

Acts 4:1-22, Reactions to the Sermon
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Overview

1. Recall the overall shape of the story in Acts 3-4, illustrating how when believers devote themselves to prayer, the Lord adds to their number:
 - a) 3:1-11, Healing of the lame man as Peter and John go to prayer.
 - b) 3:12-26, Peter's sermon.
 - c) 4:1-22, Reactions to the sermon.
 - d) 4:23-31, The church's response (later).
2. This week: Reactions to the sermon.
 - a) 1-4, a brief hinge paragraph contrasting the popular response with the official reaction from the temple hierarchy.
 - b) 5-22, Peter and John before the Sanhedrin.
3. Lesson: Much like Jer. 26.
 - a) Even when the HS works through our ministry (perhaps *especially* when his work is evident), we can expect opposition.
 - b) This opposition will be most intense from the representatives of institutional religion.
 - c) We'll see several notes throughout the chapter that emphasize the danger of an organized and professional clergy, and the true basis of leaders and teachers among God's people.

A. 1-4, The Twofold Reaction

Two groups of people were listening. One, the lay people, responded with enthusiasm. The other, the temple rulers, were very upset.

1. 1-3, Official

Note two things that upset them:

- a) They taught the people. Professional clergy feel threatened when those without the "proper qualifications" do their job. They are afraid (and with good reason!) that folk might come to realize there is no need for a professional class!
- b) They proclaimed the resurrection. The temple hierarchy was dominated by Sadducees, who deny the resurrection. Not only were these teachers unlicensed, but they were spreading extreme and "erroneous" doctrines!

The arrest is in keeping with the Lord's prediction in Mark 13:9, that the disciples would be called before councils. But he also promised that God would give them what they should say in those circumstances, and the sequel shows that this promise was kept as well.

2. 4, Popular

Compare the number given with 2:41.

- a) There, the number saved on the day of Pentecost is given as 3000.
- b) Here, after the sermon of Acts 4, the total number of *males* has become (*ginomai*, indicating the cumulative count) about 5000. If only half of those saved at Pentecost were women, this suggests that even more were saved as a result of Acts 3 than in Acts 2!
- c) Thus the episode works out the summary of 2:42. As Peter and John devote themselves to prayer and doctrine, the Lord has greatly added to their numbers.

B. 5-22, The Trial

We have a transcript of the session, practically its minutes, beginning with attendance and then continuing with a record of the interchange between the apostles and the council.

- 1. 5-6 gives the setting. This is a session of the Great Sanhedrin (the word itself is used in v.15).
 - a) Its general composition makes it a fit representative of the entire nation:
 - 1) "rulers," members of the high priestly family.
 - 2) "elders," lay representatives of the people. Not levitical.
 - 3) "scribes," legal experts.
 - b) Luke goes on to mention several specific participants from among the "rulers." We recognize Annas and Caiaphas, who barely two months before have in this same council condemned the Lord to die. What irony! They thought they had settled the matter once and for all.
 - c) The accused were there, standing before the council (v.7). With them is the healed man (v.14). Was he arrested, having done nothing to upset them? Probably he stuck with the apostles out of love and gratitude.
- 2. 7, The Council's Question
Three details invite our attention. All three emphasize the weakness and dangers of priestcraft.
 - a) They refer to the healing as "this." They can't bring themselves to acknowledge what has happened. The falsehood of their own position is staring them in the face, and they haven't the personal integrity to acknowledge it. To do so would be to endanger their own positions.
 - b) Their question concerns the authority of the apostles to do what they have done. Cf. Mt. 21:23, essentially the same question put to Jesus. They are more concerned with a person's formal credentials than with the results obtained.

NB: If they had been paying attention to Peter's sermon, they would know the answer to the question already. They got so hung up with the mention of the resurrection in 3:15 that they missed the ascription of power to Jesus' name in 3:16.

- c) In Greek, "you" is emphatic. "You laymen [v.13], without official sanction or endorsement--how dare you, being such as you are, to do this thing?"

3. 8-12, Peter's Response

- a) As the arrest is in keeping with the Lord's prediction in Mark 13:9, so Peter experiences the instruction that the Lord had promised. Mark 13:11, "it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost," and here Peter is "filled with the Holy Ghost."
- b) He addresses "rulers and elders," but what happened to the scribes of v. 5, the legal experts? 1 Cor. 1:20 and Jer. 8:8 both deprecate scribes. Rulers (e.g., the priests) and elders were instituted by God under Moses. Scribes only appear later. Ezra was a scribe; it's not in itself a dishonorable calling. But he was also a priest, and in general (2 Chron. 34:13) scribes came from the levitical families, who had the responsibility of teaching the people (Exod. 21:5; 24:8; 33:10).

Thus Peter submits himself to those with a biblical charter to rule, but not to the accretions of men.

- c) With Peter's boldness here, contrast his timidity the last time he drew near a meeting of the Sanhedrin, and denied his Lord.
- d) Under divine direction, Peter develops two propositions that demand their response. Salvation comes through Jesus of Nazareth, and they are guilty of rejecting him. In fact, they answer neither in the sequel.

The propositions are developed chiastically; fold them together for exposition.

1) Salvation comes through Jesus.

a> v.9 discusses a specific "salvation," that of the lame man.

1> He clarifies the "that" of which he has been accused. "If it's this healing you're talking about...." He describes it as a "good work," thus placing them in the awkward position of prosecuting him for a deed of righteousness.

2> Note the word "made whole," lit. "saved." The term

has broad reference, and can include body as well as soul. Here, it furnishes a point of transition to challenge them with their need for spiritual salvation.

b> v.12 generalizes this to salvation in general.

The concept of "salvation" calls to Peter's mind Psa. 118:21, "I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation." That in turn leads him to observe how their conduct toward Jesus has fulfilled the following verse, Psa. 118:22.

- 2) 10-11, They are guilty of rejecting their Messiah, in keeping with OT prophecy. Peter expressly labels Jesus as "Christ," and points out both their guilt in crucifying him and God's power in raising him from the dead.

4. 13-18, the Council deliberates.

a) 13-14, their impressions.

Two directions: toward Peter and John, and then toward the healed man.

- 1) Peter and John struck them with their boldness and their lack of formal credentials. One expects laymen to be diffident in the presence of trained "experts." These were nothing of the sort. It led to marvel on the part of the rulers, and recalled to them their association with their master, who had the same qualifications (John 7:15).

Application: Seminary training is a handicap, not a help, for the Lord's work. With diligent study, the HS can give you all you need, and then when you deal with people, they won't think, "Oh, he's been to seminary." They'll think instead, "He's been with Jesus."

- 2) The presence of the healed man left them unable to dismiss them as irrelevant or impotent. Something had happened; they are too stubborn to accept the lesson.

b) 15-17, their discussion.

It is interesting to speculate how Luke ever learned of this discussion. Acts 6:7 records that shortly after, many priests were saved; perhaps some of those saved had been in the Sanhedrin. It has also been suggested (Rackham on 7:58) that Saul was a member of that group, in which case he would have been among those whom Peter and John here face.

Sending the apostles out, they confer. They discuss nothing of the substance raised by Peter. Their only concerns are how to get around the fact of the miracle, and how to keep the faith from spreading. Those who know it all can never learn more!

Here and in v.18, "in the name" shifts from *en* to *e*pi. The original question had to do with the *authority* of the healing; now they forbid the mere *mention* of his name.

c) 18, their instruction.

A gag rule. "Speak" is a very general word that means "to utter any sound." "Don't utter a peep about this Jesus fellow, and particularly don't even think about teaching about him."

5. 19-20, Peter and John reply. The priests minister out of professional training and position. The apostles point out three bases for their ministry:

a) obedience to God ("obey you rather than God?")

b) personal experience ("the things which we have seen and heard")

c) integrity ("we cannot but speak....").

6. 21-22, dismissal

They carry out their decision of v.17 to "threaten" the apostles, a threat that is carried out in the beating of 5:40. (The threat may have originally been of death; cf. 5:33.) But they are unable to do anything more because of the popularity of the new movement with the multitudes.

Summary

Peter and John give us a good example of how not to be intimidated by clerical credentials. It is the Holy Spirit, not a Bible school or seminary, that gifts and equips people for ministry. Never defer to people on the basis of their credentials. Diligently exercise what God has given you, and he will make you effective far beyond the experience of those with the world's preparation.

Psalm: Psa. 51B

Analysis

A. The twofold reaction (hinge paragraph btw. sermon and trial)

1. Official

a) 4:1 Lalou/ntwn de\ au)tw^n pro\s to\n lao\n e)pe/sthsan au)toi^s oi(i(erei^s kai\ o(strathgo\s tou^ i(erou^ kai\ oi(Saddoukai^oi,

2 diaponou/menoi dia\ to\ dida/skein au)tou\s to\n lao\n kai\ katagge/llein e)n tw^|)Ihsou^ th\n a)na/stasin th\n e)k nekrw^h,

b) 3 kai\ e)pe/balon au)toi^s ta\s xei^ras

c) reason p

1) text: kai\ e)/qento ei)s th/rhsin ei)s th\n au)/rion:

2) reason: h)^n ga\r e(spe/ra h)/dh.

2. Popular:

a) 4 polloi\ de\ tw^h a)kousa/ntwn to\n lo/gon e)pi/steusan,

b) kai\ e)genh/qh [o(] a)riqmo\s tw^h a)ndrw^h [w(s] xilia/des pe/nte.

B. The trial

1. Setting: 5)Ege/neto de\ e)pi\ th\n au)/rion sunaxqh^nai au)tw^ntou\s a)/rxontas [high priests] kai\ tou\s presbute/rous [representatives of the people] kai\ tou\s grammatei^s [legal experts] e)n)Ierousalh/m
6 [kai\ (/Annas o(a)rxiereu\s kai\ Kai+a/fas kai\)Iwa/nnhs kai\)Ale/candros kai\ o(/soi h)^san e)k ge/nous a)rxieratikou^]
2. Priests: quote p
 - a) circumstance: 7 kai\ sth/santes au)tou\s e)n tw^| me/sw|
 - b) quote f: e)punqa/nonto,
Common Words for ask:
 - 1) This: 4441, ask a question. Superior to inferior. Exception in Lk 18:36 and Jn 13:24. "Demand."
 - 2) 154 aitew, to ask for a thing.
 - 3) 1905 eperotaw, to accost with an inquiry. Used in "tempting" situations; trick questions. But also more bland situations
 - 4) 2065 erotaw. Respectful: includes "pray," "beseech."
 - c) quote:)En poi/a| duna/mei h)\ e)n poi/w| o)no/mati e)poi/sate tou^to u(meis;
 - 1) significance of umeis: you laymen, without official recognition or ordination. cf. v.13.
 - 2) Cf. Mt. 21:23, essentially the same question put to Jesus.
 - 3) "this." They can't bring themselves to acknowledge what has happened.
3. Peter: quote p
As the arrest is in keeping with the Lord's prediction in Mark 13:9, so Peter experiences the instruction that the Lord had promised.
 - a) quote f: 8 to/te Pe/tros plhsqei\s pneu/matos a(gi/ou ei)^pen pro\s au)tou/s,
 - b) quote: Chiastic, ABA, A = salvation (root sozw), B = rejection and honor of Jesus. A2 generalizes A1.
 - 1) Specific ("saving" of the lame man):
)/Arxontes tou^ laou^ kai\ presbu/teroi, 9 ei) h(meis sh/meron a)nakrino/meqa e)pi\ eu)ergesi/a| a)nqrw/pou a)sqenou^s, e)n ti/ni ou(^tos se/swtai,
 - 2) interpretation p
 - a> interpretation: quote p
 - 1> quote f: 10 gnwsto\n e)/stw pa^sin u(mi^n kai\ panti\ tw^| law^|)Israh\l o(/ti
 - 2> quote: e)n tw^| o)no/mati)Ihsou^ Xristou^ tou^ Nazwrai/ou, o(\n u(meis e)staurw/sate, o(\n o(qeo\s h)/geiren e)k nekrw^n, e)n tou/tw| ou(^tos pare/sthken e)nw/pion u(mw^u) gih/s.
 - b> text, Ps. 118:22. 11 ou(^to/s e)stin o(li/qos o(e)couqenhqei\s u(f' u(mw^u) tw^u) oi)kodo/mwn, o(geno/menos ei)s kefalh\n gwni/as.
 - 3) Generalization:
 - a> 12 kai\ ou)k e)/stin e)n a)/llw| ou)deni\ h(swthri/a,

b> ou)de\ ga\r o)/noma/ e)stin e(/teron u(po\ to\n ou)rano\n to\ dedome/non e)n a)nqrw/pois e)n w(^| dei^ swqh^nai h(ma^s.

4. Priests:

- a) 13 Qewrou^ntes de\ th\n tou^ Pe/trou parrhsi/an kai\
)Iwa/nnou, kai\ katalabo/menoi o(/ti a)/nqrwpoi a)gra/mmatoi/
ei)sin kai\ i)diw^tai, e)qau/mazon e)pegi/nwsko/n te au)tou\s
o(/ti su\n tw^|)Ihsou^ h)^san:
- b) 14 to/n te a)/nqrwpon ble/pontes su\n au)toi^s e(stw^ta to\n teqerapeume/non ou)de\n ei)^xon a)nteipei^n.
- c) quote p
- 1) circumstance: 15 keleu/santes de\ au)tou\s e)/cw tou^ sunedri/ou a)pelqei^n
- 2) quote f: sune/ballon pro\s a)llh/lous 16 le/gontes,
- 3) quote:
- a> Ti/ poih/swmen toi^s a)nqrw/pois tou/tois;
- b> awareness quote p
- 1> text: o(/ti me\n ga\r gnwsto\n shmei^on ge/gonen di' au)tw^n
- 2> quote f:
- a: pa^sin toi^s katoikou^sin)Ierousalh\m fanero/n,
b: kai\ ou) duna/meqa a)rnei^sqai:
- c> 17 a)ll' i(/na mh\ e)pi\ plei^on dianemhqh^| ei)s to\n lao/n, a)peilhsw/meqa au)toi^s mhke/ti lalei^n e)pi\
tw^| o)no/mati tou/tw| mhdeni\ a)nqrw/pwn.
[Shift to epi here and in v.18, from en used earlier:
don't even mention his name, let alone think of acting
on his authority]
- d) quote p
- 1) circumstance: 18 kai\ kale/santes au)tou\s parh/ggeilan to\
kaqo/lou mh\ fqe/ggesqai mhde\ dida/skein e)pi\
tw^| o)no/mati tou^)Ihsou^.

5. Peter and John: quote p

- a) quote f: 19 o(de\ Pe/tros kai\)Iwa/nnhs a)pokriqe/ntes ei)^pon pro\s au)tou/s,
- b) quote:
- 1) Ei) di/kaio/n e)stin e)nw/pion tou^ qeou^ u(mw^ n a)kou/ein ma^llon h)\ tou^ qeou^, kri/nate,
- 2) 20 ou) duna/meqa ga\r h(meis a(\ ei)/damen kai\
h)kou/samen mh\ lalei^n.
[This, rather than priestly qualification, is the only basis for a godly ministry.]

6. Priests

- a) 21 oi(de\ prosapeilhsa/menoi a)pe/lusan au)tou/s, mhde\n eu(ri/skontes to\
pw^s kola/swntai au)tou/s, dia\ to\n lao/n,
- b) o(/ti pa/ntes e)do/cazon to\n qeo\n e)pi\
tw^| gegono/ti:
- c) 22 e)tw^n ga\r h)^n pleio/nwn tessera/konta o(a)/nqrwpos e)f' o(\n gego/nei to\
shmei^on tou^to th^s i)a/sews.

C. 23-31, The Aftermeeting (next study)