

“No Other Name”

Acts 4:1-12

Acts: The Unstoppable Gospel

1. The First Persecution (vv. 1-4)

Acts 4 marks the beginning of the persecution of the early church. In verses 1-12, Luke identifies no less than 11 individuals or groups that were opposed to the apostles and the message they preached about Jesus.

Acts 4:1

- Priests – divided into 24 courses; served twice a year for a week at a time.
- Captain of the temple guard – second in rank to the high priest.
- Sadducees –
 - Association with wealthy class; controlled temple & Sanhedrin
 - Cooperated with Roman government in order to maintain their power
 - Adhered only to the Torah
 - Rejected idea of unseen, spiritual world
 - Denial of existence of angels or spirits
 - Disbelief in a bodily resurrection (no future rewards or punishment)

Why did the religious leaders clash with Peter & John? They were “greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (v. 2).

Persecution is an expected part of the Christian life.

- 2 Timothy 3:12 – “Indeed, all who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”
- It’s a question of when, not if.
- How will we respond? (1 Peter 4:12-14)

Acts 4:4

- “The Sadducees could arrest the apostles, but not the gospel.” (John Stott)

2. The Corrupt Sanhedrin (vv. 5-10)

Sanhedrin – Jewish high court, comprised of 70 members, plus the high priest who presided over the council.

- Rulers: priests who had secured a position on the council
- Elders: lay members from Jewish aristocracy
- Scribes: experts in the law; academic scholars

High-Priestly Family:

- Annas was high priest from AD 6-15, but was deposed by the Roman Governor Valerius Gratus. Since high priests are appointed for life, the Jewish people continued to recognize him as the true high priest. He and his family controlled the high priesthood for decades.
- Caiaphas was Annas’ son-in-law; high priest from AD 18-36.

Acts 4:8-10

- Peter turns the tables and puts the Sanhedrin on trial. The miracle is proof of the resurrection of Jesus!

3. The Chief Cornerstone (v. 11)

A quotation from Psalm 118 – the cornerstone was the most important stone in the construction of a building. It was the first stone placed in the foundation and helped align all the other stones. Without it, everything would be crooked and unstable.

Jesus is the cornerstone of God's temple! (cf. Luke 20:17-18; Ephesians 2:20)

4. The Only Way of Salvation (v. 12)

Acts 4:12 – “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

Jesus is the only Savior (John 10:9, 14:6, 8:24; 1 John 5:12).

The world claims there are many paths that lead to God. In reality there are only two paths: the broad path that leads to destruction, and the narrow path that leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14).

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

1. Have you ever been persecuted for your Christian beliefs and being an open follower of Jesus? Where do you see persecution taking place in our culture today?
2. Why do you think the resurrection was so threatening to the Sadducees, and why is it still the central point of conflict in our culture today?
3. How do you think Peter went from denying Jesus three times to fearlessly declaring the gospel before the entire Sanhedrin?
4. Do you think it's unfair that there is only one way of salvation? How would you respond to people who claim that Christianity is narrow-minded and intolerant?