

Acts 4

The Reaction of the Jewish Leaders

<p>God</p> <p>Jesus Christ</p> <p>Holy Spirit</p> <p>Apostles:</p> <p>John & Peter</p> <p>Church,</p> <p>the saved</p> <p>Jews:</p> <p>Sanhedrin,</p> <p>High Priest'</p> <p>family,</p> <p>Teachers of</p> <p>The Law,</p> <p>Sadducees</p>	<p>Scene # 1. 4:1-4. The Sadducees and others were disturbed about the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. See Luke 20:27.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Peter and John were put in jail for teaching the people after the healing of the crippled beggar. This is a continuation of God's evangelism program for the Jews in Jerusalem according to Jesus' instructions to the apostles. See Acts 1:8. The Lord added two thousand more Jews to "those who were being saved." Acts 2:47. This brought the number of "the saved" to five thousand. Luke referred to these saved people as the church in 5:11. <p>Scene # 2. 4:5-12. The Jewish leaders understood they had a "people control" problem but they did not know how to solve it.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Peter and John were brought before the hierarchy of the Jewish leadership. Their first question: "By what power or what name did you do this?" 4:7. The Holy Spirit gave Peter the correct answer. See Luke 12:11. The name was Jesus Christ of Nazareth. The power to heal this 40 year old crippled beggar came through Peter and John's faith in this man from Galilee who was, indeed, the Christ. This assembly of Jewish leaders were the same Jews who had persuaded Pontius Pilate to kill Jesus not many days before. Peter made two points that should have brought these leaders to repentance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One the stone you builders rejected is the cornerstone for the five thousand members of the church of Christ now in Jerusalem. Jesus had quoted these verses from Psalms 118:22 to these same Israelite leaders in Luke 20:17 just before they got Him crucified. At that time they were trying to solve the same problem they were faced with here. They were trying to keep the Jewish people under their control for their money and glory. (So what is new in religious the world today?) Two "there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." 4:12. Saved from sin so the Holy Spirit can work with repentant, baptized, believers in our sanctification is the point. See Acts 2:38, 39; I Pet. 1:2. <p>Scene #3. 4:13-22. There were two possible ways out for the Sanhedrin – other than repentance of their sins.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> One, they could have denied the miracle had happened; however, the man was standing there with Peter and John. Moreover, all the people present knew what had happened to the crippled beggar. Their choice was to try to scare the apostles into keeping quiet. Perhaps they didn't have much hope in this tactic because they saw how these unschooled fishermen who had been with Jesus had courage to stand up and speak without fear. Peter and John's response: "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." 4:19, 20. After a few more threats the Sanhedrin gave up; however, not for long as we will see in chapter five. <p>Scene #4. 4:23-31. Peter and John gathered members of the church to tell what the chief priests and elders had said.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> They had a prayer meeting. Their prayer included a story that started with the dark days of Jesus' death. God was in the plot. They even reminded Him about the things He had said long ago to David by the Holy Spirit about the rage of mankind. They ask God to do more miracles through the name of Jesus so they could speak God's word more boldly. God made His presence known by shaking up the place and filling them all with the Holy Spirit. <p>Scene #5. 4:32-37. "All believers were one in heart and mind." The apostles powerfully proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus and the church took care of one another's physical needs in order to stay in Jerusalem. Luke introduces Barnabas.</p>
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Questions for Discussion

1. What was Peter and John preaching that greatly disturbed the Sadducee faction of the Jewish rulers?
2. What did the Jewish leaders have done with the preachers Jesus appointed to speak in the gospel meeting He had arranged for the people who were still in Jerusalem?
3. By a numerical count how successful was this evangelism effort?
4. What was the first question the leaders ask Peter and John?
5. Since not much time had passed since Jesus had been crucified, who might some of these have been that arrested the apostles?
6. Jesus quoted scripture, perhaps, to these same Jewish leaders not many months before this gospel meeting. What was the message He wanted to convey to them?
7. What statement did Peter make to these rulers that should have brought them and all the world to repentance?
8. Since this group of Jewish leaders was not concerned about the Christian faith, what may have been their concern?
9. What worried the leaders about these apostles?
10. What method did the leaders use that "backfired to hush up the apostles?"
11. What was Peter and John's statement to them that broke up the court session and established a precedent for all courageous preachers since then?
12. Following their release Peter and John gathered with some members of the church to fill them in on their encounter with the chief priests and elders. Their story inspired a prayer session. What was included in their prayer to God that might "turn a few heads" in a prayer meeting today?
13. How did God let them know He heard their prayer? How did the church members make use of what God had given them?
14. How did the concern of the church members for one another affirm they had faith in what Peter preached? See I Peter 1:22-25.