



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

# The Absolute Reign

The Sermon

Acts 4:23-31

## 3 | Oneness in Akouo | Acts 4:24

*“So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: ‘Lord, you are God, who made heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them’”* (Acts 4:24).

Can you imagine coming to Sunday morning worship and finding the speaker has just been released from Wilson County Jail? He shares the experience of his jail time and court orders. You are left without any doubt that the political structure of your day has an intolerable attitude toward Jesus Christ. Jesus may be your hope and Savior, and you believe in Him with your whole heart, but those in power over your culture and life style are against even the mention of His name! In fact, the powers that be inform you that any further teaching in Jesus’ name will initiate strong punishment and possible death. How will you respond?

Although this has not happened in our Sunday morning worship, we do know the pressure of such resistance in our culture. Because of this pressure it is easy for us to keep silent; our silence comes under the guise of not offending. Are we strong in our profession of Jesus? Can I establish a relationship with another person and keep the name of Jesus absent from that relationship? Does everyone with whom I associate need to be pressed with Jesus? How can I be filled with Jesus and not affect those whose hands I shake?

*“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard”* (Acts 4:20). This is the premise Peter proposed to the Sanhedrin. How could they deny the revelation of forty days in His resurrection presence? How could they ignore the indwelt Spirit of Jesus radically changing their existence? How could they dispute the signs and wonders they experienced through the growth of the early church in Jerusalem? Jesus was dominant in their lives; He became their life! To deny Jesus was to deny what they had become. If I reject Jesus, I revert back to the devil I once was! What will we do with our culture’s pressure to be silent about Jesus?

Luke’s first contrast was between the threats of the Sanhedrin and the freedom of the apostles to return to the members of the early church (Acts 4:23). Then he established another contrast. In this study, Luke begins our verse with the English word *“so,”* making a second contrast. (Acts 4:24). *“So”* is a translation of the Greek word *“de,”* primarily meaning *“but.”* This second contrast is between all the reported threats from the Sanhedrin and the response of the body of Christ. Now the dilemma was expanded to include the early church and required a response. Business as usual was not an option. A decision had to be made.

The early church responded in unity. *“So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord”* (Acts 4:24). This was a unique response, but it was not their first show of unity (Acts 1:14; 2:46). The phrase, *“with one accord,”* is a translation of the Greek word *“homothumadon.”* *“Homo”* means, *“same place and time.”* *“Thumos”* refers to *“passion,”* and has to do with *“as if heavy breathing.”* This combination of two words is expressive and signifies that all their minds, affections, desires, and wishes, were concentrated on one object. Everyone’s focus had the same end in view. They had one desire. No person was uninterested, unconcerned, or lukewarm; all were in earnest. This kind of unity gives the Holy Spirit divine action in our world. It is a powerful platform!

We have nothing to indicate that the members of early church were without differences. *“One accord”* does not mean the people involved do not disagree about something. People of *“one accord”* unite in their passion for one purpose, concentrating on one concern. They had varying likes and dislikes, but in our passage they had an overwhelming passion for Jesus. We have learned from our previous studies they were captivated by the resurrected Lord. He had shared the dreams of the Kingdom of God with them for forty days (Acts 1:3). Jesus was so large in their vision nothing else seemed to matter. Their love for Him over took all other concerns, not eliminating those concerns but certainly diminishing them.

We could make a case for unity in the Sanhedrin. Peter and John’s preaching about Jesus brought a new crisis to the lives of these leaders. People seemed to come together against an enemy, and the Sanhedrin had a common foe in Jesus. They were united in their passion to end the preaching in Jesus’ name. But there was a vast difference between the *“one accord”* of the Sanhedrin and *“one accord”* of the early church.

What did the Sanhedrin hear, and what did the early church hear? That was the difference in the *“one accord.”* According to our verse, the early church focused their praise on the sovereignty of God because of what they heard. Luke wrote, *“So when they heard (akouo) that, they raised their voice to God with one accord”* (Acts 4:24). *“They heard”* is a direct reference to, *“reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them”* (Acts 4:23). The Greek word *“apaggello,”* translated *“reported,”* comes from two Greek words, *“apo,”* meaning *“from”* and *“aggello,”* meaning *“to proclaim.”* *“Apaggello”* means a messenger who announces, but also includes the idea of details. *“Apaggello”* is followed by the Greek word *“hoso,”* translated *“all that,”* meaning a duplication of the event. So the apostles gave a detailed account of the interaction they had with the Sanhedrin, however, we have only what the Holy Spirit saw fit to share with us through Luke.

The Sanhedrin reacted to the powerful statements of Peter (Acts 4:8-12). He named Jesus as the only source of this miracle and salvation. The Sanhedrin *“saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men”* (Acts 4:13). They marveled at this and recognized that they were under the influence of Jesus.

The emphasis of the Sanhedrin’s discussion was on their inability to deny the miracle. *“What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it”* (Acts 4:16). Luke wrote, *“And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it”* (Acts 4:14).

The Sanhedrin could not deny the miracle, which Luke suggested would limit their punishment of Peter and John. *“So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done”* (Acts 4:21). This gives us insight into the perspective of the Sanhedrin. They were not glorifying God for what had been done. They were disappointed with the limited punishment they could extend to the apostles. The phrase *“they had further threatened”* is a translation of *“prosapeileo.”* It is a combination of *“pros,”* meaning *“in addition,”* and *“apeileo,”* meaning *“to threaten.”* They added threat upon threat. This is contrasted with the actual quote from the Sanhedrin, *“But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them”* (Acts 4:17). The phrase *“let us severely threaten”* is a translation of two Greek words. *“Severely”* is translated from the Greek word *“apeile,”* and *“threaten”* is a translation from *“apeileo.”* These two words are a form of the same word, making this a double statement, *“threaten, threaten.”*

As the early church heard the details of the miracle and the response of the Sanhedrin, what did they hear? What they heard was determined by their focus on Jesus, and that focus caused their unity. What the Trinity God did in Christ captured and mastered the early church. They saw everything through the lens of Jesus.

## Presence

The Sanhedrin wanted to know who was responsible for healing the lame beggar. Peter gave the credit to Jesus. The reaction of the Sanhedrin was, *“they marveled”* (Acts 4:13), a translation of the Greek word “thaumazo.” It is used forty-three times in the New Testament with thirty of those in the Gospel accounts. It speaks of an amazement awakened by sight, which is why it is used so often in the Gospels. The signs and wonders of Jesus were shocking the people and causing them to wonder.

Now the amazement of the Jewish people happened to the Sanhedrin! They were mystified by the boldness and certainty of Peter, an uneducated fisherman, as he spoke about Jesus. This untrained man should have cowered in their presence because he was far beneath their level of education and knowledge. They recognized this was the way they felt about Jesus, and what they hated in Jesus was standing before them in a man called Peter. They demeaned and belittled Peter and John. These apostles should have known their place in light of the Sanhedrin’s authority. Who did they think they were?

But the early church did not respond to the criticism of the Sanhedrin; they praised the sovereign God. The lame beggar’s miracle forced the Sanhedrin to recognize the authority in the lives of Peter and John as greater than position or education. The Trinity God executed His plan even though the Sanhedrin wanted to eliminate Jesus again. He had explained this to His disciples before His crucifixion. *“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you”* (John 15:18). *“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master”* (Matthew 10:24-25). The thrill of their lives was to be like Jesus! *“When they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord.”* They praised! They were blessed! In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus told them, *“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad”* (Matthew 5:11-12).

This was the repeated response among the believers. Stephen, the first martyr, while suffering extreme persecution said, *“Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”* (Acts 7:56). This so infuriated his persecutors that they took him outside the city and stoned him to death. Stephen called on God saying, *“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep* (Acts 7:59-60).

These early Christians were so captured by Jesus that all other circumstance grew dim in light of their merge with Him. Can Jesus be in your life without this happening? Does this mean the proper involvement of Jesus in me will produce an intimacy with Him that makes everything else minor in significance?

## Positive

The Sadducees made up half the Sanhedrin, and they did not believe in the supernatural. They rejected the idea of angels, the resurrection of the dead, and miracles. Yet, they were confronted with this miracle of the lame beggar. They said, *“For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it”* (Acts 4:16). The Trinity God moved through the Spirit of Jesus, and the Sanhedrin was forced to see it. Yet, having seen it, they would not embrace it! They chose to live in deception rather than change.

What did the persecution and threats of the Sanhedrin’s deception produce in the early church? They broke into praise! They saw God as bigger than the persecution. They did not focus on the threats; they focused on the sovereignty of God who is bigger than the threats. Their God was sovereign; He utilized those threats to complete His plan! How did they know this? They knew because He did this in Jesus. *“For truly against Your holy*

*Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done”* (Acts 4:27-28).

Can you imagine the merger of His presence and your life? Can you imagine such intimacy with Him that adverse circumstances become the stage of rejoicing? Adverse circumstances are the means by which God accomplishes His plan for your world, and you are privileged to be a part of it! We become a people who live above our circumstances, pressures, and obstacles; we see His hand moving through it all! Even when we do not know the details of His plan our confidence is in Him and not in our knowledge of the plan!

## Position

The attitude of the Sanhedrin was one of authority. It was the *“priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees”* who instigated this event (Acts 4:1). They formed the temple police who were in charge. Now two uneducated and untrained apostles confronted the most powerful court of Israel. A lowly beggar stood with them, so reduced in rank that he had never before been allowed into the temple. The Sanhedrin invited other powerful, high-ranking individuals to join their interrogation (Acts 4:5-6). The question of the Sanhedrin was one of authority, *“By what power or by what name have you done this?”* (Acts 4:7). Power and authority determined the issue of punishment for these apostles. The Sanhedrin dared not do all they would want because the people glorified God for the miracle (Acts 4:21). If they did they would lose power and authority in the eyes of the people.

Do you see the irony in this? In the midst of the authority and power of the Sanhedrin, they admitted they were powerless. As these men of authority conferred with each other, they said, *“What shall we do to these men?”* (Acts 4:16). They admitted this was beyond them. They released Peter and John only to put them back in jail at a later time. When the Sanhedrin sent for them, they were not there because an angel of the Lord had opened the prison doors (Acts 5:19). These leaders found the apostles in the temple teaching and preaching Jesus, proving the obvious; the Sanhedrin was not in charge.

The early church had readily embraced the fact that they were not in charge. They rejoiced in lack of authority. Their praise was to a sovereign God who *“made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them”* (Acts 4:24). All gentiles and Jews are under God’s authority. Even in the midst of their free will they participated in His *“purpose determined before to be done”* (Acts 4:28). God is sovereign! God is in charge!

That is why Jesus insisted, *“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life”* (Matthew 6:25). There is no room for stress, anxiety, depression, or worry in your relationship with Jesus. These are symptoms of the self-centeredness that refuses to yield control. It is time for a life-style of praise to the sovereign God who merges with us to fulfill His plan in and through our lives!