

ACTS: I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH (PART 7)

In Acts 3, Peter and John have created quite a stir in Jerusalem by healing a lame man on their way to prayer at the Temple. This happened on the way TO prayer meeting, not on the way FROM prayer meeting, because the early Christians prayed without ceasing!

Acts 3:6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

As a crowd gathers to see the former lame man “walking and leaping and praising God,” Peter turns the temple into a courtroom and lays out all the evidence for everybody to see. How could two ordinary fishermen perform such a great miracle? Through the NAME of Jesus Christ!

Acts 3:16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Hearing about the commotion, the ruling council of the Jews quickly has the disciples arrested and held overnight to appear at a hearing ...

Acts 4:1-4 And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide. Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

The Sadducees dominated the ruling council of the Jewish religion, which was called the Sanhedrin. Unlike the Pharisees, they did NOT believe in the resurrection, so Peter’s preaching is highly offensive! But even the disciples’ arrest couldn’t change the impact of this miracle – 2000 MORE people believed and were added to the church!

The early church had none of the "advantages" that we depend on today. Most of their ministers had jail records and would probably have a hard time today JOINING some of our churches, let alone LEADING them. But the early church knew how to PRAY so that God’s hand would work!

In Acts 3 & 4, immediately after the Day of Pentecost, the emphasis is on the NAME of Jesus Christ. This is NOT a coincidence! A name is much more than just identification; it carries with it AUTHORITY and POWER. The first concern of the first Christians was to give glory to His NAME!

Acts 4:5-7 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?

The Sanhedrin consisted of at least 70 members, with the High Priest as the leader. They had power under Rome to condemn a man, but not put him to death. Annas and Caiaphas had both shared in the trial of Jesus, and had Him condemned by false witnesses in illegal proceedings held in the dead of night. They thought they had put an end to Jesus!

The Sanhedrin was compromised in so many ways. It was filled with the sons and relatives of Annas. It was controlled by Rome, who kept changing High Priests even before they died. It had condemned Jesus out of envy, with the voices of the priest being loudest at His trial before Pilate, to sway the crowd. The Sadducees were the modernists of their day, and did not believe in angels, the spirit realm, or the resurrection. No wonder the ministry of Jesus shook their world – there had been “all of the above” ever since He arrived on earth!

Furthermore, Caiaphas had disqualified himself spiritually at the trial of Jesus from ever having any religious authority to lead the Sanhedrin:

Leviticus 21:10 And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes;

Mark 14:61-64 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

AT THIS MOMENT THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD PASSED TO JESUS!

Hebrews 4:14-16 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

BY WHAT POWER, OR BY WHAT NAME, HAVE YE DONE THIS?!

A man who had been lame for 38 years has just been miraculously healed; in fact, he is outside right now in the Temple courtyard “walking, and leaping, and praising God” – and they want to punish the disciples who had a part in him receiving his miracle. That’s spiritual blindness!

Mark 13:9, 11 But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them ... But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

Matthew 10:22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

The followers of Jesus in the first century were persecuted by the religious establishment because of their insistence on using His NAME. Does that sound familiar in the 21st century?!

Acts 4:8-12 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

WHOM YE CRUCIFIED ... WHOM GOD RAISED ... EVEN BY HIM!
Jesus is alive and is here backing up the use of His Name on the earth!

Psalm 118:21-24 I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

“Historia Scholastica” says that verses 22-23 describe a literal stone that was discarded by the builders of the Temple, until it was finally found to be perfectly fit for the most honorable place, coupling the sides of the walls together; this astonished the builders and Ezra wrote it in a Psalm!

JESUS IS THE CHIEF CORNER STONE – HE IS OUR SALVATION!

A CORNER IS WHERE TWO THINGS MEET! Jews & Gentiles, Bond & Free, Law & Grace, Heaven & Earth, Mercy & Truth, Righteousness & Peace (*Psalm 85:10 - Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*)

IN HEBREW, “HEAD” (OF THE CORNER) IS “ROSH” WHICH MEANS: head, chief, leader, prince, captain, point, top, first rank, best, highest, supreme, summit, sum, beginning, commencement, foremost, principal, source, zenith, total, most excellent, head cornerstone!

MOFFAT TRANSLATION OF PSALMS 118:22 - “The stone the builders cast aside is now the building’s strength and pride.”

The image of GOD as our Rock is all through the Old Testament, and it continues on without missing a beat with JESUS in the New Testament!

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

Matthew 21:42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

1 Corinthians 1:22-24 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Ephesians 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

1 Peter 2:6-10 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Matthew 16:16-18 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

The Sanhedrin was commanding them not to teach or preach at all in the Name of Jesus, because **THE NAME MEANS THE PERSON!** The Name of the Lord Jesus Christ was not merely a theory, or a doctrine, or a theological argument in the early church. The Name was a PERSON who had all POWER because He had risen from the dead!

That's why we worship the NAME, and sing about the NAME, and pray for healing in the NAME, and preach in the NAME, and baptize in the NAME, and why the devil fears the NAME!

Colossians 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Acts 4:13-14 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

The Sanhedrin is in a real dilemma! They can't argue with the RESULTS of the message the disciples are preaching! The miracle didn't happen because of Peter and John, but because they had BEEN WITH JESUS!

Acts 4:15-18 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 that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

Once again, the concern of the Sanhedrin is to SILENCE THE NAME. They weren't seeking for truth, but simply for a way to silence the truth. That is the agenda of the devil and all of Hell. What do YOU do when the devil threatens you and tries to keep YOU silent about the NAME?

Acts 4:19-22 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. 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 nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done. For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

Because they had no real case to offer, the council could only threaten the men and let them go. After all, when you have a living miracle before you, as well as an approving public around you, you must be careful!

Acts 4:23-28 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

The church met to pray in order to defeat the enemy, and began to intercede with the words of Scripture in Psalm 2. Too often today, believers gather for prayer as though attending a concert or a party. There is little sense of urgency and danger because most of us are comfortable in our Christian walk. If more of God's people were witnessing for Christ in daily life, there would be more urgency, more blessing, and more power when the church meets for prayer!

Acts 4:29-31 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

The early church did not pray for their circumstances to be changed – they asked God to empower and embolden them to make the best use of their circumstances in order to bring glory to His Name!

The same people who were filled with the Holy Ghost in Acts 2 were filled again in Acts 4 – because the church PRAYED without ceasing!