

Acts Part 1 Study Guide

Lesson 4: The Arrest of Peter and John – Acts 4

1. The Arrest and Inquisition – Acts 4:1-22

A. The arrest – 4:1-4.

1. The temple was the domain of the priesthood; they controlled the activities that transpired and had a police force to insure compliance. How incensed they must have been to see “unauthorized” commoners preaching about resurrection – a theological concept they denied – but especially the resurrection of the one they had murdered!
2. Yet, in spite of the intimidation, the influence of the gospel continues to grow. This, also, is very troubling to the Jewish leaders.

B. Peter’s bold declaration – 4:5-12.

1. After a night in jail, Peter and John (and the healed man) are brought before the Sanhedrin. What an intimidating situation, especially for Peter who has so recently wilted under similar but less pressurized circumstances.
2. Peter is asked a rather open-ended question which allows him latitude to preach about Jesus (4:7).

3. Peter makes several points in his short address. List the main thoughts:

- a. _____.
- b. _____.
- c. _____.
- d. _____.
- e. _____.
- f. _____.

C. The threat – 4:13-22.

1. The embarrassed Sanhedrin dismisses the accused so they can settle on a course of action. However, the course they choose is always ineffective, for men who act out of deep conviction cannot be effectively threatened or intimidated.
2. Peter and John stand their ground and refuse to submit to civil powers that are in rebellion to God. They are bound by their conscience to “*speak the things which we have seen and heard*” (4:20), fulfilling their very purpose as witnesses.

2. The “Debriefing” and Prayer for Boldness – Acts 4:23-31

A. In their supplication to God to assist them amid growing persecution, the apostles indicate a broader insight into the situation than they had previously shown.

1. They acknowledge God’s creative power and recognize that the struggle is actually between the Creator and the rulers of the earth – 4:24-27.
2. They further admit the providence of God in the unfolding affairs – 4:28.
3. They pray for courage to “hold up their end of the bargain” – 4:29-30.

B. God gives them miraculous confirmation of their requests – 4:31.

3. Unity Among the Early Disciples – Ac 4:32-37

A. The unique circumstances of this newly forming congregation create some logistical problems, specifically the adequate material support of all. But these are overcome by a commonness of spirit that results in the needs of life being supplied.

B. Consistent with Luke’s literary style, he introduces a character (Barnabas) whom he will consider in more detail later. Pay special attention to this technique.

C. Note the emphasis upon the leadership and focus of the apostles (4:33).

Questions:

1. What positive result came from the preaching of Peter in chapter 3?
2. To whom had miraculous powers been previously attributed by the Jews (Luke 11:15)?
- 3a. What was the real force behind Peter’s words (Acts 4:8)?
- 3b. Where was this promised? Give physical location and scripture reference.
4. Where else in the New Testament is Psalms 118:22 cited?
- 5a. How did the Sanhedrin view Peter and John?
- 5b. What did they realize about them?
6. What did Peter and John ask the Sanhedrin to judge for themselves?
7. What kept the Sanhedrin from punishing Peter and John more severely?
8. What might have made material needs among these saints so acute?