



# The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V28 N9

March 1, 2026

## POWER AND PURPOSE

### “Unstoppable Witness”

Acts 4:1-22

#### THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

##### Life Purpose

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in his kingdom purposes for his glory.

*“But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”*

Acts 20:24



Whom should believers obey—God or men?

The reader catches a glimpse of Peter's and John's Life Purpose in Acts 4:19-20. They had been taken into custody by the Jewish temple authorities for “teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Ac 4:2). It was their message verifying the resurrection of Jesus that sparked their arrest. “So their objections would be twofold: against Jesus and against resurrection. What is clear, however, is that the one resurrection of Jesus is the irrefutable” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 187).

In the first place, Sadducees, a powerful sect among the Jews with influential members on the Sanhedrin, did not believe in resurrection. They believed in neither life after death (convinced that the soul perishes with the body at death), nor resurrection, a reembodied life *after* life-after-death. And in the second place, Sadducees were pro-Roman and pragmatic, cooperating with the government to maintain their high status and peace. Resurrection carried messianic overtones that were associated with “revolt, overthrow of the foreign overlords, and restoration of the Davidic kingdom” (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 140). There had been messianic movements in the past and the Romans had put them down (cf. Ac 5:35-40). The Sadducees didn't want to see that happen again and so wanted to avoid a confrontation with Rome at all costs.

After interrogating Peter and John, the morning following their arrest, members of the Sanhedrin were amazed by the boldness of their two detainees (4:13), and after conferring with one another, council members decided to “warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name” (v. 17), so they charged them “not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus (v. 18). At this point, Peter alludes to the Life Purpose of all believers when he says: “Whether it is right in the sight of God

*to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard”* (vv. 19-20). In a nutshell, he says believers must obey God rather than men. “Peter and John had no choice but to defy the court's order, for it had ‘stepped in between the conscience and God’” (Polhill, 146).

Acts 5:17-32 contains another narrative describing another arrest of Peter, as well as of other apostles, in which the issue of obeying God rather than men again surfaces and with a similar outcome. About these two narratives, one commentator writes: “The repetition of this contrast between divine and human authority in several dramatic scenes and from the mouths of both the apostles and Gamaliel indicates emphasis, suggesting that we are encountering narrative rhetoric that is meant to convey a message not only between characters in the story but also from the implied author to the implied reader” — for our purposes from Luke to his readers — “This message indicates approval of those who, in proclaiming the name of Jesus, obey God rather than humans and suggests their boldness as a model for others. It is also a message about how the story is to be interpreted. This is a story about what happens when a purpose which is ‘from God’ is recognized by persons willing to obey God in spite of human hostility” (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke – Acts*, vol 2, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 62).

In other words, these narratives suggest that believers have a responsibility to obey God rather than men — especially when it comes to the proclamation of the gospel. Sharing the gospel isn't their only purpose in life, but it certainly is an important purpose that should not take a backseat to anything more mundane.

## Read Acts 4:1-22

1 And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

5 On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, 6 with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead – by him this man is standing before you well. 11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. 14 But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. 15 But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, 16 saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name." 18 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." 21 And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. 22 For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old. (ESV)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "they" in v. 1.
- Highlight v. 1b.
- Circle "teaching" and "proclaiming" in v. 2.
- Bracket "the resurrection from the dead" in v. 2.
- Circle "next day" in vv. 3, 5.
- Box "for" indicating *reason* in vv. 3, 12, 16, 20, 21, 22.
- Box "But" indicating *contrast* in vv. 4, 14, 15, 17, 19.
- Highlight vv. 5-6.
- Bracket "in the midst" in v. 7.
- Underline "by what power," and "by what name" in v. 7, and "by what means" in v. 9.
- Bracket "filled with the Holy Spirit" in v. 8.
- Underline "by the name of Jesus" and "by him" in v. 10.
- Circle "stone" and "cornerstone" in v. 11.
- Circle "salvation" and "saved" in v. 12.
- Bracket "uneducated, common men" in v. 13.
- Circle "conferred" v. 15.
- Box "So" indicating *result* in v. 18.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about \_\_\_\_\_."



## DIG DEEPER

---

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Why did the temple authorities arrest Peter and John?
2. Why would Sadducees be “greatly annoyed” with anyone proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus?
3. Explain the *contrast* introduced in verse 4.
4. *Identify* and *describe* the body before which Peter and John appeared the day after their arrest.
5. The apostles were questioned (v. 7). *Explain* what Peter thought they were being asked (v. 9), and *describe* how he answered (v. 10).
6. Put what Peter tells the court about Jesus in your own words.
7. Describe the dilemma the court faced in rendering its decision.
8. Describe the court’s decision and Peter’s response to it.
9. History repeats itself in Acts 5:25-32. How so?
10. **Discussion:** Acts 4:1-22 describes an interesting incident. Talk about *why* Luke recorded it and *how* he wanted his readers to respond to it.

### Commentary On The Text

One commentator provides the following helpful introduction to Acts 4:1-22: “Up until this point in Acts, there had been no resistance to the Christians on the part of the Jews. Indeed, the picture has been that of the general acceptance and favor accorded them by the people (cf. 2:47). In chap. 4 the picture changes. Not, however, with the people. They still were responding favorably to the message of the apostles, indeed, in an overwhelming way (cf. 4:4). It was the officials who turned against the apostles, and not even all of them. The primary enemy was the priestly Sadducean aristocracy for whom the Christians were a serious threat to the status quo. Twice they arrested the apostles. The first time occurred here, as they descended upon Peter and John in the course of their witness in the temple square. This time the two apostles were given a ‘preliminary hearing’ in their proclamation of Christ. Because the apostles did not heed this warning and preached Christ all the more, the Sadducees were enraged, and they arrested and tried all the apostles (5:17-42)” (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 137-38). The narrative falls into three parts: the arrest (vv. 1-4); the hearing (vv. 5-12); and the warning (vv. 13-22).

Regarding the arrest, Luke notes that three parties participated, “the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees” (v. 1). Annoyed by the fact that Peter and John “were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (v. 2), they literally “set upon” the apostles, appearing suddenly out of nowhere. “The remark suggests a confrontation as they seek to assert their leadership” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 186). They are upset, first, because Sadducees believed in no life beyond this life, and then, because resurrection was a notion with unwelcome messianic connotations. According to one commentator: “Messianic ideas among the Jews of that day meant revolt, overthrow of the foreign overlords, and restoration of the Davidic kingdom” (Polhill, 140), all of which would likely be viewed as revolutionary by the Romans and would likely threaten the status quo. Because it was past 3:00 in the afternoon and the court had adjourned, Peter and John were held in custody overnight.

Regarding the hearing, when the Sanhedrin reconvened the next day, the apostles were asked, “By what power or by what name did you do *this*?” (v. 7). One commentator remarks: “One thing the leadership knows: they did not give them this authority,

[either to heal or to teach and proclaim the resurrection] and in their view, it is theirs to give or withhold . . . No one disputes that the man was healed” (Bock, 190).

Peter understands “this” to refer to the healing of the lame man (cf. v. 9) and understands their question to pertain to the identity of the one who healed him—whom without hesitation he identifies as “*Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified*” (v. 10a) and then adds, “whom God raised from the dead—*by him this man is standing before you well*” (v. 10b). He concludes his testimony by quoting Psalm 118:22 with reference to Jesus. “Psalm 118 is one of the more frequently cited texts in the NT (Matt. 21:42; mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; 1 Pet. 2:4, 7). The declaration is that the builders rejected the stone that God elevated to be the cornerstone . . . Peter’s point is clear enough. What they rejected God vindicated. God made the rejected stone a key part of the building, an allusion to the cornerstone, the main, oversized stone at the base that holds up two intersecting walls” (Bock, 193). Salvation in its fullest sense is available in him alone.

Regarding the warning, the court was astonished by the unexpected boldness and the profound testimony of Peter and John, who lacked a formal education, but who had clearly been followers of Jesus. Since the members of the court could not dispute their testimony, given the man who was healed was standing beside them, they sent Peter and John from the room so the court might deliberate. Realizing that a notable sign, evident to all the people, had been performed, the court determined to warn them “to speak no more to anyone in this name” (v. 12), and “so they charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus” (v. 18)—in the hope that this would quell the spread of the nascent Christian movement. But the apostles would not be silenced! Peter boldly responded: “We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” To their mind, the responsibility to obey God superseded their responsibility to obey the court. One commentator explains: “Peter and John saw the command of the Sanhedrin as contradicting the command that Christ had given them (1:8; Matt. 28:19-20). They could not obey both, so they had to obey God (cf. Jer. 20:9). This is the only basis for civil disobedience that Scripture permits” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Acts,” 2026 ed., 116, [soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf](http://soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf)). Having no way to punish them—since the people were praising God for what had happened—the court, after threatening them further, let them go.

---

## Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 **they** “Evidently John spoke to the people as did Peter (‘they’), though Luke did not record what John said” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Acts,” 2026 ed., 107, [soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf](http://soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf)).

v. 1b **priests . . . Sadducees** “*priests*. Those who were serving that week in the temple precincts (see not on Lk 1:23). *captain of the temple guard*. A member of one of the leading priestly families; next in rank to the high priest (see 5:24,26; Lk 22:4,52). *Sadducees*. A Jewish sect whose members came from the priestly line and controlled the temple. They did not believe in the resurrection or a personal Messiah but held that the Messianic age—an ideal time—was then present and must be preserved. The high priest, one of their number, presided over the Sanhedrin (see 5:17; 23:6-8; Mt 22:23-33)” (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ac 4:1).

v. 2 **teaching, proclaiming** “Probably the offense is a double one. The apostles were usurping authority to teach in the temple, and the content of their teaching conflicted with denial of the resurrection by the Sadducees, an important group in the temple leadership” (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke – Acts*, vol 2, *The Acts of the apostles*, 59).

v. 2 **the resurrection . . .** “The one resurrection of Jesus is the irritant. Even for Jews who believed in a general resurrection of all at the end, the idea of a singular resurrection of a figure in the midst of history appears to be a new idea. Even more, the idea of a resurrection of such a figure who was a prophet like Moses and a messianic-like figure would make the leaders even more nervous about the crowd’s reaction” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 187).

vv. 3, 5 **next day** The lame man was healed around 3:00 in the afternoon (cf. 3:1 NIV). “Since it was now already evening and the Sanhedrin had already recessed, Peter and John would have to be detained until the court reconvened in the morning” (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 140).

v. 4 **But** “Belief was the key factor in many more Jews becoming Christians (cf. 3:19), not believing plus being baptized (2:38). Note that Luke simply wrote that they ‘believed’ ‘the message’ that they ‘had heard’” (Constable, 109).

v. 5 **rulers, elders and scribes** “This is probably an allusion to the Sanhedrin or a significant part of this seventy-one-member tribunal that served as the Jewish supreme court” (Bock, 189).

v. 6 **Annas and Caiaphas . . .** Cf. Jn 11:49f.; 18:13f. “**Annas** is designated as **high priest**. He had served in that role earlier (A.D. 6-15) and was the controlling figure in the high-priestly circle, which may also explain why he is given the title here. His son-in-law **Caiaphas** was the official high priest at this time (serving A.D. 18-36), and Annas’s son **John** would serve in the role later (36-37)” (*The ESV study Bible*, note on Ac 4:6).

v. 7 **in the midst** “‘The Sanhedrin was arranged like the half of a round threshing-floor so that they might all see one another. Before them stood the two scribes of the judges, one to the right and one to the left, and they wrote down the words of them that favored acquittal and the words of them that favored conviction’” (Polhill, 142).

v. 8 **filled with the Holy Spirit** “Jesus had promised that when His disciples stood before hostile adversaries God would give them the words to speak (Luke 21:12-15). This special filling with the Holy Spirit appears to be in view in this verse” (Constable, 113).

v. 11 **stone, cornerstone** Cf. Ps 118:22. “Psalm 118:22 establishes the guilt of the Sanhedrin. They were the ‘builders,’ the leaders of the nation, who rejected the very rock on which God’s people are to be built” (Polhill, 144).

v. 12 **salvation, saved** The lame man was made “well” (v. 10) by Jesus. His power to heal (v. 10 NIV), that is, to save from physical infirmity, indicates he has the power to save from spiritual infirmity, in other words to forgive sins (cf. Mk 2:5, 10-12). And no one else does. “In Acts 4:12 ‘salvation’ is used in its full, spiritual sense, although the imagery is supported by its physical picture of deliverance, as the healing points to this deeper reality” (Bock, 195).

v. 13 **uneducated, common** “The Sanhedrin observed in ‘Peter and John’ what they had seen in Jesus, namely, courage to speak boldly and authoritatively without formal rabbinic training (cf. Matt. 7:28-29; Mark 1:22; Luke 20:19-26; John 7:15). They may also have remembered seeing them with Jesus (John 18:15-16), but that does not seem to be Luke’s main point here” (Constable, 115).

v. 15 **conferred** Who witnessed the deliberations? No disciples were present. The possible sources that have been suggested include: Paul, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, or leaks from council members following the hearing.



## APPLY THE TEXT

---

### CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

Believers must obey God whenever human authorities prohibit their obedience or demand their disobedience – especially when it comes to sharing the gospel.

### CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



### 3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



## PARENT CONNECTION

Why does it feel like the moment you say “yes” to God’s call, you’re wearing a giant target with a neon blinking arrow pointing directly at your heart? For example, you agree to be a small group leader for a bunch of fifth-grade boys. However, your whole family passes around the flu and you aren’t able to serve for a month. Or you clearly feel the Lord nudge your family to agree to a generous financial contribution to a mission partner or organization. Then your car breaks down, the dishwasher stops working and an unexpected medical bill arrives in your mailbox. It seems the moment we submit to God, trials that threaten our obedience begin to pull us away from our commitment to His calling. One of the greatest of these is the family devotion night. God is telling you to spend more time discipling your kids. But the moment you gather them, your oldest son sneaks a look at his phone, your daughter rolls her eyes and whines, your dreamy middle child develops a way of sitting that rivals a contortionist’s and suddenly everyone is just too hungry to concentrate. Dismayed, you think, “Is this even worth it?” Stick with it. It won’t be perfect but you’re not teaching perfection. It won’t be easy, but Jesus works through the hard. The enemy will continue shooting arrows of distraction, disagreement or discord. But if God calls you to something that will bring Him glory, He will be faithful to make a way for you to complete it. Keep your eyes on Jesus. His still, quiet voice will lead you to Him. We’re praying for you!

### What Does The Bible Say?

Read Acts 4:1-22.

1. What happened to Peter and John as they were talking to the people?
2. By whose name did Peter and John say they healed the man?
3. What did the leaders ask Peter and John to stop doing?

### What Do You Think?

Reread verse 20. Are there any situations that you can think of where you wouldn’t talk about the goodness of God?

### What Do You Do?

Play a game with your family where you can’t speak certain words over dinner (fork or any utensils, pass the..., names of your food). Is it hard to get through dinner without saying these things?

### CORE COMPETENCY: Life Purpose

I believe God wants me to glorify Him in all I say and do.

### MEMORY VERSE: Luke 6:45

*“The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”*

## KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: [kids@wearecentral.org](mailto:kids@wearecentral.org)

- I completed my Bible Study
- I memorized this week’s verse
- I brought my Bible to church
- I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

# OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

## CENTRAL BELIEFS

**Authority of the Bible** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

**Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)

*I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.*

**Eternity** (John 14:1-4)

*I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.*

**The Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:9)

*I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.*

**Humanity** (John 3:16)

*I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

**Identity in Christ** (John 1:12)

*I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

**Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1-4)

*I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

**Life Purpose** (Acts 20:24)

*I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.*

**Personal God** (Psalm 121:1-2)

*I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.*

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)

*I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



## CENTRAL VIRTUES

**Love** (1 John 4:10-12)

*I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

**Joy** (John 15:11)

*I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

**Peace** (Philippians 4:6-7)

*I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.*

**Patience** (Proverbs 14:29)

*I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.*

**Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

*I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others*

**Faithfulness** (Proverbs 3:3-4)

*I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.*

**Gentleness** (Philippians 4:5)

*I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.*

**Self-Control** (Titus 2:11-13)

*I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

**Grace** (Colossians 3:13)

*I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

**Hope** (1 Peter 1:3-5)

*I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.*

**Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)

*I choose to esteem others above myself.*



## CENTRAL PRACTICES

**Bible Study** (Hebrews 4:12)

*I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Biblical Community** (Acts 2:44-47)

*I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

**Compassion** (Psalm 82:3-4)

*I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

**Disciple-Making** (2 Timothy 2:2)

*I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.*

**Evangelism** (Acts 1:8)

*I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

**Generosity** (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

*I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.*

**Prayer** (Psalm 66:16-20)

*I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Single-Mindedness** (Matthew 6:33)

*I focus on God and His priorities for my life.*

**Spiritual Gifts** (Romans 12:4-6)

*I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.*

**Worship** (Psalm 95:1-7)

*I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.*

**Tom Bulick** (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) from 1986 to 1998 and Spiritual Formation Pastor at Central Bible Church (Fort Worth, TX) from 1998 to 2022. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

**Stephanie Thomas** (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

© 2026 Central Bible Church.

Material researched, written and supervised by Dr. Tom Bulick. All Scripture referenced from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted. This resource is freely distributed and may be copied without permission.



**CENTRAL  
BIBLE CHURCH**

8001 Anderson Boulevard  
Fort Worth, Texas 76120  
817-274-1315  
wearecentral.org

**OUR MISSION**  
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.