

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study guide is to facilitate the study of Acts 4:1-22 as a supplement to the sermon. It is based on my (Michael's) study and meditation on the passage. This handout can be used for personal study or community group conversation. (I hope you join a group!)

ACTS 4:1-22 ESV

1 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.

STRUCTURE

- I. Impotent religious leaders fail to stop the church's growth (4:1-4)
 - a. Apostles arrested (4:1-3)
 - b. Church grows anyway (4:4)
- II. Impotent religious leaders failed to stop Jesus (4:5-12)
 - a. Apostles interrogated (4:5-7)
 - b. Peter preaches fire anyway (4:8-12)
 - i. Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit (4:8)
 - ii. Peter spotlights their cruelty (4:9)
 - iii. Peter spotlights Jesus (4:10-12)
 - 1. The Jesus whom you crucified is the One who healed the cripple (4:10)
 - 2. The Jesus whom you rejected is the cornerstone of God's eschatological temple (4:11)
 - 3. Total salvation is found in Him alone (4:12)
- III. Impotent religious leaders fail to silence the apostles (4:13-22)
 - a. Religious leaders astonished at their boldness (4:13)
 - b. Silencers of free speech are themselves silenced (4:14-22)
 - i. Silenced by the miracle (4:15-18)
 - ii. Silenced by the apostles' unyielding boldness (4:19-20)
 - iii. Silenced by the people praising God (4:21-22)

GENERAL COMMENTARY:

Acts 1-3 are exciting and powerful; Acts 4 is the beginning of controversy. The power of the early church's formation as a "new temple" people inevitably leads to persecution by temple authorities—the "old temple" people, if you will. This controversy will reach a boiling point in Acts 7, with the death of the first martyr, Stephen, which leads into Acts 8:1, the persecution that scatters the church from Jerusalem.

There are three major movements in this section, all of which communicate the same theme: the "new temple" of Jesus cannot be stopped. It can be arrested (4:1-3), but the church will grow anyway; it can be interrogated, but bold witnesses will preach anyway (4:4-8); it can be legally harassed, but Jesus will perform undeniable signs (4:15-18), empower His witnesses (4:19-20), and expand the boundary of His temple (4:21-22). The religious leaders are impotent before the continuing work of Jesus among and through His people.

And these aren't just any religious leaders, either. Annas and Caiaphas directly contributed to the crucifixion of Jesus. By mentioning their names, Luke builds tension: will the disciples of Jesus suffer the same fate as their Lord? In a sense, they would escape in a way that Jesus did not. The religious leaders "let them go" with empty threats. But in another sense, Peter shows them, Jesus did not lose by being crucified. Rather, He became the fulfillment of Psalm 118:22, a "chief cornerstone" of the temple—"rejected" by its builders, but "marvelous" in God's eyes. In short, Jesus became the centerpiece of God's "new temple" people by means of their crucifixion. Considering this, both Jesus and the apostles come out on top. That is the main idea of this whole section. You can't stop Jesus. Even when you oppose Him, He continues to work through His Spirit empowered church, granting signs, boldness, and expansion.

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

1 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.

—"And as they were speaking to the people":

- The religious leaders interrupted them, which intensifies the moment. Imagine police interrupting a church service to arrest the pastor, mid-sermon.
- It wasn't just Peter, but also John, who spoke to the people. It probably wasn't a singular sermon, but rather a long dialogue, interspersed with monologues from both apostles.

—"priests... captain of the temple... Sadducees": The priests oversaw the work of the temple (especially the sacrifices). The "captain" policed it and was second in charge only to the high priest. The Sadducees were very wealthy, powerful, and enmeshed with Roman power (thus, fearing the apostles' devotion to Christ over Caesar). Theologically, they disbelieved the resurrection, which explains their ire (see v. 2).

Furthermore, they weren't expecting a Messiah, for they believed the messianic age began a few hundred years prior, during the Maccabean period. For these reasons, they launched both of the initial waves of persecution (4:1; 5:17).

—"proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead":

- It was by means of union with Christ that the apostles proclaimed Christ. When we abide in Him, we bear much fruit (Jhn. 15:8).
- This seems to mean more than that they merely proclaimed Christ's resurrection; they proclaimed the doctrine of resurrection. The apostles saw Jesus as the "firstfruits" of a future resurrection (1 Cor. 15). Christ's resurrection and ours are linked, even though they come at different times.
- This would have been a surprise, even to Jews who believed in a resurrection. Daniel 12:2 teaches a general resurrection of the righteous and wicked at the end of the age, but Christ's "firstfruits" resurrection shocked them (even though it was foretold by the prophets).

—"until the next day because it was already evening":

- Peter and John arrived at 3pm, the hour of prayer, but they are arrested around 7 or 8pm. This was a long meeting.
- The trial of these apostles is beginning to resemble that of Jesus.

—Schreiner: "Chapter 4 introduces a theme that will be sustained throughout the rest of the narrative: opposition. The account is depicted as a trial narrative and has similarities to Jesus's passion account. By providing these parallels, Luke indicates the body of Christ undergoes the same hostility as their Head. The temple authorities spurn Jesus again by rejecting his witnesses. Like in the rest of Acts, the servants are

on trial for preaching Jesus's exaltation." Schreiner continues in a footnote, which largely relies on Fitzmyer's work: "In both trial narratives [of Jesus and now the apostles] the temple leaders gather to adjudicate in the morning (Luke 22:66; Acts 4:5-6); Peter plays an especially prominent role (Luke 22:56; Acts 4:13); there is no evidence of guilt (Luke 23:4, 14-15, 22; Acts 4:21); and the people react similarly (Luke 19:47; Acts 4:21). The same trial pattern will also appear in the life of Paul narrated at the end of Acts."

—Schreiner: "The temple challenge begins here and extends through chapters 7 as the conflict between the new temple people and the temple authority develops..."

4 But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

—"many": Christianity has often been depicted as something like a "cult" in the minds of Jews. This has some truth to it, but if our perception of a cult is that it's a small splinter group, then the portrayal is not accurate. Christianity took the world by storm.

—"who heard the word believed": there's no other way to believe! People must hear the word, which means we must preach it. If we feel frustrated that God doesn't save enough people, we must first ask ourselves, "How much seed am I sowing?"

—Statements about the growth of the Jerusalem Church in Acts:

- [Act 2:41, 47 ESV] 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. ... 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.
- [Act 4:4 ESV] 4 But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.
- [Act 5:14 ESV] 14 And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women
- [Act 6:7 ESV] 7 And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

—What do we learn from these statements of growth?

- Growth is a blessing.
- To be added to the Lord is to be added to the church. We can't be part of Christ if we've never been part of a church (assuming normal circumstances). Christ and His church are one.
- The Lord Jesus is the One who adds people to His church. We can't do it.
- Nevertheless, we have a role: to preach the word.
- The movement gained steam (5:14: "more than ever") until the persecution broke out in 8:1, after which the Gospel spread outward from Jerusalem.
- Even the priestly class—insiders—became part of this burgeoning movement.
- Besides any "church growth" formula one might discern, Luke is trying to show us that Judah and Israel are truly being restored in the first century.
- Some have estimated the total number of converts to be about 25,000. If most of the five thousand men were married, that number doubles to perhaps 10,000, and if each has only two kids, we reach about 20,000. And the church continues growing after Acts 4:4. It seems to me that 25,000 is conservative.

—We should be careful about judging church health by church size. Small churches tend to judge big ones for their bigness, and big churches criticize small ones for smallness. While it's true that growth is a blessing, like every blessing, it is sovereignly given. We don't have control over whether God grows a church or not. Is a church in Iran not "blessed" because it has twenty people in it, hiding underground? The only two healthy churches in Revelation are in Smyrna and Philadelphia. The first one only has a little bit of money, and the second, just a little bit of strength. It's the "powerful" churches of Sardis and Laodicea that receive some of the greatest rebukes.

—Church health should be measured, not by what God does (or doesn't do), but what we do. Are we devoted to the apostles' teaching (Scripture), the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and to prayer? Are we guarding our life and doctrine closely? Are we growing in holiness? These biblical measures apply to any church, small or large.

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?"

—"rulers" = political/religious leaders; "elders" = respected religious voices, included both priests and laymen; "scribes" = trained biblical scholars.

—"Annas... Caiaphas... John... Alexander... high-priestly family":

- Annas: served as high priest from AD 6-15. He was the first high priest appointed by Rome. He was high priest at the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry (Lk. 3:2). Annas also interrogated Jesus (Jhn. 18:13, 19-24). Even though Luke calls him "high priest" here (he wasn't in the most technical sense), it is because he maintained his influence even after Rome deposed him in AD 15.
- Caiaphas: son-in-law of Annas, high priest during Jesus's trial (Jhn. 11:49; 18:13), even through Stephen's trial (Acts 7:1).
- John: maybe the son of Annas; high priest after Caiaphas.
- Alexander: Nobody knows this dude
- High-priestly family: basically, these guys just took turns leading. Even when one stepped down, he would maintain tremendous power.
- This list of names communicates that the same dangerous and powerful people who crucified their Lord now threaten them.

—"By what power or by what name did you do this?"

- "By what power" suggests the possibility that this miracle was antithetical to Yahweh's purposes, like those of false prophets (Deut. 13:1-5).
- "by what name": as mentioned before, the "name" of Jesus—which captures His character, essence, and everything He stands for—is a theme of this section.
- Dating at least back to Solomon's prayer, God's temple was where He placed His name, which is to say, His character and presence. See 1 Kings 8:14-51.
- Solomon built a temple so that God's "name" might be there, which is to say, that His reputation would be tied to it, His presence would rest in it, His character would be proven by it.
- When God says "My name shall be there," He's saying, "I will be there." When Israel acknowledges His name, they do so by turning to the temple, repenting, and praying. When a foreigner hears of His name—His reputation, which is associated with His "mighty hand" and power—and "comes and prays toward this house," God will hear him. When warriors turn to the house and pray, God will hear. When exiles turn to the house and pray, God will hear.
- Luke, then, is not just using "the name" as shorthand for Yahweh or Jesus; in addition to that, he is reminding us of the temple. The battle over the apostles' preaching and doctrine, even more centrally, is a battle over the temple. Where does God's name now dwell? In brick and mortar? Or in the One who became flesh? Peter's sermon will answer this. Jesus is the One "greater than the temple" (Mat. 12:6). When they destroyed the body of Jesus—the temple—He promised to raise it again in three days (Jn. 2:19). It's not like Jesus's body was a symbolic temple, pointing to the structural reality. Far from it! The temple itself was a figure, a shadow, made by human hands, and incapable of housing God's presence fully. What was it a shadow of? Jesus. Jesus is our greater temple. The tabernacle and temple were not the realities; He was and is. Furthermore, the church that is "in Him" becomes a temple, where the Spirit is pleased to dwell.

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.

—"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said...":

- Peter was filled with the Spirit in Acts 2:4, and he will again be filled in 4:31. The filling of the Spirit is temporary and repeatable. This is distinct from the baptism of the Spirit, which is a one-time event. Here are my definitions of the baptism vs. filling of the Spirit from the sermon on October 2, 2022:
 - **Filling of the Holy Spirit:** the temporary, repeatable, empowerment of the Holy Spirit for testifying to Jesus.
 - **Baptism of the Spirit:** The promise of the Father, by the work of the Son, to immerse new believers in the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of incorporating them into Christ's body—the church.
- The filling of the Holy Spirit is typically associated with "boldness" (4:13, 29, 31), which—appearing three times in one chapter—is a theme of this section.

—“concerning a good deed done to a crippled man”: Luke’s apologetic against the religious leaders is to show how unreasonable their arrest was and how innocent the apostles were. In their cultural context, people trusted the religious leaders. The crowds would have naturally lent an ear to criticisms against Christianity for this reason.

—The religious leaders are only repeating the error they formerly committed against Jesus. They killed God’s representative, Jesus, who was vindicated by resurrection. Now they attack God’s representatives, the apostles, who are vindicated by another “raising” of sorts—the crippled man.

—“by what means”: again, it is not by their “power or piety” (3:12) but by Jesus. Jesus continues to heal from heaven, just as He healed while on earth.

—“healed”:

- This could be translated as “saved”. Probably, it refers to both salvation from sin and healing from infirmity.
- Stott: “We notice the ease with which Peter moves from healing to salvation, and from the particular to the general. He sees one man’s physical cure as a picture of the salvation which is offered to all in Christ.”
- Schreiner: “The healing of the crippled man was not merely a medical restoration but a comprehensive, multidimensional salvation. Healing is salvation.”

—“and to all the people of Israel”: the rest of the Jews do not appear to be present, but Peter makes his intentions clear. The leaders want him to shut up, but he intends to shout Christ’s Lordship from the rooftops.

—“Jesus Christ of Nazareth”: “Nazareth” emphasizes his earthly origin but “Christ” is Peter’s way of saying that Jesus fulfills the prophecies of the “coming One.”

—Peter’s boldness has thus far been shown by (1) condemnation of the religious leaders for arresting them for a good deed, (2) condemnation of the religious leaders for doing the same to Jesus, (3) expressed willingness to preach this message to “all Israel”, (4) naming Jesus the “Christ”, (5) proclaiming that Jesus has been “raised from the dead” to the Sadducees, who did not believe in resurrection and arrested them on account of that very doctrine (4:2). Soon (in 4:11-12), Peter’s (and John’s) boldness will also be evidenced by (6) claiming that Jesus is the cornerstone of a new and better temple, and as such, (7) fulfills Psalm 118, (8) and offers salvation on this exclusive basis.

—I feel challenged by this boldness.

- In our day, abortion rights and issues of sexual identity are being pushed on the church, with many capitulating and re-writing Scripture to agree with culture. It requires boldness to speak against this.
- “boldness” is of course not the same as obnoxiousness. More on that when we get to the definition of boldness in 4:13.
- Besides these cultural issues bleeding into the church, there is the challenge about God’s wrath (and, related, the exclusivity of Christ to save). I’m thinking of my friend Michael Miller, who spoke at a conference with someone who claimed God does not judge. He texted me and a few other guys about what he should say when he got up next to speak. If it hadn’t been heresy, we would have said to just stay silent. Christians disagree among themselves on some things. But since it is heresy to say God doesn’t judge (for it maligns His character), we told him unanimously to confront it. And he did. Publicly. As we see in Galatians 2:11, Paul rebukes Peter publicly because his sin was public. I expect more of these kinds of issues to arise as our culture descends into further moral and doctrinal confusion.
- Whether it be in official or unofficial capacities, we can’t live for God without boldness. All of us will face a time when we have to confront sin. May we do so not only boldly, but also gently, lest we fall into the same trap (Gal. 6:1-2).

11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.

—As we have been saying, Jesus is the new temple. This is a quote from Psalm 118:

“22 The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. 23 This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.”

—The verse was sung as part of Israel’s pilgrimage to Jerusalem during major feasts. It was a Hallel Psalm. Like we sing Christmas songs at Christmastime, they sang Psalm 118 (among others) in the buildup to major feasts.

—Schnabel: this was “a processional psalm begun outside the gates of the temple and continued inside.”

—Just as Israel made pilgrimage to worship in the temple by singing this song, we as Christians draw near to Jesus, our true and greater temple, singing of Him as the cornerstone of worship.

—The Psalm, fittingly, is about salvation. In Christ, our true temple, does His blood forgive our sins, that we might be saved from them.

—The verse is quoted/alluded to elsewhere in the New Testament also:

- Mat 21:42: Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"
- Mar 12:10: Have you not read this Scripture: "'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;
- Luk 20:17: But he looked directly at them and said, "What then is this that is written: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'?"
- Eph 2:20: built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,
- 1Pe 2:6-7: For it stands in Scripture: "'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.' So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.'"

—In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the setting is the same. Jesus is teaching in the temple, and his parables indict the religious leaders for their obstinance in rejecting all the prophets, and ultimately, Him. In this context, He quotes Psalm 118 against them. Jesus is showing, from within the temple precincts, that a new temple is being built. And this temple is built on Him, the precious cornerstone, whom the "builders"—the religious leaders—rejected.

—The cornerstone was the one laid first, around which all the others were set. The cornerstone "determined the location, direction and size of the building" (Schnabel). Likewise, Jesus determines the location of His church (it is global), the direction it faces (heavenward), and the size of it (large enough to fit every tongue, tribe, and nation).

—Ephesians 2 and 1 Peter 2 speak about the church being a temple, with Christ as the cornerstone. Ephesians adds that prophets and apostles hold a foundational role, for they bring the revelation of full Gentile inclusion in the people of God (3:5). Peter laces together three prophecies about a stone: Isaiah 28:16; Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14:

- *[Isa 28:16 ESV] 16 therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.'*
- *[Psa 118:22 ESV] 22 The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.*
- *[Isa 8:14 ESV] 14 And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem*

—Beale (quoted by Schreiner): "Acts 4:11 is the most direct identification of Christ as the establishment of the new temple in the book of Acts."

—Clowney (quoted by Schreiner): "In Christ is realization. It is not so much that Christ fulfills what the temple means; rather Christ is the meaning for which the temple existed... The coming of the true supersedes the figurative. The view of the temple made with hands is destroyed, for its symbolism is fulfilled."

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."

—"And there is salvation in no one else": What Peter just said about Christ as our new temple links with salvation being found only in the name of Jesus. How?

- Remembering Solomon's prayer at the temple's dedication, Israel looked to "it" for salvation, meaning that they looked to the One who dwelt there.
- They looked to the temple for salvation from sin, drought, famine, war, etc. Centrally, the issue of sin drives the others, for catastrophes were consequences for sin. Issues of sin (11x) and forgiveness (5x) dominate Solomon's prayer. Thus, when Peter says that "salvation is in no one else," both he and his hearers would have centrally understood this as "salvation from sins through forgiveness."
- In Peter's Pentecost sermon, he also talks about salvation from the Day of the Lord judgment (2:21) and from their "crooked generation" (2:40). These were all related. To have their sins forgiven would save them from the Lord's judgment against their generation in AD 70, when God allowed the

temple to be destroyed. Granted, the consummate Day of the Lord happens not until Christ returns, but Peter warned that “generation” because before Jesus returns to judge the world, He judged His own nation, Israel, who refused to heed Peter’s warning. Forgiveness from sin, from the Day of the Lord, and from a crooked generation all relate, for they each deal with our need to be made right. When Peter tells his audience in Acts 4 that salvation is in no one else, they would have understood this as an appeal to be made right with God (thus saving them from sin and the judgment of their wicked generation).

- In the first century there were many false assurances of salvation. Some thought they were automatically saved because they were Jews (Matt. 3:9); some, because they were good (Lk. 18:9-14); and some because of their ministry for Jesus (Matt. 7:21-23). But we cannot save ourselves. It is not who we are or what we’ve done that saves us; it’s who Jesus is and what He did that saves us.
- Peter’s teaching about salvation shows that these religious leaders stand in danger of something they think impossible: being judged by God. Jesus—not temple access—has become the defining measure of whether one is in or out.
- The exclusivity of Christ is something people try to debate today, but it was no debate for Jesus and the apostles:
 - [Jhn 4:23-24 ESV] 23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."
 - [Jhn 14:6 ESV] 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.
 - [1Co 1:21 ESV] 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.
 - [Rom 10:13-15 ESV] 13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"
 - [1Jo 2:22-23 ESV] 22 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.
- Why is Christ the only way?
 - Christ alone was born of a virgin, pointing to His humanity and divinity, both of which were necessary for Christ to pay for sin (as a human, Christ could die; as God, He could pay for sin).
 - Christ alone lived a perfect life, making Him capable of paying for sin.
 - Christ alone paid the price.
- But what about religious seekers? Will God make an exception for them? Cornelius is a great example of a pious seeker. Despite his prayers, alms, and overall righteous life, even he needed faith in Jesus to be saved (see Acts 10-11). Religious seekers will not go to heaven unless they place faith in Jesus.

—“for there is no other name under heaven”:

- I come back to Solomon’s prayer, for it shows us how Jews viewed the temple. Not only does Solomon talk often about the “name” of God dwelling in the temple (15x), but he also often mentions “heaven” (14x) in his prayer (1 Ki. 8). Jews associated the temple with heaven, for it provided the intersection between heaven and earth.
- Now, the intersection between heaven and earth is the incarnate Son of God.
- Schreiner: “By saying there is no other name under heaven, Peter recalls the ascension narrative and restructures geography in terms of Christ’s sovereign reign.”

—“given among men”: the name of Jesus was “given” as a gift from God to mankind.

—“salvation in no one else... no other name”: the double negative intensifies the warning. It’s like saying, “Nobody—and I mean absolutely no one on earth—can be saved apart from Christ.” Lest there be doubt, the double negative clarifies.

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.

—"boldness":

- See commentary on vv. 8-10, where I comment on eight ways in which Peter/John show boldness.
- Other translations: "courage" (NIV); "confidence" (NASB); "openness" (YLT)
- Vine's Expository Dictionary:
 - (a), primarily, "freedom of speech, unreservedness of utterance," Act 4:29, 31; 2Cr 3:12; 7:4; Phm 1:8; or "to speak without ambiguity, plainly," Jhn 10:24; or "without figures of speech," Jhn 16:25;
 - (b) "the absence of fear in speaking boldly; hence, confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, without any connection necessarily with speech;" the RV has "boldness" in the following; Act 4:13; Eph 3:12; 1Ti 3:13; Hbr 3:6; 4:16; 10:19, 35; 1Jo 2:28; 3:21; 4:17; 5:14
 - (c) the deportment by which one becomes conspicuous, Jhn 7:4; 11:54, acts openly, or secures publicity, Col 2:15.
- Relevant cross-references for "boldness" (Gk. *parresia*)
 - [Mar 8:32 ESV] 32 And he said this **plainly**. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.
 - [Jhn 7:4, 13 ESV] 4 For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known **openly**. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." ... 13 Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke **openly** of him.
 - [Jhn 10:24 ESV] 24 So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us **plainly**."
 - [Jhn 18:20 ESV] 20 Jesus answered him, "I have spoken **openly** to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret.
 - [Act 28:31 ESV] 31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all **boldness** and without hindrance.
 - [Heb 4:16 ESV] 16 Let us then with **confidence** draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
- Schnabel: "In Greek literature this term has primarily a political meaning, describing the right and the willingness to express one's opinion freely."
- Peter was completely plain and unhindered. He did not sugar-coat his message with flattery to soften the offense; he did not water down the message to avoid offense; he did not preach a different message to powerful people than he did to the general public. He was open, plain, bold, and confident. We must be the same. We need not add offense to the gospel by being obnoxious or belittling; the gospel is already offensive enough without our additions. We must neither add unnecessary offense nor subtract necessary offense.
- Practically, to the Jews, the offense of the Gospel was that salvation was found in Jesus—not in their Jewishness, their holiness, or their service. For the Pharisees, circumcision would become a battleground, for it spoke of their special covenant, their Jewishness. For the Sadducees, the doctrine of resurrection was additionally offensive. For the Gentiles, the cross was offensive for its foolishness—a crucified deity (1 Cor. 1).
- In our day, what is the offense of the Cross?
 - Most people don't care whether we believe Christ gets us to heaven—as long as He does so in the context of pluralism. That is, if Christ is one among many ways of salvation, no one has a problem with it. As it was then, the exclusivity of Christ's salvation is part of the offense. We should not shy away from telling people that Jesus is the only way to be saved. This is not a doctrine we only teach on the backside, after conversion. Peter preached it on the frontside, and so should we.
 - Where one stands on abortion and homosexuality is becoming an issue of persecution. On the surface, this is not the offense of the Cross, but rather, of the moral stipulations associated with Christianity. This issue runs deeper, however. Once we really understand these issues, we realize that they actually are part of the offense of the Cross, for they point to the exclusivity of Christ. I'm reminded of the quote by Tim Keller:

Roman Empire: 'You Christians are too exclusive. You threaten the social order because you won't honor all deities.'

Modern West: 'You Christians are too exclusive. You threaten the social order because you won't honor all identities.'

In the past Truth was found outside yourself.

Today Truth is found inside yourself.

That makes many identities into a kind of God.

—"uneducated, common men":

- They criticized Jesus in the same way.
 - Jesus was uneducated: "The Jews therefore marveled, saying, 'How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied' (Jn. 7:15)?"
 - Jesus was common: [Mat 13:55-57 ESV] 55 Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? 56 And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" 57 And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household."
- The disciples were ordinary individuals who lacked formal theological education, but the spread of the Gospel does not rely on these things.
- Why would their lack of education affect their ability to speak courageously? I think "boldness" here means courage, but it means more than courage. They plainly articulate the faith. There is a liberty in Peter's preaching, not only to share before a hostile audience, but to carefully exposit difficult texts and bring them to bear, in the face of a hostile audience.

—"astonished": Recent uses of "astonished" (Gk. *thaumazo*) in Acts:

- [Act 2:7 ESV] 7 And they were amazed and **astonished**, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"
- [Act 3:12 ESV] 12 And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you **wonder** at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?"
- People were astonished at tongue-speaking, then they were astonished at the miracle, and now in Acts 4:13, they are astonished at the apostles' boldness. Each of these is a work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit-filled church will cause unbelievers to wonder at our miracles and our boldness.

—"and they recognized that they had been with Jesus":

- This was Jesus's discipleship call in Mark 3: 13 *And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach 15 and have authority to cast out demons.*
- Before the disciples were ever sent "out to preach and have authority to cast out demons," they were called to "be with Him." Ministry flows out of friendship with Jesus. Conformity to Christ is more caught than taught. Now the disciples reflect their Master's boldness.
- My definition of a team is, "friends on a mission," and it is based on these verses. Jesus is the only One who didn't need a team, yet He chose to have one. It was rooted in friendship. He wanted to be with them because He "desired" them. Friends want to be with each other because of the pleasure it brings them to be in each other's company. Jesus loved His disciples, and this expressed itself in the form of time spent. There is no substitute for this.
- Jesus's model in Mark 3 (reinforced in Acts 4) shows us both, (1) that all ministry flows out of friendship with Jesus, and (2) we all need a team that doesn't just serve together but finds pleasure in being together for its own sake.
- Schreiner: "Their authority came not through positions, political stations, or social status but rather their proximity to Christ."

—"But... they had nothing to say in opposition":

- Jesus's words in Luke 12 are fulfilled: 11 And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.
- Matthew's version adds, "For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matt. 10:20).
- Another fulfillment: "I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict" (Lk. 21:15).

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."

—Some critics have said, "There's no way Luke could have known what happened in a secret council meeting!" In Acts 6:7, however, "many priests became obedient to the faith." Most likely, at least one of these persecutors converted and leaked the story.

—"a notable sign":

- It's noteworthy that they call this a "sign" and not just a "miracle." That they acknowledge this as a sign probably suggests that they believe the miracle came from God. This would suggest they believe the disciples' message—in that they acknowledge the facts and perhaps even the interpretation—but they just don't care because they want to stay in power. To confess the name of Jesus would put them out with their friends.
- It is also possible that they see the "signs" as being counterfeits, like what Paul says about the "false signs" of the man of lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:9).
- I would lean toward the first interpretation because "signs" in Acts (13x) always refers to confirming miracles from God and because there is no modifier like the one we find in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 ("false" signs).

—The leaders are portrayed as power-hungry, desperate, and wicked.

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.

—They can't convict them of a crime, but they don't want to acquit them, so the "compromise" by telling them to stop preaching.

—"Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than God, you must judge":

- Religious freedom is the law of God, regardless of whether it's the law of man. Rulers who prohibit worship and proselytization violate God's greater law—the moral law that expresses His perfect character—which is why Peter and John vow to obey God rather than man.
- Where God's moral law and man's written law contradict, we are not just free but obligated to obey God, not man.

—"for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard":

- We should feel this same sort of urgency. I am reminded of Jeremiah 20:9: If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot."
- I am also reminded of 1 Cor. 9:16: For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!
- We tend to think, "It's so hard to share the Gospel!" We should instead feel the opposite: it should be hard NOT to share the Gospel! If it's easy to never evangelize, there's a problem.
- "what we have seen and heard": witnesses see, hear, and report. This is a reminder that the apostles' message was not just doctrinal, but testimonial. The Christian faith is more than philosophy. It is human history. Christ rose.

—If Peter and John had merely healed the man, they would have never been arrested. It's not the works of the Gospel but the message of the Gospel that offends. We are not being faithful evangelists if we preach with our lives but not our words. For that matter, we are not being faithful if we preach with our words but not our lives. We must both LIVE and PREACH the Gospel in order to be faithful.

—"for all were praising God": these men were religious leaders, yet they felt the need to oppose increased worship of God among His people. Talk about wolves in sheep's clothing! The very purpose for their job title ("priest") was being fulfilled—more people worshipping God—and they sought to end it!