

No Other Name

Peter and John Before the Sanhedrin

Acts 1:1 And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ²greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

⁵On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, ⁶with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” ⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, ¹⁰let 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. ¹¹This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹²And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

¹³Now 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. ¹⁴But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. ¹⁵But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, ¹⁶saying, “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. ¹⁷But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.” ¹⁸So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹But 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, ²⁰ for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” ²¹ And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. ²² For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.

Acts 4:1-22

Identifying the Names

The exclusivity of Christianity is perhaps the hardest pill for non-believers to swallow, especially in a pluralistic, democratic, or postmodern society where everything is relativistic, there are no absolutes, all are equal, there are many gods or no God, and above all else, you must never judge anyone for anything they ever think, say, or do. Unless, of course, it goes against the group-think of the official narrative, then you must not only judge them, but persecute them.

But as I just ended there, everyone is exclusive to one degree or another. It is impossible to avoid. For some people, the only thing we must be intolerant about is how no

one must ever be intolerant. That's called hypocrisy, by the way. The question is, how much of another's point of view am I willing to tolerate? The exclusivity of Christianity is one of those places where many people are willing to tolerate almost nothing about its message.

In today's passage, Peter famously proclaims, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "How dare you, Peter! There are many ways to heaven," most people will reply. "You're so judgmental." Some will say they can get there all on their own through their good works. The Name in this case would happen to be their own name. Others will say that this god or that god are perfectly capable of getting someone to heaven—or at least whatever counterpart to heaven it is they have in their spirituality or religion.

Technically, when Peter uses the language of the "name" he is invoking, at least in part, the supernatural realm. "Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above *every name that is named*, not only in this

age but also in the one to come” (Eph 1:21), Paul says of Jesus who has been exalted in heaven. “Names” here refers, at least in part, to supernatural entities.

This comes from the OT. In Exodus 23:13 God says, “Pay attention to all that I have said to you, and make no mention of *the names of other gods*, nor let it be heard on your lips.” Isaiah says, “Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all *by name*; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing” (Isa 40:26).

The context into which Peter says this was perceived to be magic. Peter and John had just healed a man lame from birth. It’s important to consider a little background here. Clinton Arnold explains, “Knowing the right names and invoking the most powerful names was crucial to the practice of magic.”¹ “Note the calling of names in lines from three magical papyri: ‘I conjure you by the great names.’ ‘You, these holy names and these powers, confirm and carry out this perfect enchantment.’ ‘A phylactery, a bodyguard against demons, against phantasms, against every sickness and suffering, to be written on a leaf of gold or silver or tin

¹ Clinton Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities & Powers in Paul’s Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), ch. 7, ebook version.

or hieratic papyrus. When worn it works mightily, for it is the name of power of the great god and his seal, and it is as follows: ... [fourteen magical names are given].... These are the names.’”²

Throughout the ANE and into the Greco-Roman world, just about any deity—be it a fallen angel or a demonic spirit could be used to cast magic spells. We will see this in Acts 8 with Simon the Sorcerer. But it wasn’t just pagans. In Acts 19 Luke will tell us, “Then some of the *itinerant Jewish exorcists* undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, ‘I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims’” (Acts 19:13).

The highest deities had many names. In 3 Enoch, Metatron, the Prince of the Divine Presence is “called by the name of the Creator with *seventy names* ... [and is] greater than all the princes, more exalted than all the angels, more beloved than all the ministers, more honored than all the hosts and elevated over all potentates in sovereignty, greatness, and glory” (3En 4:1). Marduk, the great god of the Enuma Elish creation epic has *fifty names*. The Egyptian god Re has *seventy-four names* in the tomb of Thutmose II. Osiris

² Clinton E. Arnold, “Ephesians,” *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 311.

has 100-142 names in the Book of the Dead (Spell 142). Often, these names were secret and only the illuminated would know and could therefore use them. This guarded their “otherness” against improper invocation by devotees.³

The Jews of Peter’s day were preoccupied with **speculations about the names** and **orders** of the heavenly realms. In the strange but fascinating book the Testament of Solomon, the wise king is constantly commanding demons to give him their name so that he can bind it to work for him through the use of magic rings. In the Testament of Adam it gives orders and ranks to the host of heaven with **angels** being the lowest, then **archangels**, then **authorities**, then **powers**, then **dominions**, and at the top are **thrones, seraphim, and cherubim**. Identifying these powers and then using their names could mean great money, fame, and power in the hands of the right people.

Acts 4:1-22 in Context

It’s into this that we come to our passage. **Acts 4:1-22** tells the story of the **arrest** of Peter and John and the subsequent **defense** of their proclamation that they give before the

³ H. B. Huffmon, “Name,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden; Boston; Köln; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Brill; Eerdmans, 1999), 610.

Sanhedrin. Does any of this sound familiar? It should. This is precisely what happened to Jesus a little more than 50 days earlier. In fact, this story is deliberately inversely parallel to Jesus' arrest. Why? It not only shows us that what happened to Jesus is now going to happen to his disciples, thereby teaching the church a great lesson almost immediately that if we want to be like Christ we must be prepared to suffer for his Name. But it also shows a great contrast in the man Peter. For when Jesus was arrested, he was a coward and denied his Lord (Luke 22:54-62). But now, when Peter himself is arrested, the coward has turn into a hero who boldly stands and proclaims Jesus' name to the very people who put him to death.

Another inverse parallel takes place when Peter, filled with the Spirit, tells them about the stone of offense (Acts 4:12). Jesus had told some of the same people about this very stone and he was it, after giving them a parable concerning where his authority came from (Luke 20:1-18). But he would not tell them openly about this authority, it would only come to them in a parable, so that they might ever be hearing, but never perceiving.

There are a couple of parallels with the **early parts of Luke** as well. When Jesus was taken to the temple as a baby, Simeon was “filled with the Spirit” and prophecies (**Luke 2:25ff.**) Now, Peter—whose name was Simon—is filled with the Spirit and preaches after having just healed a man in the temple. Further, the beginning of Jesus’ ministry is filled with conflicts and confrontations with the religious leaders (**Luke 5:29-6:11**). This episode in Acts 4 begins a series of conflicts and confrontations with the religious leaders and Jesus’ disciples (**Acts 4:1-8:3**).

A word about **the structure**. A **simple outline** of the passage reveals **two halves**. **First**, Peter and John are brought before the council (**4:1-12**). First they are taken into custody, then they are brought to appear before the rulers, elders, scribes, and priests. Then Peter responds to their accusations. In the **second** half, the disciples are threatened to no longer teach in the name of Jesus (**13-22**). This takes place in a series of their reaction followed by Peter and John’s reply, followed by a further threatening and their release.⁴

⁴ Following the outline **Mark A. Copeland**, “Acts of the Apostles’ Chapter 4,” *executableoutlines.com* (2024), https://executableoutlines.com/guides/acts/acts_04.html.

A possible chiastic structure (there may actually be two smaller ones in 4:5-13, 14-22)⁵ reveals that Peter being **filled with the Holy Spirit is the central point**, and it leads, impressively, to the theological conclusion that what he says about Jesus being the only Name that can save us is in fact the very word of God himself since he is filled with the Spirit.

- A. Priests and Sadducees arrest Peter and John for healing (4:1-3)
- B. Many who heard believed = 5,000 men (4)
- C. Rulers, Elders, Scribes, High Priest gather in Jerusalem (5-6)
- D. Call Peter and John with question, “By what name?” (7)
- E. **Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit (8a)**
- D’. By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth ... salvation in no other name (8b-12)
- C’. They marveled at their boldness and conferred (13-16)
- B’. Do not spread the faith more, do not speak in Jesus’ name, Peter and John won’t obey (17-20)
- A’. They released them with no way to punish them (21-23)⁶

Peter and John Arrested (Acts 4:1-4)

Turning to the passage, we recall that in **Acts 3**, Peter and John had met a man in the gate of the temple whom they

⁵ See *Biblical Chiasm Exchange*, <https://www.chiasmusxchange.com/category/f-gospel-sacts/acts/>.

⁶ **Terry N. Beek**, “[The Interrelationship of Theology, History and Literary Artistry in Acts: From a Canonical Reader’s Perspective](#),” A Dissertation to the University of Pretoria (2012), 156.

chose to heal. He was a man **lame** in the feet. As soon as he was healed, he began leaping and singing and praising God. Wouldn't you? The point of this miracle was not an end to itself however. Rather it was so that Peter could address the people, telling them that they had just killed the man who was actually responsible for healing him. But how could that be possible? Because God has now **raised Jesus of Nazareth**, the Righteous Servant of God, from the dead.

Though the prophecies were that this very person **would bring judgment**, Peter tells them that **God is delaying that judgment** so that people might be forgiven not only this great sin of putting Jesus to death, but of all their sins they've ever committed. And God does this because it is his good pleasure to glorify his servant Jesus in the sight of men.

We come now to our passage, the beginning of which is technically really the ending of the former story. “**And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead**” (**Acts 4:1-2**). What made these religious leaders to angry?

Boice notices that, “That they were teaching the people was itself naturally disturbing to the priests, Sadducees, rulers, elders, and teachers of the law, because these men were teachers, and teaching by others was a threat to their authority. This was one thing that had bothered them about Jesus Christ. He had not gone to their rabbinic academies. Nevertheless, he had an intrinsic authority. People marveled at it and flocked to him.”⁷

But it should not go unnoticed that the Sadducees are mentioned here. They deny the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:8; Matt 22:23). But this is precisely what Peter and John are proclaiming—that Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead. Kistemaker explains, “Although none of the Jewish leaders saw Jesus again, suddenly some seven weeks later, in Jerusalem, multitudes of people listen to Jesus’ disciples, who proclaim the doctrine of the resurrection (2:24, 32). Then once more [ch. 3], two of his disciples preach that doctrine with reference to Jesus.”⁸ This is what infuriated them so much.

So, “They arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening” (Acts 4:3). Re-

⁷ James Montgomery Boice, *Acts: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 73.

⁸ Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 17, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 147.

member, it was the ninth hour (3 pm) when the miracle happened, so if we are somewhere near 7:30-8pm, depending on the exact day this happened. That's a long time for Peter and John to be addressing the crowds. But alas, it wasn't a big enough deal to make them call an all-night trial.

The reason this section is really the conclusion to the previous story is **vs. 4**. “But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.” That's the same number of people as were fed the fish and loaves (**Luke 9:14**), yet is only includes the men—not the women and children. But it seems to be here to show that **the gospel is spreading fast**. The previous number we had was only 3,000 (**2:41**). This is nearly twice as many people who believed in Jesus because of this miracle as opposed to the miracle of Pentecost. Behold the power of the Gospel through the preached word!

Peter and John On Trial (Acts 4:5-12)

“On the next day their rulers (*archontes*) and elders (*presbyteroi*) and scribes (*grammateus*) gathered together in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family”

(Acts 4:5-6). This is a remarkable gathering of power, elites, and scumballs. In the immortal words of Obi-Wan, “You’ll never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy.” “Rulers” share a word with some of the heavenly beings, and I’ll tell you why that matters later. “Elders” is the word we get Presbyterian from. “Scribes” are those who taught the law. Annas was the high priest who began his service in 6 AD and retired in 15 AD, so the fact that he is here as an emeritus priest is interesting. It was his son-in-law Joseph Caiaphas who became high priest in 18 AD and retained it until 37 AD who tried Jesus a couple months earlier. He served as president of the Sanhedrin and the political head of the Jewish nation. John is likely Jonathan, one of the five sons of Annas who would succeed his brother-in-law as high priest in 37 AD. (We know nothing else about Alexander.)

“And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, ‘By what power or by what name did you do this?’” (7). This question is the key to understanding everything else in the passage. We’ve already looked at “names.” Let’s look at “power.” “Power” is the word *dunamis*, from which we get words like dynamite. It appears often in lists with words such as “rule,” “rulers,” “authority,” “dominion,”

“names,” “angels,” and “authorities” (Rom 8:38; Eph 1:21; 1Pe 3:22). These include powers both on earth and in heaven. In fact, “rulers” is a word that is used not only of the men here, but of heavenly rulers, hence why I brought it up a moment ago.

In Jewish and Gentile theology, there were many powers. These are those names we discussed earlier. These powers could be manipulated, especially in the realm of magic, which sometimes included healings. It seems that the Sanhedrin wants Peter and John to clarify which power they are using as itinerant healers. Put into its proper context, it appears that they think they are using magic!

Curiously, the center of our story is likely the next statement, “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them...” (Acts 4:8a). Why do I say curiously? Because Jesus had told them just before he ascended, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...” (1:8). Later, Luke will say, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power” (10:38). Paul will say that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit” (Rom 1:4). The proclamation of the gospel is always done “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power”

(1Cor 2:4). And “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power” (2Tim 1:7). Micah says, “I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD” (Mic 3:8).

Perhaps the most relevant of them all is in Luke 12:12, “For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.” Get the point? The Holy Spirit is God’s power! They’ve just asked by what power they did this. And Luke tells us Peter was filled with the Spirit. That’s the power!

But Peter doesn’t take it in the direction of the Power. He takes it in the direction of the Name. He addresses them, “Rulers of the people and elders...” (8b). The first thing he says acknowledges that we are on the right track with them thinking this was some name of powerful magic. “If we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed...” (9). By what means is the “power” they are asking about, and it is tied directly to the healing.

As we’ve seen, such powers performed through itinerant healers and exorcists were, while not common place, still common enough for this to be the view they clearly had. Peter surely shocks them with his reply. “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” (10). He reminds them that they were the ones who directly crucified Jesus—and surely they would have remembered that night! But he doubles down on what he was just proclaiming to the people, “God has raised him from the dead.” This must have enraged the Sadducees who not only never saw the risen Jesus, but didn’t believe it was even possible.

It is because Jesus is no longer dead, but alive, that Peter says it is by “the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth ... by him this man is standing before you well.” Put into context, this is *not a hidden name*, it is *not a secret name*. God’s name(s) is never that in the Bible. It is open and public for anyone to see and hear (assuming you weren’t superstitious and wouldn’t ever say it).

But *neither was it a well-known name*, especially in these kinds of circles. It was new name and a common name. More, it was not the name of a god or a demon, but of *a man*—a man whom they had crucified. This is truly unheard of in all of history. What *man* has such power? Especially a

man *from Nazareth!* Remember what Nathaniel told Philip? “*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*” Oh Nathaniel, why do you doubt? Why do you not see and listen? Philip said to him, “*Come and see*” (*John 1:46*). The invitation stands to any Nathaniel’s who doubt him today.

Peter tells them who this Jesus is. “*This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone*” (*Acts 4:11*). Peter is quoting *Psalm 118:23*. Jesus had used it of himself (*Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17*), and Peter will use it again in his letter (*1Pet 2:4, 7*). Isaiah had spoken about it too. “*Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame*” (*Isa 8:14; 28:16; 49:23*; see *Rom 9:31*).

There’s a curious fact about the cornerstone⁹ that not many know. Not only was this stone that first laid which then became the guide for the rest of the building, determining its entire position, soundness, and squareness, but around the world it involved *a worship ceremony*, often placing offerings of grain, wine, and oil under the stone, but sometimes even animals and humans—sometimes as memorials

⁹ We are assuming here that it is the cornerstone and not the keystone. This is debated.

for stillborn babies and other times as sacrifices.¹⁰ That's curious to me in light of Jesus having just been said to have been killed by these men. Calling Jesus the cornerstone thus takes on additional theological meaning. They sacrificed him even as they rejected him—and they didn't even know what they were doing.

As we heard from Isaiah, elsewhere this stone is said to be a stone of stumbling. Paul puts it this way, “We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews” (1Cor 1:23). They had this all in their Bibles, right there in plain sight for them to see, but they rejected him. They always rejected God's prophets. Now they rejected his Son. At this very moment, they are living in unrepentant sin regarding Jesus.

It is into this that Peter concludes, “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” (Acts 4:12). This matches up with vs. 10, “by the Name of Jesus Christ...” In my estimation then, Luke has answered both the power (the Spirit) and the Name (Jesus). And given that they are viewed as the same thing, this becomes a very interesting proof for the Triune nature of God (more on this in Ch. 5).

¹⁰ See for example, James Hastings (ed.), “Human Sacrifice (Semitic),” *Encyclopaedia of Religions And Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1913): 6:863 and n. 1.

But let me say something more about this. For while Luke does not hint here that they believed this, historically we know that at this point in time, they certainly *could have*. The *DDD* on “Name” says,

The name of a person or deity is especially closely associated with that person or deity, so that knowledge of the name is connected with access to and influence with—even magical control of—the named. In particular, God’s name, which in some traditions is specifically revealed, can become a separate aspect of →God, in such a way as to represent God as a virtual hypostasis.¹¹

In the early church, *hypostasis* is technical jargon used to describe one of the three persons of the Trinity.

And this is precisely how we should understand the term. It goes on to show that the separation of God’s name as an independent aspect of God occurs in several forms. For example, we have phrase doublets such as “Praise the Lord” (quite common) and “Praise *the name of the Lord*” (Ps 113:1; 135:1; cf. 148:5, 13; 149:3; Joel 2:26); “Sing praises to the Lord” (Isa 12:5; Pss 9:12; 30:5; 98:5), “Sing praises to *His*

¹¹ Huffmon, “Name,” 610.

Name” (Ps 68:5; 135:3) and “Sing praises to the glory of *His Name*” (Ps 66:2); “To give thanks to the Lord” (Ps 92:2; 1 Chr 16:7; 2 Chr 5:13; 7:6), “To give thanks to *the name* of the Lord” (Ps 122:4; cf. Ps 54:8; 138:2; 140:14; 142:8), “To give thanks to *His holy name*” (Ps 106:47; 1 Chr 16:35) and “Let them give thanks (to) your great and terrible *name*, for it is holy” (Ps 99:3); “They will fear the Lord” (2Kg 17:28; cf. Ps 33:8) and “(They) will fear *the name* of the Lord” (Isa 59:19; Ps 102:16); “Trust in the Lord” (Isa 26:4; Ps 4:6; 115:11), “Let him trust in *the name* of the Lord” (Isa 50:10; cf. Zeph 3:12) and “We trust in His holy *name*” (Ps 33:21); “To love the Lord your God” (Deut 11:13, 22; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20; Josh 22:5; 23:11) and “To love *the name* of the Lord” (Isa 56:6).

Secondly, there are references like, “You (O Lord) are great, and *your name* is great in might” (Jer 10:6) and “Glorify the Lord ..., (even) *the name* of the Lord” (Isa 24:15). Prov 18:10 says “*the name* of the Lord is a strong tower.” In this way, God’s name **acquires mobility** and **personality**. In Exodus 23:21, God advises obedience to the angel, “for my name is in him”; Ps 75:2 describes God’s name as ‘near’; and Isa 30:27, following the traditional text, says “*the name* of

the Lord comes from far off,” even referring to the name as a “him.”¹²

“Power” is equally fascinating. The Rabbis during this very time were arguing amongst themselves over certain passages that some claimed seemed to describe, in their own words, “two powers in heaven.”¹³ Both are God. Yet, there is only one God. For example, in a favorite also of the early Church Fathers, “Then *the LORD* rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from *the LORD* out of heaven” (Gen 19:24). Notice, there are two Yahweh’s in this verse! One on earth; one in heaven. This was so well known in the early church that one council even declared, “Whoever shall explain, *The Lord rained fire from the Lord* (Gen 19:24) not of the Father and the Son, and says that He rained from Himself, be he anathema. For the Son Lord rained from the Father Lord” (*First Creed of Sirmium* [347 A. D.], Canon 17).¹⁴

Another is a reflection on this verse and it is even crazier. Amos 4:11, “I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a brand

¹² Ibid., 611.

¹³ See Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven* (Boston: Brill, 1977).

¹⁴ For a long compendium of Fathers and Reformers who saw the text this way see Matt Foreman and Douglas Van Dorn, *The Angel of the LORD: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Study* (Dacono, CO: Waters of Creation Pub., 2020), Appendix II.

plucked out of the burning; yet you did not return to me,' declares the Lord." Notice that Yahweh speaks in **the first person** ("I"), and yet says in **the third person** that God overthrew Sodom. And this is equated with his own overthrowing (and no, Seinfeld fans, this isn't "Jimmy" talking about himself). Well, there were many more of these and the Rabbis were all debating how there could be one God and yet, as Philo called him, **a second-God**. We Christians know the answer, and it was something all the Patriarchs and prophets understood. For they knew him personally. God's power in the OT is his Son. Peter has just named him as Jesus.

This then starts to **explain the exclusivity of the claim**. Because Jesus is the power of God (along with the Holy Spirit), **he is God himself**. And who else could tell you how to get to God other than God himself? Because Jesus is the power of God, he is also somehow **distinct from God** and as such—in this absolutely unique way—also serves as the only mediator God and man. This gets a little bit to his sacrifice as hinted at in the cornerstone and in them putting Jesus to death, and in the idea of Jesus saving us. That's what sacrifices do. But because Jesus **is a man**—one of us—his position

is even strengthened more, because he became the sacrifice even as he is the Stone.

All of this is encapsulated in **his Name**, for Jesus' name is **Yah-Saves** and **God-With-Us** (Immanuel). There is no one else like this, friend. There are no gods, no angels, no demons, no kings, no rulers, no men who are both God and man, who are both the sacrifice and the intercessor, who were dead and then alive, who are the exact representation of the Father, sent by the Father, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Anyone who tells you otherwise is a liar and they have a burden of proof that they cannot bear, because only Jesus has actually done this all in the presence of men, publicly and historically. **That's why Christianity is exclusive.** God only makes this available through Christ—no other way, so that God might be glorified in all things.

That's why **our entire religion stands or falls of the Name of Jesus.** For Jesus is the Name of God. Jesus is God. And only through the Power of his Name can anyone be saved. His is the name above all names. As Hebrews begins, **“Having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs” (Heb 1:4).** As Philippians' early hymn says, **“So that at the name of Jesus**

every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Php 2:10). Praise God!

Threatened and Released (Acts 4:13-22)

We must continue to the second half of the story. “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” (Acts 4:13). Think about **three things** here. **First**, the end proves that they remember Jesus. Oh, they remember Jesus alright! How could they forget him?

Second, Luke draws out **their boldness**. This is a 180° turn from just a couple months earlier, when they were so cowardly and hiding and turning their backs on Jesus and afraid and in denial of it all. What kind of power can transform someone like that so quickly? It’s truly shocking and worth contemplating for a long time. For this is the power of the Holy Spirit come into a person.

Third, it says they were “**uneducated, common men.**” Much has been made of this. Often times you will hear that this means they didn’t go to school, they didn’t know how

to write, they may have even been rather simple if not dumb. Brutes. Noobs. Application that often follows this means God hates education and training in dead schools, that he simply wants ordinary people to stand up and spontaneously start spouting off whatever comes into their minds about Jesus. And such are whole segments of the visible church in our day. And this is precisely why the church is a disaster today. They have no idea what they are even talking about. Because they truly are uneducated.

Peter and John literally wrote seven of our NT books. They were hardly illiterate. In fact, when you read them, you will see that they were actually some of the greatest pieces of literature in world history. What's going on here is that they were **not being trained in the official schools of the elites**. They by-passed the system, didn't go to an accredited school, but rather, Jesus in typical rabbinical fashion, had taught them for three years day-to-day everywhere they went. Given that, it seems to me that they actually had the greatest education anyone has ever received. They did their doctrinal work from Jesus himself! "**Common**" means that they were not Levites, they were not Scribes, they were not Rulers, they were not Priests. What business did they have

running around spouting off this new name, teaching the people this dangerous theology that they had just spent the last three years squashing out? But they were “astonished” nevertheless.

This is because the Holy Spirit was speaking through them, not through utter lack of education, but precisely because they had been **emersed in a deep education** by Jesus and now the time for the Spirit to work through them, as he promised, had come.

Furthermore, “**Seeing the man who was healed standing beside them...**” (14a). Notice that the lame man did not run away, but stayed with them through the night to this very moment at their side—proof of the miracle in the flesh. “**... they had nothing to say in opposition**” (14b). How could they? **The evidence was right there** that the man was healed in Jesus’ name.

So, as usual, Jesus and now his disciples put them in a quandary. “**They commanded them to leave the council**” (15a). And, “**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’**” (15b-16). This

is astonishing and begins to show **the true power of blindness and hypocrisy**. They literally admit that the miracle was true, saying they can't even 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”** (17). What a devastating place to be in.

You see, when you are **stuck in an unrepentant mindset**, even if you come to the point where you can *kind of* admit part of something, you can never go all the way. That would mean the kind of humility and eating crow that you could just never allow to happen. That would show weakness. That would admit wrongdoing. It might admit that you hurt people. Maybe you could get into trouble. Who knows what else goes through people's minds, but that's the idea. And this is clearly what's happening with these religious leaders. They've just put Jesus to death and you think they are going to turn from that action? They'd rather die.

But since there's **nothing they can do** at the moment to Peter and John, they do the next best thing. **“So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus”** (18). They **threaten them** with their own power. Fear! Oh how the world has seen so much of this in

recent years. “We are the mighty Sanhedrin. Caiaphas is the political ruler of the entire nation. We are right now the benevolent dictator, so long as you obey us. But dare to get out of line again, and you won’t want to see what we can do.”

Peter and John, **together in one refrain**, answered them back in stunning words that would have infuriated these men beyond belief. “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” (19-20). “Submit to your government under all circumstances,” seems to be a cry of the hour. Hogwash. Put yourself in their shoes. They’ve now witnessed Jesus rise from the dead after he said that he would, ascend into heaven before their eyes, seen tongues of fire come down on the heads of the 120 in the upper room, be heard in a multitude of languages though they spoke only their own native tongue, witnessed now 8,000 men be converted to believe in Jesus, and caused a lame man to start leaping and singing and praising God. That’s true power. What these men try to make them fear **is nothing**. It’s miniscule. It’s pathetic.

What's more, whatever power they have is itself **given to them by God**. So they confront the very teachers of Israel's religion, the very sons of Aaron himself, with **an inu-endo** that they are commanding what is against God's will. Imagine the nerve! Sadly, many Christians today can't even remotely imagine the nerve, because we've **lost our entire collective backbone** as we have fallen for each new spirit of the age that has come down the pike, weakening our testimony, diluting our message, tempering the Holy Spirit, even forsaking the means of grace as we give up the only power we actually have in this world of men for prestige, politics, big buildings, fancy lightshows, and rock concerts. All so the world won't look at us as strangers anymore? Isn't that the motive? **Can there therefore be any more relevant words than Peter and John's? "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard?"** Have we now so filled our churches with so many people who've never known this power that we no longer dare to speak up to the world of men? This is a great shame that has come upon the church. May God have mercy.

Well, the Sanhedrin has come to the end, so they “threatened them further” (21) and “let them go” and notice, “... finding no way to punish them, 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.

I’d like to end by having us think about this number “forty.” It is surely deliberately placed here for us to ponder biblically. Isaiah 35, in which we find the promise of the lame leaping for joy, comes in the larger context of people returning from the wilderness—the exile, which is likened to the wanderings of Israel for forty years in the wilderness. It seems to me that of all the “forties” in the Bible, that this one is most likely in Luke’s mind as he tells him how long he had been lame. For this cements the prophecy that the eschatological ages of freedom and joy and healing and forgiveness of sins is now here. Don’t fixate on the fear, the power of elites, those who would do you harm if they could. Fixate on the Power and Name of God and see that he indeed has the Name that is above every name, so that in heaven and on earth and under the earth, every knee will bow to Jesus, to the glory of God the Father. He is the King.

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