

THE BOOK OF ACTS | GOD'S REVELATION OF TRANSITION

SESSION 14: ACTS 4:3-17

ACTS 4:1-4 | FIVE-THOUSAND BELIEVERS

- Verses 1-2 – *see session 13*
- Verse 3 –
 - The leadership **laid hands on them** (i.e.: *arrested them*) and put them into the prison for the night, **for it was now eventide**.
 - The compound archaic word **eventide** is from *even* (short for *evening*) and *tide* (a specific point of time (like *yuletide*)).
- Verse 4 –
 - The belief was that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, for this was **the word** (and the only word) which has been preached thus far in Acts.
 - Note that there has been *nothing* about trusting the completed work of Christ on the cross.
 - It would go beyond what this verse says to make these believers into men who had placed their faith in Jesus for "personal, by-grace, die-and-go-to-heaven" kind of salvation.
 - It appears that the **total number of the men was about five thousand** rather than 5,000 new believers.

ACTS 4:5-22 | PETER AND JOHN BEFORE ANNAS AND CAIAPHAS

- Verses 5-6 –
 - Annas was appointed high priest by the Roman Governor Quirinius in 7AD, but removed from office in 15AD. In 18AD his son-in-law, Caiaphas became the appointed high priest, but since Annas and Caiaphas are often mentioned together, it appears that Annas held political sway even after losing his position.
 - Nothing is known of John and Alexander, other than they appear to be prominent **kindred of the high priest**.
- Verse 7 –
 - The priestly family recognizes that there is a supernatural **power** or **name** behind the work that had been done.
 - This is evidence that the early apostolic assembly was far from "business as usual." The apostles possessed the ability to "bind and release" in the name of Jesus.
- Verses 8-10 - Peter could not be more clear, nor more bold, in his answer. There was absolutely no hesitation nor concealment of the truth of the matter.
- Verse 11 –
 - Having given his answer (and the requested information), Peter boldly gives *more* than the officials asked for.
 - Peter refers to Psalm 118:22 and connects that Psalm with Jesus and the **builders** with the Temple officials.
 - Psalm 118 is a prophetic Psalm about the future salvation of the Jewish nation that will occur at the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom (verse 24 is the familiar verse, "**this is the day which the Lord hath made...**")
 - Peter's use of the verse here is a means of pointing out that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah.

- Verse 12 –
 - Jewish theology was (and is) that the Messiah would bring **salvation**.
 - Since the days of Paul, we know salvation to be individual and immediate.
 - In Peter's day, the salvation was future and physical (see Luke 1:71, as well as note that the word **saved** is σώζω [sozo], the same word that is used in verse 9 speaking of the man who was **made whole**).
 - Both *today* and in Peter's day salvation was only available through Jesus. But so far in the book of Acts we have not found *by grace through faith* salvation, but *repent and be baptized and recognize Jesus as Messiah for the nation* salvation.
- Verse 13 –
 - The Jewish rulers, amazed by the **boldness of Peter and John** recognized that **they were unlearned and ignorant**.
 - The Greek word translated **unlearned** is ἀγράμματος [agrammatos] (without letters or without grammar, a reference to their basic level of education and lack of standing among the academic elite).
 - The word for **ignorant** is ἰδιώτης [idiotes], from which we get *idiot*, but not with the same meaning that the modern word carries.
 - In Greek usage outside the New Testament the word simply meant "private citizen" or "outsider."
 - The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament says, "*In general it is evident that the term ἰδιώτης takes on its concrete sense from the context or the specific contrast. There can be no fixed rendering, though it always maintains the basic sense of one who represents his own interests as compared with the official or public interest.*"¹
 - Because these men were *not experienced in public speaking and an audience before high officials*, the officials **marveled** and also recognized them as having **been with Jesus**. This last phrase should not be spiritualized, but simple expresses the fact that Peter and John were recognized as His followers.
- Verse 14 –
 - The **healed man standing with them** was a very inconvenient truth for the Temple officials.
 - The miracle was public and undeniable (so unlike the so-called miracles of today's charismatic circles).
- Verses 15-17 –
 - Peter and John (and, presumably, the healed man) were told to **go aside out of the council** (that is, the Sanhedrin, as in the Greek συνέδριον [sunhedrion]).
 - The council **conferred among themselves** and determined that the miracle was too undeniable to refute, and also recognized that **this name** of Jesus was their problem, so they determined to **threaten them** about speaking in the name of Jesus.
 - How Luke was aware of this closed door meeting is unknown, save the fact that the council came forth with a public declaration in verse 18, and, with 70 members, there likely were no real secrets.

¹ Heinrich Schlier, "ἰδιώτης," ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 216.