

The Nature of Yeshua in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

Yeshua. The Apostles could have just said something like, “As disciples of Yeshua the Messiah the Nazarene, in the name of the Almighty God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—walk!” This would have given some credit to Yeshua as a teacher or spiritual leader, but the supernatural power to the God of Israel. **But, Yeshua alone is invoked to see the lame man healed.**

Ultimately, the audience as being among those who “delivered up and disowned” (Acts 3:13) Yeshua, may be said to hold to a “low Messiahship” view of Yeshua. Rather than regarding Him as the prophesied Messiah of Israel, they regarded Him as an executed failure. *A reevaluation of who this Yeshua is would necessarily have to come after witnessing miracles performed in His name.* Admittedly in his message of Acts ch. 3, Peter does not come out and just say, “Yeshua is God” (unlike the opening greeting of 2 Peter 1:1). But how could Peter come out and just make such a claim, when it *first* had to be established that Yeshua was executed in concert with prophetic expectation (Acts 3:21-22) and that Yeshua’s words must be heeded (Acts 3:23), similar to other prophetic figures seen in Israel’s history?

Credibility for Yeshua of Nazareth as a legitimate prophetic figure, as the prophesied Messiah of Israel (Acts 3:20), and having been glorified by virtue of resurrection from the dead (Acts 3:13, 15)—must be established in the minds of the audience, *before* a further consideration about His real nature can be conducted. This follows the overarching pattern seen in the Gospels of Yeshua being recognized as a prophet, then as the Messiah, and then as One with abilities and authorities that God alone can possess. For what is seen in the Book of Acts, further reading and probing of Luke’s record is warranted, as more statements about Yeshua of Nazareth are made by the Apostles, with new factors to be considered about His Divine nature.

Acts 4:1-22

“Miracles Performed in the Name of Yeshua”

“As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple *guard* and the Sadducees came up to them, being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Yeshua the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; and Annas the high priest *was there*, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. When they had placed them in the center, they *began to inquire*, ‘By what power, or in what name, have you done this?’ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Yeshua the Messiah the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this *name* this man stands here before you in good health. He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, *but WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone* [Psalm 118:22]. 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.’ 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 Yeshua. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they *began to confer* with one another, 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. 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.’ And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Yeshua. 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; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.’ 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; for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.”

In the previous scene of Acts ch. 3, the Apostles Peter and John are seen to have healed a lame man in the name of Yeshua, and they explain to the crowd the significance of His resurrection from the dead and Messiahship, to an audience that had largely been witnesses to His execution. How much or how little dialogue was able to take place between the crowd and these two Apostles is hard to deduce, as the venue was an audience that had largely believed Yeshua to be an executed failure, to now needing to reevaluate who this person was, in whose name miracles take place. That enough people were gathered to stir the attention of the Temple guard is clear enough (Acts 4:1), as the Saddusaical priestly authorities are described as being “indignant because Peter and John were teaching the people and announcing in Yeshua the resurrection of the dead” (Acts 4:2, TLV). The sect of the Sadducees flatly denied the doctrine of the resurrection (Acts 23:8), but more so, if agitators like Peter and John were teaching that the executed Yeshua had been raised from the dead—and would in fact one day return to overthrow a government like the Roman Empire—then their precarious position of power in Judea would be disrupted.

The Saddusaical Temple authorities have Peter and John arrested (Acts 4:3), in spite of the numbers of Believers rising to around five thousand (Acts 4:4). A gathering of the Sanhedrin, the ruling council, is called (Acts 4:5), including the various high priests (Acts 4:6). The leaders present recognize that something unique had happened with the once lame man, and so as it is recorded, “They had the emissaries stand before them and asked, ‘By what power or in what name did you do this?’” (Acts 4:7, CJB/CJSB). The response, issued by Peter to his accusers, was similar to the one he had issued to the crowd which had witnessed the healing of the lame man (Acts 3:13):

“Then Kefa, filled with the *Ruach HaKodesh*, said to them, ‘Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being examined today about a good deed done for a disabled person, if you want to know how he was restored to health, then let it be known to you and to all the people of Isra’el that it is in the name of the Messiah, Yeshua from Natzeret, whom you had executed on a stake as a criminal but whom God has raised from the dead, that this man stands before you perfectly healed” (Acts 4:8-10, CJB/CJSB).

Standing before a group of both religious and political leaders—who were responsible for condemning Yeshua to death—the Apostle Peter affirmed that it was in His name or authority that the lame man was healed. This Yeshua, who had been executed by the Sanhedrin, had been raised from the dead, something which had been confirmed by miracles accomplished invoking Him. The Tanach is then appealed to, as Psalm 118:22 is quoted regarding the actions that the Sanhedrin is responsible for in condemning Yeshua to death: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner *stone*” (cf. Acts 4:11). But the culpability of the Sanhedrin in rejecting Yeshua as the Messiah, and in overseeing Yeshua’s humiliation and unjust death is not just what Peter emphasizes. This Yeshua, who had been raised from the dead, is the only source of human salvation: “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12, NRSV).

That something significant was indeed present with the Apostles Peter and John is noted by members of the Sanhedrin, given the fact that neither one of them was formally trained or educated as a rabbi, but instead were companions of Yeshua (Acts 4:13). The difficulty that many would have to overcome, as narrated in Acts 4:14, was what to do with the clear evidence of the formerly lame man: “Moreover, since they could see the man who had been healed

The Nature of Yeshua in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

standing right there beside them, there was nothing they could say to discredit the healing” (CJB/CJSB). What is recorded is that the Sanhedrin council was very disturbed about what had taken place, as news was spreading throughout Jerusalem (Acts 4:15-16). And so, Peter and John are ordered by the Sanhedrin to no longer speak to or teach to the population about Yeshua of Nazareth (Acts 4:17-18). Whether some members of the Sanhedrin were curious to learn more about Yeshua—now with someone having been healed in His name—or not, the considerable majority of the Sanhedrin considered teachings and declarations of Yeshua to be off limits. Peter and John are broadly dismissive of the Sanhedrin’s orders, letting them know that the ultimate authority to which they must answer is God (Acts 4:19-20).

While threats are issued to Peter and John from the Sanhedrin, the authorities realized that they would have a real problem on their hands if they tried to do anything more. It is narrated by Luke, “They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened” (Acts 4:21, NIV). A crowd, which once stood in agreement with condemning Yeshua to death, has now seen a lame man healed in the name of Yeshua, and is praising the God of Israel for it. It is further noted, “For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old” (Acts 4:22, RSV). *There could be chaos in the streets if Peter and John were held indefinitely as criminals, for doing nothing more than seeing that a man was healed.*

Proponents of a low Christology, of Yeshua the Messiah being a created agent of God, would claim that the Apostles not saying anything about “Jesus is God, believe in Him,” serves to prove their case. Proponents of a high Christology, of Yeshua the Messiah being integrated into the Divine Identity, should instead draw readers’ attention to what is taking place in the scene of Acts ch. 4: the Apostles Peter and John are having to defend themselves to the very Sanhedrin that condemned Yeshua to die. If these two figures really did consider Yeshua to be integrated into the Divine Identity as God, and would ever have a legitimate chance at having a hearing, they would have to establish Yeshua as being a prophet and then as Messiah of Israel—which would be difficult enough—and following this be able to provide a case for His origins. A clue that the nature of Yeshua goes well beyond that of a created supernatural entity, is definitely seen in that He is the only source of salvation for human beings (Acts 4:12). *Would this be able to be affirmed about any supernatural agent of God, such as an archangel or the figure of Wisdom?*

Readers of Acts 4:30 following, as the prayer of the Believers is issued to God the Father, note the plea, “Stretch out your hand to heal and to do signs and miracles through the name of your holy servant Yeshua” (CJB/CJSB). They ask for more supernatural healings and miracles to take place, specifically so that the injustice which took place for Yeshua being turned over to the religious and political authorities (Acts 4:25-29), can be vindicated. With more miracles taking place, more can inquire about who this Yeshua is, and the multiple dimensions of both the salvation He provides and His true nature.

Acts 5:27-32

“Yeshua as Prince and Savior”

“When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, saying, ‘We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.’ But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Yeshua, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to