

**Acts 4****Lesson 4  
Peter and John before the Council****Outline****I. Peter and John Questioned by the Council (vv. 1-22)**

- A. *Arrested* (vv. 1-4)
  1. Because they preached the resurrection (vv. 1-3)
  2. Yet, many believed and obeyed (v. 4)
- B. *Questioned* (vv. 5-12)
  1. Question: By what power or name was this done (vv. 5-7)?
  2. Answer: By Jesus Christ (vv. 8-12)
    - a. Man is healed by the name of Christ who was crucified and raised (vv. 8-10)
    - b. He is the rejected stone that became the chief cornerstone (v. 11)
    - c. No salvation in any other name (v. 12)
- C. *Reaction of the council* (vv. 13-22)
  1. Marveled (v. 13a)
  2. Realized that Peter and John had been with Jesus (v. 13b)
  3. Admitted that a miracle had been performed (vv. 14-16)
  4. Threatened Peter and John (vv. 17-22)
    - a. Commanded them not to speak in the name of Jesus (vv. 17-18)
    - b. Peter and John said they could not but speak the things they saw and heard (vv. 19-20)
    - c. Let them go after more threats (vv. 21-22)

**II. Reaction of the Disciples (vv. 23-31)**

- A. *Peter and John reported to the disciples* (v. 23)
- B. *The disciples prayed for boldness* (vv. 24-30)
- C. *The results of the prayer* (v. 31)
  1. Place shook
  2. Filled with Spirit
  3. Spoke the word with boldness

**III. The Commitment of the Disciples (vv. 32-37)**

- A. *To unity* (v. 32a)
- B. *To one another* [benevolence] (vv. 32b, 34-37)
- C. *To the proclamation of the gospel* (v. 33)

## Key Verse That Summarizes the Chapter

### Acts 4:2

*Being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.*

The preaching about the resurrection and the healing of the lame man was more than the Jewish leaders could take. Because of what Peter and John had done in the previous chapter, they are arrested and questioned.

### Peter and John Questioned by the Council (vv. 1-22)

*Peter and John were arrested* (vv. 1-4). As Peter and John were preaching (the sermon in chapter 3), the captain of the temple,<sup>1</sup> and the Sadducees (who denied any resurrection, Acts 23:8) became annoyed at the teaching about the resurrection (vv. 1-2). So, they arrested them and held them for trial before the Sanhedrin the next day (v. 3).

In spite of the opposition, the gospel was effective (v. 4). Here we have a progress report. Many who heard believed.<sup>2</sup> The number came to be about 5,000 men.<sup>3</sup>

*Peter and John were questioned* (vv. 5-12). The next day the Sanhedrin Council (the highest court among the Jews) assembled to consider the case with Peter and John. The court consisted of rulers, elders and scribes with the high priest presiding over the court. Annas had been the high priest but was deposed by the Romans and Caiaphas (son-in-law to Annas) was now serving in his place. Annas was called the high priest because the Jews still thought of him as holding that office. We don't know who John and Alexander were, but they must have been in positions of authority.

The question was "By what power or by what name have you done this?" (v. 7). The council made no charge of wrong doing, but merely asked who authorized them to work the miracle (healing the lame man) and to teach about Jesus. What an opportunity the question provided. Peter told them it was all possible because of Jesus Christ (vv. 8-12). The helpless man had been healed by the power of Jesus Christ, whom they had crucified, but whom God had raised from the dead (vv. 8-10). He quoted Psalms 118:22 and applied the prophecy to Christ. He is the stone which was rejected, but chosen by God to be the chief cornerstone (v. 11). Peter concludes that salvation can be found in no other name<sup>4</sup> than Jesus Christ (v. 12). He is the way (John 14:6). Those who made up the Sanhedrin thought they were saved. And now they have heard a message that says believing and obeying the Christ is the only way to be saved.

1 "This was the commander of the guard stationed chiefly in the tower Antonia, especially during the great feasts; and it was his duty to preserve order and prevent any tumult" (Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft).

2 Believed does not mean they only had faith, but stands for obedience to what was preached (3:19). Consider how the term "obeyed" and "believed" are used interchangeably (Rom. 10:16).

3 This was the number of men, not counting the women. So, the total would be larger than that. This is probably a total including the 3,000 on Pentecost, rather than an additional 5,000.

4 The name of one stands for all their qualities, all they are, and thus their authority (cf. v. 7).

*The reaction of the council* (vv. 13-22). They marveled when they saw how bold and confident Peter and John were. They understood that these men were uneducated (had no formal training) and untrained (“ordinary” NIV; “common” RSV) men (v. 13). The council concluded that these men “had been with Jesus”.<sup>5</sup> They “realized what being with Jesus had done for them” (TLB). These men had the same message and the same boldness as Jesus.

The council members had to admit that a miracle had been performed (vv. 14-16). It could not be denied since the man (now healed) was standing with the apostles. They discussed the matter privately about what to do with them.

The decision was made to threaten them and command them not to preach any more in the name of Jesus (vv. 17-18). Peter and John appealed to the conscience of the rulers as to whose authority they should obey (v. 19). Then they affirmed their unstoppable determination to preach the truth (v. 20). They were absolutely convinced that the message was true. They felt compelled to do right no matter what.

The Sanhedrin couldn’t find a good way to punish the apostles since the crowd was praising God for the miracles of healing a man who had been lame for more than forty years (vv. 21-22). So they threatened them more and let them go.

### **The Reaction of the Disciples (vv. 23-31)**

*Peter and John reported to the disciples* (v. 23). When the council let Peter and John go, they gathered with other brethren<sup>6</sup> and reported what had been said to them.

*The disciples prayed for boldness* (vv. 24-30). The prayer began with the praise of God as one who made all things and thus controls all things. (v. 24). The opposition they had faced brought to mind David’s prophecy (Psa. 2:1-2) about how kings and rulers would oppose the Christ (vv. 25-26). That was fulfilled when Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles and even the people of Israel rejected the Christ (vv. 27-28). In the midst of such hostility, there was a need for boldness. Thus, they prayed for boldness to speak the word (v. 29). Their prayer included a request for confirmation of their message through miracles (v. 30).

*The results of the prayer* (v. 31). When their prayer was finished, three things happened: (1) The place shook, (2) they were filled with the Spirit, and (3) they spoke the word with boldness.

### **The Commitment of the Disciples (vv. 32-37)**

*To unity* (v. 32a). These early disciples were united as one. This was evident in the care they had for one another (v. 32b, 34-36).

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5 Do people see things in your life that cause them to conclude you have been influenced by Jesus?

6 It is possible that those to whom Peter and John went is limited to the apostles. See Johnny Stringer, *Acts*, Truth Commentaries, 81.

*To one another* (v. 32b, 34-37). Just as they did in Acts 2, when a need arose they had all things common (v. 32a).<sup>7</sup> Thus, they sold lands and houses then brought the money to the apostles (vv. 34-35). The funds were then distributed to those in need (v. 35b).<sup>8</sup>

Among those who were generous in giving was Joses whom had been named Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”) by the apostles (vv. 36-37).

*To the proclamation of the gospel* (v. 33). Just as they prayed (cf. vv. 24-30), the apostles proclaimed the resurrection of Christ. That was the very thing the Sanhedrin had forbidden.

### Questions

1. Why were Peter and John arrested? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. What was the progress report given in this chapter? \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_
3. What was the question the Sanhedrin asked Peter and John? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How did Peter and John answer the question before the council? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. What does “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” mean (v. 12)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. What amazed the council (v. 13)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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<sup>7</sup> This was simply an attitude that said, “What is mine is yours.”

<sup>8</sup> This is church action as in Acts 2, 6, and 11.

7. What conclusion did the council draw about Peter and John (v. 13)? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Why was the Sanhedrin court forced to admit that a miracle had been performed? \_\_\_\_\_

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9. How did the apostles react to the ultimatum given by the council? \_\_\_\_\_

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10. How does Psalm 2:1-2 relate to the prayer for boldness? \_\_\_\_\_

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