

Discipleship Questions

Who were Peter and John brought to answer before?

How did Peter answer before the Sanhedrin?

What was the difference between how people viewed Jesus and how God viewed Him?

What did the Sanhedrin conclude about Peter and John's boldness and wisdom?

What did the Sanhedrin decide to do to Peter and John?

How did Peter, John, and the other apostles respond to the actions of the Sanhedrin?

What did the disciples do to address needs that had developed among them?

What sin did Ananias and Sapphira commit, and how was it dealt with?



After Peter and John had healed a crippled man, they had the opportunity to preach to many people at the temple and urge them to turn to Jesus. However, some wanted them to be silenced, and arrested them. They were then taken into custody and kept overnight.

Peter And John On Trial (Acts 4:5-22)

4:5-7. Peter and John stood trial the next day before the Jewish leaders. The Sanhedrin (highest Jewish council, composed of rulers/chief priests, elders, and scribes), as well as Annas (the now former high priest according to the Romans who was still influential to the Jews), Caiaphas (present high priest according to the Romans, Annas's son-in-law, John 18:13, 24; Matthew 26:57), and other influential people. Note that these are the same people Jesus stood before a short time earlier who condemned Him to death (Matthew 26:57-68; Luke 22:66-71; John 18:12-14, 19-24). Also recall that these apostles had previously fled and Peter denied Jesus due to fear (Matthew 26:56, 69-75). Now, they stood before the most powerful Jews and were questioned about whose authority and power had been used to bring about this healing.

4:8-12. Jesus had foretold the apostles would stand before rulers and be given opportunity to testify of Him, promising to give them the words to speak (Luke 12:11-12; 21:12-15). The Holy Spirit filled Peter and he began speaking. Peter indicated they were being put on trial for a good deed done to a disabled man rather than something worthy of condemnation. Then, Peter used it as an opportunity to testify that such a miraculous deed was done by the power and authority of (in the name of) Jesus Christ (the Messiah) of Nazareth (Acts 3:6, 16)! Although they had condemned Jesus to death by crucifixion, God raised Him from the dead – and was now continuing to do great things in His name! Peter declared Jesus was like the

Stone rejected by the builders who God had now used to be the Cornerstone of His kingdom and church (Psalm 118:22; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:6-8). Salvation from sin is now found through no other name besides Jesus (John 8:24, 31-32; 14:6; Matthew 1:21; Romans 1:16)!

4:13-22. The council recognized and was amazed at the boldness of Peter and John, particularly since neither man was specially educated by earthly standards (having been fishermen, Luke 5:1-11). Instead, the source of their boldness and wisdom came from being with Jesus (1 Corinthians 1-2). This was the same thing people concluded about Jesus (John 7:15). As the council conferred, they could not deny the miracle that had happened through them and was plainly recognized by everyone living in Jerusalem (Acts 3:2, 9-10), not knowing what could be done to them. Still, they wanted the message stopped and decided to use their political and national power to threaten Peter and John not to speak to anyone in Jesus's name again. Peter responded that they could judge for themselves whether it was right to listen to them above God. However, despite the judgment of the court, Peter and John could not stop speaking about the undeniable truths regarding the things they had both seen and heard about Jesus – even under severe punishment! The Sanhedrin then further threatened and released them. They found no way to punish Peter and John because of how all the people were giving glory to God for the miracle that had undoubtedly taken place on the man who was over 40 years old.

Speaking God's Word With Boldness (Acts 4:23-31)

4:23-31. After being released, Peter and John went to their companions (likely the other apostles) and told them what had happened. Then, they raised their voices in unity to God in prayer. They addressed God as the Sovereign Ruler and Creator of all. They said God had foretold by the Holy Spirit through David when he wrote about the efforts made by God's enemies to defeat His efforts, plans, and Chosen One (ultimately applied to the Messianic King, Jesus, Psalm 2:1-2), that would all come to nothing! They referenced the way Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles (Romans), and Jews had all assembled against God's holy Servant and Anointed/Chosen One, Jesus, previously. Yet, it was all according to what God had predetermined would happen (Acts 2:22-24; Ephesians 3:8-11; 1 Peter 1:18-21). Seeing all this as the fulfillment of God's plan and the Sovereign Power of God, they asked that God would grant them the ability to speak His word with boldness under the current threats of the Jewish leaders, while continuing to work miracles through Jesus's name. After praying, the place shook and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak God's word with boldness.

Helping Needy Christians (Acts 4:32-37)

4:32-37. The disciples were so united that it was as if they were of one heart and mind. They did not even claim their possessions were their own (to be used only for themselves). Instead, they held everything in common in that they were willing to sell their lands and possessions to provide for the needy among them (other disciples of Jesus, Acts 2:44-45), bringing the proceeds to the apostles (into a common treasury, 1 Corinthians 16:1-4) for distribution! Meanwhile, God was giving the apostles great power in their testimony concerning Jesus's resurrection (Acts 4:30; Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:4). This all likely resulted in favor (grace) being experienced with God and among the people (Acts 2:47). One of the disciples involved in this work was Joseph (a Levite from Cyprus), who was called Barnabas ("Son of Encouragement") by the apostles. He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles.

Ananias And Sapphira Sin (Acts 5:1-11)

5:1-11. Despite the unity that characterized the church at this time, Luke introduces a hypocritical husband and wife (Ananias and Sapphira) among the church. As others were selling what they had and generously giving to needy disciples, Ananias and Sapphira also sold some land. However, they chose to only bring part of the proceeds to the apostles and, evidently, lie by claiming it to be the entire purchase amount. Although Peter made it clear they were not required to sell the land, they had chosen to do so and then lied about it (perhaps to receive the glory without the sacrifice). Their lie to Peter was also considered to be a lie against God (including the Holy Spirit) and a test against the Spirit of the Lord (e.g. test His patience toward rebellion). First, Ananias lied and dropped dead. Then, about three hours later, Sapphira (who had conspired with Ananias) also lied and dropped dead. Young men buried them both. Great fear came on the whole church and everyone who heard these things. Certainly, this event should have warned people about rebelling against God and seeking glory for themselves (Matthew 6:1-4), perhaps reminiscent of the story of Achan in Joshua 6-7!

Conclusion

Jesus's church had now faced some early trials of opposition from Jewish leadership, physical needs among the disciples, and hypocrisy in the church. Yet, none of these stopped the gospel from spreading. In fact, God used each situation to His glory!

Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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