

Acts 4 -- Is it right to listen to you?

4 The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. 2 They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. 3 They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. 4 But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand. One of the first questions you have after getting saved is why are so many greatly disturbed by the apostle's teaching? 5 The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. 6 Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others 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 man who was lame and are being 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 Jesus is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone." 12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." The builders are supposed to be the experts and the cornerstone is the most important stone for the entire building. It establishes the lines for the walls so they are straight and so that the building is in the proper place. These experts rejected Jesus as being a stone fit for the wall, and yet He has become the cornerstone. That really makes you question whether or not they know what they are doing. 13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. These rulers were able to rule by intimidating those who were uneducated. There are many rules about what clothes you can wear, what the fibers can be made of, how you should behave if you put on new clothes, new clothes should be inspected to make sure they don't have improper fibers, which arm should put on the shirt first, which shoe you should tie first, what clothes to wear of the Sabbath, on holidays, on intermediate days, while praying. Altogether there are 613 rabbinical commandments. You would need a degree to know all of them and making a mistake in these is a simple way to see that someone is

uneducated and therefore unqualified to be a leader. Yet three years with Jesus and they are no longer intimidated by this. 14 But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. 15 So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. 16 "What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it. 17 But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name." This is what I find so interesting, why did they feel threatened? Why did they feel they must "stop this thing from spreading any further"? 18 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! 20 As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." That is the answer! Why does anyone listen to these guys? They are the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law. Why does anyone care what they say? The reason is that we believe they are giving us the word of God. Once people have to ask "which is right, to listen to you or to listen to God" the entire edifice they have constructed collapses. This is the fundamental question that Jesus ministry forces you to ask. Prior to this Emperors, Kings, Pharaohs, and Caesars all claimed divine right. They claimed they were speaking for God. Once this question began to be asked Kings coordinated with Priests. Kings would claim a holy war and the Priests would back them up. The laws would have a legalized slavery and the Priests would justify this in their preaching. But this question by Peter was echoed by Martin Luther, and throughout this age. We have come to realize that the rulers played us when they told us the crusades were a holy war. We were played when they told us that the Vietnam war was a war to protect the US from communism. We were played when they told us that Iraq was responsible for 9/11 and that they had weapons of mass destruction. This age has been about being with the Lord and learning to stand on our own two feet and to stop being played by everyone claiming divine right to rule. This question that Peter asks is very similar to what God told him on the mount of transfiguration: "this is my beloved Son, hear Him". Peter took that to heart and so asks these rulers "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you or to Him?" This is what was so revolutionary about Jesus ministry. If Jesus is Lord then the rulers, elders and priests better be one with Jesus, otherwise why should we listen to them? 21 After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people

were praising God for what had happened. 22 For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old. 23 On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. 25 You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "Why do the nations rage and the people plot in vain? 26 The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one.' We are about to see the nations rage, right now they are plotting in vain. If we can stand on our own two feet then all these leaders become superfluous. In the New Testament leaders are servants, they are very different from the leaders you have in the world. What is happening today, people are questioning why we need to listen to them? If you are a taxpayer you are paying for the police department. If the police department is not protecting and serving you, then why are you paying for them? This is the same question Rosa Parks asked. This is the same question every boycott asks. We pay for the federal government to serve and protect us. If they are sending our kids to go overseas and die in wars so that some oil company or defense contractor can get rich, why are we listening to them? The CDC is supposed to keep us safe from Pandemics. SARS was a potential pandemic in 2004, they should have developed a vaccine for it. We now think that being exposed to SARS in 2004 made some countries much safer from the Covid19 pandemic, this is why Vietnam and Taiwan were not impacted. If the CDC had a vaccine for SARS they could have given this to us this summer and we wouldn't have this catastrophe with colleges and schools reopening. If they are not doing their job why are we paying them? 27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. 28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. 29 Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. 30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." They will always brand these as "conspiracy theories" and connect them to crazy conspiracy theories. But Peter tells you right here that this age began with a conspiracy against Jesus. Historians have shown that Hitler conspired to seize power in Germany and then to start WWII, the US conspired to ramp up the Vietnam war with a phony claim of an attack on our Navy. Bush conspired to falsely accuse Saddam of having Weapons of

Mass destruction to get that war. JFK was killed by a conspiracy to change US foreign policy. You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. We are being set free to stand on our own two feet and to be able to hear the voice of God's beloved Son. **31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.** This word will shake the earth. What is happening in Beirut and Belarus and Portland will take place across the entire globe. People are asking "why should we listen to you?" That is earth shaking. And, people are being filled with the Holy Spirit, and they are speaking the word boldly. **32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. 36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), 37 sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.** Right now we are in the midst of an economic disaster. China is on the brink of a famine, however, they have cash and will buy up food from around the world. That in turn will cause third world countries to have a very deep famine. The real issue is not that there isn't enough food, the real issue is that it isn't shared equally. The richest 1% own 44% of the world's wealth. That is the real problem. The church can weather this storm by sharing everything they have.