**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

Fourteenth Week Since the Resurrection

***In Jesus’ Power & Name II ~ Acts 4***

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July 19th In the Year of Our Lord 2020

(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted.)

Acts 4:8-37, pages 14-17

 Let us recount the miracles that took place, from the Resurrection, that fulfilled God’s redemptive plan for all people. Here are ten fulfillments to start. The list is too numerous to chronicle all of them here.

From the 40-day Resurrection ministry, we observe the following results of the Empty tomb and Jesus’ appearances:

* + 1. Proof of a bodily resurrection. (Gospels)
		2. Created eye witnesses. (Women and Apostles)
		3. Forced Jewish and Roman authorities into action.

Matthew 28:11-14

* + 1. Statement that God is the Creator over life and death.
		2. Fulfilled O.T. prophecies. 1 Peter 1:10-11; Isaiah 7:14, 53; Psalm 22; Genesis 3:15.

See on-line sources: Here are two of many.

<https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/swisscottage/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2014/11/44-Prophecies-Jesus-Christ-Fulfilled.pdf>

<https://jewsforjesus.org/answers/top-40-most-helpful-messianic-prophecies/>

* + 1. Prepared Apostles to carry-out the Great Commission.
		2. Created witnesses in addition to the apostles. The two on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13ff).
		3. Created the witness of the New Testament that is now over 1900 years old.
		4. Launched the Gospel Witness to a Global audience.
		5. Fulfilled all the Law (Matthew 5:17). The Law was fulfilled in that God, as Jesus, provided the perfect unblemished sacrifice for all our sins (Hebrews 10). Walking out of the tomb demonstrated exactly what God directed Paul to write in Romans 8:1.

**Romans 8:1** Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

 Christ fulfilled the Law by being the perfect sacrifice for our sin.

When we are joined to Christ, by surrendering to God’s Holy Spirit conviction, we then receive the gift of God’s faith. Belonging to Christ, being in Him, we too have victory over death (Romans 8:9).

**Acts 4 - Peter and the Rock of Offense – The Stumbling Stone**

With the power and spiritual weight of these aforementioned truths, Peter and John went to the Temple.

 We need to make some observations about what Peter said in his second sermon. We cannot emphasize enough that Peter was filled with God’s Holy Spirit, preaching in the name of Jesus, as he pointed to those who crucified Jesus. Peter did not leave-out that God raised Jesus from the dead and that it was by Jesus’ name the lame man was healed.

 We must make the observation that Peter had a historical and foundational opportunity to claim that the Church was to be built upon him as the corner stone (v.11 Greek: *lithos*), but he did not. Why is this important? Because there is a teaching from the State-Church that Jesus made Peter the “rock” (Greek: *Petra*) upon which the Church was to be built in Matthew 16:18. In Matthew, the passage is referring to Peter’s “rock of faith” for allowing God to reveal to him who Jesus is. Jesus had just chastised the disciples for not having enough faith in Matthew 16:8. When Jesus asked Peter, “*Who do you say that I am?”,* Peter allowed God to speak through him demonstrating a “rock of faith” in stating who Jesus is - the Christ.

A biblical reason the Church is not built upon Peter is that God/Jesus would not allow the Church to be built upon a man (Peter) who He called Satan. Just five verses from verse 18 (in Matthew 16:23), Peter rebuked Jesus, and Jesus called him Satan. In addition, the Bible is clear that there is only one mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). The Church is God’s light and witness, not God’s mediator.

 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

 Some scholars interpret the words Jesus speaks to Peter as referring to Himself. **Matthew 16:18** "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. When Jesus said, “upon this rock”, He is pointing to Himself. For me, this a bit of a textual leap. I do see that the plain rendering of the text supports Jesus pointing to Peter’s “rock of faith.” The Church is built upon “faith.”

 There are many Scriptures to support that not only the Church but all of God’s redemptive plan has “faith” as part of the foundation of God’s work in us. The Church is made of people of faith. There isn’t any other kind of Church. I say partly because redemption starts with God’s love and grace that are extended to us. Under the sovereign love and grace of God, faith is a gift-instrument created by God for us to acquire and use to respond to Him. Abel responded faithfully with his offering, and God counted him as righteous (Hebrews 11:3-4). God’s faith cannot operate in us unless we have surrendered to His Holy Spirit conviction. Salvation starts with God’s Holy Spirit reaching out to us. We then have the opportunity to surrender/respond. Without God reaching out to us, we would not have a chance to restore our relationship to Him. Remember the Jews, upon hearing Peter’s sermon, in Acts 2:38, received the “gift of the Holy Spirit after they surrendered (cut hearts) to the conviction of the Holy Spirit preaching of Peter. In Matthew 16, Peter had surrendered to God, and therefore, God spoke through him in identifying Jesus as the Christ/Messiah. Therefore, faith was at work in Peter. Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). Peter demonstrates faith in identifying Jesus as the Christ.

**Old Testament Points to Christ/Messiah as the “Foundation Rock/Stone”.**

 It cannot be emphasized enough that the Old Testament points to Jesus, not Peter, as the Messiah to be the cornerstone.

**Isaiah 28:16** Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.

**Isaiah 8:14** "Then He shall become a sanctuary; But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Not only in the book of Acts does Peter have a chance to claim he is the rock/stone upon which the Church is to be built, but also in the letter he wrote called 1 Peter. Peter quotes Isaiah. Peter does not refer back to Matthew 16 and make the claim that Jesus identified him as the foundation stone or rock of the Church.

**1 Peter 2:6** For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

**1 Peter 2:8** and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

**Who is the “Foundational Rock” for the Gentiles? Jesus Christ!**

 Paul, the Pharisee of Pharisees, writes to convince the Jews that the Gentiles are also included in the covenant of faith. The Jews knew that the Gentiles were not under the Law. This begs the question – How are the Gentiles made right with God? The answer is “by faith.” For the Jew, the Law was intended to point to Christ (Galatians 3:24) so that a person can be justified by faith. So, faith is the same instrument God uses to justify both Jews and Gentiles. Paul points-out that the Jews attempted to justify themselves by works of the Law. But Christ represents “faith” who the Jews rejected. Christ and faith are linked together. They both are a stumbling block for the Jews who hold on to justification through the Law.

**Romans 9:30-33**

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;

 31 but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, **did not arrive at *that* law.**

 32 Why? **Because *they did* not *pursue it* by faith,**

 but as though *it were* by works.

They stumbled over the stumbling stone,

 33 just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

**What is being proclaimed throughout the whole world?**

God calls for “faith,” not Peter, to be proclaimed. Peter is an instrument of God proclaiming “faith” as witnessed in the book of Acts and the letter we call 1st Peter. Peter never made, and never would make, the claim the State-Church made of him. Peter knew people would be protected by God through faith for salvation, not anyone else.

**Romans 1:8** First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

**1 Peter 1:5** who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

**What is the power of God for salvation? The Gospel!**

**How is the righteousness of God revealed? From Faith to Faith!**

**Romans 1:16**

For I am not ashamed of the gospel,

for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes,

to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

**Romans 1:17**

For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith;

as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

Paul is quoting **Habakkuk 2:4,** "Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith. Paul continues to proclaim the power of “faith” in his letter to Believers in Ephesus. . . For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8).

 Many times, the New Testament points back to the Old Testament confirming God’s truth. **Hebrews 11:1 proclaims. . .** Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the men of old gained approval. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

 **What are the “Keys to the Kingdom”? Gospel Witness!**

19 "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:19

The keys of the kingdom of heaven is the Gospel Message of God.

All Believers possess these keys. Jesus calls upon **Isaiah 22:22** "Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder, when he opens no one will shut, when he shuts no one will open. (see also Revelation 3:7)

By saying this to the disciples, Jesus is commissioning **all** of them to go tell people (who surrender to the Gospel of God) that they can be forgiven of their sins. However, if they do not surrender to God’s Good News then they will not be forgiven. Remember, Jesus proclaimed that **all** authority was His in Matthew 28:18. Jesus commissioned **all** disciples with His authority, not just one of them.

The apostle Paul believed he had the standing to forgive in the presence of Christ.

**2 Corinthians 2:10** But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ,

 We all have the same commissioning. As a show of transferring His Spirit and authority, Jesus breathed His Spirit into the disciples. At the same time, Jesus repeated most of His statement in Matthew 16 to **all** the disciples in **John 20:23**.

"If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them;

 if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained."

We see that Peter is not the only one who received this commissioning from Jesus. Who else has or will have the key of David? The Church is a “Priesthood of Believers” who are all empowered to be a witness for God. Peter himself declared this (1 Peter 2:1-10). Specifically verse 9, Peter wrote, “so you may proclaim.” In the Biblical text, Peter never claimed exclusive rights to the keys of David or to be a mediator between humanity and God.

 History reveals facts that can create hurt feelings because a person attends church that has a past based upon people’s religious practices and traditions that cannot be supported in God’s Word. They are seldom given a critical study from where their traditions come. They also received their traditions as a child and simply do not know to ask detailed questions. I came from the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) tradition. The SBC has a great witnessing history. When I found that the origins of the SBC were due to a split with northern Baptist churches in America over slavery, I felt bad. Obviously, I had nothing to do with the issue that occurred over one hundred years before I was born. The SBC was founded in 1845. My feelings aside, I cannot change history. Today, no SBC church supports slavery and has long jettison any defense of the practice. The reality is that many denominations split over the same issue prior to the start of the Civil War in 1861. America was created in a time of state sponsored, and or sanctioned, international slave trade.

**The Tradition of Peter**

Peter’s life witness represents all of us in that his flaws and victories, under the Lord, we can all relate to. Peter was a leading and valuable witness in the New Testament era. Peter writes two New Testament books and is the leading voice chronicled in the book of Acts to chapter 15. The Apostle Paul then comes to the forefront.

There is nothing wrong with having cultural traditions as long as they do not make claims of exclusivity. Practiced traditions should not place other groups in a lower status within the Church who do not practice the same. Many traditions have nothing to do with the core teachings of Jesus and are practiced with an innocence of faith. Most of the time, at worst, people carry burdensome traditions throughout their life needlessly. This is to satisfy generational family religious beliefs. It is my observation that often-times fear creeps into a person’s mind and heart due to family or cultural pressure. Remember, there is no fear in the love of the Lord (1 John 4:18). The word “fear” is often read in the Bible. However, this word “fear” would be better translated “reverence” in many applications. We should fear sin and the effects (judgement) of sin on our lives. Remember, God is love (1 John 4:8).

 A detailed history chronicles the view of Peter being the apostle to whom Leo attached himself. Too long a history to go into now. Here is a brief note:

The origin of the State-Church’s claim dates back to 451 A.D. at the Council of Chalcedon when Leo 1 (Bishop of Rome) pressed his view that he received his authority from Peter. This was as much a political move as theocratic. Leo’s claim was rejected by other Bishops. Throughout history, the churches in Eastern Christendom never accepted Leo’s claim. Thus, one of the reasons we have a group of Churches named Eastern Orthodox. It is reasonable to ask the question why it took over 400 years, from the Cross, to make the claim Leo made. If this was the intention of God, then why was not this a practice from the beginning accepted by all churches?

During my seminary years, I met with a Roman Catholic professor at St. Thomas in Houston, Texas. I also met with numerous priests. I pressed them on historical proof of Leo’s claim. They stated that the claim of Peter being the first Pope is tradition and no church documents existed to support the claim. It is true that the Roman Bishops, like Clement, were influential in the universal church, but they were not viewed as the head of the Church. There are numerous Church documents proving that Bishops around the Mediterranean operated in full autonomy from anyone else. The council of Nicaea in 325 was not called by the Roman Bishop. If he was the recognized head of the Church, then why was not Nicaea called under his authority? When the apostle Paul writes the book of Romans, it is not address to Peter or recognizes Peter as the Bishop of Rome. I searched for Peter’s name in the book of Romans and could not find him listed. Obviously, from reading Romans, Paul had never been there. If Peter would have been the prominent Bishop over the Romans congregation Paul would have addressed him.

Again, the claim of placing any person or organization as a mediator between God and man is against Scripture. Unfortunately, throughout the denominational world of Christendom, many see that they have to be in the group they are in to make themselves right with God. God’s requirement concerns the heart.

For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (1 Timothy 2:5)

**1 Peter 2:1-10**

1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,

 2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

 3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

 4 And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God,

 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

 6 For *this* is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER *stone*, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

 7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER *stone*,"

 8 and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed.

 9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

 10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

 This may all seem judgmental to some. We must place this commissioning in the correct Biblical context. We do not have the authority to “sentence” another person to an eternal destination. Telling someone they can be forgiven of their sins, or not be forgiven, is not passing a sentence on them. Believers are simply informing people of God’s will in their lives. God wants Believers to tell people they can be set free from sin. This is the Good News.

 **Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Romans** **8:2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. **Amen**

 **Text of Acts 4:8 - 37**

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them,

"Rulers and elders of the people,

 9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man,

as to how this man has been made well,

 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel,

that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene,

 **whom you crucified**,

**whom God raised from the dead—**

by this name this man stands here before you in good health.

 **11 "He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, but WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone**. (Psalm 118:22)

 12 "And there is salvation in no one else;

for there is no other name under heaven

that has been given among men

by which we must be saved."

 [Note: So, it is not Peter, plus, Jesus. Or Jesus, plus, Peter?

Or through, or by Peter to get to Jesus?]

 13 Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

 14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply.

**Jewish Leaders Privately Confer**

 15 But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they began to confer with one another,

16 saying, "What shall we do with these men?

 For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

 17 "But so that it will not spread any further among the people,

let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name."

 18 And when they had summoned them,

they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them,

"**Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;**  20 **for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."**

 21 When they had threatened them further, they let them go

(finding no basis on which to punish them) **on account of the people**,

because they were all glorifying God for what had happened;

 22 for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

**Peter and John Released**

 23 When they had been released, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.

 We, too, need to tell our friends and neighbors about the victories in our lives due to our looking to and following God. I know many of us do. I

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 24 And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said,

"O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, [Psalm 146:6]

 25 who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? [Psalm 2:1,2]

 26 'THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.'

 27 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

 29 "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence,

 30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."

**Results of Witness**

 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

 32 And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.

 33 And with great power the apostles were

giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,

and abundant grace was upon them all.

 34 For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales

 35 and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.

 36 Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),

 37 and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.