

Sports & Rec Plus  
THE BOOK OF ACTS  
Lesson 8: Peter and John before the Sanhedrin  
Acts 4:1-31 (NIV®)  
Rev. Rick Mitchell and Rev. Rod Morris

Welcome to the teaching ministry of **Sports & Rec Plus (S&RP)**. S&RP is a worldwide church planting ministry serving the Lord in ninety countries with an emphasis of taking the Gospel to unreached people groups. We do these using sports, recreation, leisure time activities, and life skills training to open doors for us so that the Word of God can be shared. As God's Word is shared, people get saved; Bible studies are then started; church leaders are trained; churches are established as the Lord leads.

This message today is part of a series from the book of Acts. You can listen to all of our messages by going to our website: **sportsrecplus.org** and clicking on the media tab. There you will find over two hundred messages from the Bible.

### Acts 4:1-31

#### Peter and John before the Sanhedrin

*4:1 The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. <sup>2</sup>They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. <sup>3</sup>They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day.<sup>4</sup>But many who heard the message believed; so, the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.*

*<sup>5</sup>The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup>Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. <sup>7</sup>They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"*

*<sup>8</sup>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! <sup>9</sup>If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, <sup>10</sup>then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. <sup>11</sup>Jesus is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone." <sup>12</sup>Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."*

*<sup>13</sup>When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.<sup>14</sup>But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. <sup>15</sup>So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together.*

*<sup>16</sup>"What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it. <sup>17</sup>But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name."*

*<sup>18</sup>Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup>But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! <sup>20</sup>As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."*

<sup>21</sup>After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. <sup>22</sup>For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

### **The Believers Pray**

<sup>23</sup>On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. <sup>24</sup>When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. <sup>25</sup>You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

*‘Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot in vain?*

*<sup>26</sup>The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one.’*

<sup>27</sup>Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. <sup>28</sup>They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. <sup>29</sup>Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. <sup>30</sup>Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

<sup>31</sup>After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

## INTRODUCTION

In this section of Scripture, we see:

1. Peter and John are taken up and put in jail, verses 1-4.
2. They are examined by a committee of the Sanhedrin, verses 5-7.
3. They bravely testify that what they have done—preached about Christ to their persecutors—is true, verses 8-12.
4. Their persecutors say nothing and so dismiss them, verses 13-22.
5. They then pray to God for further operations of that grace which they already had experienced, verses 23-30.
6. And verse 31, the place where they were meeting was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the Word of God boldly.

### **Peter and John before the Sanhedrin**

#### **Rick: Acts 4:1-15**

**4:1 The priests** The office of priest in the Old Testament began with Aaron and his sons (Leviticus 8). The priests were the human intermediaries between holy God and sinful humanity. They were characterized by three qualities: 1) they were chosen and set apart for this priestly service by God; 2) they were to be holy in character; 3) they were the only ones allowed to come near God on behalf of the people. The high priest was the chief go-between on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16).

**and the captain of the temple guard** This was the chief of the temple police force (composed of Levites) and second-ranking official next to the high priest. The Romans had delegated the temple-policing responsibility to the Jews.

**and the Sadducees** The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. The Pharisees, another religious/political group that often stood in opposition to the Sadducees, did believe in the resurrection and afterlife. The beliefs of the Pharisees were closer to Christianity than those of the Sadducees. Significantly, the Scripture does mention some Pharisees who were believers (Acts 15:5; John 3:1), but not Sadducees.

**came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people.** They came to get first-hand information for themselves.

**4:2 They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.** This part of Peter and John's message was the most objectionable to the Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders had executed Christ as a blasphemer and now with Peter and John proclaiming that Jesus had risen from the dead—the Jewish leaders had really executed the Messiah.

**4:3 They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day.** The Jewish leaders put Peter and John in jail overnight because Jewish law did not permit trials at night. Thus, they had to wait until the next day to try them.

**4:4 But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.** It was this unprecedented growth of the early church—Acts 1:15 to about 120 believers; Acts 2:41 their number to about 3000 followers; and now in Acts 4:4 the number of men grew to about 5000—and that it was extremely rapid growth was probably one of the alarms that prompted the authorities to take action

**4:5 The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem.** The rulers, elders, and teachers were the positions that made-up the Jewish ruling body, the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the Jews national ruling body and supreme court. It had 71 members, including the high priest.

**4:6 Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family.** Although Annas had been replaced and Caiaphas was now high priest, Annas retained his title and wielded great influence. **John and Alexander.** Their identities are uncertain. “John” could be an alternate reading for “Jonathan” who was one of Annas's sons and replaced Caiaphas as high priest in A.D. 36

**4:7 They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: “By what power or what name did you do this?”** Power or what name meant the total essence and force of what they said. The authorities that were questioning Peter and John recognized that Peter and John did not have the power within themselves to ask these questions—they recognized that the power was coming from outside them—so they ask Peter and John where their power and strength was coming from.

**4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them:** Peter, being under the control of the Spirit, enabled him able to face persecution and preach the Gospel with power. He was filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-41).

**“Rulers and elders of the people!** Beginning now and going on through verse 12: Peter puts the Sanhedrin on trial by preaching the Gospel to these men. These were the same ones, who had condemned Jesus and made themselves, by these actions, enemies of God (Acts 4:8-12).

**4:9 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed,** Peter continues his sermon.

**4:10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.** Peter continues his sermon by telling them that this man whom they killed is the one God raised from the dead.

**4:11 Jesus is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.”** Peter tells them who Jesus is. Jesus is the cornerstone.

**4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.** This verse refers to the exclusivism of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ alone. There really are only two religious paths a person can take: the broad and wide way of works salvation leading to eternal death and the narrow way of faith in Jesus, leading to eternal life (Matthew 7:13-14; John 10:7-10; John 14:6).

**4:13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.** Peter and John were acting in such a way that the men realized that Peter and John had been with Jesus.

**4:14 But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say.** Since the man who had been healed was still in the area, there was nothing the Jewish leaders could do or say.

**4:15 So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together.** Peter and John were ordered to leave the area, and then the Sanhedrin discussed the matter.

---

#### **Rod: Acts 4:16-31**

**4:16 “What are we going to do with these men?” they asked. “Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it.** The leaders of the Sanhedrin were between a rock and a hard place. No one could deny that a great sign had taken place. The man crippled since birth was well known to everyone who went into the temple. Word of the miracle had spread throughout all of Jerusalem. If they denied this notable sign, the people would be against them. If they acknowledged the miracle, then they would be acknowledging that they put Jesus on the cross.

**4:17 But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name.** Their decision was to give Peter and John a warning to never speak about Jesus again.

**4:18 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.** Peter and John are then brought back in before the council and ordered not speak or teach in the name of Jesus.

**4:19 But Peter and John replied, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges!** Peter and John’s response to the Sanhedrin is priceless by asking is it right to obey God or them. And then they asked them if they would obey God or man.

**4:20 As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.** Now they explain why they are speaking about Jesus. They just can’t help themselves. Their explanation reminds me of Luke 19:39-40, “Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”<sup>40</sup> “I tell you”, he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

There was just no way that they could keep quiet. They had to tell everyone about what they had witnessed.

**4:21 After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened.** Not knowing how to punish Peter and John, they threatened some more and let them go because the whole city was praising God.

**4:22 For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.** Now we learn that the crippled man was 40 years old.

### **The Believers Prayer**

**4:23 On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.** This was the first arrest of Christian believers. With their release, there must have been a sigh of relief for the church since these same religious leaders had killed Jesus. To see Peter and John safely returned must have been an emotional reunion, especially after they gave their report of everything that took place. Then they did as we should always do: they went together to the Lord in prayer.

**4:24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.** They begin by declaring God sovereign over everything.

**4:25 You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: “ ‘Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? 4:26 The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one.’** This is a Davidic prophecy of the world against Christ. It is just as true today as it was when they killed Jesus.

**4:27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. 4:28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.** This fulfillment of David’s words happened exactly as was prophesied. Nothing ever surprises God.

**4:29 Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.** This is a plea to preach the Word with boldness even in the face of adversity. Have you ever paused or delayed your witness because fear or anxiety came over you? Then you need to remember this prayer of the disciples as they had faced threats from the religious leaders who could have made their lives miserable.

**4:30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.** This too should be our prayer. Without the power of God, we are unable to serve Him. But when you serve God with the His power, be prepared for fantastic things to happen.

**4:31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.** When God is present, you can feel. This is because the power of the Holy Spirit overwhelms and removes all worldliness with the holiness of God.

## Conclusion

Truly a remarkable event took place when the crippled man was fully healed. But even more remarkable was the fact of all the people praising God. The name of Jesus was now being uplifted. The people are beginning to realize that they are sinners before God and that Jesus is the only answer. Their message two thousand years ago is the same message for us today. God has not changed His message of hope. Our hope is in Christ alone. Hope does not exist anywhere else. Acts 4:12 is so true. *“Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”*

Let's pray.

---

Our prayer here at **Sports & Rec Plus** for you is that every message we send out is an inspiration and blessing in your personal walk with the Lord. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions about this or any of our messages. And take a few minutes to visit our website and see how we can come alongside you, as you take the Gospel to your community and the world. Here is our contact information:

website: [sportsrecplus.org](http://sportsrecplus.org)  
phone: 571-278-5987  
Rick's email: [sportsrecplus@cs.org](mailto:sportsrecplus@cs.org)  
Rod's email: [coloradoredbird@gmail.com](mailto:coloradoredbird@gmail.com)  
mail: 2288 Gunbarrel Road, #154-235  
Chattanooga, TN 37421 United States