

# Acts 4:13-22: Have You Sat Down With God or With A Book About God?

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## I. Introduction

When you study the Bible, are you sitting down with God and having a conversation with Him about you and your life? Or are you sitting down with a book that has facts and figures about God? How you know God, how you see Him will determine how your life will go. If God is like a subject you study, then He will have no impact on your life. However, if you listen to His Word as if He's talking to YOU, then you will get to know Him and He'll get to know you...and your life will change.

## II. Acts 4:13-22: What's the Bible to You, a Place to Study God Or to Meet with God About Your Life?

**4:13**, throughout these encounters, Peter's been highlighted; he's the one who's always talking. But from this verse it's clear that John also spoke. The reason the focus is on Peter is that in Acts God is making a statement about the apostle Paul in comparison to the apostle Peter. He's showing that Paul is a legitimate apostle, as much as Peter. As Peter and John stand before the Sanhedrin (the Supreme Court of Israel made up of 71 justices), the Sanhedrin is astonished. Why? Because these two men are uneducated yet they are utterly bold in what they're saying. They're not nervous, not afraid, not timid in the least. Instead, they're as bold as can be. Why were Peter and John so bold? The answer lies in the end of the verse, "And they realized that they had been with Jesus." How did the Sanhedrin know that Peter and John had spent time in Jesus' company? Because they sound just like Him. In fact, Jesus quoted the same Scripture to these leaders of Israel in one of their contentious arguments (Matthew 21:33-46). Jesus' boldness has become theirs.....when people look at you, can they tell that you've been with Jesus?

**4:14-16**, this is an astounding state of affairs: two uneducated fishermen have stumped 71 Supreme Court justices! Uneducated doesn't mean dumb. It means that Peter and John have not gone to law school like the 71 justices have. And yet, the laymen have left the legal experts without a legal leg to stand on; they're at a loss as to what to do. Why? Because the evidence is staring them in the face, literally, i.e., the lame man who is now healed is standing right next to Peter and John. And after the Sanhedrin puts them away to confer among themselves as to what to do, they admit that they cannot deny what has just happened: God healed the lame man through Peter and John and all of Jerusalem knows it. This is an incredible admission; they see that God has done a great miracle, but they will not acknowledge God or His Son who's behind the miracle!

**4:17-18**, their solution is to contain this miracle by severely threatening Peter and John not to speak to anyone "in this name." This is how much they despise Jesus; they won't even say His name. So they call Peter and John back in and command them not to speak at all nor teach in Jesus' name. They don't want anyone else believing in this Jesus guy, miracle or no miracle. How does the Sanhedrin see God? They're full of doctrine, but how do they see God? Christianity is a strange religion; all religions are basically philosophies that tell you how to get along with God and others. Thus, in other religions you find God through their doctrine. Christianity is not like that. In Christianity God finds you; it doesn't bring you a philosophy; it brings you Goodnews! It says, "You don't have to work to please God; the work's been done for you!" But the Sanhedrin can't see this. In fact, their doctrine actually led them to deny and crucify God.

**4:19-20**, what do Peter and John say? They basically say, “You guys are the legal experts, right? OK, what do you think, should we listen to you or God? What’s your verdict on that question?” This is like a kid with a highschool diploma standing before the Supreme Court and pulling a legal precedent out of nowhere which proves his case and which no one—not any of the justices on the Supreme Court nor any other lawyer in the country—can argue against. Peter and John end their statement by informing the Sanhedrin that they absolutely CANNOT stop proclaiming the name of Jesus. They’re not powerful enough to stop God. Why? Because they saw and heard everything with their own eyes and ears: when they were with Jesus they saw Him do miracle after miracle and now, they’re still seeing Him do miracle after miracle through them! You cannot stop God!

**4:21-22**, what’s the Sanhedrin’s response? Nothing, they basically threaten them some more. They had to release them because they had broken no Jewish law and because all the people who saw this lame man’s miracle, all of them attributed the miracle to God and were glorifying Him for it. Luke ends with a seemingly throwaway comment: “For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.” Why does Luke add this? It reveals the impossible nature of the miracle. Everyone in Jerusalem knew this lame man; he sat every day at the gate for decades begging. But now, this man walks and leaps! There’s no way that the Sanhedrin will be able to stop it.

### **What’s the difference between having a Bible study about God vs. living life with Him?**

Notice the difference between how Peter and John know God vs. how the Sadducees and Pharisees know God. Who taught the Sadducees and Pharisees about God? The experts on God’s Word, in other words the seminary professors. Who taught Peter and John? Jesus, the Living God. And how were the Sadducees and Pharisees taught? Through the scrolls that their professors used, basically through textbooks. How did Jesus teach Peter and John about God, through sermons and lectures? No, by them sharing life with the Living God who walked, talked, ate, drank, worked and prayed with them! Doctrine was always there, but it was never a means to get to know God. It was the means that God got to know them. That is, doctrine is the intimate conversation that God is constantly having with us. Thus, doctrine was crucial but it was never meant to be the end. The end is always a relationship with God. This is what Jesus told His disciples about doctrine. It was the means by which you entered into relationship with God; it was powerful and full of life not simply information (Matthew 5:17-20). That’s why Jesus kept saying to His disciples, “You have heard that it was said, ... But I say.” Every time He said this He was saying, “Do you want to know the real meaning of this doctrine? This is God telling you what this particular area of your life should look like,” whether it involves a friend, an enemy, a spouse, giving your word, whatever (Matthew 5:21-48; Luke 10:25-37!). When you live life with God, you won’t see theology in His doctrine; you will hear a Loving Father guiding you. All the Pharisees and Sadducees ever saw was theology.

The Kingdom of God is not about doctrine, it’s about power (1 Corinthians 4:14-20). God’s doctrine is alive and powerful, so powerful that it cuts you open and lays you bare before Him. And whatever you thought you could hide from Him, He reveals to you. Whatever you can’t figure out, He explains (Hebrews 4:12-13). It has the capacity to empathize with you and open the door to His private chamber where God is waiting to help you (Hebrews 4:14-16). Every time you open the Bible, God is talking to YOU...not the friend you wish was there to hear what God has to say.

### III. Conclusion

*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.*