**Acts of the Apostles
A Study of New Testament History**
**Lesson 4
Acts 4:1-37**

**Introduction:**

As Peter and John are preaching about Jesus Christ, they are suddenly arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin. The group of men responsible for the arrest were especially troubled by the claim that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead. The Sanhedrin was largely made up of Sadducees who denied there is such a thing as a resurrection from the dead. Many of the Chief Priests, and the High Priest, were also Sadducees. Jesus encountered this group on more than one occasion. During the Lord's final week (before His crucifixion), He had the most memorable encounter of all with the Sadducees.

*The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her." Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.* (Matthew 22:23-33)

The Sanhedrin, before whom Peter and John were summoned, were the same group of men who condemned Jesus to death, and demanded that He be crucified. They were asked by whose authority they had healed the lame man, and had so boldly proclaimed Jesus was the resurrected Christ. Peter's response was simple: *"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."* (Acts 4:10)

Powerless to find anything worthy of punishment, yet concerned that the preaching of Jesus would continue, the Sanhedrin could only issue a "cease and desist order" and threats of future punishment in a vain effort to prevent the apostles preaching Jesus.

This simply gave the apostles even more resolve to fulfill their mission to *"go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15). But the apostles obviously realized more intense persecutions would lay ahead. Therefore they prayed that God would, *"grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus"* (Acts 4:29-30).

As more and more turned to Christ through the preaching of the apostles, the needs of the multitude began to increase. However, motivated by the grace of God, these believers exercised extraordinary benevolence toward one another. Many gladly sold their lands and possessions and brought the money to the apostles to make distribution as anyone had need – including a man whom the apostles named Barnabas. He will play a crucial role in the spread of the gospel during the first century.

**Memorization:**

*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. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."* (Acts 4:19-20)

Key Events of Acts 4:

* Peter and John arrested.
* Peter's third sermon.

**Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

These websites contain numerous Bible Versions and Translations, Concordances, Dictionaries, Lexicons and many other useful tools: http://biblos.com/ and http://www.biblestudytools.com/ (Click on "Our Library" at the top of the home page)

**The Exposition:**

**I. Persecution Begins (Acts 4:1-37)**

**A. Peter and John Arrested (Acts 4:1-4)**

1. What had "greatly disturbed. . . the priests, the captain of the temple, and he Sadducees"?

2. Explain why each of the following would be "greatly disturbed" by what Peter and John were preaching.

a. The priests:

b. The captain of the temple:

c. The Sadducees:

3. Why had the number of the disciples grown?

**B. Peter's Third Sermon (Acts 4:5-12)**

1. What was the Sanhedrin? (Consult a Bible dictionary to find your answer)

2. Who are the following? (You may need to consult a Bible dictionary or a commentary on Acts)

a. The rulers:

b. The elders:

c. The scribes:

d. Annas:

e. Caiaphas:

f. John and Alexander:

3. Why do you think Peter and John were asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this"?

4. What are the three things Peter said about Jesus in response to their question? Explain the significance of each.

a.

b.

c.

5. What passage was Peter quoting when he said, "This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone'"?

6. Why would the members of the Sanhedrin marvel at "the boldness of Peter and John"?

7. Why were the members of the Sanhedrin unable to answer Peter's statement?

**C. The Sanhedrin Forbids Preaching Jesus (Acts 4:13-22)**

1. What did they discuss among themselves concerning Peter and John? What was their decision and why?

2. Explain the meaning of Peter's response to the edict of the Sanhedrin.

3. Why did the Sanhedrin simply resort to threats instead of more harsh treatment?

**D. Prayer in the Face of Persecution (Acts 4:23-31)**

1. Who is implied by Peter and John's "companions" (or "company")?

2. What Old Testament Messianic prophecy is quoted in this prayer?

3. How is this prophecy applied to Jesus?

4. Why do we know the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus was all part of God's plan?

5. Why would the apostles pray for boldness?

6. Is this a prayer we should pray today? Explain your answer.

**E. Benevolence Among Believers (Acts 4:32-37)**

1. Describe the oneness of those who believed, and what does this mean?

2. How did those believers display their oneness?

3. How do we know the apostles disregarded the edict against preaching Jesus?

4. Explain how those believers showed "grace" to their fellow believers? Was this done voluntary or involuntary?

5. Who is Joses, and what special name was he given by the apostles? What does this name imply about the character of Joses?

**Application:**Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.