

Today as we step into our teaching time, we pick up where we left off last week. In Acts 3 last week we talked through the miracle that occurred in the name of Jesus at the Temple gate, Beautiful. A 40-year-old man who had been crippled from birth was carried every day to the Temple gate called beautiful to beg. One day Peter and John, having been filled with the Spirit, noticed him and engaged with him. He asked for money, but they gave him his mobility.

This man, crippled from birth, followed them into the Temple running, and leaping, and praising God. And his gymnastics drew the attention of a large crowd who gathered around Peter and John to find out what happened.

Peter and John explained to the people, it was not by their piety or their power, but only because of the name of Jesus this man was healed. And they began to teach about what they had seen and heard regarding Jesus.

**[Transition] - Let's pick up the story again in chapter 4:1-4 Where we see that those who don't get Jesus become very disturbed by his followers.**

### **1. Those who don't get Jesus are disturbed by his followers (1-4).**

Luke lists quite a pile of religious players here. All these dignitaries were members of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin consisted of 71 members, led by the High Priest.

The captain of the temple was part of the Temple police, Temple Security. He was second in command among the Priests. He superintended the

Levites and Priests who served around the temple and the temple police functioned as their bodyguards so to speak.<sup>1</sup>

Sadducees were essentially aristocrats (ruling class). They virtually dominated the higher echelon of the priesthood, and many Sadducees who were not priests held positions of authority as lay elders in the Sanhedrin.

Sadducees derived their power from their class, while Pharisees derived their power from their learning and tenure. Sadducees were very involved as political muscle too, working as an extension of the Roman occupiers. These guys valued status quo above all else.

They were big on law and order. They were very conservative and jumped to squelch any unrest or disruption from the Jews. The Romans rewarded them handsomely for their service. Keep the peace and all was well.

They were disturbed because of the big commotion at the Temple that day with the healed beggar running laps around the temple courts, and the crowd that was gathering, and the explanation of the Apostles.

It says they were specifically disturbed because Peter was teaching about the resurrection. This was NOT OKAY to the Sadducees...they did not believe in the resurrection; in fact they didn't believe in any afterlife experience. The soul died with the body. So, and they didn't want Peter and John whipping up a crowd about the resurrection and eternal life... and they certainly didn't want those ideas tied to the Rabbi Jesus who they had just done away with.

They were also well aware of what verse 4 reports...that many were choosing to follow the Jesus way...and just a few weeks ago 3000 were added, and now Luke reports another 5000 were added. Those are big

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<sup>1</sup> Zondervan p. 612 vol 1.

numbers, and you know the religious leaders were very aware the movement started by the Jesus they killed was still very much alive. Panic began to rise in them, and they knew they needed to find a way to cancel Peter and John and the message they were spreading.

This all about power and authority. They were left alone and even got perks from Roman officials if they kept things quiet and peaceful around the Temple and in the streets of Jerusalem. Lock these guys up, let's sleep on it. And we'll talk in the morning.

[Transition] - Let's see what happens next. Look at verses 5-12.

## **2. Jesus' followers explain there is power only in the name of Jesus (5-12)**

Again, Luke gives us incredible detail on the players involved in this interrogation. Annas and Caiaphas were related. Caiaphas was Annas' Son-in-law. And verse 6 lists other members of the family who were serving in the Sanhedrin.

So, there are family dynamics in play here as well as political dynamics. Power and authority were at stake. Caiaphas was appointed by the Roman Procurator in that region. Both Annas and Caiaphas were prominent in the unjust trials and condemnation of Jesus.

When the religious rulers were in session they sat in rows in a semi-circle all facing the one who was speaking or the one they were questioning. They bring Peter and John before them having arrested them for speaking about the resurrection. But, now concern over the resurrection wasn't the issue any longer. They ask a very poignant question about the healing that these two performed at the temple gate the day before. "By what power or what name did you do this?"

I wonder if Peter and John had flashbacks to Jesus' trial and questioning in front of this same group. Is this going to be fake trial 2.0. Will there be a similar outcome? They had to wonder.

Peter, under the influence and empowerment of the Holy Spirit begins his response. It's courageous, shrewd and in many ways, and direct.

- First, he calls attention to the kindness of healing this poor man. He basically asks, "Why are you complaining and question an act of kindness?"
- He then declares it occurred because of the name of Jesus.
- He then pokes them by adding... "Whom you crucified, but God raised." This is the third time he's used the phrase, "You killed him, but God raised him." That statement immediately insults them. That statement puts their actions in direct opposition to God's, the one they claim to represent and serve.

He then quotes Psalm 118, a messianic Psalm that Jesus himself quotes. A Psalm that refers to Jesus the Messiah as the chief cornerstone, that was rejected by the builders. It calls them out. They are the ones who rejected Jesus, but God has made him the cornerstone. These were bold, shrewd, and powerful declarations by these two apostles in the face of powerful elite religious leaders.

- Finally, Peter states a powerful truth important for everyone in the room today to understand is still true today, *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."* The double negative emphasizes the importance of this truth.

**[Application]** - I think it's fair to say than everyone is searching for a savior of some sort. What I mean is, everyone is searching for something to help them make life work, something to help them get through life, make sense of life, and make the most out of life.

Everyone is searching for something or someone to save them from the anxieties and uncertainties of life. Something or someone to help them, something or someone who is stronger, or more capable.

People look to all sorts of things to sort of save them from the angst and emptiness of life.

- Some choose relationships, and casual sexual intimacy.
- Some choose the pseudo intimacy of pornography
- Some choose various methods of self-medication—alcohol, shopping, drugs of all sorts, food, endless hours of streaming entertainment, and still others use work.
- Some choose religion, or some version of spirituality.

The problem with all these methods is they don't work, they don't satisfy the deep, deep longing and needs of the human soul. As Jeremiah says, "They are broken cisterns that hold not water." They are a well that runs dry. They promise big, but don't perform.

Every world religion has its claimed leader—Islam has Mohammad; Mormons have Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, Buddhism has The Buddha; Confucianism has Confucius; Unification Movement has Sun Myung Moon; Scientology has L. Ron Hubbard.<sup>2</sup> You know what all these religious leaders have in common? They all died, were buried, and remained in the grave.

Christianity is different. Christianity is set apart by the central truth of the resurrection. Our Savior died but was raised to life again. Our leader is alive! Our leader lives and has placed his spirit in each one of us who opens our hearts to him.

When the apostles say, "There is no other name." It's the plain simple truth. There is nothing else, or no one else who can satisfy the deep, deep longings of the soul. Only Jesus. Only Jesus. Only Jesus.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://belmont.libguides.com/worldreligions>.

[**quote**] - Jesus himself said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the father except through me."* -John 14:6

So, what this teaches us is all other strategies, all other pathways, and all other efforts to be saved or to make life work are ineffective. They simply don't have the power for your life like the person of Jesus does.

[**Transition**] - After Peter finishes his statement, the religious leaders are astonished, and they look for a way to cancel these messengers. Look at verses 13-17

### **3. Unsure what to do, the world tries to cancel Jesus' messengers (13-17)**

Fascinating, though these guys were ordinary, unschooled men, these learned, elite could tell by their comments and reasoning that they had been with the Rabbi Jesus. What a compliment.

It made me stop and wonder, do my words, my thought process, my reasoning, my attitudes and my actions; do they look like, walk like, sound like Jesus? How about you? Does your style of relating, talking, and acting in life resemble Jesus? Can people tell you've spent time with Jesus, in his word, with his Spirit?

These religious leaders were vexed. These were ordinary men through whom God did the extraordinary by healing the crippled man. If the healing is real; then the power behind the healing is real. If the power behind the healing is the name of Jesus; then the power of Jesus is real. And that means all the truth about Jesus is validated. So, they send them out to debate a solution.

They were in a conundrum...a beautiful thing happened by the Beautiful Gate in the name of Jesus, and everyone was buzzing about it. They thought they had killed this Jesus movement. Now, it's beginning to dawn on them that it's now gaining even more momentum. They had to figure out a way to stop this spreading flame of Jesus and cancel these followers.

[Transition] - After deliberation, they called Peter and John in again and try to silence them. In response to that effort to cancel them and their message, Peter respectfully informs them that they cannot help but continue to teach and speak about the truth of Jesus. Look at verses 18-22

#### **4. In the face of resistance, Jesus' follower must remain resolved to advance the truth of Jesus (18-22).**

They ask a rhetorical question, "Which is right in God's eyes; to do what you guys tell us to do, or do what God tells us to do?"

Brilliantly they use the religious leaders' respect for God against them. Are we to listen to God or to you. The question insults them. Of course, the rulers believed that one can only hear from God through them.

This disrespects their traditional role. And again, Peter and John point out that the religious leaders are on the wrong side of God's wishes. Their command is in direct opposition to God's command. And they are resolved to do what God has called them to do.

Peter and John use another double negative here to emphasize their resolve. Literally it reads, "We can't stop speaking about this." Or, "we must speak at all costs." We can't help it...we are compelled and resolved to spread the news about what we have seen and heard regarding Jesus.

They could arrest these Apostles, but they could not arrest the gospel. They try to manage these messengers, but they can't stop their message from spreading.

This a key take-away for us as Jesus followers today. God has called us to be his representatives, his ambassadors, his witnesses. God has given us that command. Our commitment to that command must be as resolved as these early Apostles.

In the face of resistance, we must never be silenced. When resistance arises, we must remain resolved to advance the truth of Jesus. When resistance arises we must remain resolved to tell our story of Jesus. We must continue to share what we know about the story of Jesus, what we've personally experienced.

This principle also extends beyond simply speaking about Jesus as savior, but to advancing all that Jesus taught with our lives.

You and I must remain resolved to live out the truths of Jesus in our lives despite the push back and despite the resistance we encounter. We must live in accordance with God's laws, morals, and teachings no matter what pressure we are up against.

And this is becoming more important lately, as our culture seems to have taken more radical steps away from God's fundamental principles, morals, and teachings. And like these religious leaders who don't align with Jesus...our culture will try to shut us down...our culture will try to cancel and silence us. Our culture will try to marginalize us by calling us extremists. But, we must remain resolved friends.

Our lives must seek to model his teachings. Our vote must reflect his values. Our lifestyle must seek to reflect his morals.

It's likely to get more and more difficult. But, as resistance rises, we must remain resolved to advance the truth of Jesus...with our lips...and with our lives.

Here's how we can do it. Just as the Apostles did

1. We must stay close to Jesus
2. We must be filled with the Spirit and yield to him
3. We must do what God calls us to do, not what our culture calls us to do.
4. We must advance the truth of Jesus at every opportunity