

## BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO ACTS 4:1-22

### Outline

- I. Jesus promises power for witness to the nations 1:1-11
- II. The apostles witness in Jerusalem & Judea 1:12–6:7
  - A. The church in Jerusalem is planted 1:12–2:47
  - B. The church in Jerusalem expands 3:1–8:3
    - 1. By the apostles' witness 3:1-4:22
      - a. Before the people 3:1-26
      - b. Before the authorities 4:1-22

### (1) Authorities annoyed by apostles

1 While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests and the commander of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, 2 angry because they were teaching the people and announcing in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. 3 So they seized them and put them in jail until the next day (for it was already evening). [New English Translation]

**Priests:** officially-chosen men who pray and offer sacrifices to God on behalf of their community. (Every Christian = a priest.)

**Commander ... guard:** Responsible to maintain peace.

Sadducees: 200+ descendants of Zadok. They managed the temple, representing the government to synagogues across the empire. The Sadducees were known to refuse the "oral law" taught by rabbis, and to deny the reality of angels, miracles, prophets and resurrection in the present time. Sects such as the Essenes and the Qumran community avoided temple worship, forming separatist communities.

**Evening:** Peter and John had gone to temple at about 15 hours (3 pm), so may have been teaching for several hours.

### (2) Apostles' Message bears fruit

4 But many of those who had listened to the message believed, and [–the] number of the men came to about 5,000.

**5,000 men:** Greek can mean 5000 more, or 5000 total. It was mostly men who came to Jerusalem feasts.

**QUERY.** What is the connection between hearing, faith and the Holy Spirit? (See Galatians 3:2, 5; Romans 10:17.)

### (3) Authorities seek reasons for prosecution

5 On the next day, their rulers, elders, and experts in the law came together in Jerusalem. 6 Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and others who were members of the high priest's family. 7 After making Peter and John stand in their midst, they began to inquire, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"

**Rulers:** feared political authorities.

**Elders:** respected synagogue & community chiefs

**Scribes:** Torah (Scripture) experts Luke 11:37–54; Acts 6:12–14; 23:9).

**High priests:** Annas (6-15 CE), Caiaphas (18-36), Ananias (47-58). Caiaphas was Annas' son-in-law, whom the Romans made high priest when they deposed Annas. Both were called high priest.

**Power:** Some Jews employed the term "power" for Yahweh and for visible forms of Yahweh, speaking of "two powers in heaven."

**Name:** Jews often employed the term "name" for Yahweh, or any other spiritual being parading as a god.

### (4) Apostles reply truthfully

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, replied, "Rulers of the people and elders [+of Israel], 9 if we are being examined today for a good deed done to a sick man — by what means this man was [~has been] healed — 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, this man stands before you healthy.

**If ... then:** Peter replies to the query posed in verse 7.

**The Name:** Human Jesus = divine Christ = crucified = raised from death = power to heal.

**Healed ... healthy:** Real acts of healing prove to be complete and long lasting, unlike fake healings done by charlatans and fake religions.

**Filled:** Apostles and ordinary Christians may be filled (empowered) with the Spirit as often as they choose to obey Jesus. (See Ephesians 5:18.) Especially when confronted by hostile authorities (Luke 12:12).

### (5) Apostles exalt Jesus

11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, that has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among people by which we must be saved."

## BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO ACTS 4:1-22

**This Jesus:** Literally, 'this one' = either this Name or this Jesus.

**Stone:** Psalm 118:22. Quoted by Jesus in Luke 20:17. The risen Christ and his followers form a new kind of temple made of "living stones" (1 Peter 2:5).

**Builders:** In Dead Sea Scroll Damascus Document 4:12, builders = religious leaders.

**Salvation:** In verse 9 = healing. Salvation includes every free gift that God has promised: forgiveness of sins, his Holy Spirit, daily joy, strength to change, resurrection from death, everlasting life, the coming Kingdom of God.

**None other:** The Name in Heaven = Yahweh. The Name under heaven = Ye(ho)shuah haMashiakh, Jesus Christ, crucified, risen and glorified. In fact, to this day, no other religion offers free salvation to all who believe.

**Must:** Not may, not should, not need, but must. Compare Acts 2:40, 'Be saved!'

### (6) Authorities examine evidence

13 When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and discovered that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized these men had been with Jesus. 14 And because they saw the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say against this.

**With Jesus:** Your daily walk with Jesus, obeying his commandments, being filled with his Holy Spirit, loving one another, proves more convincing than all that scholars can tease out of archaeology or original languages.

### (7) Authorities collude privately

15 But when they had ordered them to go outside the council, they began to confer with one another, 16 saying, "What should we do with these men? For it is plain to all who live in Jerusalem that a notable miraculous sign has come about through them, and we cannot deny it. 17 But to keep this matter from spreading any further among the people, let us warn them [~let them be warned] to speak no more to anyone in this name."

**Council:** Sanhedrin, the highest Israelite authority. = rulers, elders and scribes, most of whom were Sadducees.

**Sign:** The council stop short of acknowledging that the sign resulted from faith in Jesus.

**Warned:** Luke chose this Greek verb from 4 Maccabees 9:5, where it applies to Greek tyrants threatening young Jews with torture and death, unless they defile themselves. Compare 1 Peter 2:23 where it is used of Jesus.

**(8) Authorities forbid apostles to speak**

18 And they called them in and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.  
19 But Peter and John replied, "Whether it is right before God to obey you rather than God, you decide,  
20 for it is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard."

**Speak:** Unusual verb which may imply fake prophecy or bombastic nonsense (2 Peter 2:18).

**Right:** dikaios, legally correct.

**Obey:** Follow legitimate authority. Here of higher authority.

**Seen and heard:** Being three witnesses, the apostles and the healed man knew that the council must receive their testimony (Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16).

**(9) Authorities threaten apostles**

21 After threatening them further, they released them, for they could not find how to punish them on account of the people, because they were all praising God for what had happened. 22 For the man, on whom this miraculous sign of healing had been performed, was over forty years old.

**Punish.** Later, the same authorities would find ways in which to punish both the apostles and the disciples.

**DISCUSS:** How we should behave when opposed by hostile authorities.

- (a) What should be our public message?
- (b) What should be our attitude towards hostile authorities?
- (c) How should we reply when asked about our public message?
- (d) What should we reply when asked by what authority we speak in public?
- (e) How should we comply when forbidden to speak our public message?