



Judaism Meets Jesus

*"Salvation is found in no
one else, for there is no
other name under heaven
given to mankind by
which we must be saved."
Acts 4:12*

Lesson 4 of the series – “The Beginning of an Unfinished Work“ (Acts 4)

“The **priests** and the **captain of the temple guard** and the **Sadducees** came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.” (Acts 4:1-2)

- ✓ Besides Peter and John, there are three groups mentioned here:
 - **The Priests** – these would be descendants of Aaron who helped manage the affairs of the temple including the daily sacrifices.
 - **The Captain of the Temple Guard** – He would have been responsible for the security of the Temple, overseeing the Levites and priests on guard duty
 - **The Sadducees** – They wielded more political influence than the Pharisees and made up most the Sanhedrin which controlled local matters affecting daily Jewish life.
- ✓ Peter and John were still preaching in the same location – Solomon’s Porch

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- ✓ With the birth and establishment of the Church (Acts 1-3) now on clear footing; the Jewish “religious leaders” begin to take notice
- ✓ The Holy Spirit is working in the lives (through conviction) of both the religious leaders as well as the common person. Some will fully embrace Christ while others will continue to reject Him

“But many who heard the message believed; so, the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.” (Acts 4:4)

- ✓ Many of the religious leaders didn’t agree with the message that the Apostles were declaring but were paralyzed to do anything.

“Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.” (Acts 5:38-39)

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- ✓ The cornerstone message that the apostles were teaching was the **resurrection of Jesus from the dead.**
 - This was problematic for these religious leaders as Jesus’ death was still fresh in everyone’s minds as that event happened anywhere from 3-6 months prior.
 - The apostles were witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus and for 40 days after that they listened to him teach about the kingdom, they ate with him and fellowshiped with him. These religious leaders did not experience these things
- ✓ Unless they were willing to believe in Jesus, all that the religious leaders could do was to deny the resurrection took place. They had no other answer.

WHY THE RESURRECTION?

- Because sin brought death and separation from God – Christ conquered that by raising from the dead!
- Because Jesus told us He would raise from the dead and be seated at the right hand of God. (*Matthew 26:64, Acts 5:31, 7:55*)

“You have said so,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”
(*Matthew 26:44*)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

- It became the dividing line between the early Jewish leaders and the Apostles (Acts 5:30-32, 38-39)
- It was the central component of the Apostles teaching and preaching. (Acts 2,3,4,5, | Peter 1:21-23, | Corinthians 15, | Philippians 3:20-21)
- Even the greatest of skeptics since the time of the Apostles, conclude that if the resurrection actually took place, then it must be what it claims to be ~ a direct revelation from God.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

“The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.” (Acts 5:30-32)

“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Philippians 3:20-21)

William Evans writes; “If the resurrection of Christ can be successfully denied, if it can be proven to be absolutely untrue, then the whole fabric of the Gospel falls to pieces, the whole structure of the Christian religion is shaken at its foundation, and the very arch of Christianity crumbles into dust. Then it has wrought only imaginary changes, deluded its most faithful adherents, deceived and disappointed the hopes of its most devoted disciples, and the finest moral achievements that adorn the pages of the history of the Christian church have been based upon a falsehood”
(**William Evans, The Great Doctrines of the Bible page 85**)

EVIDENCES FOR THE RESURRECTION

- An Empty Tomb! (Matthew 28:1-8, Mark 16:1-7, Luke 24:1-12, John 20:1-20)
 - Attested by the women who first visited the tomb
 - Attested by the angel
 - Attested by the other disciples
 - Attested by the Roman guards though they were later bribed to change their story (Matthew 28:11-15)

EVIDENCES FOR THE RESURRECTION

“Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, “Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?” But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.” (Mark 16:1-7)

EVIDENCES FOR THE RESURRECTION

- The testimony of over 500 witnesses (see chart page 13)
- The testimony of Paul (1 Corinthians 15:1-19, Romans 8:11, Acts 9:1-9)
- The Testimony of Jesus Christ Himself (Revelation 1:17-18, John 20:20-29)
- The continual declaration by the Apostles
- The lack of credible early proof that He did not raise from the dead
- The continued teaching throughout 2000+ years of church history
- Present day believers who continue to teach the same

EVIDENCES FOR THE RESURRECTION

“So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Romans 8:8-11)

“They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. But many who heard the message believed; so, the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.” (Acts 4:3-4)

- ✓ It might have been too late to convene a hearing of the Sanhedrin (Jewish council) since they were now into the evening hour, so they arrested Peter and John and put them in jail perhaps in the hopes they could silence their message.
- ✓ Placing Peter and John in jail didn't seem to have the effect the religious leaders were hoping for as we are told that many of those who heard the message believed
- ✓ This resulted in the Jerusalem church growing by another 5000+ people
- ✓ Another little side note worth mentioning is that this appears to be the last mention of a specific number related to church growth and many conclude that it is because the church grew too fast to keep an accurate count

“The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest’s family. They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: “By what power or what name did you do this?” (Acts 4:5-7)

- ✓ This was probably a gathering of the full Sanhedrin (Jewish Council) in Jerusalem
 - The Jewish Sanhedrin was the supreme religious court, and it consisted of 71 elders, priests, and scribes.
 - The court was led by the High Priest Annas (he was deposed by Rome but still retained the official title of high Priest) and Caiaphas (son in law to Annas and the Roman replacement to that office), along with other important people.
- ✓ Mosaic Law specified that if someone performed a miracle, they were to be examined to determine if their teachings and actions led others toward God, or if their teachings were false. If they were false, then they were to be stoned. (Deuteronomy 13:1-5)

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- ✓ Peter and John quietly submitted and offered no resistance during their arrest
- ✓ Jesus told them this would happen and their reliance was totally on the Holy Spirit

“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time, you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.” (Matthew 10:16-20)

- ✓ The question; “By what power or what name did you do this?” was quite simple but the answer was nowhere near what they expected to hear from these two non-credentialed fisherman from Galilee.

“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.” (Acts 4:8-10)

- ✓ Peter (by the power of the Holy Spirit) went on the offensive and chose to display courage by making a valid argument to the religious leaders:
 - The only authority that the Sanhedrin had over these two Galilean fishermen was that they had to answer for the miracle that they performed in which a crippled man (since birth) was now able to walk.
 - While it was true that the religious leaders didn't like all the teaching about the resurrection of Jesus, they really couldn't punish them for that. So, they set out to determine by what authority they were able to perform this miracle.

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✓ The basis/foundation for this inquiry by the Sanhedrin was this passage:

“If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, “Let us follow other gods” (gods you have not known) “and let us worship them,” you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. It is the Lord your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him. That prophet or dreamer must be put to death for inciting rebellion against the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. That prophet or dreamer tried to turn you from the way the Lord your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you.” (Deuteronomy 13:1-5)

✓ Peter and John weren't trying to draw people away from God and it was completely ludicrous for them to be on trial for doing something good (healing a crippled man).

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- ✓ If they want to know how the man was healed then Peter was ready to make that defense, and he makes it so clear to the Sanhedrin that they offer no rebuttal!
- ✓ The beggar (who was crippled) now stands before them in good health and complete wholeness of which the religious leaders could not dispute.
- ✓ **The one responsible** for healing the crippled man is not the apostles, but **Jesus Christ,** **the very One that they crucified.**
- ✓ The ones who are leading the people away from God are those of the Sanhedrin, the priests, and other religious leaders of that day for they “rejected” Jesus.

“This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:11-12)

- ✓ Peter (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) quotes from Psalm 118 and acknowledges that Jesus is the “Chief Cornerstone”.

“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.” (Psalm 118:22-24)

- ✓ Why does Peter quote this passage of Scripture?
 - The "chief cornerstone" is the foundational, essential element of the building.
 - Peter is declaring that despite their rejection of Jesus and their decision to have him crucified, God chose to exalt Jesus by raising him from the dead to bring salvation to those who believe. Jesus is the Savior that the prophets spoke of.

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✓ Paul in his letter to the Ephesians put it this way

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:19-22)

✓ Peter declares to them that the only way to cure their problem was to repent and believe in Jesus Christ

✓ What Peter is saying here is that not only is Jesus able to physically heal but He is also the source of spiritual healing which is complete deliverance from sin.

✓ You can deny that Jesus is the only way (John 14:6) to receive salvation (many false religions do) but denying truth doesn’t make it any less true!

“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. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.” (Acts 4:13-14)

- ✓ It is highly probable that they were annoyed or even jealous that these unschooled fishermen were teaching the people at all!
 - They had no **reputation** as teachers
 - They had no **sanctions** from any reputable educational entity
 - They had no **credentials**, **degrees**, **certificates** or any type of recognized credible documentation that attributed authority to their claims.
- ✓ All the apostles had was the mighty Name of Jesus which was enough for them
- ✓ The religious leaders (on the other hand) lacked faith, and they had no response for the crippled man walking in their midst because they didn't believe in Jesus

“But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 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. 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.” (Acts 4:15-17)

- ✓ The Jewish Council (The Sanhedrin) were in a bit of an awkward position because the crippled man stood before them completely restored.

“But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. And so, you will bear testimony to me. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict” (Luke 21:15)

- ✓ They couldn't prove Peter or James had done anything wrong and thus unable to punish them for anything. The best solution they could produce was they told them to stop teaching about Jesus.

“So, they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 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.” 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. For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.” (Acts 4:18-22)

- ✓ The Sanhedrin could not dispute what occurred – the crippled man now walked among them, and he was a living reminder of their failure to submit to God, confess their sins, seek His forgiveness by believing in Jesus.
- ✓ They gave a strong command (coming from the leading religious body in Jerusalem) to Peter and John that they not speak or teach in the name of Jesus.
- ✓ Peter and John responded; It is better to obey God rather than man for He is the higher authority!

Notable Items

- ✓ Had the apostles given in to the Sanhedrin's demands, the events recorded in the balance of the Book of Acts and perhaps throughout all church history would have been radically different. Thank the Lord they obeyed his promptings.
- ✓ ***“It is particularly striking that neither on this nor on any subsequent occasion (as far as our information goes) did the Sanhedrin take any serious action to disprove the apostle's central affirmation – the resurrection of Jesus. Had it been possible to refute them on this point, how readily would the Sanhedrin have seized the opportunity! Had they succeeded, how quickly and completely the new movement would have collapsed! (F.F. Bruce - The Book of Acts [Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1971 page 102)***
- ✓ Upon their release; Peter and John returned to the brethren to report what had transpired. They received comfort and encouragement, and it fostered tremendous unity among this early body of believers called the church!

“And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 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, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: ‘Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.’”**” (Acts 4:23-26)**

- ✓ They lifted their voices in praise to God – ***“Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them”***
- ✓ **They recognized that this opposition was foreseen even in the Old Testament** and quoted Psalm 2:1-2. “Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ”. This prophecy was being fulfilled right before their very eyes!

“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 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.” (Acts 4:27-28)

- ✓ This was a reminder of those involved in the ruthless and viscous crucifixion of Jesus on the cross:
 - **Herod** – This would be Herod Antipas who is mentioned in Luke 23:8-12 in which he wanting Jesus to perform a miracle or offer some sort of sign and then mocked him for remaining silent during his trial
 - **Pilate** – responsible for condemning Jesus to death
 - Other Gentiles and the people of Israel, more specifically (though not specifically mentioned here) **Annas** and **Caiphas** (both serving as High Priests of the Temple) who arranged the betrayal and mock trial of Jesus
- ✓ Regardless, it was God who sovereignly controlled the events of the crucifixion

“Now, Lord, look on their threats, and 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.” 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.” (Acts 4:29-31)

- ✓ Instead of collapsing from intimidation, they desired even greater boldness
- ✓ They didn't ask for protection but instead they petitioned God for more courage and more boldness to declare His Truth!
- ✓ They also appealed to God through prayer that He would continue to heal and perform wonders and signs through the name of Jesus.
- ✓ The answer to their prayer came immediately and God cause the place where they met to shake, He filled them with the Holy Spirit and the preached with boldness

“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.” (Acts 4:32-33)

- ✓ The early church displayed a unity that is sometimes hard to understand given the selfishness that exists in modern times (both within the church and outside the church). We are told here that the early church was of one mind (heart and soul).
- ✓ They shared what they had and didn't consider their own possessions as their own and perhaps believed that everything they have belongs to God. All of this was based on “loving one another” which was exactly what Jesus taught

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35)

- ✓ They evidenced an unselfish life, continued to boldly declare the resurrection of Jesus and received the grace of God upon their lives as He promised.

“Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.” (Acts 4:34-37)

- ✓ They didn’t just share portions of their income....they sold (liquidated) their assets (houses and lands) which meant they were relinquishing the security of their future
- ✓ Jesus taught the disciples that they need not worry for everything they needed to sustain them would be provided by God. Thus, the selling of their possessions was an act of faith lived out in obedience.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21)

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- ✓ The act was strictly voluntary (for some still owned houses – Acts 12:12). They didn’t pool their possessions (it was not communal or communistic living) but gave to those in need. This isn’t necessarily a mandate or requirement for all churches to follow this pattern for we have no other record in Acts where this took place. It was simply a selfless act of Christian love demonstrated from a pure heart with pure motives.
- ✓ When we see someone in need (especially a brother or sister in the Lord) and we have the means to help.....we should help them. This is a principal found throughout the Scripture both in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

“Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. **And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles** (which is translated **Son of Encouragement**), **a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.**” (Acts 4:34-37)

- ✓ One of the Christ followers named Joseph, better known to us as **Barnabas** is singled out by Luke to show how those in the congregation were donating their property. The fact that Barnabas even had land to begin with being he was a Levite makes the selling of the property even more sacrificial
- ✓ Barnabas was noted as a man of compassion and that name (which meant “son of Encouragement”) was given to him by the apostles. We will learn more about him as we study further in the Book of Acts. Barnabas was an example of the humility expressed by the act of giving that not only the others within the early church performed but also serves as an example for us to follow!

Concluding Remarks

- ✓ This small band of Christ followers has grown to well over 10,000 people:
 - 120 – Acts 1:15
 - 3000 more – Acts 2:41
 - 5000 more (men – didn't include women and children) – Acts 4:4
 - Multitudes more – Acts 5:12-14
- ✓ Up to this point these believers were primarily located in Jerusalem for they had yet to expand to other regions. They witnessed miracles, wonders and signs through the work of the Holy Spirit and the powerful and mighty name of Jesus. Though they will face opposition from the religious leaders of Jerusalem and other opposing forces, none of that opposition/persecution will stop them from declaring that Jesus is Lord!