

Cancel Culture: Speaking Jesus with Boldness While Persecuted

Acts 4:1-31 / February 25, 2023

Peter: *“God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”* And as they were speaking to the people, (3:26,4:1a, ESV)

1. THE ACTION OF THE COUNCIL (4:1-7, ESV)

The Council

the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them,

The Charges

greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

The Arrest

And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

The Conversions

But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

The Accusers

On the next day their (1) rulers and (2) elders and (3) scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, with (4) Annas the high priest and (5) Caiaphas and (6) John and (7) Alexander, and (8) all who were of the high-priestly family.

The Interrogation

And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired,
“By what power or by what name did you do this?”

Jesus Before the Same Jewish Sanhedrin: Authority Questioned

And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.

One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the **chief priests** and the scribes with the elders came up and said to him,

“Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority.”

He answered them,

“I also will ask you a question. Now tell me, was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?”

And they discussed it with one another, saying,

“If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From man,’ all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet.”

So they answered that they did not know where it came from. And Jesus said to them,

“Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.” (Luke 19:47-20:8, ESV)

Jesus Before the Same Jewish Sanhedrin: After Jesus' Arrest

So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him. First they led him to **Annas**, for he was the father-in-law of **Caiaphas**, who was high priest that year. It was **Caiaphas** who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people. (John 18:12-14, ESV)

The **high priest** then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Jesus answered him,

“I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said.”

When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying,

“Is that how you answer the high priest?”

Jesus answered him,

“If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?”

Annas then sent him bound to **Caiaphas** the high priest. (John 18:19-24, ESV)

2. THE DEFENSE OF PETER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT (4:8-12, ESV)

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them,

How was the Lame Man Healed?

“Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed,

Jesus is the Resurrected Healer

*let it be known to all of you 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 is standing before you well.*

Jesus is the Rejected “Cornerstone”

This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.

Jesus is the Only Means of Salvation

*And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other **name** under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*

Peter’s “Defense” of Jesus to the Sanhedrin

Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the **high priest’s** (Annas) servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.) So Jesus said to Peter, *“Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?”* (John 18:10-11, ESV) Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the **high priest (Annas)**, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the **high priest**, but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the **high priest (Annas)**, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in. The servant girl at the door said to Peter, “You also are not one of this man’s disciples, are you?”

He said, *“I am not.”* (John 18:15-17, ESV)

Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, “You also are not one of his disciples, are you?”

He denied it and said, *“I am not.”*

One of the servants of the **high priest (Annas)**, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, “Did I not see you in the garden with him?”

Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed. (John 18:25-27, ESV)

3. THE DECISION OF THE COUNCIL (4:13-18, ESV)

Their Acknowledgment

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

Their Silence

But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.

Their Dilemma

But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, saying,

“What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.”

Their Decision

So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

4. THE RESPONSE OF PETER AND JOHN (4:19-20, ESV)

Their Reply

But Peter and John answered them,

“Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”

Peter and John Witness the Empty Tomb

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them,

“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in.

Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.

Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes. (John 20:1-10, ESV)

5. THE COUNTER-RESPONSE OF THE COUNCIL (4:21-22, ESV)

Their Action

And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them,

Their Reasoning

because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.

6. THE RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH (4:23-31, ESV)

The Church Gathers

When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said,

The Church Prays: God...

- Creates: *“Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,*
- Divides: *who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, “Why did the Gentiles rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’ –*
- Predestines: *for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.*

- Protect Us: *And now, Lord, look upon their threats and*
- Enable Us: *grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness,*
- Heal Us: *while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”*

The Church Speaks

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and **continued to speak the word of God with boldness.**