

Acts Series #5—“What It Takes” Acts 4:1-13

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Staff Team Evaluation

B. What Does It Take To Be Used Of The Lord?

1. The disciples were a pretty motley group before Jesus called them
2. They were certainly not the kind of guys that would have joined together on their *own* initiative
3. But Jesus took them and forged them into a tight knit community which turned the world upside down in and for His Name

C. Set The Scene

1. As we come to ch. 4, Peter had just preached his second sermon
2. You'll remember two weeks ago we read about Peter and John healing a lame man
 - a. he was so excited, he started running and leaping in the temple courts
 - b. soon a crowd gathered and Peter preached to them the power of the name of Jesus
3. Well, all of this took place in the temple precincts; and of course it wasn't long before the priests found out . . .

II.TEXT

A. Vs. 1-2

{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.

1. These religious leaders were already well aware of the growing new movement in Jer.
2. Everywhere they went they were hearing the rumors of Jesus having risen from the dead
3. They thought that when they had had Him crucified it would be the end of Him and His message
4. But now they hear the constant reports that He had risen from the dead
5. And even worse, His followers were apparently doing the same kind of miraculous wonders He had done
6. Here are Peter and John, standing in the Temple courts themselves, boldly proclaiming Jesus' name and being given excited attention by a large crowd

B. Vs. 3

{3} And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

1. While the Romans had taken over the official military presence in Israel,

- they allowed the Jews to maintain their own civil police forces
2. These Jewish police had very little authority in every place *except* the Temple
 3. The Romans were very careful about interfering in the religious lives of their subjects, so they allowed the priests to keep a strong police force on the Temple grounds
 4. In v. 1 we read that the *captain of the temple*—the police chief—was one of those who came by as Peter was preaching
 5. When he knew Peter’s message displeased the religious leaders, he arrested Peter and John on the grounds of disturbing the peace by raising a mob, and put them in custody
 6. But it was too late in the day to begin a trial, so they were held over till the next morning

C. V. 4

{4} However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

1. Today we figure it an absolute catastrophe if the police walk up to the pastor while he’s preaching and arrest him and haul him off
2. Surely that would totally scandalize the people and they would flee
3. Well, not here—while Peter and John are hauled off to jail, many of those who had just heard him turned to one another and confessed faith in Jesus
4. In fact, the church which had grown from 120 to 3000 on the day of Pentecost, now here, just a few days after that has grown another 2000

D. Vs. 5-7

{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?”

1. By Jewish law, a trial could only be held during daylight hours
2. Since Peter and John had been arrested in the evening, there was not enough time for a trial
3. But now that a new day has come, the religious leaders were anxious to get things under way
4. That this was an important trial is indicated by the fact that they gathered the big-wigs of Jewish society
 - a. the rulers and community elders were there
 - b. the scribes came - these men were the lawyers of their day, being well versed in all the details of the law
 - c. Annas, the high priest was in attendance, which proves it was an important trial
 - d. Caiaphus, Annas’ son-in-law was also there
 - 1) while Annas was the real high priest
 - 2) he had been officially replaced by Caiaphus by the Romans who

would change the high priest from time to time to keep any one man from gaining too much power

- 3) but since the high priest was a life-time office, the Jews just winked at the Roman appointment and continued to honor Annas as high priest

5. This was a gathering of the Sanhedrin, the supreme court and governing body of Israel

6. The Sanhedrin met in a large and elegant building just west of the Temple
7. It would be a pretty intimidating moment for the average person and no doubt the Sanhedrin was expecting Peter and John to adopt the usual posture of awe and cowering submission
8. After all, they were just country bumpkins from the northern province of Galilee
9. I've had the opportunity to speak before the City Council at several points
10. I've also given the opening prayer at the County Board of Supervisor's meeting
11. It can be pretty intimidating to walk into these government chambers and look at the luxurious furnishings
12. The architecture seems aimed at conveying a sense of power
13. And then to watch the officials and dignitaries walk in and take their seats
 - a. they have their staffs who hustle and bustle around arranging papers and getting coffee
 - b. they engage minor chit chat and make it look like they are completely comfortable in their position of authority
 - c. their ease stands in sharp contrast to the tension of the rest of the room
 - d. and really, it only serves to make everyone even more nervous
14. The Sanhedrin knew how to intimidate and no doubt used all their skill with John and Peter
15. But they just didn't know who they were dealing with
16. They came in, sat down in their official seats, engaged in their preliminary chit chat, then turned to Peter and John who had been brought in and set in their midst
17. And the trial began: **“By what power or by what name have you done this?”**
18. We don't know who it was that asked this question, but you have to wonder if as soon as the words were out of his mouth the rest of the Sanhedrin didn't cringe
19. To Peter, it was an open invitation to preach
20. Surely these men that comprised the Supreme Court of Israel could have come up with a line of questioning that would have been more condemning
 - a. the room was filled with lawyers and legal experts
 - b. why they didn't ask a question giving less opportunity to Peter is a mystery
21. Or maybe it isn't a mystery:
 - a. No—God was at work
 - b. He was preparing the Sanhedrin to be confronted with the reality of the resurrected Christ

- c. as it says in the Psalm 76, God makes even the wrath of man to praise Him
- 22. Jesus had warned the disciples that there would come a day when they would be arrested and hauled before leaders and rulers for His name sake
 - a. He told them not to worry ahead of time about what they were going to say
 - b. Jesus said that in *that* moment, the Holy Spirit would give them the words to speak
- 23. As Peter and John stood in the middle of the Sanhedrin, facing the high priest in all his visible authority, and the words of this question entered their ears, there had to be a sense of incredible thrill as they recalled Jesus' words
- 24. This was it—the very fulfillment of what He had said
- 25. And just as surely as He had promised they would be arrested and brought before rulers—just as surely, the Holy Spirit would now give them the words to speak
- 26. So Peter opened his mouth to speak as he opened his heart to receive from God

D. Vs. 8-

{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.”

- 1. Wait a minute—Is this Peter?
- 2. Is this the same guy who just a few weeks before was denying to a powerless little slave girl that he even knew Jesus?
- 3. Isn't this the guy who swore three times that he was no follower of the Lord?
- 4. How can he now stand before the Supreme Court of the land and so boldly declare the name of Jesus?
- 5. How can he point his finger at these men and lay the charge of murder at their feet?
- 6. The answer lies in the first words of v. 8 = He was **“filled with the Holy Spirit”**
- 7. The Greek is clear at this point: Peter received a special visitation of the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus had promised
- 8. Peter begins by acknowledging the authority of the Sanhedrin;
 - a. they *are* the rulers and elders of the people
 - b. which means they were responsible before God for their actions as they led the nation
- 9. If they wanted to know by what name and authority this man had been healed, Peter was more than glad to oblige
- 10. But they would not like his response, seeing that this very same group or

- rulers and elders is the one that had condemned Jesus to death
11. It's interesting isn't it—that they didn't ask if a miracle had really occurred
 12. Their investigation wasn't into whether or not the man had really been healed
 13. They only wanted to know whose power had accomplished the healing
 14. They were not interested in the least of being faithful to follow God
 15. They just wanted to make sure their positions of power would not be threatened
 16. Peter knows the motivation of their hearts, so he asks them if he and John are really being tried for having done a good deed
 - a. does the Sanhedrin oppose healing?
 - b. do the rulers think it would have been better to leave this man lame?
 - c. and if so, do they really have the best interest of the nation at heart?
 - d. or are they merely using their office for personal ambition and gain?
 17. They've asked, so Peter tells them by whose power and name the miracle was done
 18. His name is Jesus
 - a. that's right, the Jesus who came from Nazareth
 - b. the one proved to be the Messiah by His resurrection from the dead
 - c. the one *they*, just a few weeks before, had sat in this *same* room and condemned to death on a cross
 19. Peter thrusts the knife into their consciences, and then he gives it a sharp twist as he goes on . . .

E. Vs. 11-12

{11} “This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’

1. Peter again shows his experience with the Word of God by quoting to them from a passage in Psalm 118 that would leave everyone of them stunned in their seats
2. You see, Psalm 118 was recognized by everyone as being prophetic of the Messiah
3. But *this* verse proved to be a complete enigma to the rabbis
4. They could not understand how this reference to a rejected stone could apply to the Messiah
5. Jesus had quoted this same passage when confronting the religious leaders with their rejection of Him^[1] [see^[2]]
6. Peter repeats it here with unmistakable intent
7. These men were the builders, the architects of Israel's future
8. Jesus was the stone they had rejected but which had become the chief cornerstone of God's whole Kingdom
9. Now he twists the knife even more . . .

{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.”

10. Peter now rises to the climax of his short answer
11. They had asked by whose power and name he had healed the lame man

12. If Peter professed any name but that of Jehovah he would be charged with blasphemy and sentenced to death
13. But in his answer Peter deftly showed them that Jesus is Jehovah, proven by His power to heal and His resurrection from the dead
14. The name Jesus means “Jehovah Saves”
15. In Jesus, Jehovah came to bring salvation
16. And the name of Jesus is now the name, THE ONLY NAME, by which men are saved
17. Not Confucius, nor Buddha
18. Not Allah, nor Zoroaster
19. Not L. Ron Hubbard, nor Freud, Maslow, or Skinner
20. Not Sun Myung Moon, nor Joseph Smith
21. Not Judge Rutherford, nor Mary Baker Eddy
22. Not Hinn, nor Crouch, Copeland, Hagin
23. Not John MacArthur, nor Chuck Smith, Greg Laurie, or anyone else
24. There is only one name given that saves - Jesus of Nazareth, THE Christ!
25. *Your* name cannot save, *my* name cannot save - we cannot save ourselves
26. Only one name possesses the power, the authority, the grace, and the perfection to save = Jesus
27. Who are you trusting in for your salvation?

III CONCLUSION

A. V. 13

{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.

1. Here is where I want to end today
2. The Sanhedrin was left speechless at the boldness of Peter’s reply
3. These were not two country bumpkins, overawed and cowering before the august majesty of the Supreme Court
4. They bore the appearance and demeanor of the regal ambassadors of some mighty Kingdom
5. And indeed, that is exactly what they were
6. Peter and John were ambassadors who were well trained and well equipped to represent their king in a hostile land
7. They were not there to bargain or find a diplomatic solution for a sticky situation
8. They were there to deliver an ultimatum in the Name of Jesus: Surrender or Die!
9. It wasn’t Peter and John who were on trial, it was the Sanhedrin
10. The reason they were speechless is because they realized the tables had been turned on them
11. They had sought to entrap Peter and John but found themselves confronted with their own trap
12. The only way out was to call upon the Name - the Only name That Saves - Jesus

13. And so they marveled at these two hicks from the backwater province of Galilee
14. They had no formal education in the recognized schools of the day
15. They hadn't participated in the detailed courses of the scribes
16. Yet they spoke with a power they had not heard since—since—since Jesus
17. That's it! These two sounded just like Jesus
18. He too had spoken with absolute confidence and authority
19. He too had failed to cower in their midst
20. He too had spoken with complete control and drove them to fits of rage as they found their plans and traps backfiring on themselves
21. That' was it—these two looked and sounded just like Jesus
22. Here was living proof Jesus had fulfilled His promise to rise again from the dead and come back to indwell His followers
23. They realized Peter and John had been with Jesus

B. What It Takes

1. What an incredibly powerful statement that is!
2. They had no formal training; they had had nor special schooling at the hands of some famous professor
3. They were simple men who lived simple lives
4. But there was one thing that set them apart—they had been with Jesus
5. They had spent many hours with Him
6. *He* had taught them; *He* had trained them
7. And the time with Him had turned them into men of world changing faith and earthshaking power
8. What does it take to be used of God?
9. It *doesn't* take a formal education or special training by the so-called experts
10. All that's needed to be used of God is to spend time with Jesus
11. Because it's as we spend time with Him that he makes the inner changes in our lives that enable and empower us to be used by Him

[1] Mark 12:1-12

[2] In the OT there is a strong interplay between the stone, the Son of God, and the Messiah Exo 28:9 Joshua 4:6-8, 20-21 1 Kings 18:31 Isa 54:11-13 Lam 4:1-2 Zech 9:16 Dan 2:34-35 7:13-14 Psalm 118:22-23 Isa 28:16 8:14