

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Acts 4 –

In our study last week, we saw the work of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles – not only do they now proclaim the gospel in boldness, the Holy Spirit has also given them the power to heal.

And we saw that last week with the encounter of two apostles (Peter and John) as they came in contact with this man that had been lame from birth.

And because the people marveled at what happened – Peter explained to the people that the miracle they witnessed was not a result from them – but from Jesus – He is the One who healed the lame man.

So what we are going to see here in chapter four is the church will begin to face persecution – and we will see how the Holy Spirit will give boldness to the early church.

Let's pray...

[Act 4:1-37 NKJV] 1 Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and **the Sadducees** came upon them, 2 being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3

And they laid hands on them, and put [them] in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

When we read through the gospels, we repeatedly see that it was the Pharisees who were the ones that were always questioning everything that Jesus did.

And the reason was that the Pharisees were the ones who taught and practiced the oral traditions of the law. (The key word is traditions)

That is why they would get worked up every time Jesus violated any of their traditions – like when He healed on the Sabbath.

And Jesus rebuked them for clinging to their traditions because by doing so – they were nullifying the law of God.

And this is one of the reasons that led the Pharisees to conspire to kill Jesus Christ.

The Sadducees was another major group within Judaism – they were the modernist and rationalists of their day.

They denied the supernatural – they didn't believe in spirits, angels or the resurrection.

Now – this is why they were greatly disturbed.

Because this new movement – the disciples are going into the streets of Jerusalem and preaching Jesus Christ and His resurrection.

And to make matters worse – now, they are hearing reports that these apostles have the power to heal people – it was bad enough when Jesus was healing people – but now you have these other guys – these uneducated fishermen of all people - going around and doing it. **In the temple of all places.**

So they have Peter and John arrested – and because it's evening (remember, Peter and John showed up at the temple at 3:00 PM and after healing the lame man and talking with people – it is now sunset) so they decide to put them in jail until the morning.

4 However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

This was the result of Peter preaching the gospel – and the people responded.

They responded in faith that that Jesus Christ was their Messiah and that He'd risen from the dead.

Remember – it all started with Peter taking the time to reach out to one single lame man and then we see how God grows the church.

Some people believe that this five thousand speaks of those added to the church that day and some think that the 5000 speaks to the number of the church at this point – either way, we see a remarkable work being done.

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?"

What we have here is the Sanhedrin.

These guys were the ones that put Jesus through the trial.

All the Jewish big wigs were there.

It was a show of power.

They were there to intimidate these two fishermen (these country bumpkins from Galilee)

And in their minds, as the religious authority in Israel, they were the only ones authorized to sanction preaching & teaching.

So the question they asked really isn't a question but more of a statement.

"We didn't authorize you – so how dare you come to the temple and start preaching this Jesus"

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.

Who is speaking here?

Isn't this the man who ran away when the mob arrested Jesus in Gethsemane?

Isn't this the same guy who just a few weeks before was standing in the high priest's courtyard, denying he was a disciple when challenged by a young slave girl?

Isn't this the guy who swore 3 times he was no follower of Jesus?

How can such a coward now stand before the Congress & Supreme Court of Israel & so boldly declare the name of Jesus?

How can he point his finger at these men & charge them with murdering the Messiah?

The answer lies in the first words of v. 8 = He was "filled with the Holy Spirit"

Turn with me to Matt 10 –

Here we have Jesus speaking to His disciples -

[Mat 10:16-20 NKJV] 16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. 17 "But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. 18

"You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. 19 "But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; 20 "for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

The Sanhedrin thought Peter and John were going to be intimidated – but after hearing Peter’s opening statement – they soon realized that they were the ones that were actually on trial.

I don't want you to miss this -

Back in the Day of Pentecost – when the Holy Spirit manifested Himself to them in the upper room – it says that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4) and here once again we see that Peter was once again filled with the Holy Spirit.

Church, being filled with the Holy Spirit is not a one-time thing – God wants us to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit.

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."

The Gospels tell us following the Resurrection, Jesus took the disciples on an extended study of all those passages of the Bible that spoke of Him.

And one of those passages is the one that Peter quotes here from Psalm 118.

Psalm 118 was understood by all as prophetic of the Messiah.

But there was one part of the Psalm that was a mystery to the rabbis.

They couldn't understand how this reference to a rejected stone would apply to the coming Messiah

Jesus quoted the very same scripture when He was speaking to the same group of people that Peter was speaking to.

These men of the Sanhedrin were the builders, the architects of Israel.

Jesus was the chief cornerstone they'd rejected.

But God had taken Him & made Him into the foundation of a new work that bypassed them.

Notice also that Peter did not merely proclaim Jesus as a way of salvation. He proclaimed Jesus as the only way of salvation.

And for many people – even today that is hard to accept.

You see, the world likes to hear stuff like all roads lead to heaven.

And the reason is because that allows them to create their own rules and live the way they want to live.

But God has declared that there is only one road to heaven and only one name by which men are saved – salvation is found only in the name of Jesus.

The Hebrew translation of the name Jesus – is God is salvation.

His name implies His mission.

God sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

In the Old Testament – when Moses came from spending time on the mountain with God – his faced shined.

The Sanhedrin – after listening to Peter and John, they finally figure it out.

Not only did they realize that they were Jesus' disciples – they also realized that they had become just like Him.

And church, that is what enabled them to be used by God.

What made them able to be used by God is that they followed Jesus, they stayed with Him.

They simply accepted His invitation to be His disciples & stuck with Him – He did the rest.

Church, that same invitation is extended to you & I.

God wants to use you!

The qualification for being used isn't brilliance, education, privilege, skill, talent, or any other human quality.

It's one thing – yieldedness to Christ.

Just like Peter and John.

14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

Notice that the Sanhedrin did not question the miraculous healing of the lame man. That is because they knew that it was legit.

They had seen them day after day asking for alms – and not, he is standing there in front of their eyes.

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them [is] evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny [it]. 17 "But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to

no man in this name." 18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

There are some bible scholars that believe that Luke is provided the details of this conversation that takes place behind closed doors by Saul of Tarsus – after his conversion.

Because Paul tells us toward the end of the book of Acts – that he was one of the Sanhedrin.

So the Sanhedrin tell Peter and John to stop talking to people about Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Peter and John respond to the Sanhedrin's threat with a question of their own – do you want us to listen to God or to you?

The miracle of the lame man's healing validated the Gospel's claim that Jesus IS God –so therefore, how could they be silent?

21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. 22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

The Sanhedrin did not punish Peter and John because of the people.

They cared more about public opinion than doing the right thing.

23 And being let go, they went to their own [companions] and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You [are] God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 "who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? 26 The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ.' 27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 "to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29 "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Peter and John go back to the rest of the Apostles and believers and they tell them everything that happened –

Take careful note of how they sought to make sense of what they were experiencing by looking to God's Word.

Jesus had made it abundantly clear to them that following Him would mean the world's hated & opposition.

They were not to run from it, but were to bear it patiently & with grace, just as He had.

I want you to notice - In their prayer, **they never asked for less conflict or an easier time; they asked for the strength to endure**

They don't pray for God to remove the rulers or to shut them up.

They pray that they would be bold and continue to speak in the middle of their persecution.

32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

This is the word that's at the root of "fellowship" and "communion" (koinonia), having things in "common". Here, the church had their property in common.

They recognized God's ownership of everything; it all belonged to God and His people. Because God had touched their lives so deeply, they found it easy to share all things in common.

33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

So here we see the focus in the messages of the early church was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And we also see the response of the early church – they had tasted God’s love in such a way that they couldn’t help but share it with others.

34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid [them] at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. 36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold [it], and brought the money and laid [it] at the apostles’ feet.

Our study ends with the introduction of Joses – or Barnabas.

This is the same Barnabas that will team up with Paul.

Not only was he generous with his wealth – as we see him selling his land and bringing the money and laying at the feet of the apostles to distribute.

He was also generous with his encouragement.

Barnabas is going to play a big part in the early church – especially when we start to see conflict and persecution within the church.

Which by the way, we are going to see next week.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 'May the LORD bless you and protect you. 25 May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. 26 May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

