

STUDY NOTES

The Acts of the Apostles

A MESSAGE SERIES AT NEW CITY CHURCH (Spring 2016)

WWW.NEWCITYPHX.COM/SERMONS - BRIAN KRUCKENBERG

The following content is based on the message “Controlled by the Spirit” spoken on 02/28/16 by Brian Kruckenberg at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis of the message but rather a brief look at the main ideas. To use this Study Guide effectively you must listen to the message found at <http://newcityphx.com/sermons/>.

Leaders using these Study Notes for group study and reflection should read the Biblical text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material for insight. We encourage all leaders to pray and ask the Spirit for revelation as they lead their respective communities.

THE SCRIPTURE

And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them,² greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.³ And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.⁴ But 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.

ACTS 4:1-18

CHRISTIANITY IS EXTREMIST

As we open up this chapter we see John and Peter arrested, not for healing a man, but for healing a man in the name of Jesus. As Peter and John began to become more bold with their claims about Jesus (that He was the messiah and that salvation comes only in Jesus) the established powers became intimidated. They wanted to keep the peace, and more importantly, keep things under their control. But, Peter and John were “filled with the Holy Spirit” and weren’t speaking out of their own power but the power of Jesus. This is evident in the fact that they don’t even finish their message and 5000 men come to faith!

The rulers weren’t that concerned with what Peter and John did, but with what they said.

It is interesting that today people have a similar response to Christians’ claims about Jesus. People don’t like it when Christians discuss their faith in public or do things in public because of their faith. Recent research by the Barna Group (barna.org) show that *the perception that the Christian faith is extreme is now firmly entrenched among the nation’s non-Christians.*

For instance, 45% percent of atheists, agnostics, and religiously unaffiliated in America agree with the statement “Christianity is extremist.” So, just being a Christian is extreme to many in our culture.

Fifty to eighty percent of the public believe these activities qualify as extremist activities:

- protesting government policies that conflict with religious views;
 - distribute religious material door-to-door;
 - praying out loud in public for a stranger;
 - preaching a religious message in a public place; and
 - sharing your faith in hopes to convert others;
- *Why are people so offended by the message of Jesus?*
 - *How does the message of Jesus challenge us?*
 - *Do you see similarities between the people of the 1st and 21st centuries? Talk about those similarities.*

COMMON PEOPLE, UNCOMMON RESULTS

In v. 8 we are reminded that Peter was “filled with the Holy Spirit” before he began to give a defense before the council. In Matthew 10, Jesus promised the disciples that He’d give them words to speak via the Holy Spirit when they were called to defend Jesus. This passage shows that Jesus was true to His word.

This truth is further illustrated by the fact that Peter and John were uneducated and common men (v. 13). They spoke with the same authority that Jesus did because had been **with Jesus** and they were filled with the same Spirit!

The scribes and Sadducees *knew about* Jesus, but they *never spent time with Him* and certainly hadn't received His Spirit.

Being a Christian means more than just knowing about Jesus.

In fact, Jesus had called these men, and others like them, "white washed tombs" who were pretty and cleaned up on the outside, but dead to the things of God on the inside (Matt. 23). Jesus constantly challenges those who give the appearance of loving God but they aren't producing any fruit in keeping with someone who loves God. Jesus illustrates this in Matthew 21 when He curses a fig tree that was giving the outward appearance of having fruit, but it had none. You see, Jesus isn't impressed with our "leaves," He wants fruit.

- *Can you point to activities in your life that show that you've been "with" Jesus?*
- *How can you have the heart of Jesus?*
- *How do you know you have the heart of God?*

Let's continue to help find this answer.

HARDNESS OF HEART

The religious elite couldn't deny that this lame man had been healed, but they weren't celebrating this. By getting up and walking this man was able to worship in the temple for the first time ever! He was healed in body and spirit! But, they were unmoved by this. Their hearts were hard.

They were confronted with the change the Jesus had brought to the lame man and the change that He might ask for in their lives.

When we see that Jesus changes others it reminds us that He will ask us to change too. Let's get real here:

- *Have you ever wanted for someone NOT to change? Have you ever wanted someone to NOT repent or confess sin?*

I think if we are honest sometimes we can feel that. Why? Because now we might have to forgive them and we don't want to because they hurt us so bad! Think about it, if they don't repent or change then we sort of "have control" over them in our hearts because we are "better than them." We wouldn't say that, but that is what we feel. If they remain the "bad person" we are bitter towards, then our bitterness is justified. But, if they repent and confess, then we can't justify it as easily. (Truth is bitterness is not something that is ever justified.)

Allow this to speak to your heart. Ask God if there is any truth in this for you.

REARRANGING THE FURNITURE

The officials are mad because here is Jesus is shaking up the temple again! In the Gospels we learn that Jesus called the temple His Father's house and if it is His house He can rearranging the furniture. We see Him do this when He turns over the tables of the people ripping off the poor. He pushes out that which doesn't belong in the house.

Think about this:

You are the temple of God; Jesus bought you with His life. And, if you are His temple, He's coming into your life and is going to rearrange your furniture.

This is a great way of knowing if Jesus is involved in your life. Jesus is pushing on places you don't like to be pushed on. In the message, I called this "internal yoga." When Jesus comes to the Temple, He pushes out things on the inside that don't belong there. If you are in Christ he is pushing on the things inside you!

- *How do you sense God "rearranging your furniture?"*
- *What can you do to respond to what God is doing?*

ONLY GOD

At the end of Chapter 4 we see the church come together to celebrate what God had done. They knew this was all about God and His Spirit. So they worshiped!

- *Do you have moments in your life that you can point to that you know can only be attributed to God?*
- *How does that encourage and challenge you?*