

THE PRIESTS - - who took a long time to decide for Christ
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(Acts 6:7)

"And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." It is not unlikely that the final statement in this verse represents a triumph of patient perseverance in the art of soul-winning.

Testimony 1. Matthew 8 :4

Perhaps some of the priests were sitting around their table when the ominous knock sounded at the door. Someone was in a hurry! When one of the number opened the door, he saw a rather dilapidated beggar or so he thought. He cynically smiled. Here was another fellow who thought the priests were millionaires! "Yes, and what do you want?" "I want to give you something, sir. Moses said that if a leper were cleansed he should offer certain things according to the law, and I want to do that." The words tumbled from the man's lips, and he seemed possessed by a strange excitement. The priest looked at him. A leper-cleansed-what nonsense! "Yes, priest, I was a leper without hope when Jesus found me. Perhaps I should say that I found Him, for I ran and fell at His feet and said, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,' and He touched me, and I was cleansed immediately. Then He reminded me of my duty to go to the priests; and here I am." When the priest had attended to the requirements of the stranger, he returned to his colleagues; and that evening they surely had great discussions. Then, as always, it was one thing to dismiss Jesus of Nazareth as a fanatical imposter, but quite another to account for the wonder of His miracles.

Testimony 2. Luke 17:14

The priest could hardly believe his ears. Nine men standing around the doorway maintained they had all been lepers. They were very poor; their garments were tattered, and everything about their appearance suggested hardship -but lepers, No! "Yes, sir, we were all lepers; and we stood and cried, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.' He heard us, and told us to come and see you." "And were you healed then?" "No, sir, we heard His voice but we were still lepers. Yet He commanded us to come. We obeyed, and as we walked along the street, a new healing power came into our bodies and we were made clean." Some time later the priest was recalled to the door, to find another man who claimed he was the tenth of the original party. He had returned to Christ to give Him thanks, and was a little late in presenting himself before the priest. He reiterated all that had already been told to the leader, and once again the great men of the temple faced the challenge of the Nazarene. We shall never know how near they came to believing in Christ at that time; but when Jesus died, it seemed that the new movement would die with Him.

Testimony 3. Acts 3:1-8

It was the hour of prayer, and some of the priests would be officiating within the sacred house. Outside, the city was agog with excitement. People were saying that Jesus of Nazareth had risen from the dead, and great public meetings had brought the enthusiasm of the crowds to fever

THE PRIESTS - - who took a long time to decide for Christ pitch. Everywhere men and women talked of the great occurrence, and it was being rumoured that thousands of converts had been won for the new movement. The priests waited expectantly, for some of the strange preachers would be coming to pray. Suddenly there was a great commotion outside the building, and as the door opened, the waiting men saw a great crowd being led by an apparently hysterical man who jumped, and danced, and shouted. "And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him." When Peter explained how the lame man had been made whole, the priests realized that once again the power of Jesus had been made manifest. And this time the great leaders refused to postpone their decision. They could not remain secret followers of Christ when their hearts thrilled at the mention of His name. That day they left all, and followed the Saviour. And the moral of the story for all soul-winners is, " If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."

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