

24. The Book of Acts—4:1-12

(10/21/26)

In our study in the Book of Acts, we have just finished chapter 3, where after God used Peter to heal a man who had been lame from his mother's womb—it gave rise to Peter's second sermon as recorded in Acts 3:11-26.

Acts 3:11–15 (NKJV)

¹¹ Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed. ¹² So when Peter saw *it*, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? ¹³ The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *Him* go. ¹⁴ But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses...

Acts 4:1-2

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.

Let me give you a little background on both the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

The **Pharisees** were not an official group—they were a sect of Judaism.

- They were the extreme *fundamentalists* and *legalists* of their day.
- They were generally from the working class, and many of them, like Paul, made their living from a trade.
- They believed in all the Law and Prophets as being the Word of God, inspired down to the 'jots' and 'tittles' and were ultra-orthodox and conservative when it came to Judaism.
- They also believed in the supernatural, angels, miracles and in resurrection.

The **Sadducees** were also a sect of Judaism.

- The Sadducees were *liberal* in their theology and *materialists* who didn't believe in the supernatural—and as such they didn't believe in angels, miracles, or in life after death (resurrection).
- Because the Sadducees didn't believe in life after death it caused them to put all their time and energy into the pursuit of pleasure, power and wealth—they became the ultra materialists!
- They were loyal to the Roman government who put them in charge of the temple and its concessions (money changers and sellers of animals for sacrifice), a corrupt enterprise that brought them great wealth and fed into their materialism and hedonism.
- They associated with the wealthy class
- They only accepted the Pentateuch (5 books of Moses) as the Word of God.

In the Gospels, the Pharisees were the primary opponents of Jesus.

As radical fundamentalists, they claimed Jesus and His disciples violated their rituals and traditions because He taught that keeping the Law of Moses wouldn't make a person righteous nor get them into heaven—Matthew 11:28-30; 5:17).

Here in Acts, however, the Sadducees are the primary opponents of the Church.

The Sadducees (materialists through and through), were upset with those early Christians because they were going around teaching that Jesus had risen from the dead and testifying to miracles being done along with stories of angels appearing to them and in supernatural healings (like the lame man in chapter 3) being done in Jesus' name.

Acts 4:3 (NKJV)

³ And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

The Mishnah (Jewish oral traditions), "*Judgments about money may be commenced in the day and concluded in the night, but judgments about life must be begun in the day and concluded in the day.*"

One of the sub-themes of Acts is the growth of the Church in spite of persecution.

One Christian author explains some of the persecution those early Christians faced:

“Five times in 11 years, hands were stretched forth to persecute the church in Jerusalem on an organized basis. And this chapter records the first of these persecutions, and really, the beginning of the persecutions of the church that are still going on today, some 2,000 years later.

During the first 300 years of the church’s existence, there were ten persecutions of major proportions brought against the church. Beginning with Stephen and extending nearly to all of the apostles, death became the common way to go, if you were a Christian.

The first persecution, for example, broke out under Nero Domitius, the sixth Emperor of Rome, and about the time A.D. 67, which isn’t too long after the church began. And Nero contrived all kinds of punishments for Christians; he sewed some up in the skins of wild animals and then turned hungry dogs loose on them. He used others, dressed in wax shirts and attached to trees, to be lit as torches in his garden.

The next persecution under Domitian was perhaps even more inventive. Christians were imprisoned. They were put on racks, they were seared, they were broiled, they were burned. They went through scourging, stoning, and hanging. Many were lacerated with hot irons, others thrown on the horns of wild bulls.

In the fourth persecution, beginning in about 162 A.D., some Christians were made to walk with already-wounded feet over thorns, nails, sharp shells; some were scourged until their flesh was gone, others were beheaded, and so it went.

Under the eighth persecution at Utica, 300 Christians were placed alive around a lime kiln and told that they were to make offerings to Jupiter or be pushed in. Unanimously they refused, and all 300 of them perished in the lime.

That was only the beginning of what the church has undergone under Satan’s persecution, as time has progressed...In one way or another, the Christian church is always under persecution.”

Acts 4:3–4 (NKJV)

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

In those days they didn’t count the women and children so this number could have been 8 to 10 thousand or more.

Acts 4:5–6 (NKJV)

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.**

The court was essentially composed of the high priest's family.

The Jewish religious system had become so corrupt that the offices were passed from one relative to another without regard for the Word of God.

When Annas was deposed from the priesthood, Caiaphas, his son-in-law was appointed—in fact, five of Annas' sons held the office at one time or another.

“Somebody has defined a “nepotist” as *‘a man who, being evil, knows how to give good gifts to his children.’* Annas certainly qualified.”

Acts 4:7 (NKJV)

⁷ And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, “By what power or by what name have you done this?”

This was an official meeting of the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:15), the same council that a few months before had condemned Jesus to die—in fact, these officials recognized Peter and John as the associates of Jesus (Acts 4:13).

The Sanhedrin was charged with the responsibility of protecting the Jewish faith, and this meant that they had to examine every new teacher and teaching that appeared in the land (see Deut. 13).

They certainly had the right to investigate what the church was doing, but they did not have the right to arrest innocent men and then refuse to honestly examine the evidence.

Their question was legal, but they did everything they could to avoid admitting that a miracle had taken place (Acts 4:14)—they were evasive and merely referred to the miracle as “**this**” (v.7).

They were probably scornful as well, so that their question might be paraphrased, “*Where did common people like you get the power and authority to do a thing like this?*”

Their question—“**By what power or by what name have you done this?**” implies they thought the apostles might be in league with the devil—even Satan can perform miracles!

Acts 4:8 (NKJV)

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them...

“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit...”

The qualities of the men that God uses are:

- *They are men of prayer—3:1*
- *They are men of faith—3:7*
- *They are men who don't want glory for themselves—3:12*
- *They are men of the Word—3:22-25*
- ***They are men who are filled with the Holy Spirit—4:8***

“Filled” translates a Greek verb tense that indicates it was at that very moment that Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit—once again!

The filling of the Holy Spirit Peter experienced in Acts 2:4 (along with other disciples) was not a one-time event—it was something God wanted to keep doing in their lives.

The literal Greek of Ephesians 5:18 says, “*Be continually being filled with the Holy Spirit.*”

One pastor—

“As we study the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts, perhaps you are saying, “*I just can't seem to get filled. I've been praying. I've been asking. But I can't get filled.*”

Perhaps it is because you don't need to be *filled* as much as you need to be emptied—emptied of carnality and sin, of rebellion and unbelief.

How? By saying, “*No more excuses, no more justifying, no more whitewashing, I repent.*”

Acts 4:8–9 (NKJV)

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,

First of all, Peter is stating how absurd it is *“to arrest us just because a lame man is able to walk—I mean really guys, to arrest us for doing a good deed to a lame man!”*

Peter was incredulous that he and John have been arrested, thrown in jail overnight and put on trial because of making a man lame from his mother’s womb to walk.

But this is the result of religious zeal run amok—an absurd and evil abuse of power!

Acts 4:10 (NKJV)

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.

Again, as we pointed out earlier as we have been working our way through Acts, the resurrection of Jesus Christ was the central message of the early church.

Every time they preached, the subject was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!

“Yes, He was crucified, but He is risen!”—that is the main message of the Christian Church and the heart of the Great Commission—to proclaim the risen Lord!

Acts 4:10–11 (NKJV)

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.*’**

Here Peter quotes Ps. 118:22 (a Messianic psalm about the Messiah’s life and ministry)—*“The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.”*

Pastor Chuck Smith comments on this—

“In quoting Psalm 118, and recognizing that it was a reference to Jesus, it is then interesting to go back and to read the context of this prophecy concerning the Messiah in Psalm 118.

There is a story, an interesting story concerning the building of Solomon’s temple. As you remember in the Scriptures, the stones were all quarried off site and were brought to the site of the temple. They were carved in such a way that they interlocked and they didn’t use any mortar. So in the building of the temple there was no sound of hammer or trowel because the stones were quarried elsewhere and brought and laid in place.

They were quarried, brought to the site, and all, labeled where they would fit in and so forth, so that the builders had the plans of the architect, the numbers on the stones. They knew just where they went in the wall. But the story goes that a stone came which they didn’t have any marking on it. They didn’t know where the thing went. And so they thought, well, they’ve made a mistake at the quarry and they’ve sent this stone that doesn’t seem to fit anywhere. So they cast it aside and over the time, the years of the building of the temple, weeds grew up and all, covered the stone.

So that when the temple was completed all they needed was the chief cornerstone. So as the story goes, they sent the message to the quarry that you haven’t sent the chief cornerstone yet. And the quarry said yes, it is on our records as having been sent. So there was this big dispute over it until finally someone came across this stone in the bushes. They realized the stone that the builders had rejected was actually the chief cornerstone of the building.

Now there is this prophecy concerning Jesus. The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the work of God. It is marvelous, the Psalmist said, in our eyes. So, Peter is using this concerning Jesus. You are the foolish builders and you have set aside the chief cornerstone. But He has become the head of the corner and neither is there salvation in any other!”

Acts 4:11–12 (NKJV)

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.”**

What a difference in Peter!!

It was only 2 months earlier that he stood outside Caiaphas’s house and denied knowing Jesus three times—yet now filled with the Holy Spirit he stands boldly in their presence and gives them a powerful witness!

Pete was transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit—one baptism, many fillings.

Acts 4:12 (NKJV)

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.”

Peter is stating the most exclusive claim of Jesus Christ—that it is only by Him that we can be saved.

Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”*; *“I am the door to the sheepfold, anyone who tries to come in any other way is as a thief and robber.”*

So, Peter is simply saying about Jesus what Jesus said about Himself—that He is the only way to the Father (heaven) and there is salvation in none other than in the name of Jesus Christ—**“For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved!”**

One author said it well—

“The exclusivism of Christianity goes against the grain of our religiously pluralistic society. A chapel built at the North Pole in February 1959 by the men of Operation Deep Freeze 4 typifies the prevalent attitude today toward religious belief. The structure contained an altar, over which was hung a picture of Jesus, a crucifix, a star of David, and a lotus leaf (Representing the Buddha). On the wall of the chapel was an inscription that read “Now it can be said that the earth turns on the point of faith.”

Christians preach an exclusive Christ in an inclusive age. Because of that, we are often accused of being narrow-minded, even intolerant. Many paths, it is said, lead to the top of the mountain of religious enlightenment. How dare we insist that ours is the only one? In reality, however, there are only two religious paths: the broad way of works salvation leading to destruction, and the narrow way of faith in the only Savior leading to eternal life (Matt. 7:13–14).

Religious people are on either one or the other. Sadly, the Sanhedrin and all who followed them were on the broad road to hell.”

The truth about Jesus’ divine Personhood was something He pressed upon the religious leaders of His day to come to terms with—

Matthew 22:41–42 (NKJV)

⁴¹ While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ⁴² saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” They said to Him, *“The Son of David.”*

The response of the Pharisees to Jesus' question was the standard belief held by the Jewish people as to whom the Messiah would be when he finally came to the earth.

As I said last time, they believed that He was going to be a man like Moses—

Acts 3:22 (NKJV)

²² For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.

Peter quoted here from Moses in Deut. 18:15, 18–19—and because of this, the Jewish people believed that Messiah would be a great Prophet—but only a man like Moses not the Son of God.

And then later, in 2Samuel 7, God told David that Messiah would be his descendant, Who would sit on the throne of His father David forever.

And again, since David was a man and Messiah would be one of his descendants—the Jews believe that Messiah will also be a man like His father David and not the Son of God.

This happens to be the standard response of many people today when asked who Jesus Christ is (or *was* if they don't believe He's God and eternal).

If you were to take to the street and canvass people as to who they believe Jesus Christ is or was—for many today the conversation would go something like this—

“Who is Jesus Christ?”

“Well, I believe he was a great religious teacher sent here by God to teach us truth. A wonderful moral example for us to emulate.”

“Do you believe He was God in human form?”

“No, not really. In fact, I believe we're all on our way to godhood...”

“Well do you believe that He is the Savior of the world who came into the world to save us from sin?”

“No, I don’t believe we’re sinners, I don’t believe there is any right or wrong—it’s just whatever is right for you.”

“Do you believe He’s the only way to heaven?”

“No, I believe there are many roads that lead to heaven.”

So, many believe Jesus was a good man, even a great man—but just a man not the Son of God.

Whenever we talk about those who believe Jesus was a great man but not God—the words of C.S. Lewis, in his famous book, *Mere Christianity*, come to mind:

“...I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him, ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.

You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

How anybody can say that Jesus was a great religious teacher and yet reject everything He taught about Himself and salvation is ridiculous.

Which brings us back to the confrontation Jesus had with the religious leaders of His day over this very issue—was He simply the son of a man, or was and is He the Son of God?

Matthew 22:42-45 (NKJV)

⁴² ...“What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” They said to Him, “*The Son of David.*” ⁴³ He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying: ⁴⁴ *‘The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your*

footstool" '? ⁴⁵ "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?"

Jesus doesn't argue with these men—He simply appeals to the Scriptures (Psalm 110:1).

Every orthodox Jewish scholar in that day interpreted this to refer to the Messiah—only the Messiah could sit at the right hand of Yahweh (Father God).

Jesus believed in the inspiration and accuracy of the Old Testament Scriptures, for He said that David spoke these words—**“in the Spirit”** (in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit).

Jesus knew the Pharisees would never dare to question the accuracy or the authority of the Scriptures—which meant they were caught on the horns of a dilemma.

“If Messiah is David's Son,” Jesus asked, **“then how could Messiah also be David's Lord?”**

You see they lived in a strong patriarchal society—and as such the son always called his father 'lord' but the father never called his son 'lord' since the father was greater in authority than his children.

And so, the question had them completely stumped—there was no answer they could come up with that would have solved this apparent contradiction in Scripture.

And we would have to agree that the problem was unsolvable—that is if you believe Jesus was only a man.

However, the problem is easily solved if you understand and believe that Jesus was both the Son of David (a man) but also the Son of God (second Person of the Trinity) and therefore as God He was greater in authority than David which meant the David rightly referred to Him, the Messiah, as 'Lord'.

The fact that Jesus was fully God and fully man is what theologians have called the ‘hypostatic union’.

The hypostatic union is the mysterious joining of the divine and the human in the one person of Jesus.

One author—

“Jesus has two complete natures: one fully human and one fully divine. What the doctrine of the hypostatic union teaches is that these two natures are united in one person in the God-man. Jesus is not two persons. He is one person. The hypostatic union is the joining (mysterious though it be) of the divine and the human in the one person of Jesus.”

And yet, down thru the centuries Satan has deceived millions who regard Jesus as one of many religious leaders (mere men) that have come down the pike of human history—a great teacher who was a wonderful example of virtue and servanthood for all of us to follow.

As one author and historian recounts:

“Throughout the centuries, scholars and skeptics have given many different answers to the query, “Who is Jesus Christ?” His life is the most influential ever lived, and its impact continues to escalate. Still, Jesus’ true identity is still hotly debated by modern historians and theologians. Countless opinions have appeared as unbelievers have attempted to explain away the truth about Him.

The theological skeptics and liberals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were intent on denying Jesus’ deity. They viewed Him as the quintessential strictly human moral teacher, in whom the spark of divinity inherent in all people burned most brightly. In their minds, Jesus’ sacrificial life provided mankind with a model that all should follow, but not with a means by which men might be saved. Thus, He was “an example for faith, not the object of faith”.

Other conceptions of Jesus range from the crusading socio-political revolutionary of liberation theology, to the cynical Jewish sage of the Jesus Seminar, to the countercultural hero of the rock musicals Godspell and Jesus Christ Superstar. But all such fanciful and blasphemous viewpoints are far removed from the God-man revealed in holy Scripture. They say more about the obstinate unbelief and perverted imaginations of the people who created them than about Jesus’ true identity.

Ironically, in all the debate over Him, Jesus’ own self-testimony is seldom considered reasonably. Did He, as historic Christianity has always maintained, claim to be God incarnate in human flesh? Or, as skeptics argue, did His followers later invent those claims and attribute them to Him? All this unbelieving pseudo scholarship ignores the biblical account of His life and ministry, which leaves no legitimate doubt about who Jesus declared Himself to be, and who He was.”

John 8:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins.”

John 10:30–33 (NKJV)

³⁰ I and *My* Father are one.” ³¹ Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. ³² Jesus answered them, “Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?” ³³ The Jews answered Him, saying, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.”