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*God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.*

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## Acts 4.

(2013).

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The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

***Teach it, don't demand it.***

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## Acts 4.

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### Topics.

- Sadducees arrest Peter and John for proclaiming Jesus.
- Five thousand believed.
- Peter accuses the Jewish religious rulers of killing Jesus.
- The stone the builders rejected.
- Jewish religious rulers warn Peter and John not to speak in Jesus name.
- Why did the Gentiles rage and the people plot in vain?
- They were filled with the Holy Spirit and boldly spoke God's word.
- Brothers and sisters in Christ had everything in common.

**The Previous Chapter:** ended with Peter telling the men of Israel that the Holy One they killed was the one Moses said would come like him and the one all Old Testament prophets foretold was to come and who God glorified by raising him from the dead. Then told them to repent of their sins, especially of denying Christ and agreeing to have him killed and not only would all their sins be blotted out and forgiven, but God would send them their Messiah and Christ.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

### Sadducees arrest Peter and John for Proclaiming Jesus.

Acts 4:1-4 ----- <sup>1</sup>And as they (Peter and John) (v13) were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, <sup>2</sup>greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. <sup>3</sup>And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. <sup>4</sup>But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

**NOTE:** this is a continuation of the previous chapter in which Peter and John upon entering the Temple healed a man who had been lame from birth (Acts 3:1, 11).

**Sadducees:** means to be righteous, they were the religious political party of the Jewish aristocratic priesthood. They held strictly to the written law and because they were more interested in maintaining the political status quo than in the religious purity of the nation they became the religious party favourable to the Roman government. They did not believe in the resurrection, resisted the truth of the Gospel and condemned Jesus most likely because they feared that a Messianic movement led by Jesus would bring political ruin (John 11:49). The Sadducees remained actively hostile against the infant church throughout the book of Acts.

### For further information see title: -

- Sanhedrin in, Bible Dictionary (ON WEBSITE MENU).

**Five Thousand Believed:** there are over five thousand people listening to Peter and John, teaching about Jesus and the resurrection and when the priests, the captain of the Temple and the Sadducees saw it they were furious that Peter and John common fishermen dared to teach the Jewish people about religious matters especially when they concerned Jesus who they condemned and the resurrection which they did not believe so they had them arrested, nevertheless about five thousand believed what Peter and John had spoken.

## **Peter accuses the Jewish Religious rulers of Killing Jesus.**

Acts 4:5-12 ----- <sup>5</sup>On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, <sup>6</sup>with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. <sup>7</sup>And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you (Peter and John) do this?" <sup>8</sup>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, <sup>9</sup>if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, <sup>10</sup>let it be known to all of you 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 is standing before you well. <sup>11</sup>This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. <sup>12</sup>And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

This is stunning the very next day Annas the high priest and Caiaphas with all those having the highest religious authority over the nation of Israel gather together to question Peter and John (v13). Remember to these religious rulers who are descendants of Abraham and study the Scriptures daily Peter and John are just common fisherman who have no credentials or authority to be proclaim the word of God (v13).

This is why the very first thing they ask is, "By what power or by what name are they doing this?" (v7) referring to the lame man Peter had healed at the gate of the Temple (in the previous chapter) and their teaching about Jesus. Peter now full of boldness and the Holy Spirit, tells the religious rulers and the crowds that the crippled man was made well not by any goodness or power within him, but by faith in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they crucified and who God raised from the dead (v10).

### **The Stone the Builders Rejected.**

The builders refers to the priests, scribes, elders and Jewish religious rulers, to them were given the oracles of God to build His Kingdom upon, but they rejected the cornerstone the Lord Jesus Christ. Common sense tells us that there can be no building established without the corner of the foundation being put in place first.

Peter is basically telling the priests and elders that by rejecting Christ it did not matter what religious laws or deeds they established it was not God's Kingdom they were building because there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (v11-12).

### **Jewish religious rulers warn Peter and John not to speak in Jesus Name.**

Acts 4:13-22 ----- <sup>13</sup>Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognised that they had been with Jesus. <sup>14</sup>But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. <sup>15</sup>But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, <sup>16</sup>saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. <sup>17</sup>But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name." <sup>18</sup>So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup>But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, <sup>20</sup>for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." <sup>21</sup>And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. <sup>22</sup>For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.

How incredible is this; the Jewish rulers seeing the man who had been lame from birth was now miraculously healed acknowledge that a notable sign has been performed through Peter and John one that was so stunningly evident they could not deny it.

**But!** Instead of realising that God's Spirit was flowing through the two apostles and encouraging them to go out and heal the suffering they threaten them not to teach anymore in the name of Jesus (v13-17). This clearly shows that the religious leaders of Jesus Generation were far more interested in protecting their own religious empire than they were in serving God.

### **A Practical Lesson.**

Those who are in ministry serving the Lord should never allow pride and what has been established to stop them from listening to another person's point of view and examining it to see if there is any truth contained in what they are saying. The love of power, importance and wealth the religious leaders gained from the established national religious institution of Israel that had been established over many years totally blinded them to what God was really doing right in front of their own eyes.

### **Why did the Gentiles Rage and the People Plot in Vain?**

Acts 4:23-26 ----- <sup>23</sup>When they (Peter and John) were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. <sup>24</sup>And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, <sup>25</sup>who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, " 'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? <sup>26</sup>The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed'

Peter and John no-doubt raced with enormous excitement to tell their brothers and sisters in Christ all that had happened at the Temple and they together praise God saying, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them" (v24). The very first thing they credit God for is his Sovereignty; they had no doubt that God was the supreme King and absolute controller of all things.

### **The Wonder, Beauty and Majesty of the Bible.**

The following majestic words shows that Peter, John and their friends though common lay people (in the eyes of the religious rulers) had a very good knowledge and insight into the Old Testament Scriptures.

The words: -

- Why did the Gentiles rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed (v25-26)

Immediately take the mind of the ardent Bible student to Psalm two in which David cites these very words. Peter, John and their friends understood David to be saying in prophecy: -

- Why do Israel and the Gentile nations plot in vain? To crucify Christ and those who serve him. Pilate and Herod the kings of the earth set themselves, and the religious rulers Annas the high priest, Caiaphas and the Jewish elders take counsel together, against the LORD and against his anointed (Jesus) saying, "Let us burst the bonds of those who belong to Christ apart and cast away their cords from us (the Jewish and worldly rulers) (Psalm 2:1-3).

**But!** What is fabulously exciting is that this is not the end of David's insight as he goes on to say in the same Psalm: -

- The LORD who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, "As for me, I have set my King (Jesus Christ) on Zion, my holy hill." I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Now therefore, O kings, (Herod, Pilot and by extension all kings) be wise; be warned, O rulers of the

earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him (Psalm 2:4-12).

(Kiss the Son means, make peace with him).

### **Christ's death is identified with David's prophetic words in Psalm Two.**

Acts 4:27-26 ----- <sup>27</sup>for truly in this city (Jerusalem) there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, <sup>28</sup>to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. <sup>29</sup>And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, <sup>30</sup>while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

The words, "To do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place" (v28) shows that all the events of Christ's crucifixion were in God's foreordained plan and that there is nothing that is outside of His wisdom and His eternal plan whether good or bad that is not working toward His eternal plan in raising up brothers and sisters in Christ who will reign in eternal glory with him.

### **NOTICE.**

Peter and John's friends pray that God will stretch out His hand to heal so that signs and wonders are performed through the name of Jesus (v30), showing that it is God's Spirit working through faith in the name of Jesus that brings about a person's miraculous healing.

### **They were filled with the Holy Spirit and Boldly Spoke God's Word.**

Acts 4:31-37 ----- <sup>31</sup>And when they (Peter and John and their friends) had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. <sup>32</sup>Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. <sup>33</sup>And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. <sup>34</sup>There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold <sup>35</sup>and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. <sup>36</sup>Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, <sup>37</sup>sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet

The words, "The place was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit," takes our minds back to the Day of Pentecost when this first happened and one hundred and twenty people praying in an upper room were filled with the Holy Spirit symbolised by divided tongues of fire and were all able to speak in a language they had not learned (Acts 2:1-4).

After this experience both those from the upper room and those from Peter and John's prayer meeting immediately went out and boldly proclaimed the Good News of the gospel, but the words: -

- With great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (v33)

Imply that though others supernaturally received the ability to speak in a language they had not learned only the twelve apostles were able to miraculously heal.

### **Brothers and Sisters in Christ had everything in Common.**

All those who believed were as one body, they cared about the well-being of each other as much as they did about themselves. They were all of one mind and one heart, and willingly shared what they had with each other so no-one was in need.

This was such an astounding time in God, the Jewish religious rulers were aggressively persecuting those who confessed Christ, followers of Christ were able to speak in languages they had supernaturally been gifted with, the apostles were doing amazing miracles and many were even selling their houses and land, a man named Joseph, (called Barnabas) sold a field that belonged to him and gave the money to the apostles' as did all the others to distribute to their poorer brothers and sisters who were in need so that no-one had more than another.

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