

The battle for the human heart

1. Review and overview of Acts 3 and 4
2. The Pale Blue Dot
3. Observation and exposition of Acts 4:1-22
4. The take-away for us

Review and overview of Acts 3 and 4 (3:1-4:31)

1. **3:1-10** - Peter and John go to the temple and while there they heal a man who was born lame.
2. **3:11-26** - Peter's speech to the people who gathered around them as a result of the miracle healing (several thousand at least? see **4:4**).
3. **4:1-22** - Peter and John are arrested by the Jewish authorities, the next day they stand trial before the authorities, Peter makes another speech, and they are threatened and then released.
4. **4:23-31** - Peter and John return to their friends where they tell them what happened, pray to God for courage and boldness, and God answers their prayer.

The Pale Blue Dot

1. Earthrise
2. Readings from Wikipedia article, "Pale Blue Dot" [SLIDES]
3. Readings from Desiring God article, "God Put You on the Pale Blue Dot: Why Your Small Life Is Not Meaningless" [SLIDES]

Observation and exposition of Acts 4:1-22

1. **Acts 4:1-22**
2. The setting? The "Pale Blue Dot!", and more specifically, the temple in Jerusalem [SLIDES]
 - a. They were arrested in Solomon's portico
 - b. They were jailed overnight
 - c. They appeared before the Sanhedrin the next morning, probably in the council chamber, which, "according to Josephus, was situated at the eastern end of a bridge across the Tyropoeon valley (the bridge now represented by Wilson's Arch). At the western end of the bridge lay the open-air gathering place called the Xystus, 'the polished (floor).'" [SLIDE]
3. The time of day?

- a. After the “ninth hour,” or 3 p.m.
- b. Then, the next day

4. What is Judaism?

- a. According to *The Dictionary of New Testament Background*, “Judaism in antiquity is a complex phenomenon, involving religious, social, economic, historical and ethnic aspects of the life of [the people of Israel].” Judaism was also a changing phenomenon, and it developed through a series of stages, which for simplicity can be divided into four periods:
 - i. the prehistory of Israel, from Abraham’s family to a people;
 - ii. nationalization and the monarchy;
 - iii. dispossession (the exiles) and canonization;
 - iv. and radical pluralization, or early Judaism.

5. Who are...?

- a. The man, more than forty years old and lame from birth, who had never walked until he was healed on that day **(3:1-10)**
- b. Peter and John, who had gone to the temple at the hour of prayer **(3:1)**
- c. “All the people” who “ran together to them in the portico called Solomon’s...” **(3:11)**
 - i. Thousands??
- d. The priests **(4:1)**
- e. The captain of the temple **(4:1)**
 - i. “The chief of the temple police, who was responsible for the maintenance of law and order, and who held a priestly rank second only to the high priest.” (Stott, 96)
- f. The Sadducees **(4:1)**
 - i. According to Stott, the Sadducees “were the ruling class of wealthy aristocrats. Politically, they ingratiated themselves with the Romans, and followed a policy of collaboration, so that they feared the subversive implications of the apostles’ teaching. Theologically, they believed that the Messianic age had begun in the Maccabean period; so they were not looking for a Messiah. They also denied the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which the apostles proclaimed in Jesus. They thus saw the apostles as both agitators and heretics, both disturbers of the peace and enemies of the truth.” 95
- g. Their rulers and elders and scribes **(4:5)**
 - i. Another way of saying the Sanhedrin
- h. The Sanhedrin (the council in **4:15**)
 - i. According to Bruce, “The Sanhedrin...was the senate and supreme court of the Jewish nation. In the NT it is also called the....”body of elders”

and...."senate." The Mishnah calls it the Sanhedrin, the great Sanhedrin, the Sanhedrin of the seventy-one, the great law-court. It comprised the high priest, who presided over it by virtue of his office, and seventy other members....The Sanhedrin at this time included a majority of members from the Sadducean party, supporting the chief-priestly interests, and a powerful minority from the Pharisaic party, to which most of the scribes or professional exponents of the law of Moses belonged [otherwise known as lawyers?]." 91

- i. Annas the high priest **(4:6)**
 - i. Appointed by the Roman legate Quirinius in A.D. 6, he was high priest until A.D. 15, though he was still very influential and powerful, being something of a high priest emeritus.
 - ii. See John 18:13-24, especially verses 13-15, 19-24.
 - iii. See Luke 3:1-2
 - j. Caiaphas **(4:6)**
 - i. The son-in-law of Annas, he was high priest from A.D. 18-36
 - k. John and Alexander **(4:6)**
 - i. John may be the son of Annas, who became the high priest after Caiaphas
6. Peter and John (and the healed man?? see v. 14) are arrested, but many who heard Peter believed and were saved **(1-4)**
- a. Arrest and custody during these times doesn't mean they were guilty.
7. Peter and John and the man before the Sanhedrin **(5-12)**
- a. "set them in their midst" = the Sanhedrin sat in a semi-circle
 - i. Intimidating? Perhaps, if not for the Holy Spirit!
 - b. Peter was filled again or anew with the Holy Spirit, as Jesus promised would happen in **Luke 21:12-15**
 - c. In verse **11**, Peter refers to or loosely quotes **Psalm 118:22**, and applies that prophecy to the Sanhedrin.
 - d. Peter declares the core of the gospel to the Sanhedrin, that Jesus is the only way of salvation.
 - i. Implications?
 - ii. This is the epicenter of the battle for the human heart.
8. The Sanhedrin discuss their options **(13-17)**
- a. the apostles were "uneducated, common men" = laymen
 - b. "And they recognized that they had been with Jesus."
 - i. First, how long ago had Jesus been in this very same place, on trial?

1. Whiteboard
 - ii. How did they recognize “that they had been with Jesus?”
 - c. How did Luke know what they were saying?
 - i. Paul may have been there
 - ii. Gamaliel was almost certainly there (see **5:34**), and Paul was a student of Gamaliel (**22:3**)
 - d. Why did they want to stop the spread of this message?
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9. The Sanhedrin threaten the apostles and then let them go (**18-22**)
 - a. The stage is now set for the what happens next...

The take-away for us

1. Even with undeniable evidence for the healing and saving power of Jesus’ name and the truth of what they heard from the apostles, the Sanhedrin denied and did not believe. Only God can awaken the heart of man, leading to salvation. Our task? Speak the truth and let God do with that what he will.

Resources

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pale_Blue_Dot
2. <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/god-put-you-on-the-pale-blue-dot>
3. *The Acts of the Apostles*, F. F. Bruce
4. *The Book of the Acts*, F. F. Bruce
5. *The Acts of the Apostles*, David G. Peterson
6. *The Message of Acts*, John Stott
7. *The Acts of the Apostles*, Ben Witherington III
8. *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter