

I. Introduction

Good morning! Last week we talked about how the Jewish authorities at the temple became angry when Peter and John proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus and the promise of resurrection to eternal life for all who believe. They were so angry that, in order to stop the apostles from preaching, they had the apostles arrested and thrown in jail. This is the beginning of a pattern of persecution of Christians that continues in many places still today. Next week, we will talk more about that subject, but for today let's continue in Acts and see what happens next in the story of the apostles. Let's read Acts 4:5-12.

II. Scripture Acts 4:5-12 (NIV 1984)

5 The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. 6 Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family. 7 They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! 9 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, 10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. 11 He is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone." 12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

III. Teaching

Peter and John were brought before the high priest and questioned (Noelle art). There were also many other Jewish authorities there. But Peter was not intimidated by them. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, boldly preached Jesus. Peter reminded them that they had crucified Jesus, and then he proclaimed that God had raised Jesus from the dead. Peter also told them that the crippled man was healed in the Name of Jesus. And then, in **verse 11**, Peter declared that Jesus is, **"the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone."**



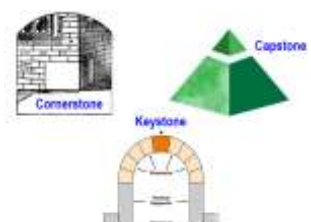
This prophetic word is a quote from Psalm 118:22, and Peter is saying that the prophecy was fulfilled when the leaders of the Jewish nation rejected Jesus. Jesus was rejected by those who should have been the builders of God's work in history. But, even though Jesus was rejected by them, He has still become the most important stone in God's work.

By the way, I want to take a moment here to mention a Bible translation issue. Take a look at **Psalm 118:22** in several different translations. As you can see, the translations are similar, except that they use different words for the stone Jesus has become. All of the translations agree that the original language is referring to the most important stone, but they don't agree on whether that is the cornerstone or the capstone, in other words, the first stone or the last stone in the building.

Psalm (詩篇) 118:22	
The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. (NIV)	家造り手の捨てた石は、隅のかしら石となった。(口語訳)
The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. (NKJV)	22 (1)家を建てる者たちの捨てた石、それが建の石になった。(新改訳)
The stone that the builders tossed aside has now become the most important stone. (CEV)	家を建てる者の退けた石が隅の冠石となった。(新共同訳)

It is fascinating that, even in places where there is some ambiguity in the Bible, the result is to reveal more about Jesus. Take a look at this slide.

The cornerstone is the first stone laid for a building's foundation. It has to be strong to hold the weight of the building, and it must be laid perfectly to make sure the entire building is straight and true. On the other hand, the capstone is the last stone to be placed; it is the crown of the building and it is often the most



beautiful stone. Finally, the keystone, which is the capstone of an arch, is the stone that holds the other stones in place. So, we can see that the cornerstone, the capstone, and the keystone are the first, the last, and the center.

This reminds us that Jesus is Lord over all, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, and the One who holds all things together. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul wrote a beautiful paragraph about these things.



Colossians 1:15-20: “15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

In eloquent words, Paul explains why Jesus is unique. Jesus is the Creator and all the fullness of God is in Him. Jesus is the perfect Savior; He gave His own life on the cross in payment for our sins. Jesus made peace between God and man through the shedding of His own blood. Through Jesus, God has provided complete salvation, given freely to all who believe. When we consider these things, we should not be at all surprised that there is only One Name by which we must be saved. Once a perfect solution to the problem of sin and death has been provided, there is no need to provide other solutions or other names.

And so, Peter confidently proclaims the essential truth in **Acts 4:12**, **“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”** Who should we call on for salvation? Jesus! There is no other name by which we must be saved.

But some people may ask, what about all of the other religions? In our modern world, it is very popular to consider all religions as essentially the same. But the facts show that religions are very different in their teachings. It is true that there is some common ground between religions concerning morality; nearly all religions agree that murder is bad, for example. And there may also be some useful teaching for daily life or philosophical insights in various other religions.

But when we come to the most important questions and issues facing humanity, the various religions give different answers and offer different solutions. For example, if we ask, “What is the worst problem facing mankind? And, what is the solution?” then Buddhism and Christianity give very different answers. Buddhism says the worst problem we face is suffering, and that the solution is to give up all worldly attachments and desires. In contrast, the Christian answer to these questions is that our worst problem is that our sin has separated us from God and that the solution is to repent of our sins and receive forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ.

To the Buddhist, suffering is the problem. To the Christian, suffering is only a symptom of a much bigger problem – sin and separation from our Heavenly Father. We could talk about many other differences between religions also, but for today let’s focus again on the point that Peter makes in **Acts 4:12**. Peter declares, **“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”**

In the diverse religions of the world, people call upon many different names. But Peter tells us that salvation is received only through the Name of Jesus. Hinduism speaks of thirty million gods, and Shintoism speaks of eight million gods. But even if someone believes that these gods exist and names them all, none of them are the Creator God who made the heavens and the earth and none of them are able to provide salvation from sin and death. Actually, if someone believes that there are millions of gods, then it is almost the same as if they believed in none, because the spiritual power would be divided among the millions so that each little god had only a little power and would not really be worthy of being called a god.

What about Buddha? Well, like the case of many gods, there are also many Buddhas. Many Buddhist sects focus on just a few Buddhist sutras and call on the name of only one Buddha. But the Tripitaka, the collection of recognized Buddhist writings which we might call the, “Buddhist Bible,” includes thousands of sutras listing the names of thousands of Buddhas. You see, the word, “Buddha,” is really a title, not a name, and it is given to each person who is thought to have achieved Buddhist enlightenment.



In Buddhism, even the so-called celestial Buddhas were ordinary persons before they achieved enlightenment. For example, Amida Buddha is said to have originally been a monk named Dharmakāra. Dharmakāra, they say, was not necessarily from this world, he might have been from some other world, but he was originally an ordinary monk. The followers of Amida chant his name, but they are not calling on God, they are calling on the name of an exalted monk. They say that Dharmakāra received enlightenment many eons ago, but that does not change the basic fact, before Amida became a Buddha, Amida was an ordinary monk.

This shows us that Buddhism is always, in the end, man-centered. In the original Hinayana Buddhist sects, achieving enlightenment depends entirely on your own personal efforts. In the newer Mahayana Buddhist sects, they say that you can get help from someone who has gone on before you, but it still all goes back to human efforts since all of the Buddhas were originally ordinary monks.

But the Bible teaches us very clearly that man can never save himself. Man-centered systems, no matter how elaborate or clever, can never provide salvation from sin and death. We need a Savior who comes to us from outside of this fallen world and who is completely untouched by sin. That Savior is Jesus, who is both Lord and God.

What about the other monotheistic religions? Well, like Christians, the Jews and the Muslims believe in an all-powerful, all-knowing, Creator God. But the Jewish leadership rejected Jesus, and the Muslims recognize Jesus only as a prophet, not as Lord and Savior. So, since they have rejected Jesus and they have no other savior to call on for help, both Jews and Muslims are still basically relying on human efforts to follow rules and be good persons. What is the conclusion? It is the same conclusion Peter proclaimed 2,000 years ago. We need Jesus, because **(Acts 4:12), “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”**

Those who are called great religious teachers usually point away from themselves to some law to follow or to some kind of disciplined lifestyle that is expected to bring spiritual advancement. But Jesus never did anything like that. Jesus always pointed to Himself. If Jesus had been just an ordinary man, that would be crazy. No man, no matter how smart, strong, or good, is able to save the world. But Jesus is the Creator God come down from heaven to provide salvation for the people He created. Therefore, Jesus is able to provide for all of our needs, even forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Did you ever notice that on every occasion and for every need, Jesus always pointed to Himself as the solution?

Consider Jesus’ words in these verses:

John 6:35, “Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”

John 8:12, “When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”

John 10:9, “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.”

John 10:11, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

John 14:6, “Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear

much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Jesus points to Himself as the solution to all of our problems and the supplier of all of our needs. In saying such things, Jesus is either speaking the truth, or He is a bad man who is deliberately deceiving us, or He is self-deceived and in need of psychiatric help. As C.S. Lewis said, we must make our choice: Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic, or Lord of all. After considering each option, Lewis came to his conclusion, **“Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God.”**

IV. Conclusion

I would like to share one more Scripture before we close for today; it is a Scripture which ties together last week’s message with today’s message. You may remember that just before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He spoke with Lazarus’ sister Martha. Look at what Jesus told her and how she responded in **John 11:25-27, “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” “Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”**

Two thousand years ago, Jesus said He is the resurrection and the life and Martha chose to believe Him and to trust in Him. Twenty-six years ago, on March 22nd, 1986, I made the same choice when I asked Jesus to forgive my sins and to come into my life. What about you? Have you made the choice to follow Jesus? It is my prayer that each and every person here, as well as all of our families, friends, and loved ones, would make the choice to say, “Yes,” to Jesus. May I encourage you to make the choice today? Today is a good day to say, “Yes,” to Jesus, and receive the free gift of eternal life.

Let’s pray.

V. Prayer

Dear heavenly Father,

We praise Your Holy Name and give thanks for the wonders of Your love and grace. Lord, we confess that we are sinners. We do and say things we should not. We leave undone and unsaid things that must be said and done. We fall short of Your perfect standards in many ways. Lord, we confess our sins and we call upon the Name of Jesus. In the Name of Jesus and by His finished work on the cross, we ask You to forgive us our sins and restore us to right relationship with You. Lord Jesus, thank You for dying on the cross as a ransom for us. Thank You for the great love You have shown in preparing this wonderful salvation for us. Cleanse us now by the power of Your blood poured out for the salvation of the world. Renew our relationship with You and give us the free gift of resurrection and eternal life. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit so that we might learn to boldly tell others of Your love and grace. Thank You, Jesus. Thank You, Jesus!

Lord, come now, and meet the needs of your people. You know each and every need. Comfort those who sorrow, strengthen those who are weak, heal those who are sick. Meet the needs of your people out of your endless love and compassion and for your glory. Be glorified, Lord. Be glorified in our lives, our homes, our church and throughout this land. Prepare us, your church, for the time when you will come again in power. In Jesus’ precious Name I pray, amen.