

Unstoppable Kingdom

Locally: Moments of Decision

Acts 4:5-22

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8

Throughout the book of Acts the early disciples did not have what Christians in the U.S. enjoy today. They had no buildings to call their own, no rights to freedom of religious expression, no celebrities, or people of great power to champion their cause, no best-selling books or strategies, no colleges, universities or seminaries, no large ministry budgets, no tax-exempt status, or ministry programming for every age. Their ministers had jail records and would have a hard time joining some of our churches, let alone leading them. Yet they grew by 120, 3,000 & 5,000...

Their success strategy can be found in an examination of Peter & John following their healing of a lame man and the subsequent gospel preaching...

“On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high priestly family. And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, ‘By what power or by what name do you do this?’ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you 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 is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.’ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, saying, ‘What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more in this name.’ So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.’ And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.” Acts 4:5-22

Main Idea: God’s Unstoppable Kingdom Creates Important Moments of Decision

I. **Decide Between Competing Kingdoms – Acts 4:5-10**

The gathering described is the Sanhedrin. Under the authority of the Romans, this council managed religious affairs, especially around the Temple. They had powers to investigate, detain, and even punish (but not execute). The Sanhedrin consisted of 71 of the wealthiest, most-influential Jewish men in the nation. They were primarily grouped into Sadducees (the largest, more progressive group that didn’t believe in the resurrection), the Pharisees (fundamentalists who taught the Law of Moses), and the scribes and elders. They were deeply involved in the plot against Jesus by paying Judas to betray him, charging him with blasphemy, and demanding that Pontius Pilate crucify him.

“The court before which Peter and John were brought was the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the Jews...Their one desire was to preserve the status quo that their own emoluments might not be lessened.” William Barclay

The gospel of Jesus threatened their temporary kingdom by bringing about an eternal kingdom. So, in the coming days they would do everything they could to stop it!

“And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, ‘By what power or by what name did you do this?’ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you 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 is standing before you well.” Acts 4:7-10

“When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

Matthew 10:19-20

There are competing Kingdoms in the world today. One is eternal, the other is temporary. One is human-centric, the other is God-centric. Recognizing the difference is key! But more than just recognizing the difference, deciding which has your heart is essential. Peter & John knew!

II. **Decide on Ultimate Authority - Acts 4:13-22**

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.” Acts 4:13-14

Peter and John were fishermen, not scholars. Normally people would just crumble under the scrutiny of the council, but they were bold and clear. Their use of Scripture was proof that Jesus had trained them well.

What is distinct about citizens of the Unstoppable Kingdom is not intelligence, power, status, or popularity. It is intimacy with Jesus!

“So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.’” **Acts 4:18-20**

Civil disobedience is appropriate when our governing authorities tell us to do something that Scripture prohibits or when they prohibit something the Scripture commands. But, it is always to be done as a last resort and with a peaceful, pleasant, and respectful attitude toward those in authority. But, citizens of the Kingdom of God must answer to a higher authority!

“The trouble with so many people is that the voice of their neighbors sounds louder in their ears than the voice of God.” **H.G. Wells**

III. **Decide for Eternal Life** – *“This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*
Acts 4:11-12

Every time the gospel was preached, two possible responses were given: reject Jesus or accept Jesus.

“This text involves a negative truth – there is no salvation outside of Christ 0- and a positive truth – there is salvation in Jesus Christ by which we must be saved.” **Charles Haddon Spurgeon**

“The physical ‘salvation’ of the lame man through the name of Jesus is thus a pointer to the far greater salvation that comes to all who call upon his name in faith.” **John Polhill**

“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” **Colossians 1:13-14**

God’s Unstoppable Kingdom Creates Important Moments of Decision

Our lives are filled with so many moments of decision. Childhood friends, hobbies, career choices, spouse, financial decisions, parental decisions, and so many more. There is no greater or more impactful decision than to become a citizen of the Unstoppable Kingdom of God and to live your life for the advancement of that Kingdom over everything else...

“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.” **Hebrews 12:28**

Sources and Further Reading Opportunities:

- *CSB Study Bible* – Trevin Wax, General Editor (2021)
- *The Bible Exposition Commentary* – Warren Wiersbe (1996)
- *Word Pictures in the New Testament* – A.T. Robertson (1933)
- *The New American Commentary: Acts* – John B. Polhill (1992)
- *Acts: Bible Study Commentary* – F.F. Bruce (2017)

- *Acts for Everyone* – N.T. Wright (2008)
- *Acts: The Church Afire* – Kent Hughes (1996)
- *Acts* – K.O. Gangle (1998)
- *The Kingdom of God* – Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1992)
- *Kingdom First* – Jeff Christopherson (2015)
- *The Kingdom Agenda* – Tony Evans (1999)