



Acts 4:5-12 | Session 11 | Encircled by the Enemy

Apostles, Peter and John, having gone up together to the temple at the hour of prayer (Acts 3:1), heal a man who had been lame from his mother's womb. A large crowd of several thousand gathers as Peter exhorts them to "Repent" for their part in crucifying their Messiah. Although Peter and John were arrested by the temple guards and put into prison until morning, the result of Peter's preaching was that about five thousand Jews believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

Acts 4:5-12 | Persecution Begins

Verse 5,6—

The council of **rulers, and elders, and scribes**, including **Annas the high priest...Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander...kindred...gathered together**. There is no clear agreement as to who all of these groups and individuals were, but it is clear these men made up the council called the Sanhedrin. These same leaders are identified in Luke 22:66 as "their council." A good rule of interpretation is to *use the clear passage to interpret the not so clear passage*. Additionally, as we read further down in Acts 4, we come to verse 15, where the context explicitly identifies them as the council. This council, called the *Sanhedrin*, or in Greek *Sunedrion*: *sun=together* and *hedra=seat*, therefore "sit together." It was the *court of justice*, like a *senate*. Since Israel was not a sovereign nation, Rome ruled through local aristocracies, in this case the Sanhedrin. The wealthiest elite were elevated to these positions of power, and in this case the passage says the **kindred gathered together**. That is, **Annas, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander** were likely related to each other. And, while **Annas** is referred to by Luke as **the high priest**, **Caiaphas** is also called the high priest in other passages. Some say this is a contradiction, but both were of the *high priestly family* and even when not ruling in that position, still carried the title (Luke 3:2). The high priest's role in the Sanhedrin was to break a tie.

Tradition states that there were 71 members of the Sanhedrin. These Sanhedrin members probably consisted of the Jerusalem aristocracy and wealthy landowners in the vicinity and the group's membership was probably self-selecting. Corruption was perpetuated. The point in verses 5 and 6 is that what is happening at the temple is such a big deal that apparently the entire council of the Sanhedrin are meeting in order to question Peter and John.

These were real events and real people. As a side note, the bones of Caiaphas were discovered in 1990.

Verse 7—

Set them in the midst. Tradition also states that the Sanhedrin sat in a semicircle. You can picture Peter and John standing before this large council with all eyes on them. We can only speculate as to what Peter and John might have been talking and praying about that night in prison and now as they stand before the council: Jesus warned them of coming persecution, (Matthew 24:9, Luke 21:16, John 16:1). As they are led to the front of the chamber, the first question the council wants answered is, **By what power, or by what name, have ye done this** (that is, healing of the man born lame). As the question is put to them, did they think back to the time of Jesus's arrest when he was asked "By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority? Matthew 21:24.

By what power, or by what name have ye done this? It is a great leading question! And it is a question that allows Peter and John to speak publicly of the power of Jesus Christ. The Sanhedrin's point is that *they* were the only ones with the power (or authority). What the apostles have done in healing the man is to challenge the priestly authorities. Corrupt leaders do not want to lose power or have their power challenged!

Verse 8—



This is the first confronting of the enemy the apostles will face. Peter doesn't shy away from the question. With boldness he is ready to give an answer (1 Peter 3:15) through the power of the Holy Ghost. He begins in a courteous manner, **Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel**. By verse 10 he is going to let loose.

Filled with the Holy Ghost. Jesus prophesied that when this time came, the apostles would know what to say (See Luke 12:11-12). How is one **filled with the Holy Ghost**? For the apostles, He came upon them as promised. But what about for us? I'm not sure Scripture tells us exactly. There are some hints: Ephesians 5: 18-21; 6:12-17; 18-20.

Verse 9—

They are **being examined** (standing trial) for doing **a good deed** and making him **whole**. In fact, what Peter was doing was pointing out that they had not committed any crime. Peter and John had done a good thing and were put in jail for it. As Peter points this out, it puts the leaders in a bad light.

Verse 10—

Be it known unto you all... This is a rhetorical device to prepare the listener for a shocking statement. We might say *You might want to sit down before I tell you...* Let me tell you by what name, **the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth**, and by the way, he is the one **whom ye crucified**, remember him? And by what power? He is also the one **whom God raised from the dead**. The power of Jesus Christ of Nazareth who conquered death. The Jesus who is "Lord both of the dead and living" (Romans 14:9). He is the reason **this man is able to stand here before you whole**.

That is the answer to their question, but Peter doesn't stop there.

Verse 11—

This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders. He cites Psalm 118:22, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." This Psalm is a prophetic one about the future salvation of the Jewish nation that will occur when Messiah returns to set up his Kingdom. It will be a day of rejoicing! "This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). In quoting this passage, Peter is making the claim that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, these **builders** (All those mentioned in Acts 4:5,6) are the ones who rejected the Messiah, as prophesied. **Head of the corner**, that is, the capstone which is the final stone fitted into place to hold the others in place. Those in the first century would have understood this imagery completely.

Verse 12—

Continuing with the imagery put forth in Psalm 118, Peter proclaims, **Neither is there salvation in any other**. Peter's gospel is of a future and physical salvation—the kingdom gospel. Their salvation would come if they repented of their sins and said "blessed is he that cometh in the name of the LORD" (Luke 13:35)

For us in the body of Christ and anyone simply believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; we now have individual and immediate salvation by grace through faith.

Thus far in the book of Acts we have yet to find salvation by grace through faith. That is because it had not yet been revealed. It will come as the transition between the kingdom gospel and the individual gospel progresses. As the nation of Israel fades, and the Body of Christ, made up of neither Jew nor Gentile appears.

