

"Facing the Sanhedrin"

Acts 4

Introduction: The Bible is very clear in teaching us that preaching the Gospel is going to bring some kind of action from the enemy. Satan hates the Gospel, and he will work through whoever makes themselves available to be used to hinder the preaching of the Gospel. He will do whatever he can to keep the Gospel from the heart of the individual who is unsaved.

Matthew 13:18-23

¹⁸ Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

¹⁹ When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

²⁰ But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

²¹ Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

²² He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

²³ But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Here in the Parable of the Sower Jesus explained to His disciples that Satan will do all he can to distract people so as to keep them from accepting and believing in the Gospel. He can bring persecution, he can cause problems in an individual's life so as to consume their thoughts, He can cause someone to be distracted in a church service where the Gospel is being shared.

We see this in Peter's second sermon as we step into Acts 4. Peter and John are going to meet up with the religious leaders who had condemned Jesus thus advocating for His death.

I. The Opposition

Notice Acts 4:1-2

Here we see that there were three groups that were Satanically motivated to oppose Peter and John. They were the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees. They were "grieved" which means they were disturbed because Peter and John were preaching of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I want to take a few minutes to explain who the Sadducees were because when we understand the background then we can understand more of why they were so disturbed. As we read over this we may ask, "Why do they care that Peter and John are preaching Jesus Christ and His resurrection?" When we get more details, we can understand why.

The Sadducees were not as popular as the Pharisees and the reason was that the Sadducees showed more favor to the Roman government. They were more concerned with pleasing Rome than they were with pleasing God. The beliefs of the Sadducees were quite different also.

- a. They did not believe in a resurrection. They believed that when the body died the soul died with it and that was just THE END.

Matthew 22:23

²³ The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,

- b. Neither did they believe in angels.

Acts 23:7-8

⁷ *And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.*

⁸ For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

The Sadducees controlled the temple worship system. The high priest was usually chosen from the Sadducees which helps us to understand even more of why they were disturbed with the teaching of Peter and John and why they hated Jesus so much. Before we see what the Sadducees were doing let us notice how they were viewed in the Gospels.

Notice what John the Baptist said about them.

Matthew 3:7

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

They were called vipers because they poisoned the people with their teaching.

Notice how Jesus spoke of the Sadducees.

Matthew 16:1-5

The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.

² He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.

³ And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

⁴ A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.

Jesus warned His disciples about the teaching of the Sadducees.

Matthew 16:6

⁶ Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

From these verses we can see that the Sadducees were a dangerous group because of what they taught. Now let me take your mind to the fact that they controlled the worship at the temple. They were the very people who examined the sacrifices that the people brought. They rejected almost every sacrifice which the people brought because the Sadducees had their own sacrifices which they could sell to the people for a very high price. So the Sadducees worshipped money and they took advantage of the people who came to the temple. Then Jesus came on the scene.

Matthew 21:12-15

¹² And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

¹³ And said unto them, *It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

¹⁴ And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.

¹⁵ And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; **they were sore displeased.**

This cleansing of the temple infuriated the Sadducees because this was where their wealth was made. Now let us jump ahead.

Matthew 26:3-4

³ Then **assembled together** the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, **unto the palace of the high priest,** who was called Caiaphas,

⁴ And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.

The religious leaders gathered in the palace of the high priest, and he was one of Sadducees. Notice what transpired from here.

John 18:12-14

¹² Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him,

¹³ And led him away to **Annas** first; for he was father in law to **Caiaphas**, which was the high priest that same year.

¹⁴ Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

Annas was of the Sadducees, and he controlled the temple worship and when Jesus chased out the money changers, He was cutting right into the finances of Annas and the other Sadducees. Caiaphas was also of the Sadducees and so we see that the Sadducees were set on killing Jesus because He was a threat to their money-making schemes. They had quite a profitable business set up in the temple. It is interesting to note that after the temple was destroyed in AD 70 that the Sadducees disappeared from the scene. Now let us get back to our text.

Notice Acts 4:1-2 again.

The Sadducees thought they had done away with Jesus. But now His disciples are on the scene, and they are preaching His resurrection. The Sadducees had no problem with a dead Jesus but if what the disciples were preaching was true then their business was again in great danger. If Jesus really did rise from the dead then they would be exposed because of what they taught, that there was no resurrection. So here in Acts 4 they are thinking they must silence Jesus disciples and that is what they are going to attempt to do.

Notice Acts 4:3-6

Here we see that this is the Sadducees. They truly believed they were finished with Jesus when they had Him put to death and now, they are faced with the same problem all over again. But the problem is greater now. When it was just Jesus, they only had one Man to deal with, but now there are thousands of people who are believing. This means thousands will understand that their theology was a lie. The Sadducees are in a situation where they are desperate.

Notice Acts 4:7

We must pay close attention to this scene. Here are two uneducated Galilean fishermen set face to face with the Sanhedrin which was the Supreme Court of the Jewish nation. Humanly speaking they were outmatched. There is no possible way they can match minds with these scholars. To most the intimidation would be overwhelming. But let us keep in mind that God specializes in bringing glory to His name in such situations as this. Let us also keep in mind that Peter and John have the power of God within them.

Zechariah 4:6b

Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

Now let us consider what the religious leaders were thinking. They knew the Old Testament and so their minds were most likely focused on a passage in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,

² *And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;*

³ *Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*

⁴ *Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.*

⁵ *And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.*

Peter and John had performed a great miracle by healing the lame man, but they were promoting Jesus Christ whom the religious leaders believed was a mere man claiming to be God. They saw Jesus as a blasphemer. So in the minds of the religious leaders Peter and John fit the context of Deuteronomy 13 and were false prophets who must be put to death. Let us see again what these religious leaders accused Jesus of.

Matthew 12:22-24

²² *Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.*

²³ *And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?*

²⁴ *But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.*

Most likely they are thinking the same thoughts concerning Peter and John.

Notice Acts 4:8

Peter was not intimidated before the Sanhedrin. He had the Words to speak, and his Words show us the faithfulness of our Lord.

Luke 12:11-12

¹¹ *And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say:*

¹² *For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.*

Conclusion:

We will pick this back up next week. As we close, I will just remind you that our is faithful to supply all we need when we too are faced with high pressure situations.