

Heritage Christian Community Baptist Church Bible Study

Acts 4: 1-12 The Arrest, The Name of Jesus, and the Power

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April 29, 2025

Through Chapter 3 of the book of Acts, we have seen the Spirit of God have influence over the disciples and those who were around them. Chapter 4 is the first we see of the resistance of the Christians and the Holy Spirit within them. As the Holy Spirit moved within the disciples for boldness to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the religious leaders stood against the disciples. Not waiting for the completion of Peter's sermon (Ch3), the officials deliberately interrupt Peter while he is preaching. In the same manner, the Holy Spirit did not wait to move on the followers and hearers of the preached Word. As Peter is preaching, lives were changed, and they were convicted and converted to salvation and faith in Jesus Christ. More than five thousand men were saved, which does not consider the number of women and children. As the officials seize Peter and John, it is evening, and the chief priest and head officials had retired for the day. Therefore, Peter and John would have to wait until the morning for a trial before the Sanhedrin council. The council was both political and religious and were given authority by the Roman government to lead the Jews in matters of their own. This same concept was used in the arrest of Jesus before His crucifixion. The difference now is the disciples would defend themselves; Jesus did not say a word, as the Lamb to be slaughtered. Instead, the disciples had the help of the Holy Spirit to empower them as the lawyer in the courtroom. Our lesson will teach us how to stand in the face of adversity, allowing the Holy Spirit to defend us and speak through us. Just as the Holy Spirit empowered Peter to preach the Gospel, this same Holy Spirit defends and empowers us to stand in faith.

Peter And John Arrested (vv1-4 NKJV)

¹Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, ²being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

The Jewish leaders were in partnership with the Roman government of the day during and after the era of Jesus' death. This partnership gave them unwritten authority to lead the religious Jews and keep the peace with Roman government. This position of political prowess allowed them to preserve their economic interests and protect themselves from Roman confrontation. After performing the miracle of the lame man in Ch3, which evidenced the power of the Holy Spirit within the disciples, Peter's sermon was suddenly interrupted by an official contingency comprised of priests, the captain of the temple guard, and Sadducees, who "descended upon" the apostles.¹ The focus of the arrest was not the miracle of healing, but the

¹ Polhill, John B. 1992. *Acts*. Vol. 26. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

preached resurrection. The Jewish leaders did not teach or believe in the life beyond this life. Therefore, they saw immortality and resurrection as heresy. This was the reason for the abrupt and aggressive reaction to Peter's sermon. The teaching of the resurrection was also contrary to what the Sadducees intended to accomplish in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. If Christ had risen from the grave, it would discredit the Sadducees and religious rulers and point to them as murders of an innocent man who not only pronounced His resurrection, but He also had more authority and power than they. Despite the efforts to quiet the disciples preaching, the power of God had been heard through their preaching already. The efforts of the religious leaders were nullified as the number of believers converted was five thousand men (not to mention women and children). This addition to the believers in Christ is exactly what the Sadducees feared. Equal to the reaction of fear was their attempt to eliminate the source of fear. Arresting and holding the disciples would at least discourage the ripple effect of the message leading to conversions.

Q1: What effect did the healing of the lame man in Ch3 have on the sermon Peter preached continued in Ch4.

A:

Q2: Why did the religious leaders approach Peter and John? (vv1-2)

A:

Q3: Why might the Sadducees be bothered by the preached sermon of Peter? (vv1-2)

A:

Q4: What benefit did Peter's interrupted sermon have? (v4)

A:

Addressing the Sanhedrin (vv5-12)

⁵ And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, ⁶ as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. ⁷ And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

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.' ¹² Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

As the religious counsel convened the next morning, they would hear the testimony of the disciples who were set in front of them. The Jewish aristocracy called "elders," Pharisees, and high priests would make up the council of men within the council. This would be the same Sanhedrin setting Jesus Christ would face before His crucifixion (Luke 22:66). Knowing the answer to the question, the high priest would ask, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" Positioning the question as if they were asking about the miracle, they really desired

to find the underlying cause of the power of preaching that would cause an uproar. The question is to ask what council had heard about Jesus would be the same as what was being preached by Peter and the disciples. Can the power of Jesus really heal and deliver? Is what Jesus said coming to life before us?

The writer Luke makes sure to mention (v8) the indwelling (filling) of the Holy Spirit for Peter. The 3rd person of the Trinity living inside of Peter compelled him to speak, even at the worst of times. This would be the fulfillment of Jesus' promise from Luke 12:11...

- ¹¹ “Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. ¹² For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

The authoritative name they were looking for was active in Peter to speak. Peter addressed council respectfully, but positioned their authority in a regional district, and not compatible to the spiritual authority of God. (v8) Although they had authority in Israel, they did not have the authority of the One who gave this power. Peter begins to preach that the helpless man who was *made well* (Greek – *sōzō* = saved) the day before, was saved by the name of Jesus. Peter is expressing it is the same Jesus you relegated to a little place called Nazareth, missing the fact that He is the Messiah who came from God. You crucified Him, but God Himself raised Jesus from the grave. With the same power of God, we speak of the name of Jesus who has the power to heal the lame man standing before you. Peter is exclaiming that this power lives within Him to have done such a great deed, because the power of God was conferred onto him after the resurrection of Jesus the Christ. His preaching is to both convict the council of their sins that day as well as to convey the message of Jesus as Savior and Messiah. Peter attempted to dissolve the political slant the council put on the disciples teaching. The name of Jesus is not disruptive, but it brings healing and wholeness.

In verses 11-12 Peter again references familiar scriptures that would be known by the Sanhedrin council for the purpose of pointing out their rejection. Psalms 118:22 states...

- *The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.*
 - (also Luke 20:17, 1 Pet 2:7)

The Pharisees would have known the Psalms and would be convicted by their knowledge of the scripture. They are the builders, high priests and leaders of the nation chosen by God who rejected the very Rock which God's people are to be built. Not only is Jesus the stone, but the chief [Greek – *kephalē* = head] cornerstone [Greek – *gōnia* = to kneel down]. This is to say that Jesus is the One who will bow down His head to be seized, that others will later kneel before Him. Jesus, though initially rejected by the religious leaders, is chosen by God as the foundation upon which all believers faith is built. This Gospel of Jesus Christ, through His resurrection, will be the catalyst of the new church and advancement of the Kingdom of God. Peter makes the appeal to the Sanhedrin that the name of Jesus and this power of resurrection is the only name that has the authority to save. Peter here mentions *salvation* (Greek – *sōtēria* = salvation) as a reference to its root word *made well* (Greek – *sōzō* = saved), as a picture of the lame man been made whole. Salvation then is the picture of the sinner through salvation being made whole.

Q5: To what event did the Jewish leaders refer when they questioned the disciples? (v7)

A:

Q6: Why did Peter reference Psalms 118:22 in His sermon? (v11)

A:

Q7: What lessons can we learn from the disciple's response to the Sanhedrin about standing firm in our faith?

A: Open

Q8: After reviewing v11, what insight do you see in Luke's use of the chief cornerstone?

A: Open

Q9: What lesson did you learn from this study?

A: Open