

Acts 04 - 1st Persecution; Peter & John Testify Before Sanhedrin; Sanhedrin's Response; Believers Pray for Boldness; Barnabas' Generosity

I. Outreach in Jerusalem (Acts 1:1—7:60)

(8) The arrest of Peter and John (4:1-37)

- (A) Peter and John arrested (4:1-4)
- (B) Peter preaches to the Sanhedrin (4:5-12)
- (C) The Jewish leadership commands the apostles not to preach (4:13-22)
- (D) The church condemns Israel (4:23-28)
- (E) The church's prayer for boldness (4:29-31)
- (F) The unity of the first church (4:32-37)

Acts 4

(8) The arrest of Peter and John (4:1-37)

(A) Peter and John arrested (4:1-4)

1 As **they** were speaking to the people, the priests and the **captain** of the temple *guard* and the **Sadducees** came up to them,

1 As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple *guard* and the Sadducees came up to them,

1 While they were speaking to the people, the priests, the commander of the Temple guards, and the Sadducees came to them.

1 And as they spoke unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,

- Verses 1-4 conclude the incident from Acts 3...

- "...they" - Peter and John

— Three separate groups objected to Peter and John addressing the public as they did: the priests, the captain of the temple guard, and the Sadducees

- "...captain" - *stratēgos*, the commanding officer of the temple police force; this person was second in command under the high priest

- "...Sadducees" - theological liberals; they denied the what the Bible says

— They only believed in the five books of Moses (the *Torah*); they did not accept the rest of the books of Hebrew Bible (the OT)

— They also did not believe in a resurrection (Cf. Matt 22:30). When Jesus was talking to the Sadducees in the gospels, He did not quote the best OT passage on the resurrection (Dan 12:2), because the Sadducees did not accept any OT books outside the five books of Moses.

— Instead, Jesus quoted from Exodus to prove resurrection to the Sadducees (Cf. Matt 22:31-32), where He argues that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are alive right now, which He uses to prove a future resurrection

— The Sadducees also did not believe in angels (Cf. 23:8)

- The Sadducees were the theological liberals...they denied the authenticity and authority of most of the OT. They were dominant in the temple in Jerusalem during the time of Acts.

— They believed that the messianic age began with the Maccabean era (168-134 BC), and continued under the Sadducee's supervision, thus they rejected Jesus as the Messiah

— The Pharisees, on the other hand, were conservative but ultra-legalists. They were dominant in the synagogues, which were located throughout the Greco-Roman world. They wrote law after law, regulation after regulation that sat on top of the Law of Moses, to such an extent that the tail began to wag the dog. They began to impose their own laws and regulations on the people instead of adhering to the Mosaic Law.

— This is why Jesus always fought with the Pharisees about the Sabbath. Jesus argued that the Sabbath was made for man, but the Pharisees imposed their own regulations on the Sabbath that went to a much further extent than anything in the Mosaic Law.

— Much of the persecution that the early church was under in Jerusalem (Acts 1-12) came from the Sadducees. The persecution that Paul was under during his missionary journeys out in the Greco-Roman world came from the Pharisees.

2 being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and **proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection** from the dead.

2 being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

2 They were greatly disturbed that Peter and John were teaching the people and announcing that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead.

2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

- The main thing that disturbed these Sadducees is explained in v13: these Sadducees were upset and angered that these unlearned fishermen (Peter & John), who never went to the rabbinical schools, were teaching the masses

— They didn't believe that the apostles had the authority to teach anyone, much less the subject they were teaching: about the resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, whom Israel rejected and killed.

— The Sadducees were angry because these uneducated fishermen, who didn't have the authority to be teaching anything as far as they were concerned, were teaching doctrines that the religious authorities opposed.

- "...proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection" - this teaching put the apostles on a collision course with the Sadducees. Even before this, the apostles likely got into hot water with the Sadducees when Peter preached the resurrection of Christ both in his sermon on Pentecost (2:23) and his second sermon (3:15).

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

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

3 So they arrested them and placed them in custody until the next day, since it was already evening.

3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.

- "...them" - Peter and John

- They were put in prison overnight because Jewish law held that there could be no trials at night

4 But many of those who had heard the message **believed**; and the number of the **men** came to be about five thousand.

4 But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

4 But many of those who heard their message believed, and the men grew to number about 5,000.

4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

- The result of the persecution that the early church came under, including the unwarranted arrest of two of its leaders, was that God didn't stop working and the church greatly expanded

— God continues to work, even while the church is under persecution. In fact, this is often, as we can see here, where God does His greatest work. On Pentecost, in front of tens of thousands of people, 3000 were saved. Here, simply by the arrest of Peter and John, 5000 were saved.

- There is no church growth methodology or marketing strategy out there that could get the church to grow like this other than persecution
- "...believed" - notice the single condition for salvation that each of these 5000 did: belief. No mention about repentance, no mention of emotion, no mention of any work that needed to be done first. No mention that God gave these 5000 the gift of faith prior to their salvation.
- "...men" - males, not the more general "mankind"; so Peter's second sermon yielded about 5,000 new male believers, not counting the numerous women who also likely came to saving faith
- It is interesting that many of Pharisees (legalists) came to faith in Jesus; however, nowhere can there be a record of a Sadducee (liberal) coming to faith in Jesus

Eight Numerical Progress Reports in Acts

1. Acts 2:47: "...And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."
2. **Acts 4:4: "But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand."**
3. Acts 6:7: "The word of God kept spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith."
4. Acts 9:31: "So the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed peace, as it was being built up; and as it continued in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it kept increasing."
5. Acts 12:24: "But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied."
6. Acts 16:5: "So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily."
7. Acts 19:20: "So the word of the Lord was growing and prevailing mightily."
8. Acts 28:30-31: "Now Paul stayed two full years in his own rented lodging and welcomed all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching things about the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered."

(B) Peter preaches to the Sanhedrin (4:5-12)

- 5 On the next day, their **rulers** and **elders** and **scribes** were gathered together in Jerusalem;
- 5 On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem;

5 The next day, their rulers, elders, and scribes met in Jerusalem

5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes,

- With Peter and John, these religious leaders are trying to follow their own rule book by only having a trial during the daylight hours, even though that's how they railroaded Jesus

- This is the first of four instances where Jesus' followers stood before the Sanhedrin in Acts: Peter and the apostles (5:27), Stephen (6:12), and Paul (22:30).

- "...rulers" - chief priests (Sadducees), who represented the 24 priestly courses (Cf. 23:5; Matt 16:21)

- "...elders" - tribal and influential family heads (Pharisees)

- "...scribes" - teachers of the Law (Pharisees)

- All three groups made up the Sanhedrin, Israel's Senate and Supreme Court

The Sanhedrin was acting within its jurisdiction when it convened to examine Peter and John. The Mosaic Law specified that whenever someone performed a miracle and used it as the basis for teaching, he was to be examined, and if the teaching were used to lead men away from the God of their fathers, the nation was responsible to stone him (Deut 13:1-5). On the other hand, if his message was doctrinally sound, the miracle-worker was to be accepted as coming with a message from God.

The Sanhedrin had already condemned Jesus (Luke 22:66-71). Now Peter and John stood trial before the same group, along with the healed man. The Sanhedrin seemed powerful, but their threats and commands could not stop God's purpose. God had already disowned them. The leaders had no real power over the three men who stood before them.

6 and Annas the high priest *was there*, and Caiaphas, **John**, and **Alexander**, and all who were of high-priestly descent.

6 and Annas the high priest *was there*, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent.

6 with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and the rest of the high priest's family.

6 And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

- Annas was not officially the high priest at this time. He served as high priest from 6-15 AD, but from 18 AD on, his son-in-law Caiaphas was high priest

- However Anna exerted great influence from behind the scenes (Cf. Luke 3:2; John 18:13-24); he was so powerful that Luke could refer to him as the high priest, even though he was only the power behind the office.

- Annas was of the Aaronic priesthood, but he was deposed by the Romans, and Caiaphas was put in his place
- Caiaphas was the acting high priest, but appointed by the Romans; he was not of the line of Aaron
- Caiaphas was in power for the Romans, but not really accepted by the Jews
- Annas and Caiaphas are two of the men who condemned Jesus to die
- "...John" - the son of Annas
- "...Alexander" - likely a member of Annas' family

THE HIGH PRIESTS OF ISRAEL (ca. A.D. 6-66)	
ANNAS (ca. A.D. 6-15): the co-high priest with Caiaphas during Jesus' trial (Luke 3:2; John 18:13, 24), and the high priest who, with Caiaphas, tried Peter and John (Acts 4:6)	
Eleazar (ca. A.D. 16-17): the son of Annas	
CAIAPHAS (ca. A.D. 18-36): the son-in-law of Annas, the high priest during Jesus' earthly ministry (Luke 3:2; Matt. 26:3, 57; John 11:49-50), and the high priest who with Annas tried Peter and John (Acts 4:6)	
Jonathan (ca. A.D. 36-37): the son of Annas, and possibly the "John" of Acts 4:6	
Theophilus (ca. A.D. 37-41): the son of Annas	
Matthias (ca. A.D. 42): the son of Annas	
ANANIAS (ca. A.D. 47-59): tried Paul in Jerusalem and Caesarea (Acts 23:1-10; 24:1-23)	
Annas (ca. A.D. 61): the son of Annas	
Matthias (ca. A.D. 65-66): the son of Theophilus, grandson of Annas	

- 7 When they had placed them in the center, they *began to* inquire, "By what power, or in what name, **have you done this?**"
- 7 When they had placed them in the center, they *began to* inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?"
- 7 They made Peter and John stand in front of them and began asking, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"
- 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?
- The religious leaders questioned Peter and John by what authority they went around healing people and teaching people
 - Notice that the religious leaders do not deny that the miracle of healing the lame man actually happened; they could not deny it

— The implication is, because they couldn't deny the reality of the miracle, that Peter and John performed this miracle under Satan's power (Cf. Matt 12:24)

- "...have you done this" - healed the lame man (Cf. 3:1-7)

— The lame man who was healed was also arrested and present at this trial (Cf. v10). He was jailed because the religious leadership did not want demonstrable evidence of this man's healing out in public for all to see. They wanted to keep this miracle under wraps.

8 Then Peter, **filled with the Holy Spirit**, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people,

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people,

8 Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, told them, "Rulers and elders of the people!

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

- "...filled with the Holy Spirit" - what changed seemingly overnight between the Peter we read about in the gospels, with the foot-shaped mouth, and the Peter in Acts who is bold, direct, truthful, and powerful in his speech.

— The speech/sermon that Peter is about to give to these religious leaders was promised to him by Jesus (Cf. Luke 21:14-15)

9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well,

9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well,

9 If we are being questioned today for a good deed done for someone who was sick or to learn how this man was healed,

9 If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;

- Peter offers a bit of sarcasm here, asking the religious leaders, Are we in jail because we did something good?

10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this *name* this man stands here before you in good health.

10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this *name* this man stands here before you in good health.

10 you and all the people of Israel must understand that this man stands healthy before you because of the name of Jesus from Nazareth, whom you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead.

10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

- Peter lays it straight out for these Sadducees...*you* crucified *your* Messiah, then God raised Him from the dead (the Sadducees did not believe in resurrection)

- Notice how careful Peter is to give all the credit and glory to Jesus Christ for the miracle. Peter's point is that although Jesus is no longer here on earth, He is performing the same miracles that He did while He was, only this time through His apostles, from heaven.

11 He is the **STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED** by you, **THE BUILDERS**, *but* WHICH BECAME THE **CHIEF CORNERSTONE**.

11 He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, *but* which became the chief corner *stone*.

11 He is 'the stone that was rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone.'

11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

- Peter quotes Ps 118:22; he is paraphrasing the psalm and apply it to Israel's religious leaders

- Peter argues that this teaching did not lead people away from God, but instead fulfilled something that God had predicted

- "...STONE" - Jesus Christ

- "...REJECTED" - Israel's leadership rejecting Jesus Christ as their Messiah (Cf. Matt 12:24)

- "...THE BUILDERS" - Israel's religious leadership

- "...CHIEF CORNERSTONE" - the resurrected and ascended Jesus Christ, who became the "cornerstone" of the Church (Cf. Eph 2:20)

- Thankfully, Ps 118:22 is followed by 118:26, which talks about Israel's future conversion and acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Messiah (Cf. Matt 23:39)

- Another demonstration of how Jesus' promise that the Holy Spirit would bring the exact right Scriptures to his mind at exactly the right time

- Peter knew God's Word, but he needed the Holy Spirit to bring to his remembrance specific and applicable Scriptures to his current situation. He didn't have time to prepare for what he was going to say, he depended completely on the Holy Spirit.

12 And there is salvation **in no one else**; for there is **no other name** under heaven that has been given among mankind by which we **must** be saved."

12 And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

12 There is no salvation by anyone else, for there is no other name under heaven given among people by which we must be saved."

12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

- "...in no one else...no other name" - the exclusivity of Christ (Cf. Matt 7:13-14; John 14:6; Gal 2:21; 1 Tim 2:5)

- "...must" - *dei*, absolutely essential; a requirement or necessity (Cf. Luke 4:43; 24:44)

— This verse is one of the best arguments for the exclusivity of Christ and against the doctrine of inclusivism, which believes that there are many ways to God (Cf. Gal 2:21)

(C) The Jewish leadership commands the apostles not to preach (4:13-22)

13 Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that **they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed**, and *began* to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

13 Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and *began* to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

13 Now when the Jewish leaders saw the boldness of Peter and John and found out that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and realized that they had been with Jesus.

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

- The first thing the Sanhedrin observes about Peter and John is their confidence (Cf. 2 Tim 1:7)

— When God asks us to do something and we're struck with fear, we know that feeling is not coming from God. When we're afraid of something, we have to learn the discipline of saying no to emotion and instead do what God has asked us to do.

— This is the same Peter who denied Jesus three times, and was intimidated by a young servant girl, just a few months earlier. But now as Peter is filled with the Spirit and dependent upon the Spirit, we see a courage and a boldness in him that we don't see in the Gospels. What happened is that something bigger than Peter is now controlling Peter.

- Notice that Luke is more focused on Peter here than on John, although both are involved. This is because one of Luke's main purposes for writing Acts was to

document the change from Peter to Paul during the early church period. See chart:
From Peter to Paul below.

- "...they were uneducated and untrained men" - the religious leaders said the same thing about Jesus (Cf. John 7:15)
- "untrained" - *idiōtēs*, where we get the English word "idiot"; it literally means "one's own" and describes someone who lives in their own world
- This verse cannot be used to justify a lack of Bible study or higher biblical education because Paul tells Timothy that he must "be diligent to present himself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth."
- "...they were amazed" - *thaumazō*, imperfect tense meaning that these religious leaders were amazed and continued to be amazed
- The third thing that these religious leaders observe about Peter and John is that their confidence and authoritative teaching was due to the fact that they had been with Jesus. The religious leaders connected the authority of their teaching not to their education and training, but because they walked with Jesus and spent considerable time with Him.
- This is a great example of Jesus' teaching in John 15 (the Vine & Branches discourse). Peter and John were simply abiding in Christ, and the fruit was supernaturally borne within them. Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, is producing fruit through Peter and John.

From Peter to Paul	
Peter	Paul
Heals a man lame from birth (3:1-11)	Heals a man lame from birth (14:8-18)
Heals by shadow (5:15-16)	Heals by handkerchief (19:11-12)
Success is a cause of jealousy (5:17)	Success is a cause of jealousy (13:45)
Confronts a sorcerer (8:9-24)	Confronts a sorcerer (13:6-11)
Raises Dorcas (9:36-41)	Raises Eutychus (20:9-12)
Jailed and miraculously freed (12:3-19)	Jailed and miraculously freed (16:25-34)

- 14 And seeing the man who had been healed **standing** with them, they had nothing to say in reply.
- 14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply.
- 14 And seeing the man who was healed standing with them, they could not say anything against them.

14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

- The powerful, educated rulers looked at Peter and John with contempt: they saw their great ability to handle Scripture, from men who had not attended the priests' schools
- "...standing" - the miracle was standing right there before their eyes; this was something the man couldn't do for 40 years, since birth
- If you'd been healed, wouldn't you be standing with them? They never deny the miracle. They never deny the resurrection. They don't challenge it: they can't deny the miracle as the guy is standing right there!

Several details in the stories of the apostles' arrests recall Jesus' teaching concerning the persecution that the disciples would experience:

- Luke 12:12 and Acts 4:8
- Luke 21:12 and Acts 4:3; 5:18
- Luke 21:13 and Acts 4:8-12; 5:29-32
- Luke 21:15 and Acts 4:13

15 But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they *began* to confer with one another,

15 But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they *began* to confer with one another,

15 So they ordered them to leave the Council and began to discuss the matter among themselves.

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

- Now the Sanhedrin didn't know what to do, so they sent Peter, John, and the lame man out so they could discuss together in private

16 saying, "What are we to do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

16 saying, "What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

16 They said, "What should we do with these men? For it's obvious to everybody living in Jerusalem that an unmistakable sign has been done by them, and we cannot deny it.

16 Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.

- The Sanhedrin had a problem: the miracle performed by Peter and John could not be denied, and news about it was spreading fast

— They are at a loss in what to do to stop news of this undeniable miracle from growing even more

17 But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let's warn them not to speak any longer to any person **in this name.**"

17 But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name."

17 But to keep it from spreading any further among the people, let us warn them never again to speak to anyone in this name."

17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

- They decided, in order to keep the news of this miracle as under wraps as possible, to warn Peter and John not to talk about Jesus any more

— Peter and John were evidently "super spreaders" and the Sanhedrin didn't want the truth about what happened to spread any further than it already had

- "...in this name" - the name of Jesus (Cf. v12), which Peter and John had been preaching

— The Sanhedrin refused to acknowledge or even say the name "Jesus" (Cf. Phil 2:9-11)

*One should note the contemptuous use of the phrase 'in his name,' for the religious leaders did not even want to say the name 'Yeshua' (Jesus). Rabbinic writings often refer to Yeshua as 'that man.' In Matt 27:63, the Pharisees called Jesus "that deceiver," as was typical in Pharisaic Judaism. When the rabbis had an issue with someone, they substituted an epithet, title, or derogatory term for that person's proper name. Even today, 'Yeshua' is still called 'Yeshu,' which in Hebrew forms a three-letter acronym meaning 'may his name and memory be blotted out.' He is also referred to as Hs-Ish Ha-Hu, meaning 'that man,' and Ha-Taloui, meaning 'the hanged one.' [Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 110].*

18 And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

18 And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

18 So they called Peter and John back in and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

- Now the Sanhedrin called Peter and John back into the room to give them their decision...

— The Sanhedrin put a "gag order" on Peter and John from preaching the name of Jesus

19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, make your *own* judgment;

19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;

19 But Peter and John answered them, "You must decide whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than God,

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

- A brilliant rhetorical response from Peter, where he basically says: Should us disciples follow what God says or follow what you say? You figure it out.

20 for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

20 for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

20 for we cannot stop talking about what we've seen and heard."

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

- Peter goes on to give them the answer to his rhetorical response...um, we're going to obey God, not you, thank you very much (Cf. 5:29)

— This command from the Sanhedrin is in clear conflict with Jesus' command in 1:8, which was to be witnesses for Him. If Peter and John stop speaking about Jesus, they will be in direct violation of this command.

— This now opens the door for civil disobedience. This is an example, of which there are many in the Bible, of authorities going too far in their edicts or laws, and directly contradict something that God has commanded believers to do (or not do).

— One of the most famous examples of civil disobedience in the Bible is in Dan 3, where Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are commanded to worship a statue of Nebuchadnezzar that he built for himself. The three friends disobeyed the command, and were thrown into the fiery furnace.

— In Dan 6, Daniel was commanded to stop praying, which he refused to do and was promptly thrown into the lion's den

Principles of Civil Disobedience

1. Clear conflict between the laws of man and the laws of God
 - Key word is "clear" as in this case with Daniel's three friends
2. Exhaustion of all creative legal remedies
 - Paul says, As much as possible, live in peace with all men
 - Civil disobedience is not a first resort but a last resort
3. A willingness to pay the consequences
 - The blood of Christ saves us from hell, but that doesn't save us from temporal consequences
4. Maintaining respect for civil authorities
 - As civil disobedience is taking place, there is still respect for the God-given institution of government

21 When they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened;

21 When they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened;

21 So they threatened Peter and John even more and then let them go. They couldn't find any way to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened,

21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.

- The Sanhedrin threatened them with future punishment if the disciples disobeyed their command, which of course they were going to do

— They were desperate to cancel this miracle, to keep the truth of it from being known, because it undermined their power and religious authority

- This was the first formal governmental wave of persecution against the church after Pentecost. Believers have not been physically injured yet (that's coming in Acts 5), but they have been given a "gag order" (v17-18) not to preach anymore in the name of Jesus.

22 for the man on whom this miracle of healing had been performed was more than forty years old.

22 for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

22 since the man on whom this sign of healing had been performed was more than 40 years old.

22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

- Reminds us of the miracle Jesus performed by healing a man who was 38-years-old and had been lame/paralyzed from birth (John 5:1-18)

- The Sanhedrin had to let Peter and John free for two reasons:

1. No law was broken, and the apostles did not claim anything that could be clearly disproved
2. 5,000 men, not counting women, were saved as a result of the healing of the lame man, and they all glorified God

God often accomplishes His redemptive purposes by working through the plots of those who oppose Him. He sovereignly allowed the Sanhedrin to oppose Peter and John, and that opposition strengthened the church.

(D) The church condemns Israel (4:23-28)

23 When they had been released, they went to their own *companions* and reported everything that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.

23 When they had been released, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.

23 After they were released, Peter and John went to their fellow believers and told them everything the high priests and the elders had said.

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

- Upon their release by the Sanhedrin, Peter and John went to their fellow believers and report to them what had happened

24 And when they heard *this*, they raised their voices to God **with one mind** and said, "Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND EVERYTHING THAT IS IN THEM,

24 And when they heard *this*, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in

them,

24 When they heard this, they all raised their voices to God and said, "Master, you made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them.

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

- They quoted from Ex 20:11, which is a reference to Creation...

- The first thing this group of believers did was pray (Cf. Dan 2:17-18). They didn't organize a counter protest, they didn't strategize on their next move to counter this "gag order."

- They come under persecution, and they immediately worship God as Creator. The idea is that because God created the heavens and the earth, the sea and all life in them, He is certainly powerful enough to help them through this persecution.

- "...with one mind" - they were in one accord; unified. Persecution has a tendency to reprioritize our lives and forget the unimportant details or hang-ups in our lives that so often fill our time and minds.

- "...Lord" - *despotés*, where we get the English term "despot"; used 10x in the NT: 4x of a human 'lord' (1 Tim 6:1,2; Titus 2:9; 1 Peter 2:18); 3x of God (Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24; Rev 6:10); 3x times of Jesus (2 Tim 2:21; 2 Peter 2:1; Jude 4).

- In this verse, the apostles used the word in the sense of a Master-slave relationship. They are recognizing God's authority as the One who created the heavens and the earth, the sea and all life that is in them. It is a recognition of God's power displayed in the act of creation.

- It is the counter of a *doulos* (bondservant or slave) that Paul and other believers refer to themselves as throughout the NT

- So the second thing that these believers pray is their recognition of their place when compared to God, that they are in a Master-slave relationship, and they are seeking Him as Master for help and guidance in this persecution

25 who by **the Holy Spirit, *through* the mouth of our father David** Your servant, said, 'WHY WERE THE NATIONS INSOLENT, AND THE PEOPLES PLOTTING IN VAIN?

25 who by the Holy Spirit, *through* the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'Why did the Gentiles rage, And the peoples devise futile things?

25 You said by the Holy Spirit through the voice of our ancestor, your servant David, 'Why do the unbelievers rage, and the people devise useless plots?

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

- "...the Holy Spirit, *through* the mouth of our father David" - a great example of the dual-authorship of Scripture. Who wrote the Psalms, the Holy Spirit or David? Both.
- Then they quoted Ps 2:1-2 in their prayer (v25b-26)...
- The context of Ps 2 is the Gentile nations invading Israel in the last days (Armageddon). Parallel passages include Zech 12:3; 14:2-3.

26 'THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.'

26 'The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.'

26 The kings of the earth take their stand, and rulers meet together against the Lord and against his Messiah.'

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

- The use of this quote, in context referring to the last days Gentile invasion of Jerusalem, and Peter's application of it to Israel's religious leadership in this prayer, shows how God viewed them during the time of the early church: no better than the Gentile nations, aligned with the Antichrist, who will attempt to eliminate Israel.

*The literal meaning of the verses in Psalm 2 refers to the Gentiles and the Gentile nations that will come against God and against the Messiah during the Campaign of Armageddon. But the application made here is to the Jewish leaders who have now spoken against God and His Anointed One. The psalmist declared that the Gentiles who in the future will rise up against God will include kings, but these Jewish leaders were not kings. Still, they gathered together against God and against His Anointed. That is the one point of similarity. Just as the Gentiles in Armageddon will come against the Lord and His Messiah, even so, these Jewish leaders have now come against the Lord and His Messiah. [Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 113-14].*

Zech 12:3: It will come about on that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will injure themselves severely. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.

Zech 14:2-3:

2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be taken, the houses plundered, the women raped, and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be eliminated from the city.

3 Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.

27 For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

27 For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

27 For in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate actually met together with unbelievers and the people of Israel to oppose your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed,

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

- The apostles here are explaining the human side of the crucifixion of Jesus

— Jesus was killed because a choice was made by human beings to kill Him (Cf. 2:23)

— The apostles are clear here to spread around blame for Jesus' death, including both Gentiles and Jews

— However, Jesus made it clear that the Jewish religious leaders bore most of the responsibility for Jesus death (Cf. John 19:11) because they had an OT to refer to in order to know who the Messiah was.

28 to do whatever Your hand and purpose predestined to occur.

28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

28 to carry out everything that your hand and will had predetermined to take place.

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

- Wait, I thought it was the Jews and Gentiles, along with Herod and Pilate, who killed Jesus? This verse says that they did the work, but God the Father had predestined the events to occur (Cf. 2:23).

— Only God could use the free will of His creatures to carry out His divine will

(E) The church's prayer for boldness (4:29-31)

29 And now, **Lord**, look at **their threats**, and grant *it* to Your **bond-servants** to speak Your word with all confidence,

29 And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence,

29 Lord, pay attention to their threats now, and allow your servants to speak your word boldly

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

- "...Lord...bond-servants" - *Kyrios...doulos*: note the Master-slave relationship (Cf. v24)

- "...their threats" - the "gag order" placed on them by the Sanhedrin to stop preaching the name of Jesus

— The prayer is for boldness; if the apostles were going under persecution, they would need boldness (2 Tim 1:7)

30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."

30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."

30 as you stretch out your hand to heal and to perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

- The apostle's third prayer request was for God to continue to heal and perform miracles through the apostles in order to authenticate their preaching

— The apostles and prophets were the foundation of the church (Eph 2:20), and certain signs and wonders often accompanied them (2 Cor 12:12)

— It is important to note that the one people who performed miracles throughout the book of Acts were the apostles or their delegates (those on whom the apostles laid hands). Believers in general were not performing signs and wonders.

- This prayer request is not a request that we should pray today. This prayer by the apostles, the foundation of the newly formed church, was before the NT was written.

— In addition, we should not interpret this verse as saying that we need to be doing Grade A miracles in our life in order to be used by God. Totally different time, situation and people involved here versus in our lives today.

What they were asking in the third prayer request is the continuous ability to perform these miracles of healing for the purpose of authenticating their message to their audience. Again, throughout the Book of Acts, the only ones who performed miracles were the apostles and their delegates, meaning those on whom the apostles laid hands. Believers in general were not performing signs and wonders, as people sometimes teach. [Fruchtenbaum, The Book of Acts, 114-15].

Prayer is not an escape from responsibility; it is our response to God's ability. True prayer energizes us for service and battle. [Wiersbe]

It might have been thought that when Peter and John returned with their story, a deep depression would have fallen on the Church, as they looked ahead to the troubles which were now bound to descend upon them. The one thing that never even struck them was to obey the Sanhedrin's command to speak no more. Into their minds at that moment there came certain great convictions and into their lives there came a tide of strength. [Barclay]

31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all **filled with the Holy Spirit** and *began* to **speak the word of God** with boldness.

31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness.

31 When they had prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken, and all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak messages from God boldly.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

- Immediate answer to prayer...

- "...filled with the Holy Spirit" - see notes on Eph 5:18

- "...speak the word of God" - notice that they were filled with the Holy Spirit to speak the Word of God. They were not filled with the Holy Spirit to speak out on their own opinion, their take on things, or anything else. They were given boldness to speak God's Word (Cf. Is 55:10-11).

— If you're not having the impact you want to have in your ministry, maybe it's because you're speaking your own word rather than God's Word

In Luke 22:39-46, just before Jesus' arrest and after Peter's assertion of readiness to suffer, Jesus urged the disciples to pray in order that they might not enter into temptation. Instead, the disciples fell asleep and were unprepared for the following crisis of events. In Acts 4:23-31 Jesus' followers are again confronted with the dangerous opposition of the Sanhedrin. Now they pray as they had previously been told to do. As a result they receive power from God to continue the mission despite the opposition. We have already noted that Peter's boldness before the Sanhedrin in Acts contrasts with his denial of Jesus in Luke. The church in Acts, finding power for witness in prayer, also contrasts with the disciples who slept instead of praying in Luke. These contrasts contribute to Luke's picture of a dramatic transformation in Jesus' followers.

(F) The unity of the first church (4:32-37)

32 And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one *of them* claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were **common property** to them.

32 And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one *of them* claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.

32 Now all the believers were one in heart and soul, and nobody called any of his possessions his own. Instead, they shared everything they owned.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

- This section (v32-37) describes what the church was doing right during that time, in contrast to what they were doing wrong (5:1-11)

— We can't rightly understand the story of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11) until we understand this passage

- "...common property" - they had a communal living situation going on, much like what is described in 2:44-45

33 And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant **grace** was upon them all.

33 And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.

33 With great power, the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was on them all,

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

- The resurrection of Jesus was a huge topic in the apostles' preaching in the early church

— Paul would later write that if Jesus did not resurrection from the dead, then our faith is in vain (1 Cor 15:14)

— This is why there is a huge emphasis on the resurrection of Christ in the early sermons of Acts (Cf. 2:24; 3:15)

— This was the reason why the apostles were always under persecution, because the Sadducees were in power and they did not believe in resurrection

- "...grace" - *charis*, unmerited favor

- They received God's abundant unmerited favor not because of their works, but because of their belief (v32)
- The only thing that gave them standing was the work that Jesus did for them on the cross, which they accepted and believed by faith

34 For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales

34 For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales

34 since none of them needed anything, because everyone who had land or houses would sell them and bring the money received for the things sold

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

- Every single need of these believers was met (Cf. Phil 4:19)

- The locals who had means liquidated their assets in order to fund for the needs of those visitors at Pentecost who were saved and stuck around to sit under the apostles' teaching

— This is how the needs were met, through the generosity of the local saved Jews with means

God's Provision

- Ex 16 (manna for millions for 40 years)
- 1 Kings 17:2-6 (ravens for Elijah to eat)
- Ps 37:25 (the righteous are never forsaken or begging for bread)
- Matt 6:25-34 (if God takes good care of animals and flowers, how much more will He take care of our needs)

35 and lay *them* at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each **to the extent that any had need.**

35 and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.

35 and lay it at the apostles' feet. Then it was distributed to anyone who needed it.

35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

- "...lay *them* at the apostles' feet" - the locals who liquidated their assets gave the proceeds to the apostles to be distributed as needs arose

— Some churches/pastors who use this verse to argue that all giving must first be to the local church, and the church will distribute the funds as they see fit. However, this verse says the money was given to the "apostles" not the "church" and we don't have apostles around today.

— Believers today should give where they are fed, and where the Word of God is preached. However, the church does not have the authority over the believer to tell them where to give. The apostles could do that in Acts, but churches don't have that authority today.

- "...to each to the extent that any had need" - used erroneously to argue that the Bible supports socialism/communism/Marxism, since money was collected centrally and distributed to the extent that each had need

— However, there are five reasons why this practice is simple charity based on the teaching of Jesus, not communism:

1. Giving was voluntary (Cf. 5:4)
2. The Greek tense of v34 indicates that varying portions were sold according to the conscience of the individuals; it was not a one-time act
3. The Jewish believers felt strongly that Jesus would return at any moment, within their lifetime
4. This practice was limited to the Jerusalem church; it did not spread to other churches
5. In the end, it proved to be a huge mistake because it caused the church in Jerusalem to become poor. After everything was sold and distributed, there was nothing left in the common pot. This poverty caused the church to need help from Gentile churches that did not follow the procedure for having all things in common (Cf. 11:27-30; 24:17; Rom 15:25-27; Gal 2:10).

— God blessed this "all things in common" living arrangement, but He didn't ordain it

A very important principle of biblical interpretation is to distinguish between what is descriptive and what is prescriptive. Historical accounts are descriptive, simply reporting what has occurred, but there is no command to continue the practice. Only when a specific command is given does it become prescriptive, an imperative (command) to follow. [Fruchtenbaum]

Wealthier believers sold their possessions, whether they were land holdings or houses, and all of this money was laid at the feet of the apostles. This was a clear recognition of apostolic authority. Nowadays, believers do not lay their financial possessions before the feet of others because there are no apostles anymore. The

*apostles had a unique authority, and in recognition of this, the saints brought them whatever they made from selling their possessions. The Greek tense allows for the translation to read, 'Selling, they brought from time to time as it was occasioned by reason of need.' In other words, the believers did not necessarily lay their entire profits at the apostles' feet all at once. They would sometimes do it bit by bit as needs arose. [Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 118-19].*

Sincerity or insincerity could motivate these works. An example of each type of motivation follows: Barnabas (v36-37); Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11).

36 Now **Joseph**, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called **Barnabas** by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),

36 Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),

36 One man, Joseph, a descendant of Levi and a native of Cyprus, who was named Barnabas by the apostles (the name means "a son of encouragement"),

36 And Josés, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

- An introduction to Barnabas...

— He is mentioned 24x in Acts and 5x elsewhere in the NT (1 Cor 9:6; Gal 2:1,9,13; Col 4:10)

- "...Joseph" - his given Jewish name; people called him by his Jewish nickname, Barnabas

- "...Barnabas" - means "Son of Encouragement"

— Jews often called a person "son of ____" to denote their personality characteristics; Barnabas likely got his because he was a constant positive influence on those around him, as numerous references in Acts demonstrate (9:27; 11:22-30; 13:1-14:28; 15:2-4,12,22,36-41; 1 Cor 9:6)

Additional facts about Barnabas can be gleaned from other passages of Scripture. His name appears 23x in Acts, and this is the first time he is mentioned.

Furthermore, he is mentioned 5x elsewhere in the NT: 1 Cor 9:6; Gal 2:1,9,13; Col 4:10. He was the cousin of John Mark, who was the author of the Gospel of Mark (Col 4:10). He was the man who persuaded the church of Jerusalem to receive Paul (9:27) when Paul returned to Jerusalem from Damascus claiming to have become a believer. Later, Barnabas was sent by the church of Jerusalem to investigate Gentile salvation in Antioch (11:19-24).

*He was fully of the Holy Spirit (11:24), which means he was a man who was controlled by the Holy Spirit. He brought Paul from Tarsus to Antioch to begin his ministry there (11:25-26). According to 14:12, he was of commanding appearance, as he was taken by the people of Lystra to be the god Jupiter or Zeus. Finally, he also had the gift of apostleship (14:14) and was of that second category of apostles, like Paul or James the half-brother of Jesus. The only prerequisite for this category of apostleship was that they had seen the resurrected Messiah. Apparently, Barnabas was among the five hundred who saw Jesus after His resurrection (1 Cor 15:6). [Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 120-21].*

37 owned a tract of land. So he sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

37 and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

37 sold a field that belonged to him, brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

- Levites, which Barnabas was, were not to own land (Num 18:20,23; Deut 10:9)

— However, Barnabas gets a pass on this because he was from the island of Cyprus

- So Barnabas sold his property, likely in Cyprus, and brought the money to the apostles for the benefit of the common good

*Whereas the Levites were not to hold land in Israel, they could own land elsewhere. Apparently Barnabas, being from the island of Cyprus, owned land there. It is also possible that his wife owned land in Israel and that they together sold it. [Dr. Stanley Toussaint, *The Book of Acts in The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 364].*

Barnabas persuaded the Church of Jerusalem to receive Paul (9:27), when Paul returned to Jerusalem from Damascus, claiming to be a believer. Later, Barnabas was sent by the Church of Jerusalem to investigate Gentile salvation in Antioch (11:19-24). He was full of the Holy Spirit (11:24), which means he was a man who was controlled by the Holy Spirit. Also, he was the one who brought Paul from Tarsus to Antioch to begin his ministry there (11:25-26). He was of commanding appearance, because he was taken by the people of Lystra to be the god Jupiter or Zeus (14:12). Finally, he also had the gift of apostleship (14:14), and was of the second category of apostles, like Paul and James, in that he had seen the resurrected Messiah. Apparently, Barnabas was among the five hundred who saw the resurrected Messiah (1 Cor 15:6).