

ACTS 4 – 5: A TEMPEST IN THE TEMPLE

A British once remarked on what he saw as his inability to have the same impact as the apostles. He said, **“Wherever Paul went, there was a riot. Wherever I go, they serve tea.”** If we think about it, we can all probably identify with this to some degree. In today’s toxic PC environment, we can all feel challenged when it comes to addressing things that are contrary to the Word of God. But this isn’t anything new. Peter and the other apostles came up against opposition all the time. In fact, they were eventually martyred, (killed) for their message and the positions they took. But that would happen later. For now, just weeks after the Passover, resurrection of Jesus and Pentecost, they are plowing ahead in the face of the opposition and have taken the fight into the temple where the Sadducees have home-field advantage – or so they think.

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. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

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?”

The Sadducees are livid that the apostles are preaching the resurrection, (something in which they didn't believe) in the name of Jesus. (A Messiah in whom they didn't believe.) Therefore, they had the apostles arrested by the temple guards and brought before the Sanhedrin.

But isn't this message of the kingdom, the Messiah and the resurrection a good thing? Not if you're part of the status quo. Everything the apostles were preaching would render the temple authorities obsolete. Because the Sadducees were responsible for running the temple and all that entailed, such as sacrifices, settling disputes, dealing with forgiveness and all that... they also played a very important part in the economics, politics and other social issues of the day. Now, everything they did and believed was being challenged by a group of men and women who had no title and (in the minds of the aristocracy) no training. The Sadducees didn't believe in a resurrection of any kind, let alone that of the Messiah. That was the first rub.

What did the resurrection entail?

Resurrection was always a radical doctrine that challenged the status quo. To not realize why that is, is to not fully appreciate what the resurrection means.

The resurrection meant that God was beginning to straighten things out. And those who were in power in the current world system couldn't be assured that they would retain that power in the new kingdom of God.

Those who believed in the resurrection had no issues with imprisonment and were not afraid to die for their cause. After all, they would be raised from the dead. (suicide bombers) This type of thing could overturn the balance of power and oust those who had placed of authority. The authorities, whether Jewish or Roman didn't anything to do with this.

If Jesus was raised by God from the dead, then God was doing something new and different. If that was so, then why weren't they, (Jewish authorities) in on it? **Peter then goes on to deal with the other part of their question: "In what name are you doing this?"**

The Name: (name dropping) **There are passages in the OT where, instead of referring to God as YHWH, Elohim, or God, He was referred to as, "The Name." (ha Shem)**

Example:

**27 Behold, the name of the Lord comes from afar,
Burning with His anger,
And His burden is heavy;
His lips are full of indignation,
And His tongue like a devouring fire. Isaiah 30:27**

Anthropomorphic language for the name. The name was another way to refer to God. (circumlocution) Since the name was another way to refer to God, (they most often wouldn't even say the name of God but refer to Him as Lord or Adonai, or "the name.") the Name had power and authority.

One result of this was that 5,000 people were saved. That didn't make the authorities happy either. They were losing their audience and were losing on their home court.

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. 11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 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.”

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. 14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, “What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name.” 18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

Peter - filled with the Holy Spirit then answers their questions.

“If we are going to be judged for this good deed done to a helpless man, then let it be known that it was in ‘ha Shem’ of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you were complicit in crucifying! But God raised Him from the dead, and by Him this man stands before you whole.

Peter then hyperlinks them to Psalm 118:22

Psalm 118:

1 Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!

For His mercy endures forever.

2 Let Israel now say,

“His mercy endures forever.”

3 Let the house of Aaron now say,

“His mercy endures forever.”

4 Let those who fear the Lord now say,

“His mercy endures forever.”

5 I called on the Lord in distress;

The Lord answered me and set me in a broad place.

6 The Lord is on my side;

I will not fear.

What can man do to me?

7 The Lord is for me among those who help me;

Therefore I shall see my desire on those who hate me.

8 It is better to trust in the Lord

Than to put confidence in man.

9 It is better to trust in the Lord

Than to put confidence in princes.

10 All nations surrounded me,

But in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.

11 They surrounded me,

Yes, they surrounded me;

But in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.

12 They surrounded me like bees;

They were quenched like a fire of thorns;

For in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.

13 You pushed me violently, that I might fall,

But the Lord helped me.

14 The Lord is my strength and song,

And He has become my salvation.

15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation

Is in the tents of the righteous;

The right hand of the Lord does valiantly.

16 The right hand of the Lord is exalted;

The right hand of the Lord does valiantly.

17 I shall not die, but live,

And declare the works of the Lord.

18 The Lord has chastened me severely,

But He has not given me over to death.

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness;

I will go through them,

And I will praise the Lord.

20 This is the gate of the Lord,

Through which the righteous shall enter.
21 I will praise You,
For You have answered me,
And have become my salvation.
22 The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.
23 This was the Lord's doing;
It is marvelous in our eyes.
24 This is the day the Lord has made;
We will rejoice and be glad in it.
25 Save now, I pray, O Lord;
O Lord, I pray, send now prosperity.
26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
We have blessed you from the house of the Lord.
27 God is the Lord,
And He has given us light;
Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.
28 You are my God, and I will praise You;
You are my God, I will exalt You.
29 Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!
For His mercy endures forever.

Look at the whole Psalm, not just the verse Peter quoted. The Sadducees would hyper-linked back to the whole thing. Look at the language!
The rejected stone. (Explain) coping stone, load bearing, often rejected for cracks or the wrong shape/ size. Peter was saying that Jesus is the load-bearing stone for the new temple, and He was rejected because he didn't fit into their "architectural plans!" There is no salvation in any other name, ha Shem!
The Sadducees couldn't argue with Peter. The miracle had happened, and everyone saw this man who had been known around there for some 40 years.

The Sanhedrin conferred and decided that under the circumstances, they would let them off with a stern warning. But Peter responded with another statement with which they couldn't argue:

19 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. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. 22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

Psalm 118:

**8 It is better to trust in the Lord
Than to put confidence in man.**

**9 It is better to trust in the Lord
Than to put confidence in princes.**

There is no way the Sadducees can argue with this logic.
23 And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:

***'Why did the nations rage,
And the people plot vain things?
26 The kings of the earth took their stand,
And the rulers were gathered together
Against the Lord and against His Christ.'***

27 “For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.”

31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

They returned to the others and then prayed and praised God. Look at the Psalm they were praying.

Psalm 2

1 Why do the nations rage,

And the people plot a vain thing?

2 The kings of the earth set themselves,

And the rulers take counsel together,

Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying,

3 “Let us break Their bonds in pieces

And cast away Their cords from us.”

4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;

The Lord shall hold them in derision.

5 Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,

And distress them in His deep displeasure:

6 “Yet I have set My King

On My holy hill of Zion.”

7 “I will declare the decree:

The Lord has said to Me,

‘You are My Son,

Today I have begotten You.

**8 Ask of Me, and I will give You
The nations for Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth for Your possession.
9 You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' ”
10 Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
11 Serve the Lord with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,
And you perish in the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.**

They attribute this Psalm to their plight and to God's plan. Look at the language of kings and the true king. Look at verse 11. We have read in Acts that the people were in fear awe, trembling at the works God did through the apostles. Also, they have placed the Sadducees and other temple officials in the same bucket as the nations, (Gentiles, Heathen).

Look at what they then pray for – boldness and more power to continue their ministry. They didn't pray that the opposition would be nicer. They didn't ask God to take away the opposition. They asked for what it would take to break the opposition. We need to pray this prayer and pray in this manner.

32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,

35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Why this isn't socialism:

1. Private property rights are a big deal in the OT. (Law)
2. All giving and sharing was voluntary.
3. The kingdom of God is different than any world system, therefore this isn't a model for a Christian Utopia, or any other utopia.
4. The Jerusalem church remained in poverty. Paul will later take up a collection for them.
5. Paul will later write about not enabling those who won't work and mooch off the generosity of others.

Verse 36: Barnabas, a Levite from Cyprus. (People and place names in Acts.) Barnabas will team up with Paul later.

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2 And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? 4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. 6 And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.

7 Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much." 9 Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." 10 Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. 11 So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

We don't like this passage. It seems harsh.

Deception was the sin. They didn't have to give anything, it was voluntary.

This was an object lesson at the outset.

Liars aren't allowed into the New Jerusalem.

If you invoke the name of YHWH, then honesty should be expected.

Verse 11: fear and trembling. Remember what Psalm 2:11 said?

**11 Serve the Lord with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.**

12 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. 13 Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. 14 And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, 15 so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. 16 Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and

those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

God was moving in a powerful way.

Verse 15: descriptive not necessarily prescriptive.

Many were healed, but not necessarily because Peter's shadow passed over them.

17 Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, 18 and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. 19 But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20 "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."

21 And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

Apostles on Trial Again

22 But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, 23 saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!" 24 Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be. 25 So one came and told them, saying, "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"

26 Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. 27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, 28

saying, “Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!”

29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.”

The Angelic Jailbreak!

Apostles are arrested and then sprung from jail by an angel. The angel tells them to stay on the offensive; attack, go back to temple and continue preaching and teaching about “this life.”

What life? The Kingdom life! This life, being shared and lived out in the face of opposition, in the very home court of the opposition is what was converting people!

Verse 26: “Y’all have filled Jerusalem with this doctrine and seek to bring this man’s blood upon us!” Once again, Peter didn’t let anyone off the hook, but they could repent and be included in God’s family.

Verse 29: Once again, we ought to obey God and not man! Why could they be this bold? For one, they Holy Spirit was moving in them. Secondly, the Psalms told them that they were part of what God was doing and that they had no reason to fear. They now served the rightful king!

33 When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them. 34 Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for

a little while. 35 And he said to them: “Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. 36 For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. 37 After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. 38 And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; 39 but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God.” 40 And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

Gamaliel brings some sanity to the meeting.

If this movement is of man, it will wither on the vine. But, if it is from God, then you don't want to be fighting against Him! Apostles are released.

41 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Apostle leave rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. They weren't whining about the opposition. They took pride in their mission and weren't afraid to be imprisoned or even die, (as they would later do) for their actions. This is how the early church thought and then acted upon that thinking.

They didn't cease to teach in the temple and from house to house.

Application:

If we have the same vocation as the apostles, then:

- 1. Psalm 2 and 118 can be applied to our situation also.**
- 2. We should take care of each other.**
- 3. We should embrace, "this life!"**
- 4. See ourselves as a family of priests, representing God to the people and interceding for them towards God.**
- 5. Realize that we are now the temple and all that entails.**
- 6. Pray as they did.**
- 7. Our new life, "this life" is in the name and resurrection of Jesus. That changes our priorities and how we live our lives.**