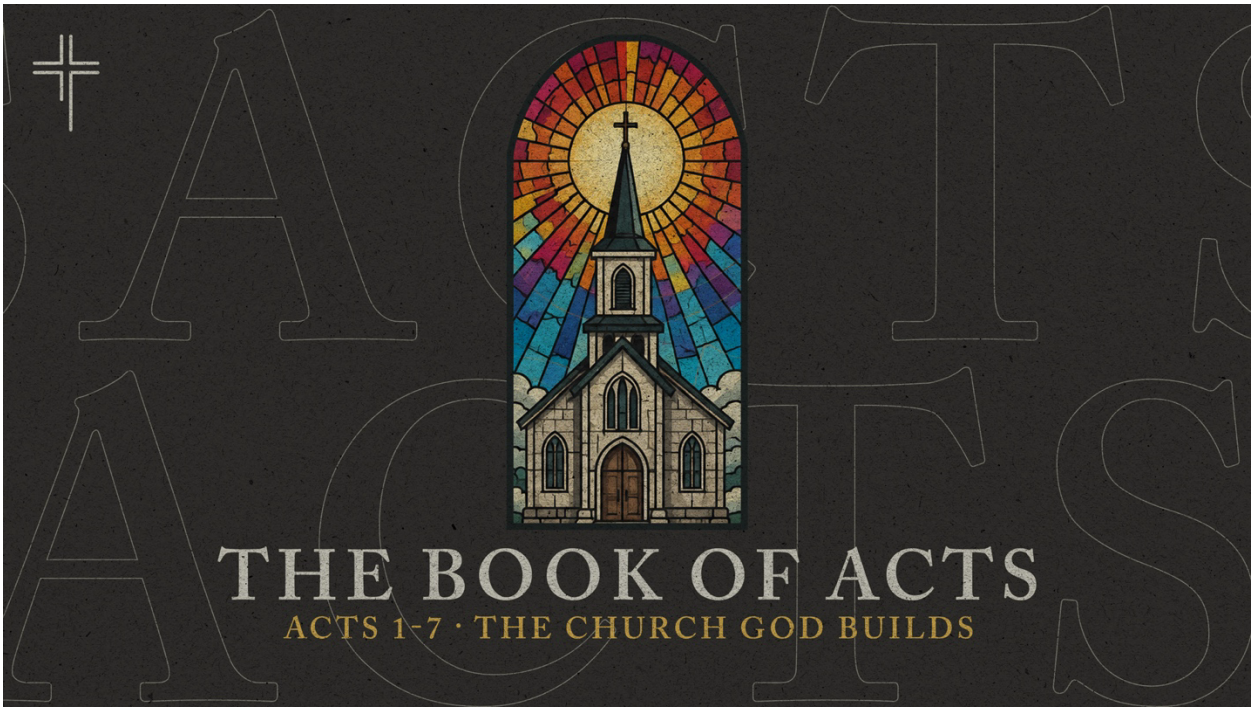


IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH
SERIES: THE CHURCH THAT GOD BUILDS
SCRIPTURE: ACTS 4:1-22
DATE: NOVEMBER 1, 2026

Introduction:

In Act 3:1-10, Peter and John healed the man that was lame from birth. We will see in today's passage that the man had been lame for more than 40 years, and that everyone in the area knew him, including the rulers, elders, and members of the Jewish Council. That a miracle had occurred was undeniable. The scriptures not only show that he was healed miraculously, but that he was instantly able to walk and leap into the air, despite a lifetime of muscle atrophy from never being able to use his legs. And apparently, he leapt and kept his balance, something he had never done before! But more importantly he instantly began to Praise God. And that praise was contagious (Acts 3:10b)!

> **Discussion Question:**
> Have you ever had that feeling well up inside of you to where you could not contain your excitement? You wanted to leap for joy and share with everyone you love all about the exciting thing that just happened?

I (Grant Jordan) must confess, being asked to help write this lesson for my Church Family was one of those occasions for me. The opportunity to share in the ministry of the Word of God to you, gives me unspeakable joy! As a young man, about 30 years ago, The Lord impressed upon me that John 17:17 would be my "Life's Verse". That is: the verse that would define my personal ministry.

"Sanctify them by the truth, Your Word is truth!"

That was part of Jesus's prayer, to the Father, on our behalf, the night before His arrest, trial and journey to the Cross. The greatest thing about that prayer is that it MUST be answered! Every time the Word of God is read, or spoken to us, it has Sanctifying power! It changes us! First, God uses it to save us (1 Corinthians 1:18; 15:1-2). Second, God causes it to work in us to make us more like Jesus (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Jesus prayed for the truth of God's Word to have saving and sanctifying power. Do you believe that the Father answered that prayer? We can have blessed assurance!

Today's lesson reveals how God still uses His Word today, to Build His Church. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said, *"... I will build my Church..."*. This statement came on the heels of Peter's confession that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." It is by our confession of the truth that Christ builds His Church. This lesson will also reveal how Peter (and John) had been transformed by the Word of God and by the hard lessons they had learned from their own failures.

Text

Acts 4:1-22 (ESV)

> **4** *And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the*
> *temple and the Sadducees came upon them,* [2] *greatly annoyed because they*
> *were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the*
> *dead.* [3] *And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for*
> *it was already evening.* [4] *But many of those who had heard the word believed,*
> *and the number of the men came to about five thousand.*
>
> [5] *On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in*
> *Jerusalem,* [6] *with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and*
> *Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family.* [7] *And when they had*
> *set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did*
> *you do this?"* [8] *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of*
> *the people and elders,* [9] *if we are being examined today concerning a good*

deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, [10] 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. [11] This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. [12] 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."

[13] Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. [14] But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. [15] But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another,[16] 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. [17] 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." [18] So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.[19] 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, [20] for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." [21] 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. [22] For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.

Explanation

Jesus Builds His Church by the Proclamation of the Word of God (verses 1-4).

The Word of God, the Gospel, is a delight to believers, but it is an annoyance to unbelievers. Satan, as allowed by God, uses every means at his disposal to hinder the teaching of The Gospel. In our text, he used the Jewish religious leaders to try to silence the good news of Jesus Christ.

The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. There is also some evidence that they only believed the Pentateuch (the 5 Books of Moses) was Scripture. These errors in their theology were symptoms of, and not the primary sources, of their annoyance with Peter and John. The true source of their annoyance was unbelief. So, they used their authority to have Peter and John arrested. However, in the midst of this, the writer of this narrative, Luke, ends verse 4 with "But many who heard the word believed…". Additionally Acts

2:47 says, “And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

The Church was multiplying rapidly as the Word of God was being proclaimed! The number given here, five thousand men, would have likely represented the known members of the New Testament Church that had come to Christ in the weeks since the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and since the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost. If we extrapolate and include women believers, it would be safe to say the church had grown to 10,000 or more in just a few weeks. The growth was explosive, as we saw in Acts 2:41, 3,000 souls were added to the church in a single day, after Peter publicly proclaimed the Gospel.

Jesus was building His Church upon the faithful preaching and teaching of his servants, the apostles. And we will see in the coming lessons that the Word will soon be proclaimed by others who were not apostles, and the response would be the same. The proclamation of the Word of God meeting up with the power of the Holy Spirit is effectual to bring people to Christ.

By the way, the Captain of the Temple would be akin to our current vice-president. He was not just the head of temple security; he was a key advisor to the High Priest, actually the second highest officer, and a full member of the Sanhedrin Council of 71 religious leaders.

> **Discussion Questions:**
> Have you ever annoyed someone while speaking, teaching, or proclaiming the truth about Jesus?
>
> Who in your life has believed because they heard the Word of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, from you?

Jesus Builds His Church Despite Opposition (Verses 5-7).

In this case, the opposition was the high priestly family, plus all of the religious leaders in Jerusalem. Can you imagine how Peter and John felt when they were brought before this group to answer for their actions? Here were two commercial fishermen (with the healed beggar, as we will see later in the text), brought forcibly to the Council Chambers, to be questioned by the leading academics and temple priests and scribes. We are introduced to two new characters here, John and Alexander. No one is quite sure who Alexander was,

although it seems likely that he was a member of the priestly family. Most Bible scholars believe this John was Jonathan, the son of Annas, who later became the High Priest.

<u>Here is a genealogical window for those who served as High Priest:</u>

- **Annas**, son of Seth, served AD 6-15, appointed by Governor Quirinius
- Ishmael, son of Fabus, served AD 15-16
- Eleazer, **son of Annas,** served AD 16-17
- Simon, son of Camithus, served AD 17-18
- Caiaphas (also called Joseph), **son-in-law of Annas**, served AD 18-36
- Jonathan, **son of Annas,** served AD 36-37 & 44
- Theophilus, **son of Annas**, served AD 37-41
- Matthias, **son of Annas**, served AD 43
- Annas, **son of Annas**, served AD 63

As you can see by the bolded names, one family dominated the position.

We also know about Annas and Caiaphas from Jesus's illegal, secret trial. They violated their own laws by putting Jesus on trial at night. Here, the leaders decided to wait until the next morning to try Peter and John.

The whole assembly came together in opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Their question was: "by what power or by what name did you do this?" As we will see in Peter's response, they were referring to the healing of the crippled man in Acts 3. Knowing that was indeed a miracle, they were concerned about where this power originated. By their question, they inadvertently revealed that they themselves were unfamiliar with the power of God, and thus the power of Jesus. And they asked this question from a position of not believing in a resurrection even though they had surely heard that Jesus was raised from the dead, and they knew all about Jesus raising his friend Lazarus from the dead (John 11:45-53). And there is also no doubt that many of them were the ones that wanted to have Lazarus killed afterward (John 12:9-11).

Before we go any further, let's think back again to Matthew 16:18. Jesus also made a statement about the church facing opposition, when He said, *"... I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell (Hades) will not prevail against it."* I see two ways to interpret the second phrase in that verse. First, the way most understand it is that the powers of Hell, demonic forces, or even unintentional evil actions, will not prevail against the Church. That is a very comforting

truth. The second interpretation is that the phrase "gates of Hades" is a euphemism for death. The Greek word in the text is translated 5 times as "Hades," 2 times as "depths," and 2 times as "grave" in the NT. Hades was understood in Jewish culture to be the abode of the dead, the resting place for the body of the deceased. The gates would thus be the entrance to Hades. So, going through the gate, to the place of the dead would be a euphemism for dying. In other words, Jesus would be saying that the natural death and even the martyrdom of the people of God will not stop Him from building His Church.

Shockingly, one of the early Church Fathers, Tertullian, circa AD 197 wrote the Latin phrase, "Semen est sanguis Christianorum," which translates to "The blood of Christians is seed." From there the phrase became "The Blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church" and sometimes it is phrased as "The Church is built on the blood of the martyrs."

> **Discussion Question:**
> It is clear from church history that Jesus builds His church despite opposition, even the kind of opposition that ends in the death of His people. Do you know, or have you heard of, someone who was saved as a result of the death of a believer who has impacted their life?

Jesus Builds His Church by Empowering People with the Truth (Verses 8-10).

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, boldly spoke to the most powerful religious leaders of his time, despite his lack of education and despite his past failures.

This is the same Peter that had just denied Jesus 3 times after he said he would die before he would do that (Matthew 26:35).

This is the same Peter to whom Jesus said *"... get behind me Satan, you are a hinderance to me..."* when Peter said he would never allow Jesus to be crucified (Matthew 16:22-23).

But it is also the same Peter that was restored by the Lord. And it is the same Peter that was informed by Jesus that he would one day lose his freedom and indeed his own life for the glory of God (John 21:15-19). It is also interesting that it was John himself (who stood with Peter in this text) that wrote the parenthetical statement in John 21:19 about Peter's death.

Peter boldly confronted the whole assembly of the Sanhedrin with the truth. He made 3 powerful statements of truth:

1. Yes, Jesus healed this man!
   Astonishingly, the text reveals that the healed man was standing right beside Peter and John as they spoke (vs. 10).

2. Yes, this is the same Jesus that you crucified!
   That truth goes for every, last, one, of us. You and me! He had to die, if any sinner is to be saved. And we are all sinners (Romans 3).

3. Yes, this same Jesus rose from the dead!
   This was the confirmation that Jesus was the innocent, sinless, Son of God, and the ultimate sign that He was the Messiah (Matthew 27:54).

Jesus Builds His Church on ONE Foundation (Verses 11-12).

My day job is structural engineering. I work with architects by designing the skeletal frames and foundations of their buildings to make them safe and structurally stable. In Bible times, foundations were made of stone. The first stone to be laid had to be perfect. The cornerstone was hand-hewn to be perfectly square, and it had to be set plumb, and accurately situated at the first corner, because everything else would be aligned by it. Today, builders have laser levels and surveying equipment that is hyper-accurate, most even use GPS technology for alignment and layout. However, in Bible times, they were not unskilled in the ways of construction. In some ways, they were more skilled, like in milling stones and in sculptured features like stone columns and archways. Many of you have seen the ruins of Roman architecture. It was magnificent. I am quite confident that the building in which they were standing in this text was extremely beautiful. The Jerusalem Temple was wonderfully designed and built.

Peter's point was that spiritual alignment is vital. He pointed to Jesus as the precious cornerstone by which we measure our alignment with the truth of God. And that alignment is revealed in both Jesus and the Word of God.

Peter quoted Psalm 118:22 to tell the Sanhedrin that they had rejected God's Messiah. The Pharisees among the Council members knew this Psalm was

Messianic. And Peter boldly confronted them with not only their failure to recognize the Messiah, but their complicity in rejecting and killing him.

Then Peter said something that has scandalized the whole world since that day. He said, "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." We can be quite sure that Peter was rehearsing in his mind the time that Jesus said, *"I am THE WAY, and THE TRUTH, and THE LIFE. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

Peter made it clear that Jesus was the Messiah. For every man, woman, and child, Jesus is the cornerstone or the stumbling stone. He is the perfect Son of God who saves us and keeps us aligned with the Father, or He is the rock of offense over whom we stumble (Romans 9:32–33; 1 Peter 2:6–8; Isaiah 8:14).

The Greek word for Stumbling Stone is "skandalon". From it we get our English word "scandal." Jesus is scandalous to those who do not believe.

Jesus Builds His Church by Transforming Ordinary People (Verses 13-14).

The council members saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were common men, and they were astonished. But then the text says this, "And they recognized that they had been with Jesus."

Peter and John amazed them because it was obvious that they had been with Jesus! Their simple words were profound and authoritative, like Jesus's teaching!

They were no longer just ordinary working-class fishermen, they were different, and it showed. They were sure of who the Messiah was, and they were sure of what He had done, and would do, perhaps He would even save some of the Sanhedrin. And standing beside them completely healed, was the man that was born lame, who had sat begging for food at the Temple Gate for over 40 years. He too was completely changed. A new man.

The healed lame man gave glory to God and praised the Lord Jesus Christ by just being there. He did not need to speak. And the Sanhedrin had nothing to say! He was a lot like the risen man, Lazarus, in that respect.

Jesus Builds His Church by the Proclamation of The Word of God (Verses 15-18).

This point is a repeat. See notes on vs. 1-4 above. But vs. 15-18 show the negative side, the inverse of 1-4. Here the religious leaders, without even knowing it, acknowledged that teaching and preaching in the name of Jesus caused the Gospel to spread. So, they attempted to silence it. "They called them and charged them not to speak or teach AT ALL in the name of Jesus."

Jesus Builds His Church on the Obedience of His People (Verses 19-20).

Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."

Mercy! It does not get any more powerful than that! Pure boldness, pure confession, pure obedience to The LORD!

> **Discussion Question:**
> Can you say the same? Are you compelled to listen to God rather than man, and obediently share the good news?

Jesus Builds His Church Despite the Threat of Persecution (Verses 21-22).

Yes, they let them go, because the miracle was undeniable and Peter and John had broken no laws. But they threatened them on the way out the door!

And the threats continued... as we shall see in the lessons that follow.

The worst persecutor that the Sanhedrin were training and would one day send out, would also become one of the greatest voices for the truth of the gospel. Ironically, he, a Jew, became the apostle to the Gentiles. And he would be one of the foundation stones on which Jesus is building his church (Ephesians 2:19-21 and 1 Corinthians 3:10)!