



## The Acts of the Spirit

GATHERING THE CHURCH

# ACTS 4:1-22

"THE COUNCIL"

JULY 30, 2023

## AT A GLANCE

*When it comes to the Gospel, we all have to make the decision to either RECEIVE Jesus or REJECT Him. Receiving Christ wholly can be offensive, as it requires dying to oneself - which is why many will reject the news.*

## CONTEXT

The book of Acts is the theological history of the Church. In the previous weeks, we explored how God's people (the Church) have become where heaven and earth meet. Peter preached the good news after the Holy Spirit's arrival, and 3,000 souls came to faith in Jesus. They are all figuring out what new life in Christ looks like. They submit themselves daily to the apostles' teaching and practice this new Christian community's way of life (sharing meals, singing, prayer, generosity, etc.).

Recently, Peter and John healed a lame man in Jesus' name. As a crowd gathers, they preach about repenting and returning to God through faith in Jesus. Many receive this message of faith, but some also reject it. Specifically, the same religious leaders become greatly annoyed and apprehend Peter and John to stop the spread of this Christian movement.

## SERMON SUMMARY

Pastor Jeff noted how uncomfortable it is to be challenged. That is because challenges force us to make a decision... to either RECEIVE or REJECT the challenge. Specifically, when it comes to a challenge of faith, it usually invites us to change a foundational belief/behavior/identity that we have built our life on.

Those beliefs are like the foundation of our spiritual house. They are the things we put our trust in, find our confidence/belonging in, and are the things we fight to protect at all costs. Pastor Jeff said that God loves us enough to dismantle that false foundation so we can be confronted with the challenge to receive or reject Jesus as the cornerstone of our life.



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In the text, Peter/John challenges the religious leaders (both conservative and liberal) to abandon their self-importance and adopt the truth that Jesus is the promised Messiah. He is the cornerstone and the source of the NEW LIFE they seek. They can receive Him and this new life or reject Him to their own destruction.

Likewise, when it comes to the Gospel, we all have the same decision to either RECEIVE Jesus or REJECT him and return the false safety of our own self-important beliefs and identities. For those who receive comes the personal challenge to share Jesus with the world. When we do, we can expect that some will RECEIVE and some will REJECT.

## DISCUSSION

### Extract the Truth: Read Acts 4:1-22

### Expand our Awareness

Pastor Jeff spoke about the religious leaders' thoughts, beliefs, and identities at that time. To properly be transformed by the text, we must expand our awareness of what their experience might have been like.

The text says they were "annoyed" with Peter's insistence on preaching in the Name of Jesus. Emotions (like anger/annoyance) can signal that something important to us is threatened. That is helpful because our emotions can easily be traceable to show us what we hold most dear and what we put our identity in.

- What would the religious leaders have lost if Peter/John were right about Jesus? What would it have been like to lose those things?
- What does their annoyance reveal about where the leaders placed their identity?
- Do you think the leaders were aware that their rejection of Jesus was possibly rooted in their fear of loss (power, importance, etc)? Why or why not?
- If not, what clouded the religious leaders from being aware of their deeper desires?



*This document can be used for either personal or group reflection.*

*Group facilitator: you do not need to ask every question but can select the best ones for your group dynamic.*



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Pastor Jeff spoke about how Jesus is the cornerstone and offers us the life we all genuinely desire (union with God, love, joy, peace, purpose, eternity, etc). Once we see that reality, rejecting our own ways and receiving Jesus is the next step.

- What did the religious leaders stand to gain if they received this message about Jesus?

## Explore Your Experience

Suppose negative emotions can be warning signs that something important to us is threatened. In that case, we should be able to use them to gather information about ourselves that can help us better follow Jesus.

- What can you learn about your identity/values by observing your emotion?
- For those comfortable answering, what negative emotion (anger, anxiety, sadness) have you been wrestling with recently and why?
- Is that a possible identity/belief that has become threatened? If so, explain.

## Experience Transformation:

Now that we have a greater awareness of the false foundational identities, it will be easier to RECEIVE more deeply the new ones offered by Jesus.

- What does that identity/belief reveal about a deeper desire you have?
- What will continue to happen if you continue to keep that old belief/identity?
- How has Jesus provided a better cornerstone belief/identity through faith in His Name?
- What would happen in this area if you received that better identity/belief from Jesus?
- How can you practically rehearse that new identity/belief in Jesus this week?



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## Engage the World:

Peter and John said this to the religious leaders,

"19 But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."

To share New Life in Jesus, we must have this type of resolve that comes from a fresh remembrance of what we have seen Jesus do in our lives.

- Who is someone in your life you can talk about that you wish knew Jesus?
- What small truth could you tell them about what Jesus has done for you?
- How could you appropriately share that with them in a loving way?
- When would you like to try?

**PREPARE FOR  
NEXT WEEK:**



Read Acts 4:23-31