

## Acts 4:1-12 NIV

### “Can anyone compete in Jesus’ league?”

“The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. <sup>2</sup>They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. <sup>3</sup>They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. <sup>4</sup>But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.

“<sup>5</sup>The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup>Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest’s family. <sup>7</sup>They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: ‘By what power or what name did you do this?’

“<sup>8</sup>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: ‘Rulers and elders of the people! <sup>9</sup>If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, <sup>10</sup>then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands

before you healed.<sup>11</sup> Jesus is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.”<sup>12</sup> Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.’”

### **The setting of this text might seem familiar.**

Perhaps you’ve watched court TV programs, attended a few trials, or served on a jury.

Even if we’re not attorneys, we’re somewhat acquainted with legal procedures.

You likely have a few folks in mind whom you’d like to see found guilty and sent to jail.

**I doubt we all agree on who deserves prison.**

### **Nonetheless, our text tells of a unique situation.**

#### **Odd features stood out in this court.**

Trials usually occur because someone is suspected or accused of a crime.

**In our text, no one committed a crime.**  
Nobody hurt, cheated or robbed anyone.

#### **Just the opposite happened.**

Suppose two surgeons operated on a forty-year-old allowing him/her to walk and run for the first time.

Many would consider what they did miraculous.

**They’d rightly be hailed as heroes, correct?**

**They’d at least make the evening local news.**



**Jesus' Apostles enabled a forty-year-old guy walk and run for the first time ever.**

**They charged nothing.**

**They suggested no payback of any kind.**

No implied or intimidated obligation.

**Authorities arrested and jailed the two.**

**Why would anyone object to a cripple being healed?**

**This incident involved another peculiar element.**

**Think of this curiosity about these apostles.**

Their recent behavior had radically changed.

**How so?**

**They converted from boastful, vengeful, scaredy-cats to humble, bold guys afraid of no one but God.**

**What caused this transformation?**

**We noted last week Peter's proud reaction when Jesus told the Apostles that he, Jesus, would be killed and then be raised from the dead.**

**"That shall never happen to you!"<sup>1</sup> Peter boasted.**

**That incident occurred shortly after Jesus said to Peter "You are Peter (petros), and upon this rock (petra) I will build my church."<sup>2</sup>**

**At the Last Supper, the Apostles all bragged about their allegiance to Jesus.**

Jesus predicted to Peter that by the time the rooster crowed the next morning, Peter would deny Jesus three times.

After Peter's third denial, Peter looked over to see Jesus looking straight at him.

**"The rock" went outside and wept bitterly."<sup>3</sup>**



**The word Peter (petros) does means "rock."**

**Even some Protestant theologians say that there's little difference between the word *petros* translated Peter and *petra* translated rock in Mt 16:18 (πέτρος - πέτρα).<sup>4</sup>**

But you need to see/hear some differing evidence. **First, Mark's Gospel (3:16-19) tells us about Jesus appointing the Twelve Apostles:**

**"These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name *Boanerges*, which means "sons of Thunder"); Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas. . ."<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 16:21-23.NIV

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 16:18 NIV

<sup>3</sup> Luke 22: 54-62

<sup>4</sup> The NASB footnotes the difference.

<sup>5</sup> Mark 3:16-19 NIV

Partly in a spirit of playfulness, I think, Jesus gave nicknames to his three closest Apostles.

As you see, Jesus referred to James and John as **“Boanerges sons of Thunder.”**

Once, the brothers wanted to call down fire from heaven on a Samaritan village that had disinvented Jesus—level the town with a “Jesus missile.”

**One night when our kids were young, thunder frightened them.**

**We explained that if you hear the thunder, you are fine, because light travels faster than sound.**

**If you hear the thunder that means the lightning didn’t strike you.**

**Jesus knew what he was talking about; he created everything in the Universe.**

The *Boa* in the brothers’ nickname means “to shout.” As you learned in school, the *erg* part refers to work.

You know the kind of people who make a lot of noise, but get little work done.

Lightning contains the electrical energy; thunder mostly carries noise and vibes.

I think Jesus meant that the bros did **“Shout work.”**

**Second, the Gospels tell Peter’s impetuous nature; he tended to talk first and think later.**

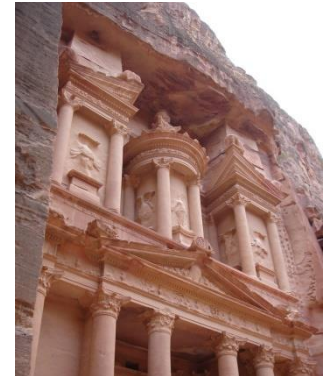
**You possibly know, that in the New Testament, the term *petros* never refers to a rock.**

The only time the NT uses *petros*, it applies to Peter’s name; it’s never used for *rock*.

Regarding *petra* and *petros* in **Profane Greek and the Old Testament**, the scholar Oscar Cullmann wrote this in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*: “The feminine *petra* is predominately used in secular Greek for a large and solid rock . . . *petra* denotes firmness and immovability. The masculine *petros* is used more for isolated rocks or small stones, including flints and pebbles for slings.”<sup>6</sup>

You might find this fact interesting.

Peter’s Hebrew name *Simon* means *listen*.



The Treasury in the ancient city of Petra, Jordan, carved from solid rock.

**Talking was Peter’s strong suit, not listening.** From these facts, I think Jesus drolly called Peter *pebble* or *listening-stone* in the way he called James and John *sons of Thunder* or *shout-workers*. **Peter, James, and John accompanied Jesus at some significant times, e.g. his Transfiguration.**

On that evidence, I’ve assumed along with others that the three became a trusted inner circle.

<sup>6</sup> TDNT, Vol. VI, p. 95

Maybe we should peek out of the box and wonder if Jesus chose not to leave them in charge because those three were "loose cannons."

One more curious fact might interest you.

The Apostle Paul's Hebrew name was *Saul*.

Saul was named for Israel's first king, the tallest man in the country at the time.

Acts chapter nine describes Saul's conversion.

Before that, we'll meet a generous man named Joseph, whom the Apostles called

Barnabas, which means Son of Encouragement.

Acts 13:1 tells how the Holy Spirit chose Joseph (Barnabas) and Saul for a special mission work.

**They traveled first to the Mediterranean island of Cypress, Joseph's home.**

Acts chapter 13, verse 9 reads:

"Then Saul, who is also called Paul..."

**Why would folks call him Paul?**

You possibly know that in Latin, the language spoken in Rome, *Paulus* means *little or short*.

There's reason to think Paul's nickname was *Shorty*.

The Bible shows frailties even of its key people.

Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Peter, James, John and nearly all the rest, dealt with shortcomings.

Political parties, sports' writer, advertisers, P.R people like to create larger-than-life-images.

Sooner or later—often sooner—human gods crash and burn.

**We help no one by making gods of human beings.**

Peter, James, John, and the other Apostles met the only perfect person.

**They quit their jobs in order to follow Jesus three years and learn from him.**

In close proximity to someone, you come to know that person.



For a number of years, I played racquetball with Larry and Donna Trapp. At times, Donna was my main opponent.

She was smart, tough, and played with great control; we played fairly even.

When Donna told people that she played against me, she said that they never asked who won.

They wanted to know: **"Does Bob swear?"**

If you play a sport like racquetball, you quickly learn about the character of your opponent.

**Peter, John, and the other Apostles spent three years close to Jesus.**

They traveled and worked with Jesus and saw him under stress in all types of situations.

**Did he cheat? Was he quick-tempered?  
Did he lie? Did he lust after or  
take advantage of women?  
Never!**



**They knew Jesus' exceptional, sin-free  
life firsthand.**

If he'd had chinks in his armor, defects in his character, they'd have known.

**They watched him die, saw him entombed, but  
then three days later saw him alive.**

They knew he was the same man they'd known for three years.

**Jesus' life and the Holy Spirit changed them from  
braggarts to bold witnesses of his resurrection.**

**The NASB translates a subtlety worth noting.**

**Prominent people arrested James and John.**

Compare the captain of the temple guard to the Captain of the D.C. Capitol Police; the high priest compares to the Supreme Court Chief Justice.

**Other fancy-robed bigwigs arrived.**

The NASB, Chapter 4:7 reads: **"When they placed them in the center, they began to enquire . . ."**

**How would you feel if hostile interrogators  
surrounded you?**

**"By what power or what name did you do this?"**

**The scholar F.F. Bruce noted another subtlety.**

**The Greek word "you" (ὁμεῖς ) comes at the end of this question as if the elite questioners sarcastically demeaned the Apostles by saying: "People like you."**

The very changed *pebble* replied by the wisdom and bravery of Jesus' perfect life, his resurrection from death, and the power of the Holy Spirit:

**"It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. Jesus is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.'"**

**God gives us tremendous strength in Christ.**

As "Shorty," Paul, said, "I can do all things in Him (Christ) who strengthens me," Philippians 4:13 NASB.

**All human heroes and systems fail.**

If we trust our future to anyone, but the risen Son of God, Jesus, and his Holy Spirit, we face disaster.

**"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."**

**Jesus and his followers gave all glory to God.**

**So must we!**

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