

The Historical Stories of the Acts of the Apostles

Lesson 3 Acts 4:5 – Acts 5:16

As Peter and John enter the temple they heal the lame man simply by telling him to get up and walk. Leaping and rejoicing, the man clings to the apostles. Amazed, the people gather around the men giving Peter the opportunity to speak about the risen Savior. The Sadducees become furious with Peter's emphasis on the resurrection and put Peter and John in jail overnight. The next morning they take them before the rulers, elders, scribes and the current and former high priests.

Peter's Fourth Message – Response to Healing the Lame Man

Acts 4:5 And it came about on the next day, that their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; **6** and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. **7** And when they had placed them in the center, they *began to inquire*, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" **8** Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, **9** if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, **10** let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead-- by this *name* this man stands here before you in good health. **11** "He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, *but* WHICH BECAME THE VERY CORNER *stone*.²⁸ **12** "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."

The people show honor to the ex-high priests by referring to them with the title even though they are no longer serving in that position the way we honor former presidents. So it is with Annas who held the position as high priest from AD 7-14. He is also the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the actual high priest at the time of this incident in AD 30. John and Alexander will serve as high priest before Luke writes this letter to Theophilus after AD 63.

The rulers and religious leaders of the people try to discover the magic formula used to heal the lame man. Peter uses the name of Jesus and the leaders want to know if they can use this same name with the same results. Later, in this letter, Jews try to mimic Paul when they attempt to cast out demons in the name of Jesus.²⁹ In both cases, the Jews do not understand the source of the power to heal when mentioning the name of Jesus.

²⁸ Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 28:16; Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Romans 9:33; 1 Peter 2:7

²⁹ **Acts 19: 11** And God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, **12** so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. **13** But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches."

The name of Jesus is not a magic formula for use anytime by anyone to achieve any result. Peter and John heal by using the name of Jesus because they are apostles specifically selected by Jesus and invested with the ability to heal through His power. The day before Peter mentions the true origin of this power when he says, "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?"³⁰ Peter makes it clear that the healing comes from the Lord, not man. The day before, they all had heard Peter say the words, "In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene-- walk!"³¹ To the religious leaders, these are magical words.

Several facts need to be kept in mind as we discuss the authority and power behind using the name of Jesus. First, the authority to heal in the name of Jesus had been delegated to the apostles only; no one else had the authority to do the wonders and miracles. Acts records that:

1. Jesus' last words were orders to the apostles – Acts 1:2
2. The many signs and wonders were happening through the apostles – Acts 2:22; Acts 5:12; Acts 8:18

Therefore, only the apostles had the authority to heal in the name of Jesus. However, didn't Jesus say He would do anything a person asked in His name? John recorded Jesus' words when He said, "And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."³² We might ask this question, "Doesn't this passage apply to all believers even today?" The answer is a resounding no. When Jesus says these words, only the apostles are with Him³³ in the upper room after Judas has left and the Lord's Supper is over. The same is true with the other passages in John that say the same thing.³⁴ In the upper room, Jesus gives the apostles final instructions before His crucifixion. He has already given His authority to them when He selects them on the hillside about eighteen months before. However, while He is on the mount of transfiguration, they fail to cast the demon out of the boy down the mountainside because they do not pray before attempting the exorcism.³⁵ After the filling of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, these same apostles have the ability to do all things in the name of Jesus. No one else in history will have the ability to reproduce what Jesus had invested in the lives of the apostles. When John, the author of the Revelation, died after AD 96, the era of authority to do all things in the name of Jesus ended. Today when we pray, we make requests of the Lord asking Him to fulfill our prayers if, and only if, it is His divine will.

Second, when the apostles speak in the name of Jesus, their words are backed with the full authority of the Lord. Because He has given them the authority to speak for Him, He acts on their behalf to fulfill their words. Peter does not heal the lame man; Jesus does, and Peter makes this point crystal clear.

³⁰ Acts 3:12

³¹ Acts 3:6

³² John 14:13

³³ Who is in the upper room? Only Jesus with the apostles. What is Jesus doing? Giving final instructions before His crucifixion. When does He give these instructions? After the Lord's Supper, after Judas left the room. Where does He give the instructions? In the upper room.

³⁴ John 15:16; John 16:23

³⁵ Mark 9:14-27

Third, Jesus is the only way to eternal salvation. When we call out to the name of Jesus and beg Him for salvation, He will save us. The Jews will not grasp this concept. They are the religious authorities and they reject the authority of the Lord. Religious as they may be, they cannot receive salvation in eternity without calling on the name of Jesus while on earth.

Commanded Not to Teach in the Name of Jesus

Acts 4:13 Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John, and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were marveling, and *began* to recognize them as having been with Jesus. **14** And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. **15** But when they had ordered them to go aside out of the Council, they *began* to confer with one another, **16** saying, "What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. **17** But in order that it may not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to any man in this name." **18** And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. **19** But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; **20** for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard." **21** And when they had threatened them further, they let them go (~~finding no basis on which they might punish them~~) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; **22** for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

We must not forget that we are observing a mock trial with the current, former, and future high priests and many of the other rulers and elders. In this situation, these leaders cannot deny the healing of a man they have known to be lame for forty years. The strongest discipline they can offer the apostles is a warning because they are still afraid of the people just as they were afraid of the multitudes during Jesus' ministry.

The Prayer of the Apostles

Acts 4:23 And when they had been released, they went to their own *companions*, and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. **24** And when they heard *this*, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is Thou who DIDST MAKE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, **25** who by the Holy Spirit, *through* the mouth of our father David Thy servant, didst say, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? **26** THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD, AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.' **36** **27** "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, **28** to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur. **29** "And now, Lord, take note

³⁶ Psalm 2:1-2

of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence, ³⁰while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus." ³¹And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness.

When Peter and John return to their fellow believers, they all begin to pray. We do not know who speaks these words, but they reveal an interesting point about Herod, Pilate, the gentiles, and the people of Israel; their prayer reveals that these people are anointed by God. Are they godly people? No. Are they righteous people? No. Did they do the will of God? Yes. God uses whom He wishes to achieve what He wishes, how He wishes, when He wishes. In God's plan for the ages, He anoints these people to do His will, in this case, to sacrifice His Son, so the opportunity for salvation can come to everyone in this world.

We must be careful with the use of the word "anointed" in today's church. Not all are anointed by the Lord, even though they are powerful speakers, talented musicians, and artful organizers. The simplest member of the church who writes a letter of encouragement or criticisms may be anointed by the Lord to place a word from God in the heart of the church's earthly leaders.

It All Belongs to Lord

Acts 4:32 And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of *them* claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them. ³³And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. ³⁴For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, ³⁵and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need.

In the beginning days of the church the apostles address the needs of all the people. A new thought arises in this passage as all the people adopt the attitude that everything they have belongs to the Lord. It is not a new thought in Scripture,³⁷ but it is a new thought in the religious circles of that day. As the need becomes apparent, the Lord provides a resource through His people.

Two Tracts of Land, Two Different Families, Two Different Outcomes

Barnabas

Acts 4:36 And Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (~~which translated means, Son of Encouragement~~), ³⁷and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

³⁷ **Psalm 24:1** The earth is the LORD's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.

A need arises in the congregation and Barnabas sells a tract of land and takes the money to the apostles to use as they see fit. It is a straight forward, godly transaction and gift to the Lord.

Ananias

Acts 5:1 But a certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, **2** and kept back *some* of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. **3** But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back *some* of the price of the land? **4**" While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God." **5** And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came upon all who heard of it. **6** And the young men arose and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.

The sale of Ananias' tract of land is not a godly transaction. Ananias lies about the gift and withholds a portion of the sale for himself. Ananias wants the same praise that Barnabas receives with his gift, but he does not give it all to the Lord because of greed and pride. If he had just told the truth, all would have been well.

Sapphira

Acts 5:7 Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. **8** And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price." **9** Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out as well." **10** And she fell immediately at his feet, and breathed her last; and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. **11** And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things.

Ananias sells the property with the full knowledge of his wife.³⁸ Three hours after the death of her husband, but not knowing of his death, she comes to Peter. Peter simply asks her if the amount of money Ananias has given in the offering is the sale price of the land. Like her husband, she lies, and she dies. Their ordeal grips the heart of the church as a whole and establishes the importance of integrity.

At the Hands of the Apostles

Acts 5:12 And at the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. **13** But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. **14** And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to *their* number; **15** to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the

³⁸ Acts 5:2

streets, and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on any one of them. ¹⁶And also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits; and they were all being healed.

The apostles spent a great deal of time in Solomon's portico³⁹ in the weeks following Pentecost. What better place to share the message of the Lord Jesus than at the temple where the people of His heritage come to worship! With their hands they perform wonders and miracles just as Jesus did with the people during His ministry. The Lord's healing power continues through the apostles and amazes and bewilders the people. Many accept the Lord as Savior and become part of the church; however, the members of the church keep their distance from the apostles, not wanting to be caught up in an altercation with the religious leaders at the temple. But even in their fear of the religious leaders, the people still bring the sick for healing, perhaps by Peter's shadow as he passes by.

³⁹ Solomon's temple included a porch on the east side. With the rebuilding of the temple after the exile, the porch was not included. Four hundred years later, Herod makes extensive renovations to the temple, adding a porch around the entire temple with multiple columns. After completion, the people refer to the porch as Solomon's portico.