

# Acts

## Bible Study

### By Whose Authority?

#### Acts 4:7—12

Peter had just finished healing the lame man, a picture presented to Israel of their current condition, and the hope of complete healing going into the Millennial Kingdom. This was also another proof that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, whom they crucified. However, instead of using this to condemn those who had Jesus put to death, Peter used it to get their attention before giving them a message of hope through the work of the Messiah. If they would accept Jesus Christ as their Messiah, by faith, they would have the promise of going into the Kingdom at Christ's Second Coming.

However, as we studied in last week's lesson, the religious leaders were still rejecting the Messiah. In spite of all the miracles, signs and wonders performed in the past three plus years, their only goal was to expunge the name of Jesus from the minds of all Israelites. The more Jesus was preached, and the more that people believed, the more these leaders became jealous, because they felt they were losing their power over the people.

#### **A question of authority** (verse 7)

As the leaders sensed their power slipping away, they become more desperate to hang on to what they had. They didn't want to change anything they were doing, instead, they attempted to hold on tighter to their traditions with great tenacity. This is illustrated with the parable of the wineskins (Mark 2:21—22). Jesus was preaching the word of God as it should be preached, but contrary to how the Scribes and Pharisees were understanding Scripture. By putting new wine (what Jesus and His Disciples were teaching) in old wineskins (the doctrine of the religious leaders), the wineskin will burst, not being compatible with each other. Peter was, in effect, pouring new, godly doctrine into their old, inflexible containers, and they were not able to bear it. The promise from Jesus that new leaders would take their place was already being fulfilled (Matthew 19:28; 21:43).

It was impossible for these leaders to deny that a miracle had taken place (verse 16). There were too many eyewitnesses of the healing, and the man who was healed was standing in their midst, giving testimony to him being healed. The only thing they could criticize about Peter and those with him was in the authority that they had in doing this miracle. They obviously felt, as the religious leaders of Israel, that they had the right to tell others what they should and should not do, after all, they were the renowned keepers of the Mosaic Law, and they were the author of many other laws (Oral Tradition) that would "help" people to keep the Mosaic Law. Doing something outside the authority of the religious leaders was tantamount to breaking the Law.

Having nothing else, the religious leaders questioned Peter's authority in performing the miracle, and in preaching Jesus Christ as Messiah. This was reminiscent of how the leaders treated Jesus a number of months ago. As Jesus was teaching in the temple, near the end of His life, the chief priests and elders of the people came up to Him to question His authority of teaching His doctrine to the people. He told them two parables that related to why He was qualified. The first parable was about the two sons. The first son said he would not go out and work in the vineyard, but eventually did, while the second son said he would go work in the vineyard, but never did. The leadership of Israel is the son who said he would work, but never did. The second parable shows the owner's son killed by the keepers of the vineyard, which speaks of the leaders putting Jesus to death, with Israel being the vineyard. He ends by telling them about the rejected stone and in so doing, gives them the answer to their question about Who gave Him His authority in teaching the people, and healing the infirmed. When Peter uses this same argument, it should clue them in as to who the Messiah is and by Who's authority Peter is working under.

### **The three stones**

Christ is likened to three stones. The first stone shows Him at His first coming. This is the stone that Israel stumbled over. It was not a fatal fall at this point. The second stone is the stone of crushing. This portrays Christ at His Second Coming. Finally, He is the stone of salvation, the corner stone of the foundation of those who come to Him by faith.

#### **Stumbling stone**

When Jesus Christ came to this earth, He was soundly rejected en masse by Israel. His rejection ultimately led to His death. Many teach that this was a fatal blow to Israel and that God turned away from her at this point, never to deal with Israel again. This thought has led people to substitute the church for Israel (replacement theology), and ultimately has led them to a very twisted view of Scripture.

Scripture sometimes shows Jesus Christ as a stone of stumbling, not one of destruction (Luke 20:18a). Israel stumbled over Jesus Christ when they crucified Him on the cross (1 Peter 2:6; Romans 9:32), which was predicted to happen in Isaiah 8:14. However, one can recover from a stumble since it was not a fatal fall. In Israel's case, Jesus Christ prayed for God to forgive their sin (Luke 23:34), and because they sinned in ignorance, God did forgive Israel and gave her another chance to repent (Acts 3:17—19; Acts 2:38). Reading through the first part of the book of Acts shows that God was continuing to work with Israel as a nation, and did not reject her at the cross.

#### **Crushing stone**

When Jesus Christ comes back at His Second Coming, He will appear as a crushing stone, one that pulverizes and destroys (Luke 20:18b). This stone of destruction is seen in Daniel 2:34—35. The stone is seen being carved out without hands (it came from God), crushing the giant statue (the nations of the world)(Psalm 2:9) and becoming a great mountain that filled the whole earth (Christ will rule over all the earth). This is when Christ's enemies (unbelievers) will be quashed and made His footstool (Psalm 110:1)

#### **Saving stone**

Finally, Christ is pictured as a saving stone, One who has become the cornerstone, or foundation stone, to those who believe on Him (1 Peter 2:6—8). Jesus confronts the Jewish leaders with who He is in Matthew 21:42 by quoting from Psalm 118:22. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." The prediction that Jesus came to save was given to Joseph by the angel of the Lord (Matthew 1:21). The leaders of Israel refused the cornerstone, Jesus Christ, their Rock of salvation (Psalm 89:26). Psalm 118 shows Christ coming into the Kingdom to take His rightful place on the throne in Jerusalem. This is when Israel will fully realize their salvation.

Christ is foundational to all who are saved in every dispensation. He is a cornerstone to Israel (Matthew 21:42; 1 Peter 2:6—7) and to the Church, the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:20).

Just as Jesus answered their question about His authority in Matthew 21, Peter answers in the same way by pointing to Jesus as the stone. They should have enough knowledge of Scripture to understand what Jesus Christ was saying when He connected Himself to the stone in Psalm 118. If they missed it with Jesus, they should have understood the connection to Jesus when Peter uses this same verse to assert that his authority was from God. Their hardened hearts prevented the truth from entering their minds and hearts.

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