

International Bible Lessons Commentary
Acts 4:23-31

King James Version

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, September 6, 2015

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, September 6, 2015**, is from **Acts 4:23-31**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** discusses *Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further* to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. A podcast for this commentary is also available at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Acts 4:23-31

(Acts 4:23) And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

When Peter and John went to the temple, they healed a lame beggar in the name of Jesus. When on trial before the Sanhedrin the next day and told to stop preaching, they replied, “We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). After they were released, they went back to the Church, and the Church prayed after they reported their experiences. Their prayer may have been longer, but the Holy Spirit moved Luke to report what was most important and exemplary in their prayer.

(Acts 4:24) And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

They began their prayer by addressing the true God as the Creator of everything and the Supreme Lord and King over all of creation – which included not only everyone in the First Church, but also the chief priests and elders who controlled of the Sanhedrin. All of these human leaders ruled under the authority of and with the permission of the true God, Who through Jesus foretold that His followers would be persecuted for following Him (see Matthew 5:11-12 and John 15:20).

(Acts 4:25) Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

In their prayer, they referred to the Scriptures and what God had said in the Scriptures (Psalms 2:1-2). They did not need to know the reasons why the nations rage and people plot against God. They knew that they raged and plotted in vain (or in empty and meaningless ways), because God was and remains the Sovereign LORD over all. They knew God's response to His and their enemies: God laughs, scoffs, rebukes, and terrifies His enemies (Psalms 2:4-5). They knew that the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures – which they used in their prayer. They knew that David, Jesus, and they were servants of the Sovereign Lord, and they could all trust the LORD God to do right no matter how situations appeared.

(Acts 4:26) The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

King Herod, Pilate, Annas (the high priest), Caiaphas and other political and religious leaders banded together against the Sovereign LORD (Who the priests were supposed to lead the people to worship rightly) and against the Messiah (the name "Messiah" means "anointed one" – the same meaning as "Christ"). What they did was

consistent with and foretold by King David, because as the servant of God the Holy Spirit spoke through King David.

(Acts 4:27) For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

In prayer as conversation with God, they reported what Scriptures seemed most related to the historical facts they had just experienced. The Holy Spirit inspired them to pray according to the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit prayed for and with them (see Romans 8:26-30). These conspirators did what they wanted, because they saw Jesus and His followers as a threat to their power and wealth. Both the religious and political leaders conspired together, because the Messiah and His teachings were a threat to all of them.

(Acts 4:28) For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

These evil leaders acted consistently with their evil hearts and intentions to live supremely for themselves. They refused to rule unselfishly according to the Scriptures and the Law of God for the benefit of those they led politically and religiously. These evil leaders then took actions that the Sovereign Lord decided beforehand would happen (from eternity past and in human reckoning hundreds of

years before Jesus was offered as a sacrifice for our sins). God used these evil people, who had committed themselves to fighting against God and His purposes, to bring about good and the salvation of all who would accept Jesus the Messiah and their Lord and Savior (Romans 8:28).

(Acts 4:29) And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

They bowed in prayer before God as His servants to do His will. They knew the great commission of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20). They knew Jesus' promise and command: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). So they prayed for the Lord to consider the threats they faced (and do what the Lord thought best, as they knew He would). But primarily, they asked that God would help them do their duty and obey Jesus' commission with boldness in spite of the threats and persecutions they faced.

(Acts 4:30) By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

Peter had healed the lame beggar in the name of Jesus. They described Jesus as the Lord's "holy servant," but they did not call themselves "holy servants" or want God to answer their prayers because they considered themselves "holy." They wanted to glorify Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Those in the First Church saw themselves as coworkers with God. They would obey God in everything God wanted and Jesus taught. They prayed that God would help them obey boldly in the face of danger from political and religious leaders who had crucified Messiah Jesus. They asked that the Sovereign Lord would honor Jesus and His Name by healing and performing signs and wonders as they witnessed boldly for God in Jesus' Name.

(Acts 4:31) And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

The Lord gave them an experiential sign that their prayer was according to His will. He would answer it, and He would do all they asked when they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, which many would have remembered from the Day of Pentecost as an authentic filling by the Holy Spirit. Other new believers, who had received the Holy Spirit earlier when they first believed and demonstrated their willingness to obey Jesus (see Acts 2:38), were now filled by the Holy Spirit in a new experiential way that

empowered them to be bolder in their witnessing for Jesus Christ. The result of this filling was more power and courage and a deeper knowledge of and experience with God that motivated them to speak the word of God more boldly. They spoke the word of God as assuredly as King David through the Holy Spirit spoke (see acts 4:25), and we can trust their words to be “the word of God” too.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What are some of the truths that the first Christians prayed about God’s attributes, abilities, and actions after Peter and John reported their experiences to them?
2. What did God do in answer to their prayer?
3. What does it mean to you to learn about the Holy Spirit speaking through David?
4. What does it mean to you to learn that nations and people plot in vain against God or imagine in vain that they can defeat God or His plans?
5. Read Acts 4:29-30 again. Can you pray that prayer today? Why or Why not?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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