

Acts: Verse-by-Verse

Acts 4:10b-12

As we return to our study of Acts, we are looking at Peter's sermon to the Sanhedrin, Israel's "Council of Elders". Peter is giving a response to their questions about how the lame man at the Beautiful Gate was healed, and by what authority it was done.

Let's back up to verse 9 to get the context:

"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..."

While the NIV uses "If we are being called to account", other versions say, "If we are on trial". It's interesting that either phrase is only one word in Greek: it's the word *Anakrino*.

It means to sift up and down, to examine accurately or carefully (re-examine), to make careful and exact research as in legal processes (interrogating, cross examining).

The idea of **anakrino** is to put someone through a series of questions as in a court of law. It was often used in secular Greek of the interrogation of a prisoner which is appropriate here since Peter and John were prisoners of the Sanhedrin!

In other contexts, *anakrino* has a very different nuance. For example, in Acts 17:11 we find: "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the

Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.” – Acts 17:11

There, we see the Jewish believers examining the Scriptures daily to see whether" the words of Paul were corroborated by the Word of God! It's the same process: questions and answers.

Had the Jewish leaders done the same thing with Peter and John, the outcome would have been very different! Instead, they already had their minds made up when they questioned them.

That's a great lesson for us as well. God's Word is always able to help us make wise choices and test what others are telling us. That's what Hebrews 4:12 says to us:

“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

Let's notice a second thing in verse 9. Peter says, “If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame...”

Usually, we expect to be called to account when we have done something wrong. In this case, the apostles are being tried for having done something supernaturally benevolent! There is a great quote from Dr. Martin-Lloyd-Jones about this. He wrote:

“All the greatest benefits that humanity has ever known have come through this Gospel. Good deeds! Where did hospitals come from? The Christian church. Where did education come from? The Christian church. Where did relief for the poor and suffering come from? The Christian church. Look at the great missionary enterprise. Look at the light that has been taken to the dark places

of the earth. . . Look at the unreasonableness of it all. If the apostles had hit the lame man on the head, I could understand why the authorities threw them into prison. But fancy throwing them into prison because they had healed a man! What is it that makes people do such things? There is only one answer: It is the blindness and the deadness that is ever produced by prejudice. Something in human nature is malignant.” - Dr. Martin-Lloyd-Jones

When the NIV uses the phrase, “an act of kindness”, it telegraphs something from the Greek words that Luke chose. As a doctor, Luke had several options in the Greek language to signify healing, including *iaomai*, *therapeuo*, and *sozo*.

- **iaomai** is used literally of deliverance from physical diseases and afflictions and so to make whole, restore to bodily health or heal.
- **Therapeuo** has two main senses in the New Testament. One is to render service, such as taking care of the sick. Another means to heal miraculously, as seen in Matthew 4:23-24; 10:1, 8; and Acts 4:14.
- **Sozo** has the basic meaning of rescuing someone from great peril. Additional nuances include to protect, keep alive, preserve life, deliver, heal, or be made whole.

Dr. Luke chose the last one, “sozo”. It was intentional, since as we will see in Acts 4:12 he uses the same word to declare that the only way to obtain “spiritual healing” is through Jesus.

As others have noted, “sozo” was the perfect verb to describe the lame man’s experience since he received both physical healing and spiritual healing at the same time!

Just like in a court of law, the Sanhedrin opened itself up to Peter's use of the verb 'sozo' for spiritual healing when they asked how he had physically "healed" (sozoed) the crippled man.

Let's move on and read verses 9-10 together: "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."

I want to remind you of something I said earlier. The Sanhedrin is not contesting the miracle itself. Why? Because it was impossible. The lame man had been laid at the Beautiful Gate every day- perhaps for years.

Everyone who lived in the vicinity of the Temple had seen this man countless times. Many knew his story personally. It would have been futile for the Sanhedrin to attack the miracle – to say it was some sham.

They didn't question the validity of the miracle: The questioned what authority the apostles had to heal him – what Name they had used to heal him. That's the real issue for the Sanhedrin.

It reminds us of the events surrounding the healing of the blind man in John 9.

The disciples saw a blind man and asked Jesus if either the man or his parents had sinned. Jesus told them neither the blind man nor his parents were at fault. He said it was for God's glory.

When Jesus put mud on the man's eyes and had him go wash in the pool of Siloam, he was healed. When the Sanhedrin learned of this, they initiated an anakrino process. They asked his parents how this healing took place.

Listen to the conversation in John 9:23-25:

“His parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. “Give glory to God by telling the truth,” they said. “We know this man is a sinner.”

He replied, “Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”

The Sanhedrin couldn’t contest the fact of the man’s healing. That was evident to his parents, and everyone who knew him. So, what are they really angry about? John tells us in verses 13-15.

He writes, “They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man’s eyes was a Sabbath Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight.”

Here a man had been wonderfully healed, and what was the Pharisees biggest complaint? Jesus had done the miracle on a Sabbath. To the Pharisees, healing was work ... and Jesus had violated the Elder’s sabbath laws by healing the blind man.

In Peter’s case, the Sanhedrin arrested and examined him because they knew Peter had used the authority of Jesus’ Name to heal the crippled man.

Let’s look at verse 10:

“... 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.”

Peter is now going to give the religious leaders the “how” behind what has happened that day. In the prior verse

Luke notes that the Sanhedrin was asking two things: 1. How the lame man was healed. 2. By what authority the miracle was done.

Peter gives them the “how” as he starts his sermon. He says, “It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth”. We are meant to notice that Peter is using the same formula that was applied when the lame man was healed. Peter said to the man, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”- Acts 3:6

Using this formula is far from semantics about Jesus’ name. Peter is saying that the power or authority to heal the man came from the name of Jesus.

In the Greek language, the word "name" comes from the Greek root word “onoma”. It is far more than an identifier. The full spectrum of the "Name" includes the essence of the person. In this case, Peter is using the “Name” to indicate Jesus’ character, sovereignty, authority, power, deity, as well as His identity as God.

As one scholar points out, “Peter doesn't use "Jesus Christ of Nazareth" as a magical spell. He has faith in the Person of Jesus.”

Now that Peter has explained how, and by what authority the lame man was healed he continues his sermon by stating the same thing he did in his Acts 2 sermon. He references, “Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead...”

This is the third time that Peter has used the phrase, “...You killed him, but God raised him”. He also does this in Acts 2:23–24 and 3:15. Peter goes on to reference Psalm 118, when he says, “He is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone”.

Peter declares Jesus is the stone of Psalm 118 which the builders rejected but God has promoted to be the capstone. Jesus also quoted this same psalm, referring to himself. In Matthew 21:42, he said, “Have you *never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’*”? - Matthew 21:42

I’m pointing this out, because the context of that verse is identical to that of Peter’s defense. The religious leaders are asking Jesus the same thing that they asked Peter. In the Matthew 21 account this is what they asked Jesus: “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you this authority?” – Matthew 21:23

As Peter answered the Sanhedrin, did he remember what Jesus had said about himself?

Peter tells the authorities, “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.” He has now told them how the man was healed, and by what power this was done.

Let’s look at verse 12:

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

Let me make two observations about Peter’s final statement:

First, Peter quickly moves from the lame man’s healing to the offer of salvation in Christ. He goes from the specific incident to the general offer of salvation.

In a sense, Peter views the lame man's healing as a picture of salvation. By using the Greek word "sozo" Peter ties together the meaning of healing or making one whole with the promise of salvation – which has the primary meaning of deliverance.

Second, Peter presents the exclusiveness of salvation through Jesus Christ. He uses two sets of negatives to make the point. First, he says, "Salvation is found in no one else." Let that soak in: "No One Else". Next, he says, "...For there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." We have, "No One Else" and "No Other Name".

Peter is saying that Christ's death, resurrection, exaltation, and authority constitutes his unique identification as the Savior: No one else can meet these qualifications.

Do Christians still believe this? We live in what we might call the pluralistic age. By this we mean that, twenty-one centuries after the events we are studying, our culture has adopted a very different view of Christianity and its relationship to what are commonly called the "world religions".

What are these divergent views? Let me cover them so you can have a fuller view of what is happening in seminaries and churches across America – and for that matter, the world. The first approach is called Pluralism:

Pluralism:

Theologians like John Hicks and Paul Kittner propose that, although Christ is unique to Christians, this is not true with other religions. They put Christ on the same platform as the founders of the world religions such as Buddha, Confucius, and Mohammed. They deny that Peter's words can be applied to all humans.

Inclusivism:

The second divergent view is called “Inclusivism”. Inclusivists claim that, while Christ has died for all humans, Christianity is not the exclusive entrance into that salvation.

Theologians such as Karl Rahner and Hans Kung insist that belief in the gospel of Christ is not the only path to salvation. Anyone who has faith in God – no matter what form that takes, are included in Christ’s atoning death.

That returns us to Peter’s statement: “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” Put simply, this is what Christian theologians call Exclusivism.

Exclusivism:

Exclusivists hold to the Biblical view that Peter presents in his Acts 4 sermon. Faith in Jesus’ atoning death is the exclusive means of salvation.

It is aligned with Peter’s own declaration that salvation cannot be found in anyone else but Jesus. It is aligned with Peter’s insistence that, “There is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

I want us to see a couple of things here. First, Peter is locating salvation in the person of Jesus. Only Jesus has the ability to save humans from the penalty of sin. This is the Bible’s unwavering claim. Let me show you just a short list of verses that demonstrate this:

- **John 5:24:**

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”

- **John 14:6:**

“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

- **Romans 3:23-24:**

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

- **Romans 6:23:**

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- **Ephesians 1:7:**

“In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace...”

Repeatedly, the scriptures locate the source of salvation in Christ. This is not only a salvation from sin and eternal death, but a salvation to eternal life. It is all located in Christ.

Second, let me note that there is a consistent statement that salvation must come through Christ. Peter says, “... For there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

The Greek word in that sentence for “must” is “dei”. The word emphatically indicates that there is a necessity for a response to Jesus’ name or authority. Peter was making it clear to the Sanhedrin: Salvation can only be found in Christ and this offer of salvation requires “dei” a response.

In our pluralistic world, a common criticism of Christians is that we are myopic and arrogant because we deny the efficacy of salvation through the means offered by the world religions.

We are supposedly arrogant because we do not recognize what others call the “treasures of religious insight” offered by the world religions.

This is where Christians and the world religions part ways? Why? Peter gives us the reason. Jesus is the only source of salvation. Our faith is not located in religious dogma or a set of writings by a founder. Our faith is in a person whom God has designated as the Savior of the World.

Let me give you a quote from Johnathan Dodson, that really zeroes in on this. He writes:

Jesus is the way. Jesus is also the Truth. What does that mean? In John chapter 1, we are told that God became flesh and was full of grace and truth in Jesus. The truth is that God is Jesus. Christianity is the only religion where God is born as a man, becomes fully human. This is the height of enlightenment.

All other religions teach that humans must work their way toward divinity. The truth is Jesus. The truth is a person who dies in our place, for our crimes, and in turn gives us his life. The truth is that God works his way down to humanity and dies for us. That's grace.

In Christianity, the truth is essentially revealed in a Person, Jesus, full of grace and humility. All other religions God is impersonal, but in Christianity we meet God in Jesus. The truth is a Person who dies for us. – Johnathan Dodson

Next time: We look at the Sanhedrin's response to Peter's message.