

Approximate Schedule:

- Opening worship [10 minutes]
- 9:40 AM – teaching
- 10:30 AM – break
- 10:45 AM – resume
- 11:30 AM – ministry time
- 12:30 PM – approximate closing

First Session: Persecution And Peace

1. The Arrest and Interrogation (Acts 4:1-7)

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

5 And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, 6 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. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, “By what power or by what name have you done this?”

- The Sanhedrin was the body of elders of Israel, made up of 70 elders, plus a President. This copied the pattern of Moses presiding over 70 elders of Israel.
- The Jews did not enjoy complete power over their own affairs.
- Who was present?
 - Annas had previously been High Priest, until 15 AD.
 - Caiaphas was Annas's son-in-law and was High Priest from 18-36 AD.
 - We don't know who John and Alexander were.
 - The Captain of the Temple was head of the Temple Guard and was often viewed as second-in-command to the High Priest himself.

2. About the Name of Jesus

- What **kind** of power, what **kind** of name?
- Many believed that you could be healed by the exercise of **power** or by using a **name** – that you could be healed by the authority carried by someone's name.
- If I have the right to use your name, then I have the authority to act for you.

2A. The Power Of The Name Of Jesus

- The Bible says that God has made Jesus *Lord*.
- Jesus' Name has been elevated above every other name! Philippians 2:8ff.:
- *"...God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

- Jesus has been seated at the right hand of God: “[God] seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church...” (Ephesians 1:20-22)

2B. The Privilege To Use The Name Of Jesus

- Peter and John had the right to use the Name. The privilege to use His Name only belongs to people in covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ.
- “And these signs will follow those who **believe**: in My name they will cast out demons... they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover” (Mark 16:17-18).
- “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore...” (Matthew 28:18-19) He was saying, “I have all authority, so I’m sending **you!**”

2C. The Purpose Of Using The Name Of Jesus

- To magnify that Name. Whenever something wonderful happens in the Name of Jesus, His Name is magnified.
- To demonstrate Jesus’ true identity.
- To continue Jesus’ works and mission through the power of His Name.
- We’ve been given the privilege to use His Name in prayer and as a weapon.
- We need to be convinced of the authority God has placed within His Name!

3. Peter Points to Christ the Cornerstone (Acts 4:8-12)

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 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. 11 This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ 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.”

- Notice Peter’s bold response. We observe that he was **filled** with the Holy Spirit.
- *“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. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say (Luke 12:11-12).”*
- Peter respectfully but boldly says that they crucified the Lord. He may also be hinting at how ridiculous all this is.
- This is the first time we’re introduced to the “cornerstone” concept, from Psalm 118. It talks about the stone that builders rejected being the most important stone.
- *“Then [Jesus] looked at them and said, ‘What then is this that is written: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone”’? Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.’ And the chief priests and the scribes that very hour sought to lay hands on Him, but they feared the people—for they knew He had spoken this parable against them” (Luke 20:17-19).*

- Man considered Him insignificant, but God exalted Him to be the most important stone of all. Psalm 118 says, “This was God’s doing, and it’s amazing in our sight!”
- There is no other name by which we must be saved. Salvation (sozo in Greek) meant being whole spiritually and physically.
- If God really has exalted Jesus to His own right hand, and made Him the Savior, then there can’t be multiple Saviors!

4. An Undeniable Miracle (Acts 4:13-17)

13 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. 14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 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. 17 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.”

- The council... shocked into silence? The formerly lame man was living proof.
- Three wonderful things that the council noticed about Peter and John:
 - Their boldness.
 - They were uneducated and untrained.
 - Third, they had been with Jesus!

5. You Decide! (Acts 4:18-22)

18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 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. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." 21 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. 22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

- The rulers say not to speak or teach in the Name of Jesus. This would mean cancelling the Great Commission!

6. A powerful (and theologically deep) prayer meeting! (Acts 4:23-31)

23 And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 24 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, 25 who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:

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

27 “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 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.”

31 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 most notable prayer meeting in the Book of Acts, and it’s theologically sophisticated. Don’t ever think they were just making it up as they went!
- Their prayers and their lives are built on the idea that God is God, and He has made everything. He has also spoken in His Word.
- Psalm 2 is a very important Messianic prophecy which tells us how God is going to establish His chosen King on Mount Zion.
- Prophecies can have smaller fulfillments that lead up to their ultimate, final fulfillment. They can spiral upwards until the final fulfillment. The Church applied Psalm 2 to the rejection of Jesus, but that doesn’t mean there won’t be a **future** final fulfillment of Psalm 2.
- Again we see the interplay between God’s sovereignty and Man’s will.
- The Church’s response is not to hide or curse those evil leaders. Instead, they ask God for even **more** boldness, and for an effective witness.

- They pray that God will make them bold to share Jesus by Him doing signs and wonders through the Name of Jesus.
- It's entirely appropriate to ask God to heal and do the miraculous, and to do so in evangelization. It can't be wrong to pray for the miraculous if **they** did it!
- Even though they were filled in Acts 2, here they were filled again.
- They spoke the Word of God with boldness. They were not deterred!

7. Responding to tribulations and persecutions.

We can learn so much from imitating their example. How did they respond to threats and intimidation? How did they maintain their peace in the tumult?

7A. Keep the majesty of God in mind.

They grounded themselves in the knowledge of who God is. What's happening doesn't escape His notice, and power belongs to God.

7B. Entrust yourself to that Creator God!

"...let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator" (1 Pet. 4:19).

7C. Accept the realities of war.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). We are often so carefree about things as believers that we are no longer **sober**.

- Jesus gave us the balance: *“In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (John 16:33b).”*
- Barnabas and Paul were *“...exhorting [the believers] to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God’” (Acts 14:22b).*
- *“...no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are **appointed** to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know” (1Th. 1:3-4).*
- Our flesh doesn’t like tribulation but accepting that it’s going to come to us because of Christ is a major part of overcoming in it. Jesus said they wouldn’t lose a hair of their heads, but just two verses before that He said some of them would be killed (see Luke 21:18), so what does He mean?

7D. Have Heaven’s perspective on our sufferings!

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:16-18).

- We can endure like Jesus did because of the joy that was set before Him (see Hebrews 12:1-2).

- *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:10-12).*

7E. Keep your peace by staying before the Lord in prayer and in the Word.

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the LORD forever, for in YAH, the LORD, is everlasting strength” (Isaiah 26:3-4).

- “Stayed” means fixed and focused on God! He promises to keep us in *shalom shalom* - double peace - but there’s a condition attached to that promise.
- *“...because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12).*
- Peter says Lot *“...was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked [and he] tormented his righteous soul...”* (See 2:7-8).
- Jesus said that even though He has cleansed us, we still need to wash our feet (see John 13:10).
- *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).*
- Peter learned that lesson... and he slept!

7F. Walking in love and forgiveness.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you...” (Matthew 5:43-44).

- This not only guards our heart, but it shows God’s love to our enemies.
- When your witness is not received, and you’re mistreated, you can’t hate the ones who refused you, and you have to forgive them.

8. Having a right attitude toward rulers.

8A. Behaving well for conscience’ sake.

“...submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men... (1 Pet. 2:13-15)”

8B. We owe the government honor and respect.

We’re citizens of Heaven, but our citizenship is not **exclusively** in Heaven. For the time being, we have *dual citizenship*. We honor and respect human leaders.

- God commanded His people not to revile their rulers.
- Daniel and his friends treated the king of Babylon with respect, even when they were persecuted: “O King, live forever!”

8C. We also owe government the payment of taxes.

“Render unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar.”

8D. We owe our rulers submission... but not complete obedience.

Submission is an attitude of respect we always carry towards authority. Submission is **unconditional**, but obedience **is** conditional.

- Where we have rights that we can use to legally defend ourselves against government action, we should do so. Paul is our example here.
- Like Paul, we can also use our rights to good advantage.

8E. We have the duty of intercession for our leaders.

“I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:1-4); “He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.” (2 Sam. 23:3b)
