

Sermon Title: No Other Name Under Heaven
Scripture Text: Acts 4:1-12 (Acts #9)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-19-23

Now come to the Book of Acts with me—Chapter 4. And as you come to the Book of Acts, remember that you are looking at the record of the beginning of what we are a part of (Matt. 16:18; Col. 1:18, 24). It is a worldwide phenomenon, now 20 centuries old; and it has stretched, and is stretching, to "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" on the planet (Rev. 5:9).

The Book of Acts is the history of approximately the first 30 years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is all about a time of transition. It is the historical record of the massive transition from the time of the "Old Covenant" (2 Cor. 3:14) to the "New Covenant" (Jer. 31:31; Lk. 22:20; 2 Cor. 3:6). This is the historical record of it; if you want the theological record of it, go read the Book of Hebrews—especially Chapters 8, 9, and 10. It is the transition from Israel as the focal point of the work of God on Earth to the Church as His chosen instrument (cf. Matt. 21:43; Rom. 11:25-27). And just a few years after the close of the Book of Acts, the Romans came through and destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, putting a divine exclamation point on the close of the Old Covenant (cf. Matt. 23:38; Lk. 19:44).

Acts begins with a "hundred and twenty" devoted followers of Jesus (1:15)—all of them Jews in Jerusalem. And by the end of this book, we see the Church *thriving*, and including *many thousands* of both Jews *and* Gentiles who believed in Jesus (Eph. 2:11-22; cf. Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11); and by the close of the Book of Acts, Gentiles *outnumbered* Jews significantly in the Church (cf. Rom. 11:5).

And through the years recorded in Acts, and shortly afterward, we also have going on this continued progressive revelation from God about His design for the church. This is a *whole new era* in His kingdom plan (Lk. 17:20-21; Eph. 3:4-6). The King came; He was rejected; He was crucified; He was buried; He rose again; He ascended to the Father; He's coming again—but in the meantime, the Kingdom of God continues to be built, but it's a whole different time: The King is enthroned, but not present (Matt. 28:18; Acts 3:20-21). And so we have this growth of the message of the Kingdom of God in the form of the "Gospel" that now spreads and travels (Matt. 24:14; cf. Lk. 24:47). And especially through the time of the Apostle Paul, but also Peter and John and James and Jude and the author of Hebrews, we have this further and further revelation of this design of God for this age which we call the Church—"the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12; cf. Col. 1:24). In Acts Chapter 1, Verse 8, Jesus predicted—and it is unfolding, as we see through this book—that the Holy Spirit would come, and then they would become His "witnesses," and they would take the Gospel in "Jerusalem" and "Judea," that area; then to the Samaritans; and then to the Gentiles: "to the remotest part of the earth."

Well, we have already seen Peter preaching to Jews in Jerusalem. In a few chapters, we are going to see God use Philip to spread the Gospel to the Samaritans—and, *wow*, talk about a *transition*! "Jews" *hated* "Samaritans" (Jn. 4:9; cf. 8:48). Samaritans *hated* Jews (Lk. 9:52-53). And yet, the same Gospel brought them together in Christ. And then, we are going to see Peter take the Gospel to the Gentiles. And then after that, God is going to take a man named Saul, who was a zealously rigorous persecutor of the church on behalf of the Jews—He's going to bring him to Christ, change his name to Paul, and make him a *special* Apostle to spread the Gospel to Gentiles throughout the Roman Empire.

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I want you to constantly keep that picture in mind as we see these early stages of this world-changing transition.

This book is actually Volume 2 of Luke's record of the life and ministry of Jesus. Volume 1 is what we call the Gospel of Luke, which chronicles from before Jesus' birth through His resurrection.

Now we have come into the Book of Acts. Where are we now?

Well, in Chapter 1, we saw the record of Jesus' ascension to the Father, after about 45 days after His resurrection. That day, He made that final promise that the Holy Spirit was going to come upon those who believed in Him, and they would become His "witnesses" from "Jerusalem...to the remotest part of the earth" (vs. 8). We are still talking about Jerusalem, today.

Then, the eleven remaining Apostles, and those "hundred and twenty" disciples who were gathered and "devoting themselves to prayer" (vs. 14) as they waited for the Holy Spirit, took on a project: During that time, they settled on the appointment of a man named "Matthias" to replace Judas Iscariot, who had defected and betrayed Jesus, and then committed suicide. So they rounded out the twelfth seat among the Apostles (cf. Matt. 19:28; Rev. 21:14).

Chapter 2 then records that incredible day during the feast of "Pentecost" (vs. 1)—that means it was 50 days after the day that Jesus was crucified; that was the day when the Holy Spirit came upon that group. And if you recall, there were three spectacular miracles that accompanied the arrival of the Holy Spirit and drew a *huge* crowd in Jerusalem. Peter preached to that crowd, and all the Apostles followed up with countless personal conversations. And the focus was all upon Jesus, who had sent the Spirit "from the Father" (Jn. 15:26). And the focus was also on how the leaders of the Jews had arranged for the Romans to put Jesus to death, but God had raised Him from the dead. And Peter's call to that group of people was to "Repent" (vs. 38)—"turn" (Ezek. 33:11; cf. Is. 55:7; Jer. 18:11; 25:5; Ezek. 14:6; 1 Thess. 1:9).

"Three thousand souls" turned to Christ that day and were saved (vs. 41). They were baptized to proclaim their allegiance to Jesus and to show their affiliation with one another and take their public stand that they were the followers of Jesus. They immediately became a brand new, tight-knit fellowship (vs. 44), who daily sat under the "teaching" of the "Apostles" (vs. 42); they celebrated the Lord's Table together (vs. 42b; cf. 1 Cor. 11:23-26); they prayed diligently (vs. 42); they ate their regular meals together, as well (vs. 46). I'm sure those people had no understanding of all that would follow, but *here we sit*: I think we are about 6,500 miles from Jerusalem; we are almost all Gentiles—and here we sit, *in Christ*, preaching the very same message that they did.

God continued to do more miracles among the Apostles that are mentioned, but not specified—most of them in the Book of Acts (2:43; 5:12; cf. 2 Cor. 12:12). And by the end of Chapter 2, we are told that *every day*, more and more people "were being saved" (vs. 47).

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Most of the public activity took place in the Temple, and that is going to set the stage for today. Where do you get 3,000 people together in First-Century Jerusalem? Well, there is *only one place* where you could *gather* that many people, and it was the Temple: the outer court of the Temple, and the area around the Temple. And they met there *to the total consternation* of the leaders of the Jews.

Chapter 3 records—we are not told exactly *how many* days, but not many days later, after Chapter 2, "Peter and John"—the Apostle Peter and the Apostle John—came "into the temple" in the afternoon; it was "the ninth hour," so about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, one of the scheduled times for public prayers in the Temple; and they went there customarily (vs. 1). And they healed a man who had never walked. That man had been sustained—and we are going to see a little bit later in our chapter, probably next week—for forty years by begging in the Temple. Friends and family would carry him to this "gate...called Beautiful" (vs. 2), the Beautiful Gate that went from the Court of the Gentiles to the Court of the Women; and there he would receive "alms"—charity—from people who came by in the Temple.

Well now, by the end of Chapter 3, we have *another* crowd gathered; because we have that guy who had never walked until Peter and John said, "I don't have any coins today, but I'll give you what I have: In the name of Jesus, get up and walk!" And now he is—remember the phrase?—"walking and leaping and praising God" (vs. 8). He draws another large crowd for another sermon for Peter; and *again*, Peter explained that this miracle was all about "Jesus" (vs. 16). He didn't line up people and say, "More miracles to come, just get in line here!" No, the *whole point* of his sermon was that this was done by the power of the risen Jesus Christ. And the "invitation" in that sermon: Chapter 3, Verse 19, the same thing as he said in Chapter 2: "Therefore repent and return"—Change your mind and turn around—"so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted)

Now, remember: They were heading to the Temple for the 3-o'clock-in-the-afternoon prayers. They stopped; they healed the man; and then Peter preached. I don't know how long he preached; I'm sure it's only a summary that's in the Book of Acts. Chapter 3 closes, and Chapter 4 opens, immediately after that event. It is not a logical place for a chapter break. As a matter of fact, the first word of Chapter 4 continues from the last words of Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 records the first instance of open persecution against the followers of Christ. The description of the events is actually pretty straightforward; but along the way, we are going to look at principles that we can apply—*even though* we are not Apostles; we are not Jews; we are not in the Temple; we aren't even in Jerusalem; we don't have Apostles around doing spectacular miracles; and at least for now, we are not being arrested for preaching the Gospel. But we are going to find out how to respond when that does come.

Back when I was working on my outline for this week—as always, my eyes were bigger than reality would allow—I thought, "It would be great to go through Verse 22!" And I fully intend to...next week.

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And I confess: I kind of like murder mysteries and whodunits and stuff like that, so you'll see the genre here. Here is how we might outline this:

First of all, the first three verses: You Are Under Arrest
Verse 4: The Evidence Against You Is Strong
Then, Verses 5 through 12: We Confess

Next time: Let's Offer A Deal To These Guys
And then: We Order You To Remain Silent (they hadn't watched TV yet; they thought it wasn't a "*right* to remain silent)
And then: The Deal Is Rejected

So, we will get there. Today, we are going to see the first 11 verses, and a little bit of 12.

First of all: You Are Under Arrest.

"As they were speaking..." (vs. 1) I told you: that connects right away to the end of Chapter 3. These people came and interrupted what was going on; they had had *enough* of these guys in *their* temple (cf. Matt. 27:18; Acts 5:17; 13:45; 17:5). "As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them..."

Now, we have to figure out who this group was that came and interrupted. First of all: It's "the priests"—those are the ones who served in the Temple; they had to be descendants of the Tribe of Levi; they are the ones who offered the sacrifices. We are told that there were 24 divisions of priests from all over the world; they rotated serving in the Temple in two-week shifts. So if you were a priest, out of every 48 weeks you would serve a two-week time; and otherwise, you would be at your home. And they came from all over Israel. If you want to make a connection: Luke Chapter 1, Verse 8 tells us about Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist; and it says "he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division" among the priests. So it happened to be his turn, and God arranged that providentially.

So you have a group of priests—an unknown number, but a pretty big crowd. And then, "the captain of the temple guard." That refers to the guy who was the head of the security force for the Temple; his name was Andy. If you don't know Andy, I'll introduce you later. With all the ceremonial regulation—formal activities that went on in the Temple—you couldn't just come there and freelance, so somebody had to keep order. So "the captain of the temple guard" answered directly to the High Priest, who kept everything under control. Especially at times like Pentecost and Passover and the Day of Atonement, there were also matters of crowd control; there would be thousands *more* people in Jerusalem than usual. So it was necessary to have people who made sure things were under control—so it was a legitimate role that they had.

We know that the Romans allowed the peoples that they conquered to remain free and keep their own ways of doing things, for the most part, as long as they faithfully paid their taxes to Rome, they didn't stir up rebellions, and they didn't commit crimes. That's why

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the Jews could have so much autonomy in Jerusalem. But there were limits—they were *not* an independent nation; Israel was never a fully independent nation from 586 B.C. until 1948 A.D. That, in itself, is a miracle attesting to the accuracy of the Word of God. But the Jews could only do so much. They could not "put anyone to death" (Jn. 18:31)—that's why they had to manipulate the Romans to arrange for the Romans to crucify Jesus. But they *could* have their own security. So this is not Roman soldiers; this is "the temple guard"—Jews coming to deal with this situation.

It is not hard to see why these guys were disturbed: They now have this new group of *thousands* of people who keep showing up *every day*, filling up all of the public areas in the outer court of the Temple and all around that part of town—but they were *not* doing the things that Jews normally did!

Notice, it also mentions "the Sadducees." "The Sadducees" refers to one of the four groups of leadership among the Jews at that time.

One group is called the "Essenes"—they were the reclusive, nerdy, scholarly types who never did anything in public; you would probably not even know about the Essenes unless you've heard of the "Dead Sea Scrolls"; we are sure glad that they hid their library up in the mountains above the Dead Sea. That's the Essenes.

The "Zealots" were the other end of the spectrum from the Essenes. They were the political activists; they wanted to overthrow Rome. They led the charge to try to get Jesus to be a King because they thought, "He can get us out from under the thumb of Rome." It didn't work out for them at that time (cf. Jn. 6:15). One of Jesus' disciples, "Simon"—he's called "Simon the Zealot" (Matt. 10:4)—he had been a member of the Zealot party before he came to Jesus.

Then there were the ones you've heard even more about: the ultra-legalistic "Pharisees." The Pharisees controlled what went on in the synagogues, where most people worshipped most of the time (Jn. 12:42). They hated Jesus because Jesus was constantly exposing their self-righteousness (Lk. 18:11-12), their "hypocrisy" (Matt. 23:28), and their teaching of salvation-by-works—they believed that they, "in themselves," by their works, "were righteous" (Lk. 18:9; cf. Acts 15:5; Phil. 3:4-6).

The "Sadducees" were numerically much smaller than the Pharisees, but the Sadducees held the political power and the control of the priesthood and what went on in the Temple (Acts 5:17). Theologically, the Pharisees and the Sadducees were *extremely* different: The Pharisees were the ultra-rightwing arch-conservatives, and the Sadducees were the theological liberals. The Sadducees did not accept all 22 books of the Old Testament (it's 22 in Hebrew; we would say 39); they accepted only Genesis through Deuteronomy—the "Torah," the Law. They considered the rest of the Old Testament as sort of like lightweight commentary on the Torah. And as we will see later: Yes, they *were* very liberal, theologically; we are going to see in the Book of Acts where it mentions that they did not believe in "resurrection," or in "angels" and demons (23:8; cf. Matt. 22:23, 29). How do you think it flew with the Sadducees when they said, "Jesus rose from the dead! We *know* because the angel told us at the empty tomb!" That didn't resonate with them.

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The Pharisees and the Sadducees agreed on essentially *nothing*, except they both hated Jesus because Jesus exposed them (Matt. 16:1, 6, 12). The Pharisees put up with the Sadducees because they had to access the Temple; and the Sadducees put up with the Pharisees because most of the people were more influenced by the Pharisees than the Sadducees, and the Sadducees lived off the offerings of the people that were controlled by the Pharisees. So it was like this peaceful coexistence, but very different groups.

The Sadducees were pompous; they were aristocratic; they were wealthy, by and large; and they were in complete control of the Temple and the priesthood. They were the ones, for example, who gave the franchises to the people to sell sacrifices and exchange money in the Temple—so they weren't too thrilled with Jesus on those two days that He threw out all of their stuff (Matt. 21:12-13; Jn. 2:14-16).

So this combined group—"the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees *came up to them*"—Peter and John—and that verb tense implies suddenness. And Verse 2—"being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead."

This group did *not* think this through, and say, "You know, something is going on here! I mean, I think there's a revival! I think we better go ask some questions. We better go listen to what these guys are saying. We better go open our Bibles and think this through!" No, they were "greatly disturbed." They were in a lather! This was *their temple*! And in *their temple*, these untrained Galileans are *teaching the people*! How *dare* they? *Harrumph*! That was just *downright offensive*! In their own minds, they regarded themselves as the *only* ones qualified to do *any* such thing in *their temple*!

But it was *even worse* than the fact that they were merely teaching, because they regarded them as unqualified to teach; this group of Sadducees understood, in their thinking, that it was false doctrine to proclaim "the resurrection from the dead." The fact that Jesus was alive—that was pretty inconvenient for them, but it didn't get them to rethink their theology (cf. Jn. 12:9-11). It was *even worse* than merely teaching: They were "proclaiming...the resurrection from the dead"—*and worse yet*: "in Jesus"!

They never got over their hatred of Jesus. They did everything within their power to get rid of Him, by even cooperating with those *idiotic Pharisees* to work together to manipulate the Romans to crucify Jesus. They got Him crucified. Remember, then they went to the Roman authorities and they requested and received the orders that they would "seal" the tomb and "guard" it with soldiers (Matt. 27:66). Problem solved—or so they thought.

Now they are stuck with not only an empty tomb that people keep pointing out to them, but *thousands* of people are crowding into *their temple* every day, listening to these annoying, uneducated Galilean Apostles. "They just don't have our credentials, and they are 'proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead'!"

So what are you going to do, if you don't believe in resurrection but a guy was raised from the dead? What do you do if you have *had* Public Enemy #1 crucified, and yet He lives?

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What do you do when you have this massive swell of people every day, coming into *your temple* and teaching things that you despise?

Well, they *should* have been rejoicing because it was their Messiah. They *should* have been discussing. They *should* have been investigating. But no. What do they do? They burst in, they stop what's going on. And Verse 3—"And they laid hands on them"—that was not an ordination ceremony; it doesn't mean that kind of "laid hands on them"—and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening."

Remember: the whole incident started after three in the afternoon; so who knows how long the sermon lasted? I'm sure it's only a summary that we have in Acts. Then there was all the discussion, and the Apostles roaming around teaching the people. So what do you do? Well, you crash the party; you grab Peter and John—they happened to be the two primary offenders on that day; and you put them in jail. You *hope* that if you wait until the next day, *maybe* things will have died down a little bit.

So, Number 1: You Are Under Arrest.

Number 2: The Evidence Against You Is Strong.

In the minds of the temple elite, and their little private police force, this was an open and shut case. "These men are guilty of causing a scene in *our temple*"—and to them, the evidence is massive. Just all these people doing this proves they have to be wrong! It's easy to think that way, as long as you consider only the evidence that you want to see. And think about it, Friends: To be apart from Christ is to be *spiritually blind* (1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:3-4).

Think about how much they had to *ignore*! Never mind all those miracles that Jesus had done (Jn. 15:24). Never mind all of His teaching. Never mind the empty tomb. Ignore that miracle from a few days ago: that "sound like a mighty rushing wind" (Acts 2:2, ESV) that sounded like there was a tornado right outside the Temple, and gathered all those people. You have to pretend that the miracle of the "tongues as of fire" never happened (vs. 3), even though you have hundreds of people saying that it did. Just scoff at that phenomenon of a "hundred and twenty" people proclaiming "the mighty deeds of God" articulately in languages they don't know (vs. 11). You have to just pay no attention to the fact that these people that are following Jesus now, whom you consider a problem—they are so full of joy, they are so generous, they are so loving, and they are beloved by everyone who comes in contact with them! Oh, and you also have to ignore that guy who was crippled from birth, going around "walking and leaping and praising God" (2:8); how do you handle *that*? Well, just like the Moon landing: It was a hoax, I'm sure.

All these men could see is that this was a problem in *their temple*; and these thousands of exuberant followers of Jesus were a threat to their control, their power, their position. They were experiencing the success of the power of the Gospel—the "Gospel" which is "the power of God for salvation" (Rom. 1:16; cf. 10:17; 1 Thess. 1:5; 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:23). They were experiencing the power of the Gospel; and to them, that was proof of the guilt of these Gospel preachers and these people running around in *their temple*!

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So, Verse 4: What is this abundant evidence? It says: "But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand."

That's an interesting detail that Luke puts in here, and we are going to see a string of details as he recounts the growth of the followers of Christ. Remember: just a few days earlier, "three thousand souls" were saved and "baptized," after that first time Peter preached (2:41). We are told at the end of Chapter 2 that the numbers kept swelling: God "was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved" (vs. 47; cf. Matt. 16:18; Col. 1:5-6).

Now, it's even more. The word for "men" here in Verse 4 is not the generic word *anthrōpos* that means "man," like in "mankind"; this is the word that means "adult males." So now he says there were "about five thousand...men"—and who knows how many "women and children" (Matt. 14:21; 15:38). That means that in Jewish culture, you now have the heads of "five thousand" *households* included in this fellowship.

To an honest, Bible-believing Jew (Lk. 2:25; Jn. 1:47), this *should* be cause for unbridled celebration! This was proof that the Messiah had, indeed, come! "This is proof that the kingdom program of God is upon us!" But to the power-hungry, somewhat paranoid Sadducees, it's just more evidence that "these incorrigible people are *all* crazy, they *all* need to be stopped, and they need to get out of *our temple*! *We* are in charge here!"

So, You Are Under Arrest. The Evidence Against You Is Strong.

So, what do you do? We Confess. They didn't even have to be taken off into separate rooms and interrogated for eight hours!

Now surely, those who arrested them thought, "You know, a night in the slammer might knock some sense into this loudmouth, Peter, and his sidekick, John. Maybe if we make an example of them, it will help quash this uprising of deluded people." Well, cue the next scene.

The next scene takes place in the chambers of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin is a group of 70—put an asterisk on "70"; there were a few others in there. They are almost all Sadducees, and they are the supreme court of the Jews (cf. Lk. 22:66).

So, Verses 5 and 6—"On the next day"—the day after they were arrested—"their rulers and elders and scribes"—that's the Sanhedrin—"were gathered together in Jerusalem; and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent."

The Sanhedrin was officially 70—actually, 71, because they were headed by whoever was the current high priest. He served as the chairman; and if there was a tie in a vote, he was the tiebreaker. It's like the U.S. Senate: We have a hundred senators from fifty different states, with the Vice-President presiding and breaking ties when there is a tie.

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If you work back through the Gospels, some of these names will be familiar. You will remember that the actual high priest at that time was Caiaphas; but before Caiaphas was the high priest, his father-in-law Annas had been in that office for over a decade. The Romans maintained the authority to change the high priests; and they had dumped Annas, but Annas having been in power for so long, he cleverly arranged to have a place of honor—like the "High Priest Emeritus," if you will—and his son-in-law Caiaphas became the high priest.

So it's 70, plus the high priest—well, and then you have the "High Priest Emeritus"—and then you have "John and Alexander"; they were other members who followed in the line of Annas. So they had no problem with a number bigger than 70, as long as they were all sycophants—and they all were; they were all going to come do the bidding of the Sadducees.

So this group in their chamber—the chamber of the Sanhedrin—they met in a circle in a large hall. I don't know if there were 70 individual chairs around, or maybe they made it two or three deep; but there was a space in the middle where those who were charged with crimes or other offenses could be questioned, and they were literally surrounded for the questioning.

We know this took place in the spring, and it was a great day for grilling Apostles; so they started. Chapter 4, Verse 7—"When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, 'By what power, or in what name, have you done this?' "

Now, I do not have Peter's patience. I would have said: "Did you listen to anything I said? Have you paid *any attention at all*? Have you listened to the guy that's 'walking and leaping and praising God'? Come on, guys!" No, he didn't do that.

By the way: the Greek sentence puts great emphasis on the plural pronoun "you"; only two of the twelve Apostles were being questioned, but it is clear that the questioners were holding them—and by extension, all twelve of them—responsible for doing this. How "have you done this?"

"This" what? Well, I think they are referring to the whole situation. They were not about to consider that this was being done by the hand of God. In their minds, this was just an assault on their power and their position. The Sanhedrin was just like your run-of-the-mill, garden variety evolutionist: "Okay, we are *ruling out* the answer: *We know this cannot be God!* Now, let's explain the answer to the question." That's *exactly* what they are doing. "*We know this isn't of God, because you are messing around in our temple! We don't like that! We want you to stop!*" That's kind of the attitude that they had. "We hold *you* responsible for these *unauthorized* gatherings in *our temple!*"

So as I said: it's "blindness" (Eph. 4:18, NKJV; cf. Matt. 15:14). How much did they have to *ignore*? Couldn't they remember Jesus on the cross—three hours of "darkness" (Matt. 27:45)? Didn't they remember the "veil" in "the temple"—*their temple*—being "torn in two," miraculously, "from top to bottom" (Matt. 27:51)? Didn't they hear about the testimonies of those people who were "raised" from the dead that day (Matt. 27:52-53)?

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Couldn't they remember the empty tomb that kept being pointed out to them? Didn't they remember that "sound like a mighty rushing wind" that raced through all of Jerusalem and gathered the whole city together, the testimonies about the "tongues as of fire," the unknown "languages"? And then, what about the everyday testimonies of the "three thousand people" who were "baptized," and the guy "walking and leaping and praising God"? Did they just think that was an elegant *hoax*? Well, they didn't care (cf. Acts 4:16-17). It was just: "You are messing with *our temple*, and we don't like that!"

So that one question—Verse 7: "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?"—that pushed Peter's "Play" button. He was moved, he was guided, he was empowered by the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus had promised: "You will know what to say when they come after you" (cf. Matt. 10:19-20). And Peter again speaks—directly, on behalf of himself and John; but he speaks for the rest of the twelve as well, and *all* of those thousands of people who so *greatly* disturbed the Sadducees and their ilk.

So what did he say? We will circle back and pick up some of this again next time, but let's look at Verses 8 through 12—"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone. 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.' "

We are not going to get any further, but remember: this is the first open persecution of Christians in the Book of Acts. It's not going to be the last, and others are going to be worse. But we can begin to see some patterns, based on how Spirit-filled people—Apostle or otherwise—respond in a situation like that.

Now, you know what would happen today: If somebody was arrested like that, there would immediately be the protests, the lawsuits, the shouting. But would you look. I think there are some principles we can understand here:

They did not fight against the authorities. They did not demand their rights. They did not protest. They did not go on Twitter to drum up support for their cause. They did not complain about being in jail overnight. Now, I'm also pretty sure they didn't love it—but they did not fight against the ones who persecuted them (cf. Rom. 12:14; 1 Pet. 2:23). They didn't fight, they *spoke*. They spoke *truth*. They spoke it boldly.

So secondly, we see: They spoke respectfully (cf. 2 Tim. 2:24-25; 1 Pet. 3:15). Notice how Peter addresses them: "Rulers and elders of the people." That is the proper way to address the Sanhedrin. I think I would have gone all "Jesus" on them: "You whitewashed 'sepulchers,' you 'full of dead men's bones!'" (Matt. 23:27, KJV). They didn't. No name-calling, just stating facts. "Do you want to know how we did it? Do you want to know in whose name we did it? Well, we'll tell you." They were *bold*, but they were not disrespectful.

Sermon Title: No Other Name Under Heaven
Scripture Text: Acts 4:1-12 (Acts #9)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-19-23

Would you notice how, immediately they turned the attention to Jesus. They are not saying, "We're innocent! We didn't do anything wrong!" They could have made a case: "Our Lord Jesus said, 'This is "My Father's house" that you are making into "a robbers' den"! (Jn. 2:16; Lk. 19:46)' " There are a lot of things they *could* have said, but they just turned the attention to Jesus. Peter was *very* careful about pointing to the facts of the situation. "Are you upset about 'a benefit done to a sick man'? Do you *really* want to know how he was 'made well'?"

And would you notice: he turned the attention to Jesus, and then to the Word of God. Next time, I will circle back and I'll show you how significant it was that he quoted Psalm 118. But by now, you should see the pattern in Acts. In *every situation*, the attention is *always* turned to: "This is what God said in His Word," and "This is about His Son, Jesus."

So put a mental bookmark there; we will come back. I don't care if you read farther, all the way through Verse 22—where I *hoped* to get to this morning.

But I want to be bold and suggest: How about memorizing a verse? If somebody wants to say, "Where does it say that Jesus is the *only* way? There are *lots* of ways to God." Well, maybe you've already nailed John 14:6—"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." (cf. Is. 43:11; Jn. 3:18, 36; 8:24; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Jn. 2:23)

Okay, here's another one; go ahead and memorize this: 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." Now, next time we open Acts, it will be tempting to have you stand and recite that from memory, without any prompts on the screen. I'm too nice; I probably won't do that.

But let's take our cue from Peter and John, even when it comes that we are unjustly punished (Prov. 3:25; 2 Tim. 3:12). Even when we are misunderstood, falsely accused, we can always turn the attention and the conversation to God and His Word and His Son. God will give you wisdom to do that.

Oh, and by the way: you *can* stop at Ephesians 4:12 and say, "And do you *have* that 'salvation'? It is found in 'no one else.' There is *only* one way 'by which we must be saved'!" Oh, *how wonderful* to have God's forgiveness! (Rom. 4:7-8) *How wonderful* to be His child by "adoption"! (Rom. 8:5; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5)

And by this time, they had the Holy Spirit—who we are told "bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:16, NKJV)—they understood this was *all brand new* in Christ! How wonderful to have His Holy Spirit to help us understand His Word (1 Cor. 2:12). And how marvelous to be stewards of *the greatest message of all!* (2 Cor. 5:19)

If you do not have that salvation, today is *the very best day of the rest of humanity's time on Earth* to give your life to Jesus Christ, and be "saved" (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:9; Eph. 2:8; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5), and be "born again" (Jn. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23).

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Let's pray:

Father, how we thank You for Your glorious grace to us in Christ—"blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." Thank You, now, for giving us this very same message as was on the lips of Your Apostles in those days. Send us out from this place as stewards of that wonderful message. And please arrange opportunities that we may "speak that truth in love" to those who need the Savior. And we know that for people to be saved, it will require their eyes being opened, and that is the work of Your Spirit. So help us, we pray, to be good stewards of our part: spreading the message. And grant that there would be much fruit for Your glory, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.