

11—Acts 4.1-22—The Kingdom Threatened, The Kingdom Advances

- I. Introduction
 - a. A group of us were traveling south on a bus in Tunis, Tunisia on our way to El Jem, a famous Roman coliseum. A more direct conversation about the gospel began to happen with our Muslim friend who was our guide. He was a kind and gentle man but we knew he needed Jesus. I'm not sure what I expected from him but my instinct told me to be ready for some pushback when we claimed like Peter did in this text that Jesus is the ONLY way to God.
 - i. I've been in both sides of this exclusive claim. I've watched people get really upset that if what I was saying was true then all of their family who had already died were eternally condemned.
 - ii. The reaction we got from our Muslim friend suggested that we were all on different paths to God. You have yours and I have mine. We are all okay. We simply asked him, "If we turn around and travel north, will we arrive at El Jem?" He replied, "No, we must go south."
 - iii. Whether he was just being nice and not wanting to engage in an awkward conversion or whether he really believed there are multiple ways to God I do not know. He finally admitted someone was heading the wrong direction.
 - b. Do you believe that Jesus is the only way? Larry King had a knack for getting people to deny that claim. Do you deny that claim? The enemy certainly wants you to do so.
- II. Main Point
 - a. Preaching Christ results in resistance. Here it resulted in being arrested and it resulted in many believing. The church is threatened but the Kingdom advances.
 - i. "The Sadducees could arrest the apostles, but they could not arrest the gospel" Stott
- III. Outline
 - a. This section breaks down into three parts.
 - i. 1-4 shows the gospel proclaimed which resulted in arrests AND many believing.
 - ii. In 5-12 the arrested apostles proclaimed the exclusive gospel before councils
 - iii. 13-22 we see the timid rulers threaten but King Jesus cannot be stopped
- IV. Exposition
 - a. Where the gospel is proclaimed there will be resistance by some and faith in others.
 - i. Jesus left his disciples with a mission. (Acts 1:8) ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
 - ii. The problem is there are people who do not like Jesus and the gospel. As the scene begins in verse 1, the main activities are speaking and teaching. They were not talking about the weather or that Solomon's porch needed painting. They were proclaiming Christ and the resurrection and the authorities (the religious elites) are upset.
 - iii. In this first verse, Peter and John were speaking to the people that had gathered around them because of a lame man that they all knew had been healed.
 - iv. However, while they are speaking the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees come over to them. Now they do not come running with amazement but rather they are angry.
 1. Why? Because of what they heard the apostles teaching.
 2. And what were they teaching? Notice, it says proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.
 - a. In other words, the result of the resurrection of Jesus offered hope to anyone who repented and trusted in him that someday God would make everything right. Even sin and death would be destroyed.

4. Peter and John had been placed in the midst of the rulers. It is not clear to me what the rulers mean by their questions though.
 - a. They ask in verse 7, “By what power or by what name did you do this?”
 - b. “This” what? The teaching or the healing? In verse 2, they are upset because of their teaching concerning Jesus and the resurrection. The Sadducees are known for their opposition of a resurrection.
 - c. But if we take Peter’s reply beginning in verse 8 then it could to be healing of the lame man.
 - d. Maybe the rulers meant the teaching but Peter turned their opposition on their heads by bringing into question a good deed of restoring this lame man.
5. It appears the issue is something like this: “We haven’t given you authority to teach the people.”
 - a. The apostles take what they have asked concerning the power and the name and essentially ask them...you mean by what power and by what name is this man who has been lame for 40 years is STANDING?
 - b. Though it hasn’t been mentioned. The last place the lame man was standing had been clinging to Peter and John. Yet, they were arrested, not the lame man.
 - c. At the end of verse 9 and the end of verse 10, Peter says, “⁹ if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, ¹⁰ let it be known to all of you 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 is standing before you well.
 - i. When you use the word “this” you mean something nearby. In other words, he must be standing next to them again. Exhibit A for evidence is standing beside them.
 - ii. I must clarify the word “well” at the end of verse 10. It is the same word used at the end of verse 12—be saved. Salvation can mean both physical and spiritual salvation. God’s salvation has both in mind. Our souls will be united with our resurrected bodies someday.
- ii. The highest authorities in Jerusalem have now convened for court. The trial involves the preaching of Jesus and the resurrection.
 1. Peter speaks in defense but really, he just speaks the gospel before these rulers.
 - a. Do you remember Jesus saying this in (Mk. 13:9-11) ⁹ "But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. ¹⁰ And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. ¹¹ And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Notice the beginning of verse 8. (Acts 4:8) ⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them...
 - i. It happened just like Jesus said it would.
 2. Peter points to the 40+ year old lame man who is standing beside them.
 - a. He makes certain they know that it was by the power and by the name of Jesus of Nazareth who made this man well.

- b. He makes sure to remind them...you know that Jesus whom you crucified...whom God raised from the dead.
- c.by HIM this man is standing BEFORE you well!
- d. Peter makes uses of Psalm 118 to describe what they have done.
 - i. (Acts 4:11) ¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.
 - ii. Peter says the stone is Jesus. The builders that rejected him are these rulers. And this Jesus has become the cornerstone!
 - iii. In other words, Jesus is the beginning and foundation on which this new temple is being built called the church. God's presence now dwells in his people.
 - iv. Peter describes this house like this in (1 Pet. 2:4-5) As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
- iii. These builders have stumbled over Jesus. He has become a rock of offense to them.
 - 1. Peter ends his gospel presentation with the line clearly drawn. (Acts 4:12) ² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
 - 2. In other words, high priests of the temple...you must bow the knee to King Jesus to be saved.
- c. How will they response? Repentance and humility? Actually, the rulers are timid and dumbfounded. But King Jesus and the gospel cannot be stopped! It's as though Jesus is there in these uneducated laymen.
 - i. This last scene begins in verse 13 with the rulers taking notice of Peter and John's boldness.
 - 1. Boldness is courage in the midst of trouble. Boldness is the freedom to speak the gospel freely even when it might cost you.
 - 2. How does this strike you? Do you know that Peter and John are just like me and you? Do you know the same Holy Spirit is in us to speak boldly just like this?
 - 3. You might say, well I've never been to seminary. These rulers perceived that Peter and John were uneducated, common men. Not illiterate but no formal training like them.
 - 4. What's the answer? Where can you get trained? The same place they were trained. They also perceived that they had been with Jesus!
 - a. You can be with Jesus by the Holy Spirit and through his word. May we uneducated, common believers be bold in our witness for Jesus no matter who stands before us because we have meditated on the word! Let's be strong trees like in Psalm 1.
 - 5. You might say, well I don't have a 40+ year old lame man standing next to me as it says in verse 14 to help people believe.
 - a. Well actually, you have this one. Scripture is your witness. And if you have been saved you can tell them you were once dead but God has made you alive. You are a miracle standing right in front of them.
 - 6. You might say, well what if they oppose me. Notice in verse 14—these powerful and educated men had nothing to say in opposition.
 - a. It is amazing that the resounding theme of these verses is the speaking, teaching, proclaiming, saying of the apostles but here it says the rulers had nothing to say. HA!

- ii. They order them to leave the courtroom.
 - 1. It might be embarrassing if the apostles hear them saying things like they do in verse 16. (Acts 4:16) "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.
 - a. They do not know what to do. Even among the high priestly family, the elders, scribes and Sadducees—educated men, experienced men, uncommon men, powerful men—they are left with only one option.
 - b. Threats!
- iii. They want to stop the spread of gospel. Satan wants to stop the spread of the gospel. But all they have are threats. They attempt to silence them with fear.
 - 1. (Acts 4:17) ¹⁷ But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name."
 - a. They seem to be so afraid of Jesus they continually avoid using his name.
 - 2. What would you do if you were placed in a courtroom such as this?
 - a. What if you recognized that you have been silenced? It is as though you have been warned not spread this Jesus throughout Goodlettsville. Are you that person?
- iv. Maybe it's time for you to stand up to the enemy like Peter and John do here.
 - 1. (Acts 4:19-20) "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."
 - 2. Most threats are just empty words. People use them to get their way. Satan uses people to spread fear in God's people. They are often here in the church.
 - 3. Ask yourself, "Am I being used to stop the spread of the gospel in anyway?" God please show me.
 - 4. You need to stop listening to yourself and start preaching to yourself. And if you do not know what that means, talk to be afterwards.

V. Conclusion

- a. Let's conclude where they did. (Acts 4:21-22) ²¹ And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, **for** all were praising God for what had happened. ²² For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.
- b. They threatened and the people are praising God. Praising God pushes back the darkness.
- c. Who are you in this story? We may suffer now for speaking the gospel but we will live forever with our King. Who is your King?