

# KINGDOM POWER IN JERUSALEM

With the gift of the Holy Spirit, Peter and the other apostles found themselves full of power and energy for sharing the good news of God’s kingdom with everyone around them. And some people loved what they had to offer.

One afternoon Peter and John went to the Temple for a prayer service. As they went in, they saw a man begging beside the entrance. He couldn’t walk—he had been lame his whole life—so he lived by begging. When he asked Peter and John for money, they stopped. “We don’t have any money to give you,” Peter told him. “But I’ll give you what we have. In the name of Jesus, stand up and walk!” Then Peter took the man’s hand and pulled him up, and all of a sudden the man found his ankles and feet were healed. Of course he started jumping around and praising God!

Everyone there knew this was a man who had never walked before, and they were amazed. Peter grabbed at the chance to tell them about Jesus. “Why are you so surprised?!” he asked them. “It wasn’t anything about us that made this man walk, it was the power of God through faith in Jesus.” Then he told them how everything in the Bible pointed to what Jesus was going to do, and was still doing. Lots more people heard him and believed; now there were about 5,000 men who were following Jesus, plus women and children.

The religious leaders weren’t so excited. In fact, they hated what the apostles were saying so much that they had Peter and John arrested and thrown in jail. (They objected most to the idea that anyone could rise from the dead.) The next morning all the religious leaders and teachers met together. Guards brought Peter and John to them to be questioned. “By what power,” they wanted to know, “are you doing all this?” Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter answered bravely and told them all about Jesus. The leaders were impressed by how well he spoke—they knew he had never been to school. They were also worried by how many people seemed to love hearing the apostles’ message. “Everybody knows they’ve performed a miracle,” they said to each other. “But we can’t let them keep telling people about Jesus!” So they called Peter and John back in to tell them to stop preaching and healing.

“Who should we listen to, you—or God?!” the apostles answered. The religious leaders didn’t like that one bit, but they were afraid if they did anything to Peter or John the people would start a riot. So they let them go. Peter and John went back to the other believers, and together they all prayed that God would make them brave. Once again, everyone was filled with the Holy Spirit and they all headed out again to preach the good news.

As they talked with people in the Temple and elsewhere in Jerusalem, more and more people came to them to be healed. People even came out into the street as Peter walked by, because if even his shadow touched them they would get better. And more and more people joined the gathering of believers. The religious leaders got more and more angry, and before long they had all the apostles arrested and thrown in jail.

But overnight an angel came and let them out, without anyone noticing—and when the leaders sent for the prisoners to question them, they weren’t there. It was even more confusing because the gates were still locked, with the guards standing beside them! The leaders and guards were looking all over to find where the prisoners could be hiding, or a way they could possibly have escaped, when a messenger came running up shouting, “the men you put in jail are standing in the Temple teaching the people!”

*flip over for more!*

Furious, the leaders sent the captain of the guard to arrest the apostles again, with orders to do it peacefully—they were afraid that if they hurt them the people would fight back. When the guards brought the apostles in front of the leaders' council, the high priest asked them why they kept telling people about Jesus. "We told you to stop, and you're not stopping!" he said. "We're going to have to kill you, and it'll be your fault!"

Peter and the other apostles stayed calm. "We have to obey God," Peter said, "not any human rulers." When the members of the council heard this most of them were so mad they wanted to have the apostles all executed. But one member counselled them not to. "There were other people who thought they were prophets," he said. "People followed them for a little while, but then it all came to nothing. If these people have made up this story about Jesus, they'll soon run out of energy without us having to do anything. And on the other hand, if their movement is really from God, we probably shouldn't be fighting against it!"

## Wondering Questions

I wonder if Peter and the other apostles ever felt scared?

I wonder which was more exciting to people in the Temple—the apostles' preaching, or the way they healed people?

I wonder if any of the religious leaders were actually secretly interested in what the apostles had to say about Jesus?