

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon June 12, 2022
Acts 4: 1 – 4 “Opposite Responses to Preaching”

11 Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed. 12 So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. 14 But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. 16 And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. 17 Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. 22 For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' 24 Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. 25 You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' 26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

1 Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

5 And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, 6 as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 "If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 "let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 "This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

- I. Introduction
 - a. Henry “We have here the interests of the kingdom of heaven successfully carried on, and the powers of darkness appearing against them to put a stop to them. Let Christ’s servants be ever so resolute, Satan’s agents will be spiteful; and therefore, let Satan’s agents be ever so spiteful, Christ’s servants ought to be resolute.”¹
 - b. Today’s sermon: Acts 4: 1 – 4 “Opposite Responses to Preaching”
 - i. Setting: As they spoke to the people v1
 - ii. Greatly Disturbed
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 - 2. Why: Preaching in Jesus the Resurrection v2
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 - 1. Who: Many who heard the Word v4
 - 2. Why: Heard the Word v4
 - 3. What: Identified with the Church v4
 - iv. Questions to know love and obey God
- II. Setting: As they spoke to the people v1
 - a. 1 “Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them,”
 - b. So, Peter has finished his 2nd sermon at the temple in Jerusalem, likely in the spring of AD30, shortly after the Feast of Pentecost where God has poured out His Holy Spirit upon His Church. Peter’s sermon occurred as a response to the excitement about God healing a lame man who, after being healed, stood, leaped with joy and walked into the temple with Peter and John. Peter has proclaimed Jesus as the prophesied Messiah, the Holy One and Just, the Prince of Life, and witnesses to Jesus Christ as crucified, resurrected, ascended and reigning from heaven. Once again, Peter has indicted the Men of Israel with denying and killing Christ, and he has called them to repent, be converted and have their sins blotted out so that times of refreshing may come to them from before the Father’s Face, and so that the times of the restoration of all things may come forth in and through Israel to all the families of the earth.
 - c. After completing his sermon, Peter remains with John in the temple speaking to the people. This post-sermon scene shows that faith has entered the hearers—the people are believing in Jesus as their Messiah, and they are repenting of their sins and turning to Him, to follow Him. We can only speculate on the content of these conversations, but given the excitement before the sermon and the added new believers after the sermon, they were likely discussing our Lord, rejoicing in His Person, Life, Death, Resurrection and Reign, and discussing a new life devoted to following Him. And, this post-sermon excitement and apparent conversions likely served as the motivation for the Jewish religious leaders to

¹ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2075.

attack. They could put up with one major episode (Acts 2), but they will not tolerate the 2nd.

III. Greatly Disturbed

a. Greatly Disturbed

i. V2 “being greatly disturbed” = διαπονέομαι

1. “to be troubled, displeased, offended, pained, to be worked up”
2. Acts 16:18 “Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. 17 This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, “These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.” 18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, **greatly annoyed**, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And he came out that very hour.

b. Who: Jewish Religious Leaders v1

i. 1 “Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them,”

1. The Jewish leaders make their move at this time, and their public action displays the full force of Jewish leadership: priests, captain of the temple, and the Sadducees.
 - a. “Peter’s declarations of Jesus and God’s plan finally trigger a reaction from the officials of Judaism at the temple. As the speech is in progress, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, who run the temple, show up. Literally, “they set upon” (ἐπέστησαν, *epēstēsān*) the apostles. The remark suggests a confrontation as they seek to assert their leadership. Johnson (1992: 76) notes that Luke often uses the verb “to set/come upon” for sudden appearances (Luke 2:9, 38; 4:39; 21:34; Acts 4:1–3; 6:12; 10:17; 11:11; 12:7; 22:13).”²
- ii. Priests: “one who offers sacrifices and in general is busied with sacred rites” – those of Aaron’s lineage who oversaw the required sacrifices and activities of the Jewish temple
 1. “The “priests” (οἱ ἱερεῖς) are the officials who are responsible for the temple, particularly for the sacrifices, for other rituals at the traditional festivals, and matters such as the temple tax. They are mentioned here for the first time in Acts. In 6:7 Luke reports that

² Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 186.

many priests had come to faith in Jesus as the Messiah (14:13 mentions the priest of Zeus at Lystra).”³

- iii. Captain of the Temple: in charge of Temple security
 1. “The reference to the captain is one of two references in Acts (4:1–3; 5:26), as usually the Greek term refers to magistrates or officials in a city ... This captain ... was in charge of the temple police ... He was a member of the high-priestly family and the number two man at the temple, an elite position among the Levites who made up the temple guard ... He officiated over the daily whole offering and was captain of the temple police, whose role at the temple was to keep the peace and not allow any messianic expectations that Rome would dislike.”⁴
 - iv. Sadducees: A sect of Judaism at that time, along with Pharisees and Essenes. Wealthy and powerful group. They ran the show in terms of actual power within Judaism of that time, with some meaningful resistance from the Pharisees within ruling councils. We will see this rivalry between the Sadducees and the Pharisees later in Acts.
 1. “The Sadducees were one of the key sects of Judaism. They claimed that their roots went back to Zadok, high priest under Solomon ... and even further back to Zadok, elder son of Aaron... Their name is related to the Hebrew term for “righteousness.” From this aristocratic group (of mostly lay nobility) came the high priest. They also were very materialistic in their worldview, cooperative with Rome to maintain their status, and less devoted to detailed questions about the law and piety than the Pharisees. Such political concerns are certainly important to them here ... They denied the resurrection (Luke 20:27–40; Acts 23:6–10), believing that the soul died with the body, and emphasized the Torah within the OT. They rejected the oral law and the traditions that other sects held. The Sadducees appear occasionally in Acts (4:1–3; 5:17–18; 23:6–8 [3x]; five of the fourteen NT references are in Acts). They react in part because in their view the apostles’ teaching could be politically, socially, and religiously destabilizing to their relatively good relationship with Rome.”⁵
- c. Why: Preaching in Jesus the Resurrection v2

³ Eckhard J. Schnabel, [Acts](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 4:1.

⁴ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 186.

⁵ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 186.

- i. 2 “being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”
 - ii. The Jewish religious leaders were greatly disturbed because of the teaching and the preaching of Peter and John: **“they** taught the people and preached.”
 - iii. The specific objection is that the teaching and the preaching included the claim that Jesus Christ had been resurrected from the dead. The Sadducees vehemently denied the resurrection from the dead. This was one of their major theological beliefs.
 - 1. “Peter proclaims the resurrection of the dead (τὴν ἀνάστασιν τῆν ἐκ νεκρῶν). This annoys the Sadducees, who deny a future resurrection of the body. Moreover, Peter argues more specifically that Jesus’ resurrection from the dead (ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ) was an event which took place recently.”⁶
 - iv. Also, the Jewish religious leaders objected to the simple fact that Peter and John were teaching the people in the temple.
 - 1. “The followers of Jesus are teaching the people (διδάσκειν ... τὸν λαόν) in Solomon’s Portico complex without authorization, which annoys the priests who are responsible for the affairs of the temple.”⁷
- d. Fruit: Laid Hands on them v1,3
- i. Back to v1: 1 “Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them,”
 - 1. “Came upon them” – approached them
 - 2. “The verb translated as “approach” (ἐπίστημι) implies here hostile intent. The use of the verb to describe the interruption of Peter and John speaking to the crowds underscores (1) the public nature of the intervention of the Jewish officials, (2) the contrast between the people who listen to Peter and John as they describe the nature of salvation in the messianic days which have arrived, and the Jewish authorities who stood from afar and are only now approaching, with hostile intentions, and (3) the parallel to Jesus’ teaching the people in the temple, who was similarly interrupted (Luke 20:1).”⁸
 - ii. 3 “And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.”

⁶ Eckhard J. Schnabel, [Acts](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 4:2.

⁷ Eckhard J. Schnabel, [Acts](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 4:2.

⁸ Eckhard J. Schnabel, [Acts](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 4:1.

1. Laid hands on them: Peter and John are formally arrested by the Jewish leaders who have authority to take them and hold them.
 - a. “The Jewish leaders arrest Peter and John. The Greek phrase ... means to lay hands on someone (Acts 5:18; 12:1; 21:27; Mark 14:46; Luke 20:19; 21:12 [Jesus predicts this]; Pesch 1986a: 164). It refers here to seizing and arresting them.”⁹
 2. “Put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening”: Peter and John are placed in prison until the next morning when they will be examined and judged by “their rulers, elders, and scribes, as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest [who] were gathered together at Jerusalem.” (4:5,6)
 3. The Jewish leaders’ ruling the next day: “So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.” (4:18)
- iii. So, the Jewish leaders reveal their hearts of unbelief by being greatly disturbed, much annoyed, with Peter and John, especially because they taught in the Temple without authorization, and most especially because they preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. This offended the Sadducees theology and threatened their stable and profitable and powerful relationship with Rome. So, they used their power to try and put a stop to the message about Jesus. They commanded that the Gospel message cease, in direct disobedience to their Messiah’s commandment to spread the Gospel of the Kingdom to the entire world.

IV. Believed

- a. Believed
 - i. V4 “believed” = πιστεύω → “to trust in Jesus or God as able to aid either in obtaining or in doing something: saving faith”
- b. Who: Many who heard the Word v4
 - i. 4 “However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”
 - ii. Not everyone who heard the Word believed, as we have seen already with the unbelieving, annoyed Jewish leaders. But, “many” did believe. What did they believe? Let’s recall Peter’s sermon about Jesus:
 1. “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, ***glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. 14 But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and***

⁹ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 187.

*asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. 16 And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. 17 Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 **But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,** so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. 20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 **whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things,** which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.”*

2. So, many who heard these things about Jesus believed. They believe that God had glorified Jesus by healing the lame man. They believe that faith in Jesus healed the man. They believe it was Christ’s power that healed the man. They believe they helped kill their Messiah, choosing a murderer over Jesus. They believe Jesus is the Prince (Author) of Life, the Holy One and Just, and they believe Jesus was crucified and resurrected from the dead and received in heaven until the restoration of all things. They believe Jesus is their Savior Who died upon the cross for their sins, and they believe Jesus is their Lord Who now reigns over all things and Who Is conquering His enemies.

c. Why: Heard the Word v4

- i. V4 “Heard the Word” – Why did they believe? Because they not only “heard the word”, but they had inner ears to hear the Word.
 1. Luke 8:8 “When He had said these things He cried, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!””
 2. Most everyone has the physical sense of hearing that functions adequately. But, not everyone has functioning spiritual ears. Why not?
 - a. Ephesians 2:1-10 “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us

alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in
the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to
come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in
His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you
have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves;
it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should
boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ
Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand
that we should walk in them.”

3. It is by God’s grace that we are saved. We believe because God gives us faith.

d. Fruit: Identified with the Church v4

i. “and the number of them men came to be about five thousand”

ii. Those who repented, turned from their sins and believed in Jesus Christ came forward to the apostles and were identified with the Church. They wanted to be counted amongst those who believe in Christ. As we saw in chapter 2, this would have also included water baptism for these men and their families. Not only do these men take on the blessings of the Church, but also their families. And, their families also take on the risks and persecutions.

1. “38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

V. Questions to know, love and obey God