

## The Acts of the Apostles

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### **“No Other Name”**

Acts 4:1-31

It has been six weeks since we last studied in the Book of Acts.

Acts of the Apostles is the sequel to Luke’s Gospel and I rather like the way Luke introduces this historical record:

Acts 1:1-3

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, <sup>2</sup> until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, <sup>3</sup> to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. NKJV

Luke writes to Theophilus, who is probably not an actual person, but a literary device, a name that Luke made up from two Greek words, Theos & philos, which mean “Lover of God.”

Luke wrote about “of all that Jesus began both to do and teach....”

At the end of Luke’s Gospel and as he begins Acts, he reports that Jesus ascended to heaven. Jesus told His disciples that it was necessary for Him to leave them in His physical body but that He would send His Holy Spirit, the Comforter, another like Himself, to continue the work of the Kingdom of God working through vessels of clay, His followers.

At the end of Acts 3 we find Peter and John, who through the power of Jesus’ name, and having healed the man who was lame from his mother’s womb, are in the temple preaching Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah. Jesus of Nazareth is the Prophet God promised to Moses; a prophet like your brethren, a Man? Yes, the God-Man!

Things are about to get very intense for Peter and John.

#### Acts 4

1 Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, <sup>2</sup> being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. <sup>3</sup> And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. <sup>4</sup> However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

While Peter and John are still preaching the Gospel, that Jesus is the One all the prophets foretold, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees who hated Jesus turn their hatred toward His followers. First it is Peter and John as we have recorded in Acts 4. The persecution begins with the martyrdom of Stephen and continues until the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

We will have more to say about Stephen and Saul when we get to the passages in chapters 7 and 9, but for the sake of understanding what the early church experienced I will read the two accounts.

Stephen:

#### Acts 7:54-60

<sup>54</sup> When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with *their* teeth. <sup>55</sup> But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, <sup>56</sup> and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

<sup>57</sup> Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; <sup>58</sup> and they cast *him* out of the city and stoned *him*. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. <sup>59</sup> And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." <sup>60</sup> Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Saul:

Acts 9:1-6

Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup> and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. <sup>4</sup> Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

<sup>5</sup> And he said, "Who are You, Lord?"

Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

<sup>6</sup> So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"

Then the Lord *said* to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

It is soon after the crucifixion, about 30 AD. From that time until the late 60's AD before the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, Christian Jews were not allowed to go to the temple.

Try to imagine yourself being raised in the Hebrew religion of temple worship, the sacrifices and offerings, and then by the grace of God believing that Jesus is the fulfillment of everything that true temple worship pointed to, being denied access to the temple. The transition from temple worship to the worship in small groups in homes took about 40 years.

The Letter to the Hebrews was written, I believe by Paul, because I am not sophisticated enough to believe otherwise, to persuade the Hebrew Christians not to turn away from Jesus Christ and return to the system of temple worship.

They no longer need a temple, the place where God meets with man, because Jesus is the Temple. They no longer need to offer an animal sacrifice that pointed to the Christ because they have the true Sacrifice. They no longer need a Levite priest to intercede with God because they have the true High Priest, Jesus Christ!

Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament system; that system served its purpose, it is over, and it is never coming back!

Jesus prophesied about the end of the temple worship when He spoke to the woman at the well in Samaria.

John 4:19-26

<sup>19</sup> The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you *Jews* say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. <sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. <sup>24</sup> God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

<sup>25</sup> The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things."

<sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am *He*."

Acts 4:1-4

<sup>1</sup> Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, <sup>2</sup> being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. <sup>3</sup> And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. <sup>4</sup> However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

The Roman military allowed the Jews to gather for their feasts but a large crowd at any other time could signal trouble. Here we have about 5000 men and no doubt as many women, responding to the message of the resurrection of Jesus.

The Romans knew that the trial and crucifixion of Jesus was an injustice and they feared a rebellion could be started.

But the people who were most offended by the message of the resurrection was the Sadducees. The Sadducees did not believe in an afterlife, they did not believe in angels, so the resurrection of Jesus was a direct affront to their main teaching.

The captain of the temple guard was in charge of the temple police. Their job was to make sure that only "good" Jews were permitted to enter the temple.

The priests were the third group that were “greatly disturbed” by the message of the resurrection. They had just finished a course of evening sacrifices and the hour of prayer.

In the providence of God when the evening worship is about to start, a man who has been lame all of his life, who makes his living begging at the Gate called Beautiful, sees Peter and John about to go into the temple, asks them for alms.

Peter tells the man, “Look at us!” “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus of Nazareth rise up and walk.”

The man, who had never taken a step in over forty years, not only stands up, he walks and leaps for joy and praises God!

The Jews could not legally hold a trial at night although they had not compunction about holding the trial for Jesus at night.

#### Acts 4:5-11

<sup>5</sup> And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, <sup>6</sup> as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. <sup>7</sup> And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

The impact that the healing of the man had on the Jewish leaders, and the reason given by Peter for it, is seen in the fact that the entire ruling authority of the Jews was assembled. The Council of the Sanhedrin is indicated by the list of dignitaries gathered.

"By what power or by what name have you done this?"

Jesus had promised that when such an occasion came up that they would not have to worry about what to answer because the Holy Spirit would tell them what to say.

#### Luke 12:11-12

<sup>11</sup> "Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. <sup>12</sup> For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

Some ignorant preachers use this passage to excuse themselves from study and sermon preparation. The context is a court trial not a pulpit!

The very same people who condemned Jesus are about to be put on trial by Peter! Peter will be their judge, but Peter is also an evangelist.

Peter understands that the only difference between a lost man and a justified man is the sovereignty of God in the empowerment of the Gospel message.

About 30 years before Paul wrote to young Timothy, Peter knew what made the difference between the lost and the saved!

1 Cor 4:6-7

<sup>6</sup>And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

<sup>7</sup>For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

So Peter puts the Jewish rulers on trial.

<sup>8</sup>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: <sup>9</sup>If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, <sup>10</sup>let it be known to you all, 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 stands here before you whole. <sup>11</sup>This is the *'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'*

Peter's says that the good deed done to a helpless man was by the power of the Man you crucified, Jesus Christ of Nazareth! God raised Him from the dead! That's the power and the name by which this miracle was done!

Peter quotes from Psalm 118 and Isaiah 28:

Psalm 118:22

The stone *which* the builders rejected  
Has become the chief cornerstone.

Isaiah 28:16

Therefore thus says the Lord God:

"Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation,  
A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation;  
Whoever believes will not act hastily.

One of the best sermons that I ever read was by George Morrison with the title,  
"The Ignorance of the Architects."

The very ones, the "experts" in the Scriptures, the religious leaders of the Jews,  
should have recognized Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah but the "architects,"  
crucified Him!

The stone *which* the builders rejected Has become the chief  
cornerstone.

Notice the boldness of the man that was once afraid to tell a servant girl that he  
was with Jesus.

Acts 4:12

The "name" as it is used here means the authority or power of someone.

The Jewish rulers ask:

<sup>7</sup> And when they had set them in the midst, they asked,

"By what power or by what name have you done this?"

Peter answers:

<sup>10</sup> let it be known to you all, 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 stands here before you whole.

**Listen very carefully.** This may be the most important truth about Christianity that decides who is and who is not a Christian. This is not about what a person claims to be; this is about who Jesus is!

Acts 4:12

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

In America, indeed, in much of the world where Christianity is allowed to be openly expressed, even with that freedom of expression, the politically correct thing among many is pluralism. Pluralism very simply says that any and all religions are valid and that to claim that Jesus Christ is the only way to be with God is bigoted and wrong.

May the Lord Jesus and His Holy Spirit give me grace if I am ever threatened to be as bold as Peter and John as they stood before a hostile court.

Mohammed and Islam cannot save you!

The teachings of Buddha cannot save you!

The wisdom of Confucius cannot save you!

Following the Law of Moses cannot save you!

Not even the Virgin Mary can save you!

The issue is not what you believe or what I believe; the issue is the integrity of Jesus Christ!

Brother Walter's last two messages on John 14, "Show Us God," were excellent and there is no need for me to repeat what he taught about Jesus being God manifest in a human body; but what Jesus claimed for Himself is decisive.

Either you can believe what Jesus said about Himself or you can go to hell with all those who deny Jesus!

That may offend some of you but Paul was no less strong when he wrote to the Galatians and told them if they followed another gospel they would be accursed. That is simply a polite way to tell someone to go to hell.

Please hear me correctly; I don't want anyone to go to hell, but if you deny the exclusive claim that Jesus made for Himself, that is where you are headed if you don't repent and believe in the Gospel.

Please notice what is in the bulletin today:

**Three questions:**

**#1—Will anyone experience eternal conscious torment under God's wrath?**

**#2—Is the work of Christ necessary for salvation?**

**#3—Is conscious faith in Christ necessary for salvation?**

**These are three important questions John Piper asks in his new book entitled: *Jesus Christ—the Only Way to God. Must You Hear the Gospel to be Saved?***

John 14:1-11

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup> In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. <sup>4</sup> And where I go you know, and the way you know."

<sup>5</sup> Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"

<sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him,

**"I am the way, the truth, and the life.**

**No one comes to the Father except through Me.**

That then is the issue and the dividing point between being a Christian and claiming to be a Christian while denying Jesus Christ!

## Acts 4:13-22

What will the Jewish leaders do now?

<sup>13</sup> Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. <sup>14</sup> And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. <sup>15</sup> But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, <sup>16</sup> saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them *is* evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny *it*. <sup>17</sup> But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name."

<sup>18</sup> So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. <sup>20</sup> For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." <sup>21</sup> So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. <sup>22</sup> For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

Acts 6:7 gives us encouragement that not all of the Jewish leaders were blind to the truth:

Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

The word "marveled" or "astonished" in verse 13 includes admiration. Even though they were offended by Peter's message of the resurrection, they were impressed that this uneducated fisherman could argue with such power and logic. They also grudgingly acknowledged that "they had been with Jesus."

A formal education might help a person quite a bit; but as to spiritual understanding it has no benefit. The key is to be with Jesus in prayer, reading the Bible, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the Word of God.

There stands the man who was lame from his mother's womb and lived that way for over 40 years; and the power is in the name of Jesus.

One of the laws of the Sanhedrin was that an ignorant man could not be punished without first being warned. They cannot deny what is before them but they warn Peter and John, they "severely threaten them."

### Acts 4:23

Peter is no longer the man who is afraid to be with Jesus

And being let go, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.

Peter and John were faithful Jews who had just been kicked out of the temple and warned not to preach the name of Jesus.

### Acts 4:24-30

It is time for another prayer meeting. This whole episode began in the temple at the hour of prayer [3:1].

<sup>24</sup> So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You *are* God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, <sup>25</sup> who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:

*'Why did the nations rage,  
And the people plot vain things?  
<sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth took their stand,  
And the rulers were gathered together  
Against the LORD and against His Christ.'*

<sup>27</sup> "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together <sup>28</sup> to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. <sup>29</sup> Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, <sup>30</sup> by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

It is very important to see that they did not pray to be kept from physical harm; they prayed for **boldness** to speak the Word of God; 29.

They acknowledge the sovereignty of God in everything; 24, 28.

They go to the Scriptures.

The only Scriptures they had was the Old Testament; 25-26.

Now they understood that Messiah would conquer through suffering, the very thing that the Jewish leaders could not grasp; 27-28.

They place their entire trust in Jesus as His servants; 30.

#### Acts 4:31

Once again they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

<sup>31</sup> And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

The Gospel is “Christ died for sinners.”

Repent and believe in the Gospel!