

Comments About Acts 4

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BIG SANDY, Texas—Recently, I began a series of brief articles to discuss chapters in the book of Acts. This week, we will talk about chapter 4.

May this project encourage you to review the valuable history found in the book of Acts.

Power of Sadducees

If you recall, Acts 3:12-26 described words that the apostle Peter was delivering to the people after he and John healed a lame man in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Chapter 4 begins by showing the actions of the Sadducees.

Acts 4:1—"Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them."

Here is a brief comparison between the Sadducees and Pharisees.

- The Sadducees were more associated with the priests, while the Pharisees were more associated with the scribes and lawyers.
- The Sadducees were more associated with the aristocracy (rich descendants), while the Pharisees were more associated with the middle class and merchants.
- The Sadducees were more associated with the temple, while the Pharisees were more associated with the synagogue.
- The Sadducees had greater influence in the Sanhedrin, while the Pharisees had greater influence among the masses.

Disturbed by their message

The Sadducees were disturbed by the message of the disciples—about Christ and the resurrection of the dead (verse 2).

The Sadducees placed the disciples into custody (verse 3).

The religious leaders asked the disciples how they had healed the lame man (verse 7).

Peter answered clearly by invoking the name and power of Jesus Christ of Nazareth (verses 8-12).

The religious leaders marveled at the answers of these untrained men (verses 13-14).

Threatened the disciples

The Sanhedrin conferred among themselves and decided to threaten the disciples (verses 15-17). The Sanhedrin called the disciples back into the chambers and commanded them to avoid speaking or teaching in the name of Jesus (verse 18).

Notice Peter's answer.

Acts 4:19-20—"But Peter and John answered and said to them, 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.' "

Although the Sanhedrin threatened the disciples again, the Sanhedrin could not punish them because of their popularity with the people (verse 21).

Reaction of disciples

The rest of the chapter deals with the reaction of the other disciples who were watching the events. Notice three reactions at that time.

- They prayed for boldness (verses 26-31).
- With great power, the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (verse 33).
- They shared some possessions to serve the needs of other disciples (verse 32, 34-35).

Son of encouragement

At the end of this chapter (verses 36-37), Bible students are introduced to a man called Barnabas (which is translated "Son of Encouragement").

Barnabas is later identified in the book of Acts as an apostle (Acts 13:1-3 and Acts 14:14).