youtu.be/xVpAOoaiV40>

The Scripture Reading is: Acts 2:42-4:31

The Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples during Shavuot, one of the pilgrimage feasts of the LORD. As commanded by God, Jews from all around Israel, as well as the surrounding countries, had come to celebrate this feast at Jerusalem. After the feast, everyone would return to their homes. For most of Yeshua's disciples this would have been in the Galilee region. However, this time, the disciples, fired up by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, remained in Jerusalem.

Acts 2:46-47 NKJV 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

The first acts of the apostles were performed in Jerusalem in front of all the religious and political leaders of the day. These leaders were given every opportunity to hear the message of salvation and to embrace Yeshua as their Messiah. How did the apostles present their message and what was the message?

Luke describes the daily routine of Yeshua's followers in a few short sentences. They didn't immediately go out and preach. Instead they focused on the routine of being Jewish.

Acts 2:42 YLT 42 and they were continuing steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles, and the fellowship, and the breaking of the bread, and the prayers.

A central part of Jewish life both then and now was and is the study of the Torah. The apostles had learned at Yeshua's feet for three years both before and after His death and resurrection. They were now passing on the teaching of their Master to those who had come to faith during Shavuot and the days immediately following. The teaching was intense and all encompassing. This naturally formed a fellowship community. The word "fellowship" in the Greek is "koinonia," #2842 in Strong's Concordance, which Thayer defines as fellowship, association, community or joint-participation. These disciples gave up their businesses and livelihoods to stay in Jerusalem and become part of this community.

Acts 2:44-45 NKJV 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

These early days were days of nurturing and teaching. All new believers need a solid foundation in understanding the scriptures so they can stand firmly in their faith during times of trial and trouble. It was essential for these Jews who had experienced their Messiah to understand and internalize the message of Yeshua their Messiah!

Those who believed in Yeshua as their Messiah continued of one accord in community with one another. Part of that community is described as the breaking of bread. In a Jewish household, every meal began with the host breaking bread and speaking the blessing for the bread and the meal. After the meal, the guests would join together for the blessing after the meal. Yeshua demonstrated the role of host as He fed the five thousand.

Matthew 14:19 NKJV 19 Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes.

Yeshua's disciples did not neglect temple worship either. What a privilege it was for them to be able to go to the temple every day and participate in the corporate worship of God! Those whose homes were not in Jerusalem or the surrounding villages only had this opportunity during the three pilgrimage feasts when the streets of the city and the courts of the temple would be thronged with worshipers! Now that the spring feasts were over, access to the temple would be easier. They actively participated in the prayers. Notice the definite article "the" as well as the plural "prayers." They did not just devote themselves to prayer, in general, but in "the prayers," specific! These are the liturgical prayers common to Jewish gatherings and consisted of many of the Psalms as well as the prayers passed down by Ezra when the second temple was built. One of the incidents we will examine shortly occurred as Peter and John were on their way to the temple for the daily prayers.

Acts 3:1 YLT 1 And Peter and John were going up at the same time to the temple, at the hour of the prayer, the ninth hour,

The simplicity of heart and devotion to praising God practiced by this community of believers earned them the favor of the people. As the disciples continued going about their daily routine, continuing in one accord, fear fell on those around them!

Acts 2:43 NKJV 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

The signs and wonders probably added to the fear that came upon the people. Notice Luke's careful phrasing here. The signs and wonders were not done by the apostles but through the apostles! They were a conduit for God's power!

Luke describes one of the signs and wonders performed through Peter and John in the next verses. It happened as they were on their way to the temple. A forty year old man who had been lame from birth habitually went to the temple gate called Beautiful to ask for charity. Those who went to the temple regularly through this gate knew him by sight and were aware of his circumstances. As Peter and John were about to enter the gate, they saw the man and called his attention to them.

Acts 3:6-8 NKJV 6 Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." 7 And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. 8 So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them--walking, leaping, and praising God.

This man was lame since birth; the muscles he needed in order to walk would not have been even close to strong enough to bear his weight, let alone jump around. It would take months of physical therapy to develop the necessary muscle strength, but God's healing was complete and included strengthening those unused muscles! This was an incredible miracle. The people in the temple recognized this man and could hardly believe what they were seeing.

Acts 3:9-11 NKJV 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God. 10 Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. 11 Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed.

As the people gathered around Peter and John, Peter spoke to the crowd explaining that Yeshua, the one they had rejected and gave up to be crucified by Pilate, was the one through whom the lame man was healed.

Acts 3:16 NKJV 16 "And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Peter went on to explain that Yeshua was the long awaited Messiah and that as Messiah, He had to suffer first.

Acts 3:18 NKJV 18 "But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

The suffering of Messiah was not an unknown concept among the Jews. The scholar Raphael Patai traces the development of the Jewish understanding of their messiah in his book The Messiah Texts. Speaking about passages in the latter part of Isaiah known as the servant passages, Patai writes:

"As to the identification of this "Servant," there is no scholarly consensus to this day. However, the Aggada, the Talmudic legend, unhesitatingly identifies him with the Messiah, and understands especially the descriptions of his sufferings as referring to Messiah ben Joseph."ⁱ

Once Peter established that Yeshua was their Messiah, he called on the people to return to the faith of their fathers so that their sins would be blotted out.

Acts 3:19-21 YLT 19 reform ye, therefore, and turn back, for your sins being blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and He may send Jesus Christ who before hath been preached to you, 21 whom it behoveth heaven, indeed, to receive till times of a restitution of all things, of which God spake through the mouth of all His holy prophets from the age.

In Jewish terms, repentance or return means to return to following the Torah of God. Peter is calling on his fellow Jews to return to God's Torah as did the prophets, John the Baptist and even Yeshua! The prophet Malachi calls on God's people to return to God and to follow God's Torah.

Malachi 3:7 NKJV 7 Yet from the days of your fathers You have gone away from My ordinances And have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," Says the LORD of hosts. "But you said, 'In what way shall we return?'

Isaiah explains that God will blot out their sins when they return to Him.

Isaiah 44:22 NKJV 22 I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, And like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you."

Peter explained that not only would their sins be forgiven, but the result of their return would bring in the times of refreshing and the return of Yeshua. Peter concludes by explaining that Yeshua is the prophet like Moses that God promised to send to lead them. He reminds them that they are sons of the covenant God made with Abraham.

Acts 3:25-26 NKJV 25 "You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' 26 "To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

Peter is openly stating that Yeshua is the seed of Abraham that God had sent to bless them. The form of that blessing is to turn them away from their sins. This fulfills the name Yeshua meaning salvation that was given to Him at His birth.

Matthew 1:21 MJLT 21 "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Yeshua, for He will save His people from their sins."

As Peter spoke, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came out to find out what was going on in the temple that such a crowd had gathered. In those days, the sect of Sadducees was in control of both the temple and the Sanhedrin. In particular, the family members of the high priest were all Sadducees. First Fruits of Zion in their work [The Chronicles of the Messiah](#) writes about the Sanhedrin:

In the year the Master died (30 CE), the high priest Caiaphas and the Sadducean chief priests took control of the Sanhedrin.ⁱⁱ

The main difference between the sect of the Sadducees and that of the Pharisees was that the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead, the belief in a soul or any life after death. Peter's speech had challenged the authority of the Sadducees on multiple fronts. He began by convicting them of having put the Messiah Yeshua to death. Peter, then, challenged their belief and authority to teach that there wasn't a resurrection from the dead by asserting that Yeshua had risen from the grave. Finally, he challenged their hold over the people by stating that only through Yeshua could their sins be blotted out. Needless to say, the Sadducees were not happy.

Acts 4:1-3 NKJV 1 Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

When Peter and John were taken before the Sanhedrin the next day, we see that the Sanhedrin is heavily weighted toward the family of the high priest and, thus, of the sect of the Sadducees.

Acts 7 NKJV 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

Peter and John were immediately asked by what authority they acted. Keep in mind that the chief priests and elders had, also, asked Yeshua this question when He was teaching in the temple. As Peter had told the gathered people the previous day in the temple, all his and John's actions were done by the Holy Spirit acting through them. Peter boldly answered the council through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 4:8-11 NKJV 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 "If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 "let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 "This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'

Peter declares that the members of the council were the builders Isaiah said would reject the chief cornerstone.

When the chief priests and elders questioned Yeshua's authority, Yeshua refused to answer the question because they wouldn't commit to accepting or rejecting the testimony of John the Baptist.

Mark 11:31-33 NKJV 31 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' 32 "But if we say, 'From men' --they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed. 33 So they answered and said to Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus answered and said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

Yeshua went on to state that they were the builders that rejected the chief cornerstone. The chief priests and elders hadn't learned anything from this exchange. Their reaction to Peter and John was the same as their reaction to Yeshua. They couldn't deny the miracle that was performed through Peter and John in the name of Yeshua; however, they also would not accept that the miracle was from God. After conferring together, the council commanded Peter and John to be silent about Yeshua.

Acts 4:18-21 NKJV 18 And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.

As a result of Peter's words in the temple, the number of those who believed increased to five thousand! In contrast, the chief priests, scribes and elders, those who should have been the first to recognize Yeshua rejected the message!

When Peter and John were released, they returned to the community of believers and reported all that had been done. We may think that they would have been discouraged after being warned by those in authority not to speak or teach in the name of Yeshua; but they were instead encouraged and rejoiced in the power of God!

Acts 4:24 NKJV 24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them,

They joined together in one accord in prayer that God would give them boldness to continue to speak God's word.

Acts 4:29-31 NKJV 29 "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Despite the unbelief and opposition of those in authority, the followers of Yeshua presented the message of salvation with boldness! They prayed that God would precede them by performing healings, signs and wonders through the name of Yeshua so their message would be received. Their message was that Yeshua was the Messiah that God had promised to send to His people. The disciples instructed their fellow Jews to return to the Torah of God so they would receive forgiveness of their transgressions through the name of Yeshua and that Yeshua would return.

The disciples continued steadfastly in their commitment to learning, to the community, and to worship of God! This passage opened with the believers coming together with one accord and ends with them together with one accord! May we, also, go in one accord with boldness of spirit to speak the word of God.

Study Questions:

1. Discuss how the daily routine the believers practiced - learning, being part of a community, eating together and joint prayers- was beneficial to their faith. How would such a routine look in our society? Have you ever experienced this?
2. The believers were all together having all things together selling possessions and goods as needed to provide for the body. Do you think this model would have been sustainable? Why or why not?
3. We think of "salvation" as being personal redemption from sin. However, based on Peter's instructions, what else is involved in "salvation" through the Messiah?
4. In John 14:12, Yeshua said that His apostles would do greater works than even the works Yeshua did. How are the results of the healing of the lame man a demonstration of these greater works?
5. Compare the prayer of the believers in Acts 4:24-30 with Psalm 2. Where do the opening and closing statements come from?
6. What new insight did you gain from this teaching? How do you respond to this new insight? How will you realign your life based on this new understanding?

Bonus: What are some of the titles of Messiah Peter uses in Acts 3:13-14? What do they reveal about Him?

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ⁱ Patai, Raphael. The Messiah Texts. Wayne State University Press. Detroit, MI. ©1988. Page xxiii.

ⁱⁱ The Chronicles of the Messiah. First Fruits of Zion. D. T. Lancaster ©2010. Page 1442.