

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 15

I. Exposition of Chapter Four.

A. Peter and John are confronted by the Jewish leaders.

1. Verses 1-4 – Peter and John are Arrested.

a. Verse 1 – “Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them,”

1) Notice the words, “...they spoke...” – Evidently John was also speaking to the people though it wasn’t recorded. Stanley Horton, and others, state that seeing verse 3 states that it was “...already evening”, this indicates that they had been speaking to the people from 3:00 p.m. (cf. 3:1) until 6:00 p.m. which is three hours of speaking and possibly answering questions.¹

2) There are three groups mentioned: “priests”, “captain of the temple” and “the Sadducees”.

“These were priests assigned to watch over the temple, and the captain of the guard is not just over the temple police (two hundred priests and mostly Levites) but the official in charge of temple affairs and keeping order in the temple. The Sadducees were aristocratic members of the upper priestly families. So they represented temple officials and the Sanhedrin itself. They considered the apostles to be not just a false religion but a threat to order in the temple.”²

3) The phrase, “...came upon them...” means; “Burst upon them suddenly or stood by them in a hostile attitude.”³

b. Verse 2 – “...being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”

1) “...greatly disturbed...” – Means “to be worked up” and “indignant”.⁴

2) “...preached in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.” – It seems the biggest problem these religious leaders had with the apostles was the preaching that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead and that this healing was proof of it. The Sadducees did not believe in any resurrection or really anything supernatural. They could be considered the liberal theologians of their day.

“These people were distinguished by several characteristics: (a) a disbelief in a bodily resurrection and a denial of the existence of angels or spirits (23:8); (b) loyalty to the Roman government; (c) a desire to maintain the status quo; (d) an association with the wealthy class; and (e) adherence only to the Pentateuch.”⁵

c. Verses 3-4 – “And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the of the men came to be about five thousand.”

1) Verse 3 – It was too late for a trial so they jailed them for the night.

2) Verse 4 – The power of the Word of God (the Gospel) brought faith to the hearts of the hearers (cf. Romans 10:17). A remarkable harvest of people came to Christ – “...about five thousand” men.

“Estimates of Jerusalem’s population at this time vary from 25,000 to 85,000...A total of 5000 Jewish Christian ‘men’ in Jerusalem, not including women and children is thus quite substantial. Because they were in the outer court, the converts surely included women as well.”⁶

3) Toussaint adds another powerful point:

“One of the subthemes of Acts is the growth of God’s Word in spite of opposition. Like a juggernaut the message irresistibly moved ahead. Two leading apostles were bound, but the Word of God cannot be bound! (Cf. 28:30–31; Phil. 1:12–14.)”⁷

¹Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 99.

²Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 79–80.

³A.T. Robertson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Vol. III, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), 49.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 362.

⁶Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 333.

⁷Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2, 362.

2. Verses 5-7 – Peter and John stand before the Sanhedrin.

- a. The “**Sanhedrin**” is not mentioned by name here but, nevertheless, it is the group of men whom Peter and John were brought before.

“The ‘Council’ (v. 15) before which soldiers brought Peter and John the next day was the Sanhedrin, which was the senate and supreme court of Israel. It consisted of the high priest, who served as its presiding officer, and 70 other men. Its aristocratic members, the majority, were Sadducees, and its lay leaders were Pharisees.”⁸

- b. Verse 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.”**

- 1) Annas and Caiaphas had a big part in having Jesus crucified. Caiaphas was son in law to Annas. Jesus was taken to Annas’s house first (**John 18:12-14**), then He was taken to Caiaphas. Horton infers the corruption in this family when he states:

“Annas and Caiaphas, along with some of the rest of the relatives of Annas, formed something of a ‘closed corporation’ that ran the temple and controlled its vast income and wealth.”⁹

- 2) Due to many, if not all, of these men had a hand in putting Jesus to death, Peter and John may have thought the same thing was going to happen to them.

- c. Verse 7 – **“And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, ‘By what power or by what name have you done this?’”**

- 1) **“...in the midst...”** means that they had been set in the center. The Sanhedrin would usually sit in a semi-circle on a raised platform.

- 2) **“...by what power or by what name...”** – Several commentators suggest that the Sanhedrin were implying that this power was of demonic origin. Dr. Robert Utley writes:

“They insinuated that the healing was done by magical power (cf. 19:13). They tried this same trick on Jesus (cf. Luke 11:14–26; Mark 3:20–30). They could not deny the miracles so they attempted to impugn the method or source of the power.”¹⁰

3. Verses 8-12 - Peter preaches to the Sanhedrin.

- a. Verse 8 – **“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit...”** – Here we see Peter receives a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit in order to speak boldly and with wisdom. (cf. **Luke 21:12-15**).

- b. Verse 9 – **“If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well,”**

- 1) The word **“judged”** means, **“to interrogate”** or **“to examine”**. The words **“good deed”** mean, **“to do that which is good and beneficial to someone”¹¹**

“Peter and John did not do so by their own strength but by the power of Jesus’ name. Such an act of kindness would not be done by Satan’s authority (see on v. 7) but only by God. The Sanhedrin should be thanking God rather than questioning his representatives.”¹²

- c. Verse 10 – Peter responds boldly to the question the Sanhedrin asked (verse 7). This man is made well by the authority and power found in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth!

- 1) **“...whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead...”** – The Holy Spirit through Peter was attempting to prick the consciences of these men, too (cf. **2:23, 36-37; 3:13-15**). He laid the guilt for Jesus’ death on them, and gave witness that God had raised Him from the dead.

- d. Verse 11 – Peter quotes from **Psalm 118:22**. Jesus was rejected by men but exalted by His Father. (cf. **Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Ephesians 2:20; I Peter 2:6-7**.)

- e. Verse 12 - Peter doesn’t declare Jesus as *a way* of salvation, but as the *only way* of salvation. The idea that there is no salvation in any other, and that there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved is an offensive one in our pluralistic society. (cf. **John 14:6**)

⁸Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 114.

⁹Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 101.

¹⁰Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 67.

¹¹Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 743.

¹²Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 83.