

ACTS 4:1-23

A. The Apostles are arrested by the religious leaders.

Acts 4:1-3 - And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, Acts 4:2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. Acts 4:3 And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.

1. The circumstances surrounding the healing of the beggar were **still** causing an uproar around the Temple. Also, the Jewish rulers who had condemned Jesus to death were upset that Peter and John were still proclaiming that the crucified-dead Jesus was now **alive**.

****Can you imagine what their thinking was when they were told the One they helped murder was alive again?**

2. Since it was evening time, the arrested apostles were kept overnight in the prison stronghold until the next morning. Wonder what the apostles were thinking (remember **John** the Baptist)?
3. It is important to grasp two important facts:
 - a. The primary question in early Acts is: What will the nation of Israel (O.T. ground), with their government rulers, **do** about Christ the Messiah (Acts 1-7)?
 - b. It is also important to **understand** the significance of the Sadducees.
 - (1) The Sadducees were the **most** powerful sect within the Sanhedrin. The High Priest himself, and those with him, were of the sect of Sadducees.

Acts 5:17 - Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,

- (2) So powerful and entrenched in the Sanhedrin, the Sadducees, with the High Priest Caiaphas, dared to **openly** ridicule the Pharisees for their **timid** dealing with Jesus!

John 11:47-49 - Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. John 11:48 If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.

John 11:49 And one of them, *named* Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,

- (3) It was the Pharisees who had led the opposition of Christ while He was on earth. But now, we see here that the Sadducees are taking the **lead**. Why?

Matthew 22:23 - The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,

Acts 23:8 - For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

Note: The message of the resurrection was an **embarrassment** to their **doctrine** and jeopardized their authority in Jerusalem and all Israel. Now they feel they must fight for their credibility and even their very existence. Even worse, if they don't win, they become **guilty** of murdering their very own Messiah.

*A risen and alive Christ proved they were **wrong** about Jesus.

- c. The Sadducees, at all cost, were using all their religious influence to prove that Jesus was dead and the resurrection was **impossible**. **They did fight against the resurrection to preserve their positions and **reputation**.

*Isn't it interesting when religious groups are presented **unanswerable facts**, they become more determined to stop and frustrate the truth? (Don't confuse me with the **facts**!)

- d. Amazingly, these religious leaders (Pharisees and Sadducees) already **knew** about Christ's resurrection!

Matthew 27:63-64 - Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Matt. 27:64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.

Matthew 28:11-14 - Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. Matt. 28:12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Matt. 28:13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. Matt. 28:14 And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

*Evidently, they hoped that Jesus would go **elsewhere** so that they would not have to deal with Him again. They could have been hoping that, after all the suffering He had gone through, He would want to flee as far away as He could. They were spiritually blind! They closed their eyes to the **overwhelming** evidence.

B. Truth is always more powerful than religion!

*The Sadducees and Pharisees could not stop some of the people from **believing**. The 5000 in this verse

<u>Acts 4:4</u> - Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.
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were more than likely not converted on this day. It is the total number of believers arising from **Pentecost** up to that time. (Dr. Baker)

C. The Apostles are questioned by Israel's rulers.

<u>Acts 4:5-7</u> - And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, <u>Acts 4:6</u> 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. <u>Acts 4:7</u> And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, <u>By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?</u>

1. They were brought before the religious court. Assembled are the **highest** ranking members of the Sanhedrin. As they were seated one could feel the intense bias of the court. The court seemed determined that, in this test case, **they** would not be the ones to suffer defeat.
2. By their very first question, it is obvious that these rulers are not truly seeking evidence as to whether Jesus is alive or not. These elders deal with the apostles as they had dealt with **Christ** - craftily, accusingly, and criminally.

Example: Matthew 21:23 - And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

3. Remember, the apostles are brought before this court for **healing** the lame man (beggar), a good and supernatural deed!

*Evidently the elders were hoping to find something in the apostles' answers by which they could condemn them and **stop** them from proclaiming that Jesus was alive.

D. Peter answers their question.

Acts 4:8-12 - Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, Acts 4:9 If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Acts 4:10 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. Acts 4:11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. 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.

1. We can't help but notice Peter's boldness and courage. This is the man, who just a few weeks earlier, had **denied** three times that he even knew Christ!

Peter has been radically **changed into a powerful witness for Christ. This could only be because he had **seen** a resurrected Christ (for 40 days!). All of Christ's disciples were now ready to die for Him if need be.

2. Peter gets to the point immediately. It was by the power of **Jesus'** name, the One they had crucified - Who is now alive, that the beggar was healed.

Again, it is amazing that Peter, filled with the Spirit, stands before Israel's supreme court and charges **them with the murder of their Messiah. The accuser becomes the accused!

3. Peter also tells them of their **rejection** of the "stone" (Christ), Who has become the head of the corner.

Note these prophecies:

Psalm 118:22 - The stone *which* the builders refused is become the head *stone* of the corner.

Isaiah 8:14 - And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Daniel 2:34 - Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet *that were* of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

Jesus: Matthew 21:42-44 - Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Matt. 21:43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Matt. 21:44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

4. Peter also shares with them that Jesus, the Christ-Messiah they had crucified, was the only Savior that could save them. That's exclusivism!
 - a. When Peter's message of salvation is referred to, it is to the nation Israel with the establishing of Christ's Kingdom. To go into the Kingdom meant one would have everlasting life.
 - b. Today, Christ also is Savior of our salvation. But, it is an out-calling to all nations, who when saved by the gospel become a part in the Body of Christ - not a part of Israel.
 - c. Both are gospels to salvation and Christ is Savior to both, but there are sharp differences in each program. Israel is under prophecy; whereas, we (the Body of Christ) are under the Mystery program given to Paul our Apostle.

Galatians 2:7, 9 - But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; Gal.2:9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

**Examples:

For Israel -

Acts 2:38 - Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

For Us Today -

Galatians 3:26-27 - For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Gal. 3:27 - For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

I Corinthians 12:13 - For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

5. Also, notice about the beggar's healing. It was not because of his faith. All he was expecting was a few pennies. Jesus had given His apostles healing power over all diseases.

Hebrews 2:3-4 - How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; Heb. 2:4 God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

*Modern day healers usually place the responsibility for healing upon the **faith** of the afflicted one. This gives an **excuse** for their failures. They say it is because of the lack of faith by the afflicted person. They say the person was healed, or lost their healing, because of their faith-or lack of faith! Also, did you notice the healing of the beggar was **visible** and immediate?

E. The Rulers' Conviction -

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

1. These rulers were amazed at Peter's sermon that was intelligently communicated with much assurance in the message.

*The rulers knew these apostles were uneducated, unlettered, **common** men, who had been with **Jesus** - giving them power and authority.

2. These rulers were religious veterans and could tell that these men had power and were not deceivers. It was **undeniable**!
3. These rulers knew Peter and John had been with Jesus not only for this miracle. Some believed John was acquainted with the High Priest, who was awestruck with what had happened. They knew **God** was involved!

F. The Rulers' Decision -

1. The whole event with the rulers was a mockery of true justice. These rulers were wicked, deceitful, and unfair. A jury is to **hear** the charges and not **make** them, as they had done.

Acts 4:14-18 - And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. Acts 4:15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 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*. Acts 4:17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. Acts 4:18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

2. They themselves had been charged by Peter with the murder of Jesus Christ Messiah and warned that Christ had risen. The verses here show that they (rulers) were convinced Peter and John were speaking the **truth**. There is a healed leper, whom they had often seen themselves at the Temple Beautiful Gate. They are confronted with **clear** evidence that a miracle had taken place and they even admitted it! They also knew that most all in Jerusalem were aware of this miracle healing in the name of Jesus.

* But these rulers-judges were determined not to be **embarrassed** any longer, nor allow their authority
 * to be challenged or threatened. They were jealous over their positions and, if necessary, they would
 * **crush** anyone who would threaten them. They had already proven that in their crucifixion of
 * Christ.

3. Their decision for now was just to threaten and intimidate the Apostles to get them to **stop** preaching in Jesus' name. The disciples are told to keep silent, or **else** suffer severe punishment!

G. Peter and John's Response to the Rulers' Threats -

Acts 4:19-20 - But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. Acts 4:20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

1. Their reply stopped the mouths of the rulers. What a reply! Could these rulers, who claimed to be governing for God, say that man's word was more important than **God's** Word? These rulers would never admit that...not publically anyway.
2. The Apostles' faith and love for Christ is undeniable. They were ready to even die for the truth, but they would **not** be silent while God gave them breath.

Later Peter writes: I Peter 3:14, 17 - But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy *are ye*: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; 1Peter 3:17 For *it is* better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

H. The Rulers' Conclusion on the Matter -

1. The rulers, because of the people, only threatened the disciples a little more and then let them go.

Acts 4:21-23 - So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all *men* glorified God for that which was done. Acts 4:22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed. Acts 4:23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

They dared not hold them any longer. The disciples returned to the other believers and told them all about their ordeal and how God had brought them through.

2. Also, it is important to understand that, as believers, we are to be subject to human rulers (Romans 13:1-6; I Peter 2:13). However, there is a higher law - **God**. There might be times when human government tells us to obey its laws, but its laws are **contrary** to what God says we are to do. It is at those times that we, like Peter and John, obey **God** and not human government's laws.

Acts 5:28-29 - Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Acts 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.