

International Bible Lessons Commentary

Acts 4:23-31

New Revised Standard 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](#).

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Acts 4:23-31

(Acts 4:23) After they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to 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) When they heard it, they raised their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and everything in them,

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) it is you who said by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant: ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples 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 took their stand, and the rulers have gathered together against the Lord and against his Messiah.’

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 in this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed,

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) to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

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, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness,

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) while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant 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) When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke 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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