

## Peter Preaches to the Leaders

Acts 4:1—12

Peter just finished his second recorded sermon to Israel. He is speaking to them about “their fathers” Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Everything he speaks about relates exclusively to Israel, because it is still an extension of their ministry in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The plan of salvation includes baptism, the Gospel of the Kingdom is still being preached. The events Peter talks about includes the coming Messiah at the Second Coming and the setting up of the Millennial Kingdom. All the prophets mentioned were writing directly to Israel about God’s plans concerning Israel. The Gentiles and the church are nowhere to be seen.

So, where is the Church, the Body of Christ? Most dispensationalist randomly force fit the church into Acts two with the coming of the Holy Spirit. It seems strange that the coming of the Holy Spirit was foretold in the Old Testament and connected only to Israel, but yet the church somehow is plopped right into the middle of this Jewish feast day of Pentecost. Rightly dividing Scripture is critical to properly understanding what is happening. However, many who say they are rightly dividing Scripture will pick out promises given exclusively to Israel and apply them to the church. Paul’s 13 books consistently hold together as a unit, and are applicable to the Church. The writings of Matthew, Luke, Peter, John, etc hold together as a cohesive unit when applied to Israel’s prophetic program. When applied consistently, right division will make the Bible suddenly become much more understandable. It’s not logical to force Paul’s writings into Peter’s or force Peter’s writings into Paul’s. In other words, don’t mix Israel’s prophetic program into the Mystery program given to Paul for the Church in this Dispensation of Grace.

### **Jealous leaders** (verses 1—2)

The leaders of Israel were driven to jealousy because Jesus, and those preaching Him, were directing people away from their teaching and authority. It was the Pharisees and Sadducees who came together in unity against John the Baptist and against Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:7; Mark 15:10; Acts 5:17). This would be similar to the Democrats and Republicans coming together to fight a common enemy. The only thing they agreed upon is that Jesus was a threat to their power over the people (John 11:48; 12:19).

Imagine how relieved these religious leaders of Israel were when they finally were able to put Jesus to death and resume their normal hypocritical activities. Now imagine their fear and hatred brought to the forefront again when they find out Jesus had risen from the dead. Not only that, but now His disciples are coming back stronger than ever accusing them of murder, and proclaiming that He was alive and responsible for healing this lame man. Their problem had come back to life, literally and figuratively.

Now Peter, James and John were boldly preaching Jesus Christ to Israel and it’s recorded that 5,000 men had believed the Gospel of the Kingdom, still a small percentage of the 600,000 or so people living in Jerusalem at that time. However, it was large enough to get the leaders’ attention, and for them to be concerned that their power over the people was slipping away.

### **Special meeting** (verses 5—10)

The leaders convened a meeting the following day to discuss the problem of Peter preaching Jesus Christ’s resurrection, and influencing the people to believe a message rejected by the leaders. All the elite leaders were in attendance, and could be likened to having a meeting between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of our government coming together to discuss something critically important. Caiaphas, the current high priest, and Annas, the former high priest (Luke 3:2) were both in attendance. Their hands were still dripping with the blood of Jesus.

The meeting was convened to find out who authorized Peter's preaching about Jesus Christ and His resurrection. Saying Jesus was alive would have gone against the coverup perpetrated by these Jewish leaders. Peter didn't need to pre-plan his sermon because the Holy Spirit filled him, and gave him words directly from God. This is consistent with Jesus teaching the Disciples to take no thought of what they were to speak, because what they needed to say would be given to them as needed (Matthew 10:19; Luke 12:11—12). Unfortunately, there are teachers today who follow this command as if it were spoken to them. Teachers today need to study Scripture, not wait for a special word from the Lord (2 Timothy 2:15). God was speaking through His Apostles at that time because He had not finished revealing His word to mankind as we currently do in the Bible.

Peter is given the opportunity to preach Jesus Christ directly to all the leaders of Israel, giving each one personally the chance to accept or reject Jesus Christ as their Messiah. In the past three years, each of these leaders saw irrefutable evidence that Jesus was whom He claimed to be. Now Peter was confronting them face-to-face with the same message they heard while Jesus was on earth. He first points his finger directly at them, accusing them of killing the Messiah. He then tells them that this lame man was healed by the name of Jesus Christ, proof that He was alive. Since the Messiah was understood to have the power to heal (Isaiah 35:5—6), seeing this man healed through the name of Jesus Christ was another proof Jesus was the Messiah.

### **The rejected Stone** (verses 11—12)

Having presented proof that Jesus Christ was alive, through the healing of the lame man, Peter then adds another Old Testament proof that Jesus Christ was Israel's Messiah by referring to Jesus as the Stone, rejected. This Stone reference was given to these leaders by Jesus as they gathered at the temple in Matthew 21:42. It was tied to a parable about a landowner sending his son to the those put in charge of the vineyard (husbandmen), a reference to God sending Jesus to Israel. The husbandmen (leaders of Israel) killed the landowner's son because they wanted to keep control over the vineyard. The leaders condemned themselves when Jesus asked what should happen to these evil husbandmen who killed the son of the owner. They said that the owner should destroy those wicked men and put others in charge.

With that answer, Jesus then turns their condemnation of the husbandmen against them saying this indeed will happen. Those in charge will be destroyed and a new group will be brought in to take their place (the 12 Disciples). They did not realize that Jesus was the Messiah, and they were the ones who tripped over Him. He was put in their way, and they did everything possible to get rid of that Stone, instead of seeing that God was building a new structure with Christ as the Cornerstone.

The reference to Messiah as a stone is found in Psalm 118:22—29. This chapter shows the Messiah taking His rightful place in the Millennial Kingdom. We know it is the Messiah because of the gates of righteousness mentioned in verse 19—20. The righteous are the ones coming through the gates into Jerusalem. Today, many Jews understand this verse to be speaking only of King David taking the throne, with David as the stone and the builders of this kingdom of Israel being Jesse and Samuel. It is said that they did not recognizing that God chose David to be the King of Israel. It's obvious, however, that it was not a righteous kingdom. This righteous kingdom will not be established until Christ is ruling with a rod of iron in the future.

This rejected Stone is the only way of salvation. Those who reject the Stone are condemning themselves. These leaders were using their own position and the Law as their way of righteousness, missing the necessity of relying upon faith in Jesus Christ for their salvation.

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