

Acts Chapter 4

Acts 4:1 "And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,"

“Priests”: The office of priest in the Old Testament began with Aaron and his sons (Lev. 8). They became the human intermediaries between holy God and sinful humanity. They were characterized by 3 qualities:

- (1) They were chosen and set apart for priestly service by God;
- (2) They were to be holy in character; and
- (3) They were the only ones allowed to come near to God on behalf of the people with the High-priest being the chief go-between on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16; Numbers 16:5).

“The captain of the temple”: Chief of the temple police force (composed of Levites), and second ranking official to the High-Priest. The Romans had delegated the temple-policing responsibility to the Jews.

“Sadducees” (see notes on 23:8; Matt. 3:7).

Luke gives an extended account here of the arrest and trial of Peter and John, as he does later with Paul, to demonstrate that Christianity is not an illegal sect even though continually attacked.

We see here, a quick response to the Sermon Peter had preached. The priests, and the captain who guarded the temple, and the Sadducee (aristocrats), who did not believe in the resurrection came, because Peter and John had been preaching that Jesus rose again.

Acts 4:2 "Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead."

“Preached through Jesus the resurrection”: This part of the apostles’ message was the most objectionable to the Jewish leaders. They had executed Christ as a blasphemer and now Peter and John were proclaiming His resurrection.

The annoyance to the Jewish leaders was twofold:

- (1) The presumption of the apostles to teach people as if they were recognized rabbis (verse 13), and
- (2) The teaching of the resurrection, which was denied by these Sadducees (23:6).

This teaching of Peter and John is in direct opposition with what the Sadducee believes. This preaching of Peter and John angered these men from the temple.

Acts 4:3 "And they laid hands on them, and put [them] in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide."

“Now eventide”: The Jews detained Peter and John overnight in jail because Jewish law did not permit trials at night. It had been too late to convene the Sanhedrin (see note on verse 15), that afternoon, so the apostles would face a hearing the next day before that council.

This is the beginning of the persecution of the followers of Jesus. We see that they held them overnight.

Acts 4:4 "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand."

“Five thousand”: The cumulative total of men in the Jerusalem church by this time, not the number of those converted after Peter’s latest message.

Their phenomenal results may also have had something to do with their arrest. Five thousand men, plus women and children, have now turned to Christ in Jerusalem.

This believing the word which Peter and John had preached is an extension of chapter 3 in the last lesson. We read earlier how about 3,000 believed, now the group of believers has grown to 5,000 men. At this time, there were many women who believed, so the number of believers is expanding greatly.

Acts 4:5 "And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes,"

“Rulers, and elders, and scribes”: These positions made up the Jewish ruling body, the Sanhedrin (see note on verse 15).

Acts 4:6 "And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem."

“Annas ... Caiaphas” (see note on John 18:13). Even though Annas (A.D. 6-15), had been replaced and Caiaphas was now High-Priest (A.D. 18-36), he retained his title and wielded great influence.

“John ... Alexander”: Their identities are uncertain. “John” could be an alternate reading for “Jonathan,” who was one of Annas’ sons and replaced Caiaphas as High-Priest (in A.D. 36).

Annas was the patriarchal, ex-high priest. His son-in-law Caiaphas held the political office (Luke 3:2).

This shows that the higher-ups in the temple were all gathered together to see if they couldn't trap Peter and John.

Acts 4:7 "And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?"

This is an interrogation of Peter and John. The question itself, lets you know that these in power here did not have respect for the name of Jesus Christ. Instead of being pleased that a man crippled from birth can now walk, they were ready to criticize what they had done.

Verses 8-12: Peter put the Sanhedrin on trial by preaching the gospel to those same men who condemned Jesus Christ and made themselves enemies of God.

Acts 4:8 "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,"

“Filled with the Holy Ghost” (see note on 2:4). Because Peter was under the control of the Spirit, he was able to face persecution and preach the gospel with power (Luke 12:11-12).

Acts 4:9-10 "If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;" "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, [even] by him doth this man stand here before you whole."

It is so important to notice the difference in Peter here, and the Peter who had been afraid and denied Jesus three times. This Peter is filled with the power of the Holy Ghost. He is looking these accusers in the face and telling them that they killed Jesus.

He is also telling these powerful (worldly) men, who do not believe in the dead rising again, that Jesus whom they killed, rose again. In fact, he is telling them that this power to do miracles, that no one in their group was able to do, came just by mentioning the name of this Jesus they had crucified.

Peter has no fear of what these worldly men can do to him. He also reminds them that they are trying to punish him for a good deed, not a bad.

Acts 4:11 "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner."

Peter gets even bolder and tells them that Jesus was the cornerstone upon which all the church fits together with, and these supposedly godly men rejected the most important part of the church. Jesus the cornerstone, brought physical Israel and spiritual Israel into the family of God (quoted from Psalm 118:22. Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-8).

Acts 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

“None other name”: This refers to the exclusivism of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. There are only two religious paths: the broad way of works salvation leading to eternal death, and the narrow way of faith in Jesus, leading to eternal life (Matt. 7:13-14; John 10:7-8; 14:6). Sadly, the Sanhedrin and their followers were on the first path.

The name of Jesus Christ is the center of contention (verse 7, 10, 12), and ever will be. Salvation for Jew and Gentile alike is exclusively through the name of Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

The Lord Jesus Christ shed His blood on Calvary to save us from sin and death. Christianity is really the only religion which promises eternal life after death; and hell after death, if we reject so great salvation. The religions of the world (other than Christianity), center around man's life on the earth.

The difference in most religions and Christianity is that Christians worship the Creator of all the earth. Most other religions worship the created things of the earth and heavens. Jesus is the Judge of all the world and we will stand or fall by whether we are His or not. He is our great Shepherd and on judgment day, if we are His sheep, we will live eternally in heaven with Him.

If we are not His sheep, we will go the way of the goats to eternal damnation. You may read about this (in Matthew 25:32 on).

Acts 4:13 "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

“Unlearned and ignorant men”: Peter and John were not educated in the rabbinical schools and had no formal training in Old Testament theology.

The Greek words literally say that Peter and John were “unlettered” men and “commoners.” They were unlettered or uneducated in the technical, rabbinical teachings. They were commoners in that they possessed no official positions nor special abilities. But the priests do clearly note that these men have been with Jesus. This explains their boldness and power.

These men had not been taught in the rabbinical schools as the Levitical tribe was. This boldness, when speaking out for the good news of the gospel, is very important: not only to the apostles then, but also to the preachers today. All who receive this baptism whether preachers or laymen receive power to minister more boldly.

One of the beauties of the effective preacher is in his or her boldness to speak in common every day English, so that all can understand what you are saying. The Lord does not choose ordinarily the highly educated to carry the simple message of the gospel. People with a great deal of education, sometimes, want everything proven in black and white.

The Bible and its teachings are accepted by faith. Faith and proven facts are the opposite. The Lord generally chooses those with a humble heart who He can teach His ways. These apostles,

Jesus had taught one on one. It was easier for them to believe, because they did not have pre-conceived ideas.

Acts 4:14 "And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it."

We can quickly see that the evidence was stacked in favor of Peter and John. The man who had been lame from birth was standing in front of them. These priests, Sadducees, captains and high ranking people from the temple could not deny the man could now walk. They would have to let them go.

Verses 15-17: It would be risky to punish the two apostles when they had broken no laws and had performed a miracle that captured the entire city's attention. But the Sanhedrin believed it had to stop the preaching of the incriminating truth that its members had executed the Messiah.

Acts 4:15 "But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,"

“Council”: The Sanhedrin, the Jews’ national ruling body and supreme court. It had 71 members, including the High-Priest (see note on verse 5).

This had these high officials of the temple confused as to what to do. They had no idea how they would be able to discredit the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and still not deny this miracle. Either way, the council would look bad.

Acts 4:16 "Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them [is] manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny [it]."

These religious men should be repenting for refusing to accept Jesus as Messiah. They have been shown again, by this tremendous miracle in His name, who He is and was. They really should be asking help of Peter and John, instead they are trying to figure out a way to save face with their temple people.

Acts Chapter 4 Questions

1. As Peter and John spoke to the people, who came up?
2. What were these men grieved about?
3. What did they do to Peter and John?
4. In verse 4, we find that the number of the believing men had grown to what number?

5. Who gathered together at Jerusalem as a council against Peter and John in verses 5 and 6?
6. What question did they ask Peter and John?
7. What caused Peter to speak so boldly?
8. How did Peter answer their question?
9. Who did Peter say crucified Jesus?
10. What is the difference in Peter now, and the Peter who denied Jesus?
11. What is Jesus called in verse 11?
12. Who is salvation in?
13. Which is the only religion that promises eternal life just by believing?
14. Who is the great Shepherd?
15. When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they perceived that they were _____ and _____ men.
16. These men knew that Peter and John had been with whom?
17. What is one of the most important assets a preacher needs?
18. Who does the Lord choose to work for Him?
19. What and proven facts are opposites?
20. Why could they not say anything against Peter and John healing the man?
21. In verse 15, where did they command Peter and John to go?
22. When the council met, what had them confused?