

ACTS CHAPTER FOUR

Read vs. 4:1-12

1. Who was "grieved" by the preaching about the resurrection?

All of these people together made up the Sanhedrin. This was a council that could best be described as the supreme court of the Jewish nation. It had 71 members. Most of the 71 were Sadducees, who were the liberal theologians of the day. They rejected anything supernatural, especially resurrection from the dead. (See Acts 23:6-8) Mostly, they wanted to keep on good terms with the Romans. These unlearned Jewish fanatics who were talking about Jesus being resurrected and being the Messiah were making a real problem for them.

Also, notice why they were annoyed at them. In verse 2, they were annoyed because: 1. They were uneducated men that were standing in the temple teaching the people. 2. They were preaching about a resurrection, which they didn't believe in, but they couldn't disprove it because they had never been able to find the body of Jesus.

They have the men arrested, but because it is now too late for a trial they put them in prison overnight. The result of Peter's sermon was that 5000 men were saved by turning to Christ. Since Peter had been preaching in the temple, it is probably accurate to say that all of the converts were indeed men. There was a limited area where women could be in the temple.

2. Who was present at the hearing on the next day?

This is basically describing the Sanhedrin along with some relatives of the council. Before we go on to verse 8, notice the question that the council asks in verse 7. They ask by what power or by what name they have done this miracle. The words that they use are the same ones that would be used to describe sorcery or magic. They are asking what kind of trick this was. Also, the way they ask "have you done this?" is a scornful way to address them. It would be like asking "What are people like you doing in the temple anyway?"

3. Where did we last hear of Annas and Caiaphas? see John 18:12-14

4. How are verses 8 and 13 a fulfillment of Matt. 10:16-20

Jesus had promised to be with them and give them the words to say. They weren't even supposed to plan ahead of time how they would respond. In Acts chapter 4 we see that the scribes and Pharisees were astonished at how well Peter and John spoke. They knew that they were "uneducated" and yet their speech was very impressive.

5. In vs. 9-12, Peter, speaking by the Holy Spirit, does a masterful job of turning the conversation in the direction he wants it to go. He changes the conversation from a

discussion of the _____ to their need of _____.

Notice in verse 11 where Peter quotes from Psalm 118:22 about the stone that the builders rejected becoming the head of the corner. The stones for the temple were chiseled and shaped away from the building site so there wouldn't be any noise of hammering going on at the sacred area. Imagine the builders picking up stone after stone and fitting it into place. Then they come to one that is such an odd shape that they are sure it is a mistake. They toss it aside so as not to trip over it. But then, they get to the top of the corner where a very special rock is needed to fill the space on this prominent corner and discover that the stone they had tossed aside is exactly what they need.

Peter is saying that Jesus is like the rock that was tossed aside. They didn't recognize Him as the one that they exactly needed. They've just been tripping over Him and trying to get Him out of the way. Look up Romans 9:30-33 where Paul says that the Jews are still stumbling over Jesus, the Rock. Also notice in I Peter 2:2-8 where Peter says that we are now living stones.

6. Paraphrase vs. 12 in your own words. Compare I Tim 2:5.

Read vs. 4:13-22

7. What "official position" did the council take concerning the miracle?

Here we find the council in a difficult position. He couldn't deny the miracle, but they won't acknowledge it either. Notice in verse 14 who came to the trial. The healed man came in defense of his mentors. He was walking proof that a miracle had been done. Do people today reject Christ because they don't have the facts or is it the condition of their hearts?

Compare John 7:14-17 where Jesus was also described as unlearned. Consider I Cor. 1:27 and Matt. 11:25 also.

8. In defense, Peter and John said they were only speaking the things _____

Here is an example of one of the very few times that we should not obey our government. From verse 19, what guideline could we use? (If the words of our government directly contradict the commandments of God, Christians must choose to obey God. God had told Peter to preach the gospel and that's what he was going to do!)

Christians need to be careful to apply this principle only when it is truly appropriate. God's word clearly teaches that we are to be in submission to government authorities. See Romans 13:1-3, I Tim. 2:1-3 and I Peter 2:13-15. We are often tempted to ignore the commandments of submission when we disagree with a law or a ruling. We would like to apply this example in Acts whenever our standards of righteousness are violated. Having a disrespectful, outspoken attitude toward authority is never pleasing to the Lord. We must search our hearts and our Bibles. It is only when we are being told to do something in

direct contrast to the Word of God that we should take a stand against those whom God has put in authority over us. Christ has left us an example of having a submissive spirit. Consider Phil. 2:1-18.

9. *What was the council forced to do in the end? vs. 21*

The men had not committed any crime and they had nothing to punish them for. There were at least 5000 men who were present, all giving glory to God. They might have had violence from the crowd if they had tried to punish the men right then.

Read vs. 4:23-31

10. *What was the first thing the apostles did after being released?*

11. *How did the believers react to the news from Peter and John*

Part of their prayer in verses 25 & 26 is a quote from Psalm 2. David wrote hundreds of years before the birth of Christ about how the world would react to Jesus' coming. The Holy Spirit had obviously opened the eyes of these believers to understand this prophecy from the Psalms.

Notice also, in verse 30, they asked specifically for God to continue with the signs and wonders while they spread the word. It gave authenticity to the words they spoke.

In verse 31, even though they hadn't prayed for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit, they received it! The result was that they preached the word with boldness, which is what they requested in verse 29. This is not another example of tongues. The Holy Spirit was in their presence and they preached the word. There was no need for a sign for them. There was no need for God to prove authentication, and there was no need for the sign of tongues. Speaking in tongues was a sign for the Jewish nation during this time of transition in the book of Acts. There is no need for this sign in Gentile churches today either.

Read vs. 4:32-37

12. *From vs. 33, what seems to have been the main message of the apostles' preaching?*

It has been so long ago and we have heard it said so many times that we lose the impact of it, but our whole salvation rests on the fact that Jesus came back from the grave. Since He Himself conquered death, we can count on Him to be able to rescue us from death also.

13. *Describe the Christian community at this point as you understand it.*

Let's pause to look backward for a moment. Who was ultimately behind the arrest of Peter and John? Satan tried to thwart the gospel, but what happened instead? They grew bolder and preached all the more powerfully. Satan wasn't able to hurt them from the outside, so in the next chapter we see him move right inside the church with a different strategy. This

is still one of his favorite tactics. When the enemy is outside the church, we recognize him as the enemy, but when Satan uses someone in the church that we know and worship with, that gets really difficult. That's what we'll see in the next chapter and we'll also see God put a quick stop to it.

14. *Is the sharing and having all things in common an example of communism? Why or why not?*

Points to consider:

Christianity

*Spiritual motivation
Believers
To glorify God
Voluntary giving*

Communism

*Material motivation
Atheists
To deny God
Compulsory giving*