**The Book of Acts: Verse-by-Verse**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Study Notes Acts 10:41-43**

* **A Duality Of Response: vv. 39-40**

“They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen.”

A consistent part of Peter’s preaching is the statement about Jesus’ treatment by the Sanhedrin (Romans) versus God the Father. See: Acts 2:23-24; Acts 3:15; Acts 5:30

These statements of God’s actions versus human actions do indeed become a standard part of the Kerygma. It’s far more than just a statement of facts; it’s their way of showing the power of God in the face of human opposition.

“Hanging Him On A Tree”:

Peter use of the phrase, “hanging him on a tree” is intention. Gentiles might not immediately grasp the implications of that statement, but Jews would.

Deuteronomy 21:22–23 - “If a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is executed, and you hang his body on a tree, you must not leave the body on the tree overnight, but you must be sure to bury him that day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse.”

Galatians 3:10-13 - “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”

Peter, himself, repeats this theme in his second epistle when he says:

1 Peter 2:24 - “He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed.”-

Peter uses the phrase, “on a tree” to stress the fact that Jesus bore our judgment (God’s curse). There is no room for human righteousness. Isaiah 53:4 – “But he endured the suffering that should have been ours, the pain that we should have borne. All the while we thought that his suffering was punishment sent by God.”

* **The Divine Plan:**

Acts 2:23 - “But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him.”

What happened to Jesus was not by chance, nor was it by human choice alone. The true masterplan was not theirs, but God’s. See: I Corinthians 2;7-9:

* **He Was Seen By Witnesses God Chose:**

Although “wicked hand” crucified the Lord of Glory, God the Father raised him back to life. But this was not done in secret. Peter tells Cornelius:

“He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.” v. 41

Again, Peter is giving Cornelius the strongest confidence in what he is telling him. There was no doubt about Jesus’ resurrection. True, it was not witnessed by everyone, but the key players in Jesus’ ministry were given eyewitness evidence of this historical event.

By the phrase, “witnesses who God had already chosen”, Peter primarily means Jesus’ inner-circle disciples. Peter and the rest could testify with complete accuracy that they had seen Jesus alive after his death and had eaten and drunk with him.

It’s interesting that Luke is the only gospel writer who includes the story of Jesus proving his Resurrection Day “flesh and blood” existence by eating a piece of broiled fish in front of his disciples. Luke 24:41-42 records:

“While they were still in disbelief because of their joy and amazement, He asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” So they gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate it in front of them.”

So again, Peter wants Cornelius, his family, and his friends to know that Jesus’ resurrection was a real, “flesh and blood” event. As one Bible commentator put it, Peter didn’t want them to suppose the Resurrected Jesus was some form of “phantom appearance”.

With the Resurrection in view, in verse 42 Peter tells Cornelius, “He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.”

That statement truly defines what an apostle is – They are the “sent ones”. Peter refers to the “twelve” when he uses the pronoun, “us”. He very specifically notes the initial role of a “first-order” apostle: They are to preach to the people and testify about Jesus.

As John Stott points out, “The life, death and resurrection of Jesus were more than significant events; they also constituted the gospel, which he commanded … the apostles again to preach.”

Now it’s interesting that Peter includes a description of Jesus that we have not found so far in the Book of Acts. He calls Jesus, “The One whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.”

This must have been a startling statement to Peter’s Gentile audience. None of the Gentile gods made such a claim – to be the “judge of the living and the dead”. This is an entirely unique designation, yet Peter says that he and the apostles were sent out to make this very claim about Christ.

Do we have any Old Testament references to this? Yes. In Daniel 7 we find these words about a vision that Daniel had:

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, a coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” – Daniel 7:13-14

Now let me take you over to John 5, so we can see what Jesus himself had to say about this. I’ll read verses 24-27

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.”

Jesus clearly states that the Father has given to Him the authority to judge the dead. Now that judgment is two-sided. On the one hand, He has the authority to grant eternal salvation. On the other, He has the authority to judge the unsaved.

Paul will pick up this thread in his instructions to his protégé in 2 Timothy 4:1, where he tells him, “I solemnly urge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who will someday judge the living and the dead when he comes to set up his Kingdom.” - 2 Timothy 4:1

Paul will make a similar statement in Romans 14:9, where we read, For this reason Christ died and returned to life, that He might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.” - Romans 14:9

In the case of Peter’s statement of this reality, he is telling his Gentile listeners that a day is coming when Jesus Christ will be that judge. In that capacity he will not only judge the living – but the dead.

In addition, Peter is making it clear that Jesus Christ is “Lord of All”. As such, the apostles were sent to everyone – both Jews and Gentiles. They were to testify that Jesus would return on the judgment day. No one will be exempt from his authority.

As Peter finishes this sermon, in verse 43 he says, “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Cornelius and those gathered in his home may have been startled by the image of Jesus judging both the living and the dead, Jews, as well as Gentiles. But Peter gives them a reason not to fear the coming day of Judgement: While Jesus is the Judge of the living and the dead, He is also has the power to forgive sins and grant salvation.

Now, notice how Peter frames this promise. He tells them that “All the prophets testify about Him” … and agree that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Just before that statement Peter emphasized how the apostles were sent to declare Jesus as Lord. Now he reaches back and fortifies that statement by telling the crowd that long before the apostles were given this role, the prophets did the same thing.

The Old Testament prophets repeatedly predicted the coming of the Messiah. Their spoked messages became the very basis of the Old Testament written prophecies. But in a sense, Peter is saying that the prophets are still testifying to Jesus as what one scholar said, “…The unique, historical, incarnate, crucified and resurrected Jesus.”

It is not superfluous that Peter says that these prophets “all agree” or “all testify” that everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins through His name.”

There are two things that emerge from that statement: 1. The universal agreement of the prophets. 2. The universal offer of salvation.

On the first score, consider this question: “What would have happened if even one of the Old Testament prophets had disagreed about the source of salvation? It would have disrupted the entire prophetic testimony and shattered the unity of the Old Testament.

On the second point, Peter is stressing universal opportunity for salvation through Christ’s Name – meaning all that He is and all that He stands for. “Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” Everything that Jesus is and everything that He has done makes this salvation possible.

What a remarkable turn Peter has taken. Through everything that he has experienced in the last few months of his ministry he has arrived at the primary goal of the Gospel – that both Jews and Gentiles can receive the exact same salvation.

As John Stott notes, “This ‘everyone’ includes Gentiles as well as Jews: the phrase ‘crashes through the barrier’ of race and nationality.”

Peter’s message is now done. With 231 words he has given a remarkably comprehensive outline of the Gospel that, as others have noted, the rest of the New Testament writers would record and explain in much greater detail.

But for Cornelius and those gathered in his home, this was all they needed to hear in order to believe. Perhaps, at times, we feel such a succinct outline is not comprehensive enough for people to accept the Gospel. I wonder if we are simply overthinking the message!

In Peter’s message, he focused so beautifully on presenting Jesus as the historical Jesus – the Jesus who was seen and heard in real time. While emphasizing the real time events of Jesus’ life, ministry, death, resurrection, and future role as Judge, Peter presents him as the one and only source of salvation.

As one scholar pointed out, Peter combined history, theology, and the gospel in his apostolic message. In just 231 words, Peter told Cornelius, his family, relatives, friends, and servants all they needed to know to grasp the Gospel and make a decision.

**And they did. We will see that next time.**