

K.E.Y. Bible Study

Description: K.E.Y. Bible Study introduces the essential biblical narratives, concepts, and themes, and teaches the student how to apply the message of the Bible to daily living. Each teaching session is self-contained, which allows participants to join in the study at any time during the five years.

Purpose: To teach the most significant events, passages, and doctrines of the Bible in a manner and using methods which encourages and empowers the student to:

Keep the faith that we have received

Be Equipped to serve the Body of Christ

Become Yoked, or connect, with others for the purpose of ministry

Using the Bad for the Good So People Can Experience the Best September 23, 2015 Acts 4:1-31

General Background

The transformation of the apostles and early followers by the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ was remarkable. In this chapter, Luke recounted how former fishermen from Galilee stood with boldness before the powerful Jewish assembly, the Sanhedrin. News of the healing of the crippled beggar in Acts 3 had reached these Jewish leaders and reports had come that this had been done in the name of Jesus. This body was the one that had condemned Jesus to be executed and turned Him over to the Romans to be crucified. They considered the pesky business of this insurrectionist Jesus to be over. Now, the followers of Jesus were performing miracles and preaching the gospel message that Jesus had died, was buried, was gloriously raised from the dead, and had been seen by the disciples. They had to get to the bottom to this and silence this foolishness.

The apostles knew full well the consequences of crossing this assembly. Yet, Peter and John spoke clearly and the body of believers in Jerusalem grew in number and in the power of the Holy Spirit. The apostles knew that Jesus was their resurrected Lord and nothing or no one could silence this message.

Although we do not know the exact date of the events in Acts 4, it was most likely relatively soon after the Day of Pentecost, approximately 30 A.D.

What Happened

Acts 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.*

- Following the healing of the lame man, Peter and John began to preach to the onlookers that Jesus had been resurrected and that they must repent and turn to Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. Word of these events reached the Temple and in turn was passed up to higher authorities that now came to investigate this matter. The wording expressed that they barged up suddenly and with the assertiveness of superior authority.
- This force was composed of **priests** who were on Temple duty that day and the ones to whom the reports had probably first come. The **captain of the temple guard** was the head of the Levitical "police force." The **Sadducees** were a Jewish sect that rejected much of the oral traditions taught by the popular schools of the day and claimed that this life was

K.E.Y. Bible Study

all there was and that one's soul died with the body. They did not believe in a resurrection, nor were there angels or spirits. They were members of the Sanhedrin and wielded great influence due to their wealth and social position. The family of the high priests belonged to this group.

Acts 4:2: *They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.*

- Various translations say “**greatly disturbed**”, “thoroughly vexed”, “being grieved”, “provoked” and carry the idea of being indignant and worked up.
- **In Jesus** means “in connection with Jesus” the apostles were teaching the resurrection of the dead. To merely express a belief that Jesus had been resurrected was one thing, but now to proclaim that we too would experience a resurrection crossed the line with the Sadducees. The healing of the lame man evidenced the living power of Jesus.
- **Resurrection of the dead** – an impossible outcome. Death was death.... The end! (see Jesus and the conflict with the Sadducees in Mark 12:18-27)

Acts 4:3: *They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day.*

- **They seized** means to manhandle, to strong-arm. They threw their hands on them.
- Since it was late in the day, Peter and John were imprisoned in a location not the same as the one we will see in Acts 5:18. Being late, it would have been illegal to call the full Sanhedrin into session. They had just recently, at the trial of Jesus, flagrantly violated that code.

Acts 4:4: *But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.*

- Too late! Many heard and believed. They heard the **message** – the basic doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus. *Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. Rom. 10:17*
- **and the number of men grew to about five thousand** – the entire number of male believers in Jerusalem had grown from 3,000 (2:41) to now 5,000. The number of women and children is not included.

Acts 4:5-6: *The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family.*

- Usually only two of the three constituent groups that make up the Sanhedrin are mentioned. The naming of all three is impressive. This was serious business
- Also the **high priest** and his **family** were present. These were the real leaders of the Sanhedrin and all of them were Sadducees and foes of any teaching about Jesus having been raised from the dead. The verdict on Peter and John was in before the trial began.

Acts 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?"*

- **this** – refers back to the healing of the lame man. The fact that something good had been done for this man was inconsequential. In fact, the tone is one of dismissal and scorn (this *thing*).

K.E.Y. Bible Study

- **What power or what name** - literally “*Connected to what power? Connected to what name?*” Acts 4:2 tells us that they already knew the answer to these questions. These were trick questions to entrap Peter and John with intent of bringing the Pharisees into friendly agreement with the Sadducees on this matter.

Acts 4:8-12: *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, 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. He is "'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone'. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*

- **Filled with the Holy Spirit** – a fulfillment of Jesus’ words in Matt 10:19-20 “*But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*”
- **Rulers and elders of the people** – Peter opened in a respectful way
- Peter gave a direct answer to the disdainful “*this thing*” question presented in v. 7. This “*thing*” as they called it was an **act of kindness**.
- **then know this** – No backing down. Peter boldly spoke. They wanted to know the name by which this was done and Peter triumphantly responded
- **by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth** – Although our translations say “by” or “in”, the idea is “connected” to Jesus. It is Jesus, working through Peter, who accomplished this miracle. Name means more than authority, it means at the revelation of God through Jesus Christ.
- **whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead** – God nullified what the Sanhedrin had done.
- **this man stands before you healed** – Exhibit “A” as to the power of Jesus still at work.
- **He is "'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone'.** Peter called to their mind the words that they heard directly from the lips of Jesus when He quoted from Ps 118:22 in Matt 21:42-45 *Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."* When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. Peter had no concern for his or John’s safety at this point; he preached Jesus to the glory of the Father! They had rejected Jesus, but He was now the supreme stone. A Spiritual stone for a better temple. (1 Peter 2:4-10)
- **Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.** It is by connection with Jesus and no other that we have salvation. A foundational verse! Know it and live it! Absoluteness in the fact that it is only in the revelation of God through Jesus Christ that our hope of salvation is found. No other. Salvation means wholeness.

Acts 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.*

K.E.Y. Bible Study

- Two things stood out: How bold they were and how uneducated they were.
- **they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.** The perception of the Sanhedrin: They ARE uneducated bumpkins, but they WERE with Jesus. How is it that they speak this way? Something (or Someone!) made a difference in their life.

Acts 4:14-15: *But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together.*

- Try as they may the math was not adding up to an answer that they liked, so they had to put their heads together and come up with a satisfactory solution,

Acts 4:16-17: *"What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it. But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name."*

- **Outstanding miracle?** I thought they had just called it "this thing." They could not deny the veracity of Exhibit "A": the formerly crippled man.
- Like a football team in a huddle, they figured that they had come up with the perfect play: **But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name."**

Acts 4:18: *Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.*

- **commanded them** – An order given by this Jewish Supreme Court allowed for no exceptions. Their thinking: Silence the disciples and this foolishness would come to an end.

Acts 4:19-20: *But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."*

- Peter and John appealed to a higher court.
- **right in God's sight-** **right**= just or righteous; **God's sight**= the one who pronounces what is in harmony with His righteousness. The Divine Judge alone decides what is just and the Sanhedrin knew that His judgment was true.
- **For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."** *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 1 John 1:1-3*

Acts 4:21-22: *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. For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.*

- With a living miracle standing before them and the crowd of people against them, the Sanhedrin could do nothing but release Peter and John

K.E.Y. Bible Study

Acts 4:23-30: *On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. 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?
The kings of the earth take their stand
and the rulers gather together
against the Lord
and against his Anointed One.*

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. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

- **went back to their own people** There is a question as to whom this is referring. Most consider this to be the apostles and perhaps a few more and not a gathering of the more than 5,000 believers that were now in Jerusalem.
- **they raised their voices together in prayer to God** – Here we see the reaction to these early Christians to the threat of danger. They united in prayer. Not that the danger would be removed, but for boldness to share the gospel message. From this point on they would be in violation of a direct command from the Sanhedrin
- The prayer included the language of Psalm 2 and showed that Herod, Pilate and others were carrying out God's appointed counsel under His sovereign guidance. The scheme of man has continually been to abolish the message of the gospel, but to no avail.

Acts 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.*

- **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly** - The apostles had already received the Spirit (chapter 2), here is an instance where God gave affirmation that their prayer had been heard and answered.

What Does It Mean and How Can I Apply It?

Throughout biblical history and the history of Christianity, believers have been called on to make courageous stands for their faith. Today, as believers in Jesus, one need not need look any further than to the media and entertainment to know that we stand counterculture. But this may not necessarily be a bad thing. Christianity was birthed on the wrong side of culture. Many of our failures have come when we sided with the prevailing culture of the day. Our "strangeness" comes in what identifies us most: the gospel. **The eyes of the early believers were not fixed on that which made them comfortable, popular, safe, but on the singular task of bringing glory to God through Jesus Christ. May the church continue in that task.**