

Acts 4

New Wine and Old Wineskins

The release of power by God through the Holy Spirit was not understood or appreciated by those in traditional religion. It was completely foreign to them. God will not subject himself to our format, patterns or our expectations. The priesthood and their surrounding religious practices had drifted far away from truth and God. We can also get onto an auto pilot pattern, and lose touch with God. It takes no time at all to become estranged from God, and to lose all interest in prayer. Those who thought they were serving God did not recognize God when he came in the form of the Holy Spirit. Religion is often a pattern. God is an unknown dynamic.

¹⁶ “No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. ¹⁷ Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” (Matthew 9:16-17)

Read Acts 4:1-4: We have been reading about how The Holy Spirit was working in the lives of men in new and spectacular ways. Now we see how the broken and dead religious system collides with God’s expanding work. The priests had gone so far away from God that they did not even recognize him when he came in the form of the prophesied baby Jesus or later on, in the form of the Holy Spirit. The bible teaches us through both comparisons and contrasts. Let’s look at who was running the religious system.

The Captain of the Temple was very upset with the Apostles continuation to talk about Jesus rising from the dead. To someone who is not born again, this is crazy talk.

¹³ These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴ But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2)

The captain of the temple was like a Chief Operating Officer, who scheduled all 24 courses (groups) of priests into their periodic assignments. Someone had to be in charge of temple logistics. You could also say that he was like a Sergeant of Arms and facilities Manager. He was second in command to the High Priest. We can get so invested into our own plans and events that there is no room for God to do a work in our lives.

The Sadducees were also greatly disturbed at the growing Jesus movement; and now there are declarations of life after death. It was probably like a nightmare that they could not end. They thought they put an end to the Jesus movement on the cross; and they just created a martyr. Now Jesus is back from the dead.

The Sadducees were focused on wealth accumulation, influence, control and elitism. They equated wealth to God's favor. The Sadducees were in the majority in the Sanhedrin, and they occupied the office of the High Priesthood. Annas and Caiphas were sellouts, posing as godly men. They rejected any notion that Jesus was credentialed enough to weigh in on religious issues.

It is a miserable place to be divided between this world's accolades and pay offs and the Kingdom of heaven. There is no partnership or compromising with God. He will not fit into our religious model. He will not fit into our schedule. We have to make room for him. You cannot keep the world as a friend and walk with God. God will disappoint us if we have our heart set on our own desires. He gives us better targets. Chasing this world's things is like chasing crickets at night. You go in that direction to follow the voices...to only discover that you have moved further away. Our expectations will never be met in the exact way which we desire.

The Sadducees were a seemingly contradictory religious sect. On one hand, they were biblical literalists (which can be good). On the other hand, they did not believe in the resurrection from the dead, spirits or angels, heaven or hell, etc.. You really are not a true literalist if you do not believe in spiritual life. Any discussion of rising from the dead would undermine their views. Any evidence of Jesus rising from the dead would be very embarrassing to the Sadducees. Any proofs or belief in The Holy Spirit or spiritual activity would reveal how wrong their limited beliefs were. The Day of Pentecost was the Sadducees worst nightmare. They probably already had enormous guilt over killing Jesus. Just when they thought that it was over, the spiritual realm of God multiplied many times in many ways. They were tortured for lying.

The Pharisees are not mentioned here. They felt more competitive against Jesus than the Sadducees, they had no issues with spirits and the Holy Spirit and resurrection. They wanted to be the regional go-to rabbi authorities for all spiritual directions in the synagogues. Oddly, these gate keepers of truth somehow devolved into believing the Mishna was more important than the scriptures. Beyond all of this, they placed the approvals and backing of famous men as their most-notable standings. Jesus came in as an outsider, just like John the Baptist. Any time that Jesus says: “You have heard it said, but I tell you”... it is probably another place where Jesus is distinguishing his truth from the Mishna. The Mishna is the use of men’s logic to stretch out and define scripture...instead of letting scripture interpret scripture. It ended up working against the Kingdom’s purposes.

It was kind of like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Arresting Peter and John did not stop anything. In fact, even the arrests of saints turned into a prison ministry. God was using every flaming arrow from the evil one to advance the Kingdom. God’s Spirit was transforming the world like a tidal wave. Arresting a few men did not slow anything down. In fact, unless Paul was arrested, we would have a much smaller New Testament. The New Testament had to be written as a necessity as Paul’s prison letters to various churches.

Two of God’s primary servants are arrested and 5,000 are saved. Every act of desperation from the evil one results in an enhanced harvest for God. Nothing can effectively work against God (in its ultimate sense).

If anyone does attack you, it will not be my doing; whoever attacks you will surrender to you. ¹⁶ “See, it is I who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its work. And it is I who have created the destroyer to wreak havoc; ¹⁷ no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me,” declares the Lord. (Isaiah 54)

Read Acts 4:5-12: The world has a pessimistic phrase “*No good deed goes unpunished*”. The apostles healed a man in need, according to what the Holy Spirit did in their lives. On one hand you could say they were agents for God. On the other hand; it was God’s doing. They have been arrested, and now they are testifying how *they* did this. Biblically speaking, this public rejection does not qualify as a curse or a punishment. This opportunity to testify is a blessing. Not every blessing is pleasant. Sometimes it feels like a kick in the shins. We can feel

like we are losing, but we are really winning. Do we ever see the hassles that we may go through to be blessings? This inquiry provides the needed format to clarify that the apostles did nothing. They said that it was the power of Jesus being used to heal this man. We can get into hot water over things that we say. Getting into hot water over things that we should say is another matter. The Holy Spirit gives us a supernatural peace, though the world may be giving us a tongue lashing for our faith.

Read Acts 4:13-22: There was protected class system barrier between the intellectual priests and attorneys verses the common blue-collar citizens beneath them. They assumed that the apostles could not read or make strong reasoning points. These apostles were fishermen and untrained men. There was even a slang dialect in Galilee that was obvious to a person of higher learning in Jerusalem.

The man was obviously healed, so the religious leaders were stuck as to what to say. They declared the topic of Jesus to be off limits for public discourse. The apostles responded that they were not going to hide what had happened. The public had been very enthusiastic about the healing, glorifying God. This kept the elite from being able to do too much to them. It was not only a huge miracle to see this man now able to use his legs...but he immediately learned how to walk. That could take months!

Read Acts 4:23-37: It is shocking to a peaceful people become attacked. We are averse to conflict. It is unsolicited. God's people come bringing peace and healing. The devil's children have been providing bad direction since the beginning. We are mischaracterized. The false prophets have been encouraging men to make decisions leading towards death time after time. And yet, they still have an audience. People are blind until the Holy Spirit gives them spiritual eyes.

The bible compares this world's unrest and threats to waves breaking on shore. Israel is compared to solid land; and the Gentile nations are compared to the raging sea. The sea is controlled by any wind. The winds are symbolic of demonic influences and false narratives. It never stops. It is also not allowed to go any further than God's prescribed boundaries. It always starts with a lot of drama and rising up and intimidation. The whole world is against God, because it is under demonic influence.

Do you not fear Me?' says the LORD. 'Will you not tremble at My presence, Who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea, By a perpetual decree, that it cannot

pass beyond it? And though its waves toss to and fro, Yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it. ²³ But this people has a defiant and rebellious heart; They have revolted and departed. (Jeremiah 5)

The scriptures from Psalm 2 here are about how the world will think that it can stop Jesus at his second coming. That is insane. We are definitely seeing a new hatred for anything good in our political world. I can see why the scriptures compare them to unreasoning animals.

The wild animals (natural men) get crazier, and God's people draw a tighter alignment with each other and with God. The miracles and Holy Ghost power took off like a rocket. It was unstoppable. The force of darkness always comes over to try to stop the forces of light.