

## 20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 24 (June 11-17, 2017)

Peter's preaching has caused such a stir around Jerusalem that persecutions are coming his way. The religious community is not happy to see their system of controlling the people interrupted by the disciples of Jesus. We will follow Peter's journey in this week's devotions.

**Sunday, June 11** (read Acts 4:1-4)

*They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. (Acts 4:2)*

The Sadducees do not believe in anything supernatural; therefore, they do not believe in the resurrection (see Matthew 22:23). That's why they are **sad, you see** (pun intended). The last thing they want is for the people to believe that Jesus is alive, because that will affect the large flow of money coming into their evil system (v. 2). In an effort to stop this new teaching, they arrest Peter and John and have them thrown into prison (v. 3), but not before 2000 more new believers are added to their number (v. 4). Similarly, many people in the government of the United States have been trying to stamp out Christianity for some time now. Christianity, because of the risen Savior, is their main target. The media is alarmed at the thought of a **living** Christ, because that will destroy their constant pursuit of a one-world global government. Stay alert! Persecutions in America are drawing near!

**Monday, June 12** (read Acts 4:5-12)

*They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?" (Acts 4:7)*

The powerful religious leaders unite in an effort to stop the spread of this new faith (v. 5-6). They ask the same question that politicians are asking today (v. 7, printed above). Peter, no longer a coward because of the Holy Spirit now living in him, answers them in no uncertain terms (v. 9-11). The same is true of any accomplishments you and I have ever had! It is through the power of the resurrected Lord that anything of lasting value takes place. Unbelievers applaud His crucifixion, but recoil at the thought of His resurrection. They are threatened by anyone who proclaims that salvation is found **only** in Him (v. 12; see also John 14:6). Are you ready to defend your faith against a godless society? The time to do so is now!

**Tuesday, June 13** (read Acts 4:12-22)

*"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under Heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)*

Armed with the message in the printed verse above, I have tried to stand against the liberal church that seeks a one-world global religion. Verse 13 is printed on my tombstone along with Acts 20:20, because these two verses define what I am trying to accomplish. God can still use **any** unschooled, ordinary person who is fully committed to this singular message. His power is made perfect by our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). Like these apostles, we who are called to preach must obey God, regardless of what the government approves (v. 19). I know that He is real and that there is a Heaven to gain and a hell to shun, so I must keep speaking what I have seen and heard (v. 20). All of us who have received the truth must become **witnesses** to others who have not yet received Jesus as their Lord and Savior (v. 21-22). How are you witnessing in your portion of the world?

**Wednesday, June 14** (read Acts 4:23-26)

*On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. (Acts 4:23)*

Instead of dividing the new believers, the persecution of Peter and John unites them. The two apostles report their trials to the church, an act that leads to united prayer (v. 23-24). Their prayer should be a model for ours! They start by praising God for creating everything in Heaven and on earth. Those who believe the evolution lie will find it impossible to pray this way. Their rejection of the Genesis account will also lead them to reject the rest of the Scriptures, because the Book of Genesis forms the foundation for everything else. Specifically, they will ignore the prophecy from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Psalm that tells of the Lord's return to earth to rule from Jerusalem (v. 25-26). They will even question the Jews' right to possess Jerusalem! Be aware of the world's attempt to destroy the Jews. The entire Biblical account is at stake!

**Thursday, June 15** (read Acts 4:27-31)

*After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly. (Acts 4:31)*

Just as in the days of the early Church, nothing in the political realm today surprises God (v. 27-28). Government threats should serve as a force that unites Christians in prayer. We must also pray that the wonders and miracles of Jesus will be renewed in our time. Pray for boldness with which to preach and proclaim His Word (v. 29-30). For a second time, the Holy Spirit comes on everyone in the room (v. 31; see Acts 2:1-13). From this we learn that the **filling** of the Holy Spirit is not a one-time event. We must ask for His **refilling** each day as we face new trials and temptations! Don't face a single day without inviting His Spirit to fill you!

**Friday, June 16** (read Acts 4:32-37)

*All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. (Acts 4:32)*

Unity of prayer (v. 24) leads to unity of possessions (v. 32). Critics have claimed that this is a form of communism, since the community shares everything. One underlying principle makes this system work for **God's glory**, however. The church has a rule that's recorded in 2 Thessalonians 3:10: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." Joseph, a Levite illustrates the real Christian spirit of giving, as he sells a field and brings the money to the apostles. You may know this man as Barnabas, a name that means Son of Encouragement. Unfortunately, wherever you find the real thing, the phony will soon show up, as we will see in tomorrow's devotion.

**Saturday, June 17** (read Acts 5:1-11)

*"You have not lied to men but to God." (Acts 5:4b)*

Perhaps inspired by the recognition Barnabas receives from his generous act of giving, Ananias and Sapphira sell some land and give a **part** of the money to the church (v. 1-2). What's wrong with that? Nothing, except they claim to be giving it **all**! Peter confronts Ananias, reminding him that the land was his with which to do anything that he decided. However, by giving the impression that he is giving everything, he is listening to Satan and lying to the Holy Spirit (v. 3-4). Don't miss the fact that the Holy Spirit is also God, along with the Father and the Son! The deception not only costs Ananias his life (v. 5-6), but it costs Sapphira her life as well (v. 7-11). Anyone may want to think about this before they claim a larger deduction for their charitable giving than they actually make. Peter's experiences will continue in next week's devotions.