

-11-

## Alternative Analyses of the First Section of Peter's Sermon

In the next chapter, Chapter 12, I will present a suggested outline for the sermon as a whole. To “prepare the ground” for this, here are four alternative analyses of the first part of Peter’s sermon (the explanation for the healing, and demonstration of the guilt of Israel) which include what we have previously called the transition section” - i.e. we are including verses 17 and 18). The fourth of these is the one that will have particular relevance for Chapter 12.

The first proposed structure is shown on the next page (Figure 11.1):

### First Analysis

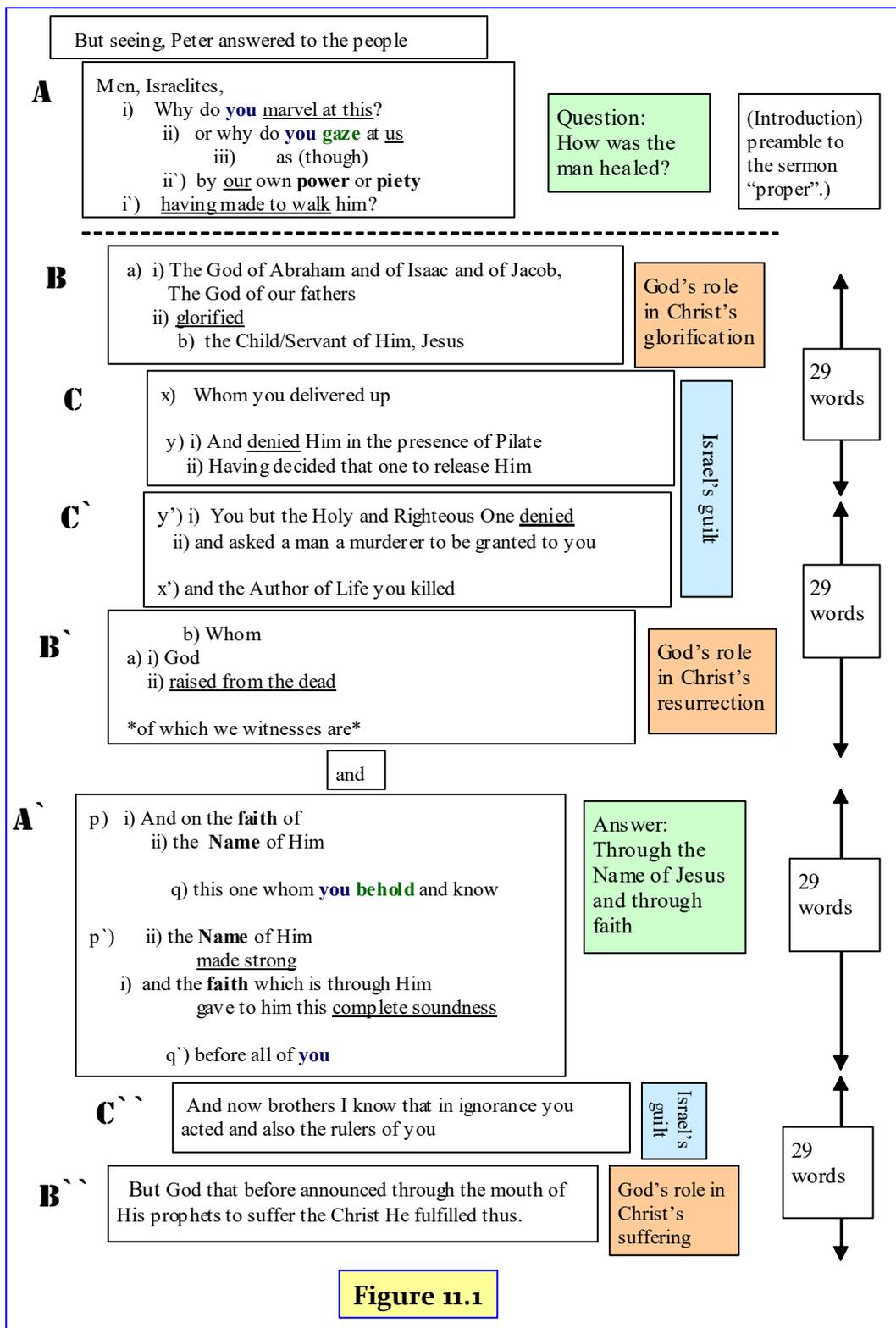
Notes:

1) The structure is essentially chiasmic—although the section B-C-C'-B' in the upper half corresponds with C''-B'' in the lower half. This is perhaps partly explained in that Christ’s suffering was a “single event”, but Christ’s subsequent exaltation has two aspects—resurrection and ascension/glorification.

2) In the chiasm Peter “works backwards” through Christ’s passage from suffering to glory. Thus, B refers to Christ’s glorification, B' for Christ’s resurrection and B'' to his suffering.

3) There is an interesting word count pattern involving 29 words in various sections of the chiasm. This pattern does not seem to include Peter’s declaration regarding his (and John’s) lack of healing power (i.e. section A) - which is perhaps more of a “preamble” - a preparatory disclaimer before Peter starts out on the “sermon proper”. (Seeing Peter’s “disclaimer” as a preamble to the “sermon proper” will also allow us to propose a second analysis of this first section of Peter’s sermon—this time with a “panel” rather than a “chiasmic” structure—please see the next section of this chapter!)

4) C'' speaks of the roles of “you” (the people) and of “your rulers”. This is



usually understood to refer to the "lay" people (the *laos*) and the religious rulers. However, given the link between C'' and C/C', it may be that the

two groups intended are the people of Israel whom Peter is addressing and the Roman rulers—of whom Pilate was the representative head.

5) I think there is a very important lesson to be learned from the passage which is well illustrated by this analysis. It's this.

In the section B-C-C'-B' we see that God has systematically reversed the wicked actions of the people against Christ. In B, God has glorified Christ who had been treated shamefully in being handed over and denied in C. In C' and B', God raises Christ, the Author of Life, from the dead—the One whom they had killed.

Thus, the actions of the God of Abraham and of our fathers" and those of the people are seen in contrast. However, in C'' and B'' we have the astonishing declaration that God, who, as we have seen, has up to this point in the sermon been strongly contrasted with the people in reversing their wicked actions, here has actually, in some mysterious way, fulfilled His own purposes, stated in his prior prophetic announcement regarding the suffering of Christ at the hands of the people and their rulers.

A helpful verse to illustrate the link between God's purposes and the words of the prophets is Amos 3:7: "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets".

We can thus see that God has both used Israel's guilty actions to produce Christ's sufferings and has also reversed the results of Israel's guilty actions.

Astonishingly, in the former of these, described in C''-B'', (verses 17 and 18) Peter describes Israel's actions as being done "in ignorance". It appears that God's role in planning, and announcing prophetically, that Christ should suffer at the hands of wicked men is that of which they were ignorant. But it also enables Peter to see their sins as those committed unwittingly, rather than "with a high hand" - an important distinction in the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant—and an astonishingly gracious view of the matter on God's part. The relationship of this section to the Old Covenant laws relating to categories of sin is well recognised in the commentaries. Somehow then these "mitigating factors" involving Christ's suffering are linked with the "therefore" of repentance and blotting out of sins that immediately follows in v. 19. Although Peter does not present a fully developed "theology of the atonement" in this sermon, he nevertheless here links Christ's sufferings and God's role in producing them as the basis for treating Israel's sins as able to be forgiven and blotted out on the

basis of repentance and being converted.

### Second Analysis

In this second analysis, we will treat Peter's disclaimer as a "preamble" and also extend the analysis to include the following sub-section, i.e. the repentance, blotting out of sins, refreshing and sending of Jesus in verses 19 and 20.

The analysis is presented in Figure 11.2 on the next page:

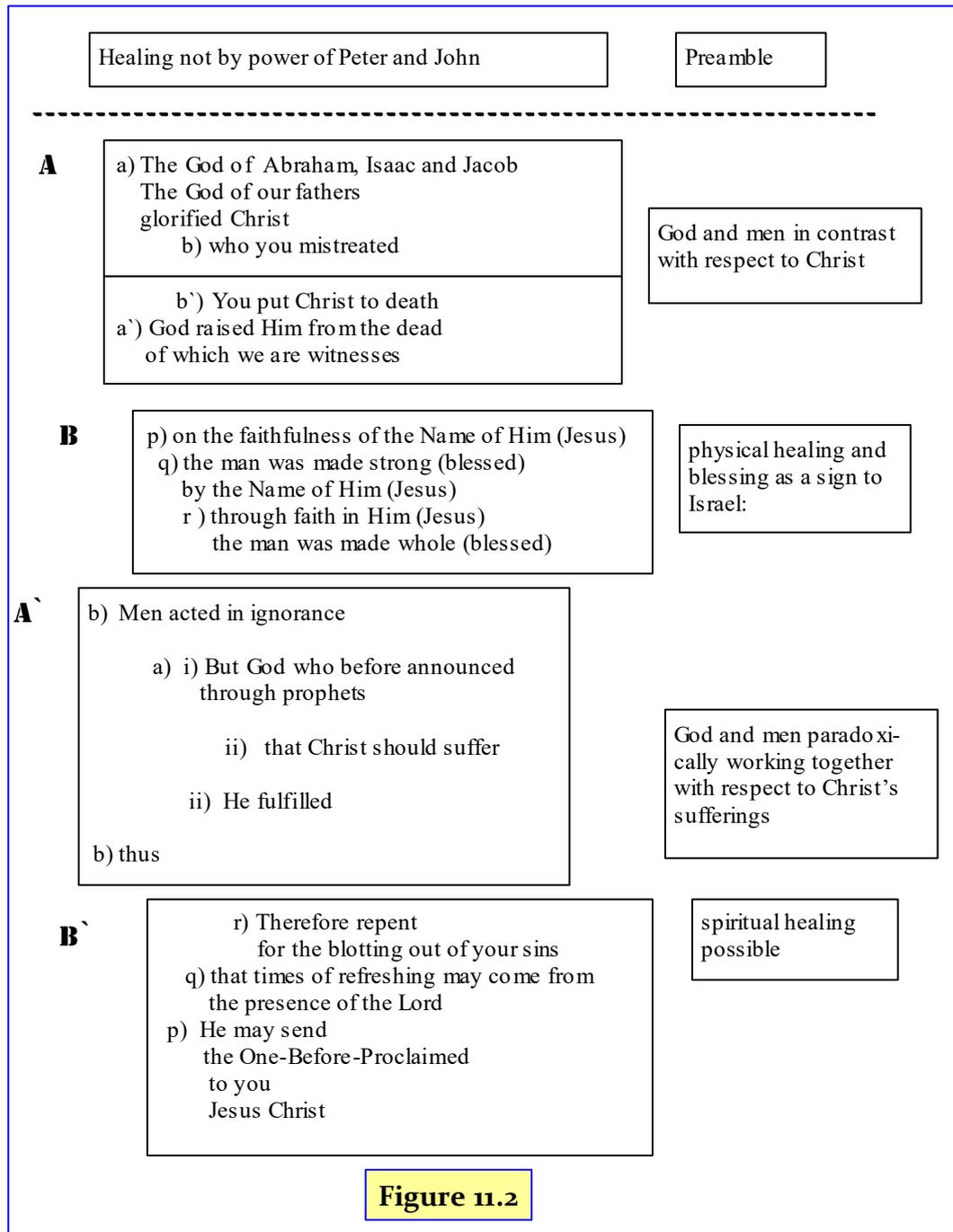
Notes:

- 1) The structure is, then, a "panel" structure - A - B // A' - B'.
- 2) This section of the sermon contains three sources for hope:
  - i) In A, we see the God's reversal of mens' sinful actions: God can undo the effects of sin.
  - ii) In B, the physical healing gives hope to the hearers that blessing is still possible, and is both a sign and also a typological "method" in which physical healing corresponds to spiritual healing, and in which faith in Christ and being made whole correspond (as shown by comparison with B') to repentance and blotting out of sin. This typological aspect is also a pattern of many of Jesus' healings recorded in the Gospels.
  - iii) The involvement of God in Christ's suffering (i.e. God's plan) gives hope that the situation is not hopeless since God has been in control all along.

These three together pave the way for the repentance, refreshing and sending of Christ in B'.

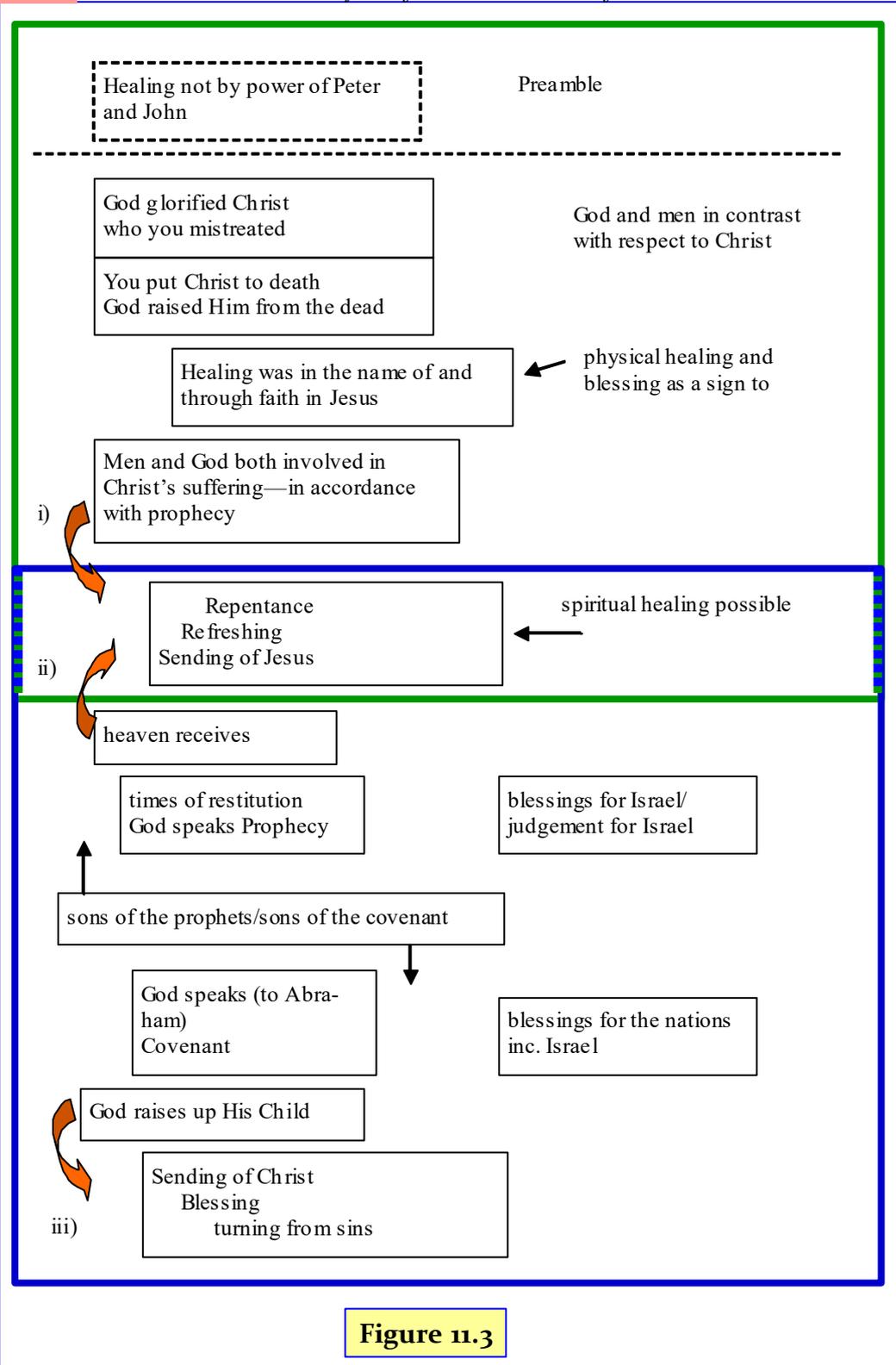
3) When Figure 11.2—representing the first half of the sermon—is combined with Figure 5.7 representing the second half (with a suitable change in notation) we have an analysis of the whole sermon in which verse 19, about repentance, refreshing and sending, acts as a "hinge" belonging equally to both halves. This analysis is presented, in outline form in Figure 11.3 on the next page but one.

Among many points that could be discussed, we note (red arrows) that in i) "Christ's sufferings" lead directly into "repentance" whereas in ii) and iii) the sending of Jesus is chiastically linked with "Whom heaven must



receive” and “God raised his (or His) Child Jesus”.

Thus, Peter’s sermon at these points flows “logically” since in i) Christ’s sufferings and the people’s repentance are connected to each other a) via the sinful role of the people in Christ’s sufferings, b) in connection with the “mechanism” of the atonement and also c) that both the sufferings and the repentance happen/happened on earth. Similarly, in ii) and iii)



the sending of Christ to the people by God requires first Christ to have been raised and received by heaven—again “heaven and earth” aspects are

logically dealt with by Peter.

### *Third Analysis*

We can modify the analysis shown in Figure 11.2 by “uncoupling” B and B' and treating them as separate sections as shown (with a slight change of notation) in Figure 11.4 on the next page. The reason for doing this is that in this way of looking at the passage, B functions to demonstrate God's continuing purposes for Israel—a present act of “good faith” on the part of God— with the two sections A and A' describing how God has acted in the recent past to put right, and also contextualise in terms of His own plan and purposes, Israel's sinful behaviour. This then leads the way to the new section where the required behaviour of Israel now (repentance) and the blessings that follow from that are described.

### *Fourth Analysis*

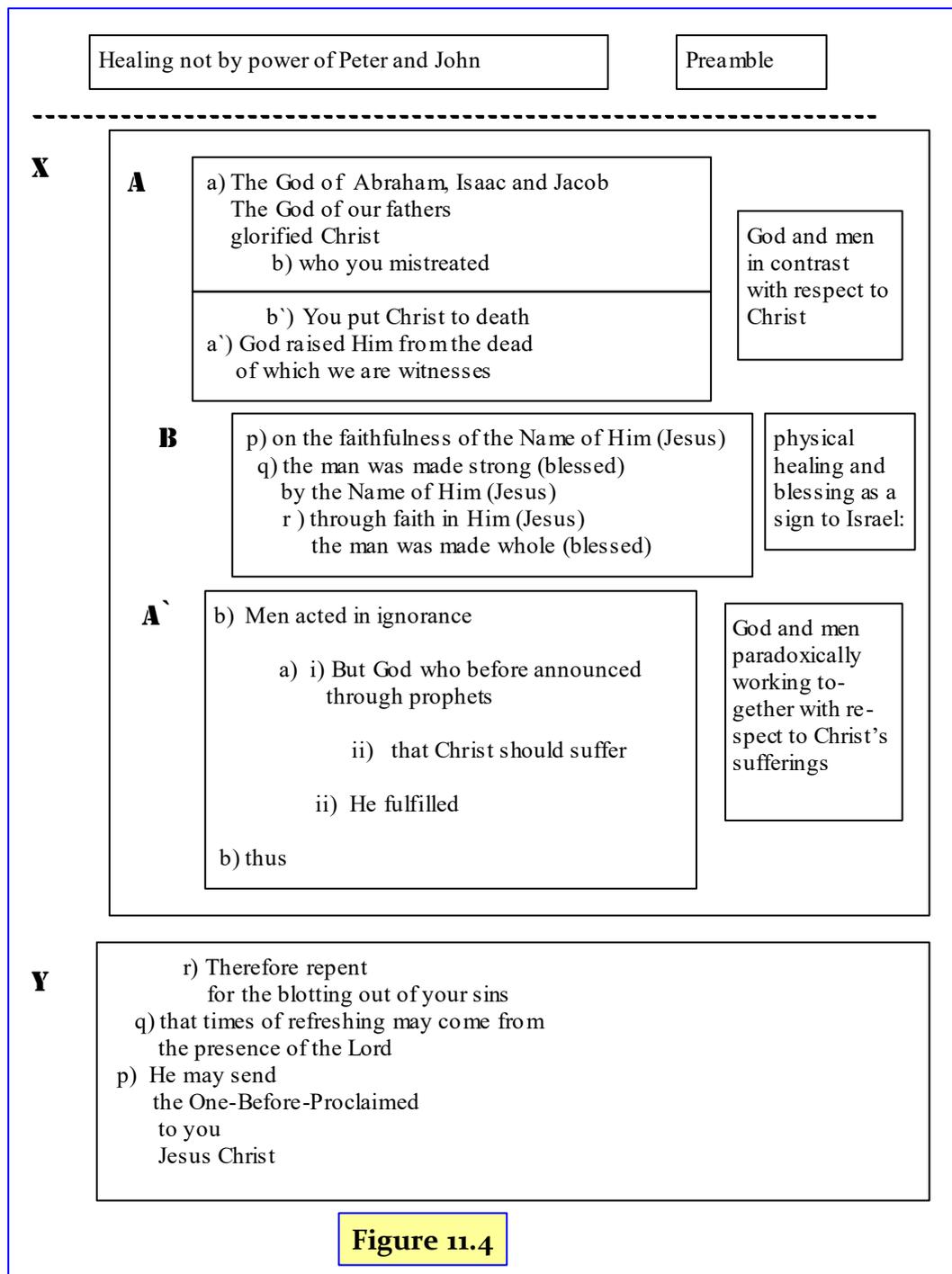
Finally, here (Figure 11.5, on the next page but one) is an analysis which incorporates features of some of the earlier analyses. It treats Peter's disclaimer as part of the structure, rather than as a preamble, but its distinctive feature however is that it treats the actions of God in the section labelled B-C-C'-B' in Figure 11.1 as actions of the God of Abraham, whereas in the section labelled C''-B'', God acts as the God of the prophets.

As we will see in the next chapter, this analysis of the first part of Peter's sermon shown in Figure 11.5 may also be capable of incorporation into another, somewhat speculative structural analysis of the whole sermon since the rest of the sermon can also be divided into “prophetic” and “Abrahamic” sections.

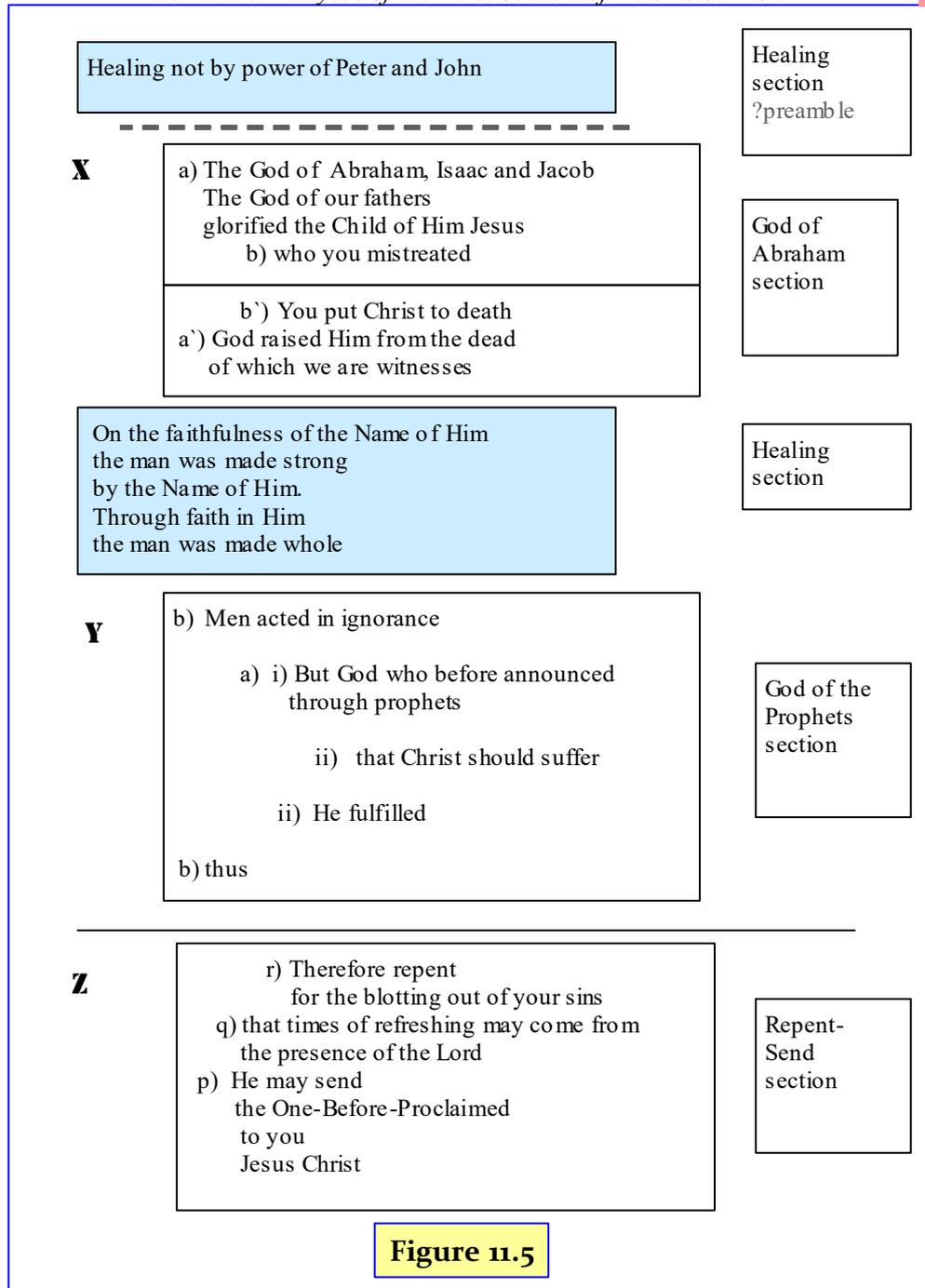
To prepare for this, here is a discussion of some of the salient features of Figure 11.5.

Notes on Figure 11.5:

- 1) We are here treating Peter's “preamble” as an integral part of the structure.
- 2) Peter's explanation of the healing miracle is in two sections. The first is followed by the “Abraham” section (X) and the second by the “prophecy” section (Y). These are followed by the required response of Peter's hearers—repentance - and the blessings that flow from that (section Z).



3) Peter starts off by saying what is *not* the explanation for the healing miracle, and immediately follows this (in Xa and Xa') by telling his hearers of the actions of the God of Abraham and of "our fathers" in glorifying and raising Christ—thus showing that Jesus is "approved of" by God. Having said this, Peter can go onto explain that the healing was done by the Name (of Jesus Christ) (and also that faith in Him was involved too).



This healing is a “physical” picture (and actually also an example) of restored relationships between God and men: Christ is faithful in healing the lame man, and men exercise faith in Christ for that healing. I think it is sort of taken for granted that, in the demonstration of physical healing, there is “implicit” the possibility of a corresponding “spiritual” healing. This would be part of the people’s worldview, and people reading Luke-Acts would likely think of an inter-textual reference, the healing of the

paralysed man in Luke Ch. 5 which has very many similarities with the healing miracle in Acts Ch. 3. Here is Luke 5:18-26:

*“And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.*

*And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.*

*And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.*

*And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”*

*But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts?*

*Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?*

*But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house.*

*And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.*

*And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day.”*

4) However, section X also speaks of the sins of the people in handing over and killing Christ, (in Xb and Xb') and the people would naturally think that they are beyond hope since they have acted so directly contrary to God in relation to Christ, and that the spiritual blessings of which the man's physical healing is a type or picture would surely not be available to them. It would thus appear that, even though they are the sons of Abraham and of the fathers, that they have now alienated themselves from the God of Abraham and the fathers, and so in a sense from Abraham and the fathers themselves since God is called “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (and He is not the God of the dead but of the living (Luke 20:37-38)!)

(Interestingly, one of John the Baptist's tasks in “restoring all things” (Matt. 17:11) was to turn the heart of the fathers to the sons and the heart of the sons to the fathers—Mal. 4:6). We will return to this theme later.

The overall picture in X is that God will “have the last word”. He will not allow Israel's sins to stand, and he has quickly reversed them by glorifying

Christ and raising him from the dead. (The order here is interesting as will be discussed further below).

5) The tension between God's approval of Jesus and Israel's terrible sins in relation to Jesus and the tension between the man's healing through Christ and Israel's alienation from God and Christ start to be resolved in the immediately following section - section Y (Acts 3:17-18) - which Peter introduces with the conciliatory "And now brothers . ." and "I know you acted through ignorance . ..". In section Y, Peter presents an alternative, prophetic way of viewing Israel's sins. Section Y places Israel's sins on the "outside" of the chiasmic structure, and in the centre is God's purpose in the suffering of Christ, prophetically announced beforehand, in relation to Israel's sins: not only did God know about this before-hand, but He fulfilled it! Whereas in X, God and Israel were acting "in diametrically opposed directions", here, amazingly and paradoxically, God and Israel were both in some strange and mysterious way working together to fulfil God's purposes. Who will not here find their thoughts turning to Isaiah Ch. 53 and particularly v. 10, "Yet it was the will of the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief"?

6) God does three things in relation to Christ in sections X and Y: He glorifies Christ, raises Him from the dead, and is involved in His suffering. This is a "downwards" movement in reverse chronological order, but section Z reverses this downwards movement since it shows men who respond to Peter's sermon having a spiritual ascension - from their spiritual death, through repentance and the blotting out of sins, to spiritual refreshment and the receiving the heavenly Christ sent from God. These elements appear to correspond—the repentance and blotting out of sins with Christ's sufferings (pointing to the Atonement), the spiritual refreshment with Christ's resurrection life, and the receiving of Christ sent from the Father in heaven with the glorified Christ.)

7) But it is the Crucified Lord, as well as the risen Lord, who is sent to us and who meets us and who represents us. Peter amazingly points to this in verse 20 when in speaking of the sending of Jesus Christ (Who has been received into heaven v. 21) he calls him the "Before-Proclaimed-One". Now, in the sermon so far, the only "before proclaiming" has been the prophetic announcement by God through the mouth of all the prophets concerning the suffering of Christ in v. 18. It is reasonable to see that Peter in v. 20 is therefore referring back to v. 18: the Christ who is sent from heaven is also the Christ who suffered on earth: His glory is in His suffering as well as in His exaltation. (In John's Gospel especially, Jesus is glorified *in* His being lifted up (same Greek word as "exalted") on the cross.)

(Unfortunately, NA27 has the “Before-Appointed One, not the “Before-Proclaimed-One”, in” v.20).

8) The view that we are risen with Christ and (now) seated in the heavenly places (Eph. 2:6) is not included in Peter's presentation of the Gospel. Could this be linked with the fact that Peter and John were, at this early time in the history of the church and the development of the doctrine which we have in the entirety of the New Testament writings, still participating in the Temple services where (symbolically) men ascend to God *in* the sacrificial system and the prayers, and the priest enters God's house on their behalf? The questioning of the role of the Temple in Acts starts with Stephen in Acts Chs. 6 and 7, although we also note that the Temple continued to play a significant role in Acts for many Jewish believers—including Paul (e.g. Acts 21:17-26).

9) The connection between prophecy and suffering. (e.g. in the life of Jeremiah and in Jesus' words about the killing of the prophets: a prophet should not suffer outside Jerusalem etc. ) It is as the “before proclaimed” Christ that He comes to us (as noted above). This reminds us that in Revelation, Jesus in heaven is the Lamb having been slain. Note: the prophets are not called the *holy* prophets in v. 18, cf. v. 21).

10) The prophets were mediators between God and men. They entered God's heavenly counsels (Amos 3:7— “*Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets*”) and even participate—sometimes successfully (Moses) sometimes unsuccessfully (Jonah) in advocating a course of action different from the one that God appeared to have chosen. They communicated God's will and His messages to the people, and they also represented the people before God often with great suffering as noted above. Moses in an example of this two-way “advocacy” or mediatorial activity. He met with God, symbolically ascending to heaven when he ascended Mount Sinai, and delivered God's messages—including the Torah and the plan for the tabernacle—to the people.

11) In Peter's sermon, as we shall see more fully later, the prophets' own mediatorial roles are also those of Christ—who is *the* Prophet—they embody their message, just as Christ also did completely. In this section of the sermon however, we note that the prophets announce beforehand the sufferings of Christ (v. 18) and that later we will see the prophets announcing the corresponding other half of their work—Christ being raised up (to heaven) from there to speak authoritatively to men (v. 22-23). In Peter's

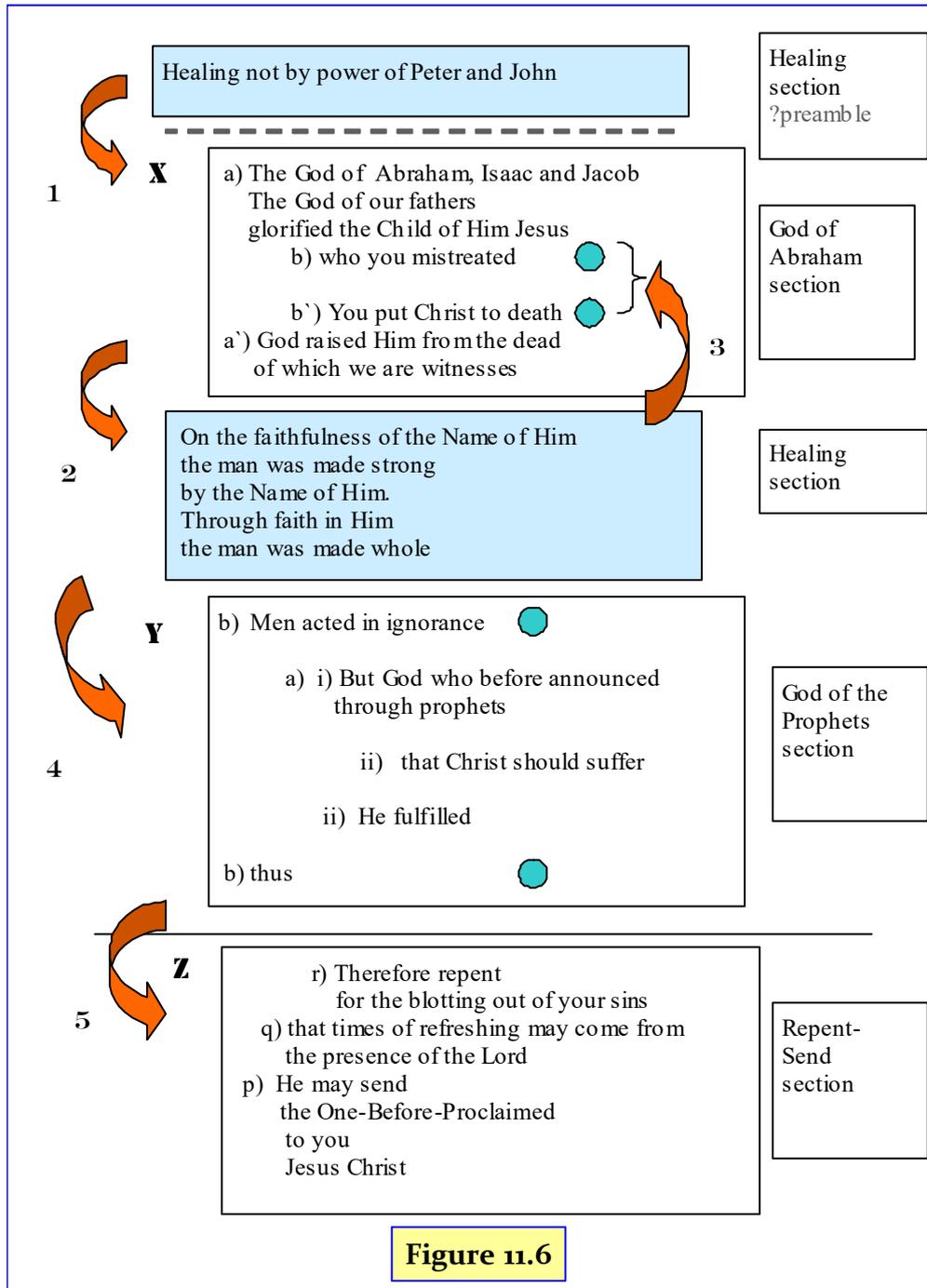
sermon, Christ is only specifically called the Prophet however in connection with this latter role—not with respect to His suffering—unless we are to understand the “raising up” of the Prophet as *implying* His former suffering (which includes His death). Christ certainly viewed Himself as a suffering prophet (“Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem”. Luke 13:33)

12) The “prophetic” perspective on Israel’s wicked actions in relation to Christ (where God is complicit in Christ’s sufferings, and in some way even complicit in Israel’s actions contrasts with the Abrahamic perspective in which God dramatically reverses Israel’s actions (vs. 13-15). God here “makes sure” that Jesus is rescued and honoured and restored in heaven. the fate of Israel is not covered at this point. We will attempt to see how this all links in with the later reference to Abraham and the covenant (v. 25) in a later chapter. Nevertheless, the Abrahamic and prophetic aspects together surround the explanation of the healing of the man through Jesus (v. 16) whose symbolic significance has been noted. together the Abrahamic aspects have “rescued and restored Christ” and the prophetic aspects have made possible the rescuing and restoring of men so that this can be followed by the command to repent and the promise of forgiveness and blessing and restoring of the relationship between men and Christ in v. 19.

13) Finally we will note the significance of the use of the word *paida* in v. 13 (and v. 26). It means both child and servant: we are reminded of the suffering, Servant of Isaiah e.g. Is. Ch. 53, and also verses like “God did not spare His only Son”. But both as Servant and as Son He is also raised up and glorified. There is much here which should be explored much more fully: for example, verses like Christ’s prayer in John’s Gospel, “Glorify the Son that the Son may glorify Thee”. and “My Servant will be lifted up” in Isaiah Ch. 53. There is also a double meaning to being “lifted up” - particularly in John’s Gospel. We will see later that Christ is also the “*paida*”, not only of God but also of Abraham: Isaac, Abraham’s son was, (in type), resurrected and (also in type) glorified through the substitutionary “ascension (burnt) offering” in Genesis Ch. 22 (please see also Heb. 11:17-19) Perhaps we could see that Christ was also a *paida* of Abraham in the “servant” sense also since He faithfully fulfilled the promise to Abraham as we will discuss further later.

### *Dynamic Development of Peter's Argument in vs. 12-20*

Using the above discussion and Figure 11.5, we can see how Peter has developed his "argument" in the first half of his sermon. This is shown in Figure 11.6 below.



Notes on the development of Peter's argument

1) In the opening section that we have called the “preamble” Peter explains that the power to heal the lame man did not lie with “us” - that is himself and John. By saying that this is not the explanation, he creates the expectation (arrow no. 1 in Figure 11.6) that the true explanation will follow—and it does!

2) The first part of the explanation is given in X—namely that God has glorified and raised Jesus (Xa and Xa') and this is followed with the explanation in the “blue box” that the healing has been possible because Jesus is faithful, and also that faith has been placed in Jesus (certainly by Peter and John—the role of faith on the part of the man is not clear). These steps are indicated by arrow 2.

3) However, Xb and Xb' have described Israel's sins, and this raises the question as to *why* Jesus, raised and glorified by God, should show such faithfulness and goodwill to the lame man—a “token” of His goodwill to Israel at large—when He had been rejected and treated so badly by them. This “tension” is indicated by arrow 3.

4) This question is answered in section Y. The green circles in sections X and Y, corresponding to Israel's sins, indicate that the question has been “transferred” from section X to section Y (arrow 4). The “sinfulness” has been softened in Y both by Peter's words regarding “acting in ignorance” and especially by the information that God was involved in Christ's sufferings. This information is appropriately placed at the centre of the chiasm in Y—with the green dots at the periphery.

5) With this explanation for the healing, i.e. i) that Jesus is alive and powerful and approved by God, ii) that the man's physical healing by Jesus points to the possibility that spiritual healing can be extended to Israel and iii) that God was in some way involved in Christ's sufferings, (and Peter's words at this point in the sermon indicate that this makes a big difference to the situation), Peter can now (arrow 5) present the exhortation to repent, and consequently to reap the wonderful spiritual benefits given in section Z.

6) The sermon does not explain *everything* about atonement and salvation! It is an inspired response to the healing and given to the audience of Israelites at a particular time in salvation history.

As already noted, we do not see a developed “atonement theory” in this sermon, but many of the “raw materials” are there in the linking of Christ's sufferings, Israel's sins and God's plan (in Y) and the assurance

that repentance will result, not just in the blotting out of sins, but in other aspects of salvation including God's goodwill and blessing in the form of refreshing and the sending to them of His own precious Son, Jesus Christ.

Also, although the notion of being risen with Christ (i.e. of being brought to life spiritually *in* Him and of making a heavenly ascent with Him) is not explicitly stated, nevertheless communication between God and Israel has been established through Christ's descent to men: He is the fulfilment of the "ladder" linking heaven and earth of Jacob's dream at Bethel) (Gen. 28:12, John 1:51).

Perhaps we might also speculate that the identification of the believer with Christ—the truth of our being "in Christ" referred to above may also be hinted at since Peter i) refers to his hearers as sons of the prophets and especially ii) calls Abraham their father. These aspects are discussed below:

Well Jesus is the One about whom the prophets spoke, (and is in fact *the* Prophet) and Peter describes his hearers as sons of the prophets. Also, Peter makes much of the fact that Moses prophesied that the Prophet would be one of the people (v. 22): they are represented by, perhaps even *in*, Him. In both these ways, Jesus is closely identified, in the "prophecy" aspect of the sermon, with the people.

Also it is true that Jesus is a son of Abraham—indeed He is *the* Seed of the covenantal promise to Abraham, and Peter's hearers too are sons of Abraham. There is thus an identification between them. In this second case, we can go further because the covenantal promise is that all the lineages will be blessed *in* Him—in Christ the Seed of Abraham. The truth of the believer being *in Christ* is thus present in a rudimentary form in this sermon.

Again, also, there is no mention in this sermon of the Holy Spirit—unless we see the expression "times of refreshing" in v. 20 as a reference to the spiritual refreshment that comes from the sending of the Holy Spirit (as suggested by William S. Kurz in his Acts commentary p. 74). However, the receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit was emphasised in Peter's Pentecost sermon—so when these sermons are considered together, we get a more complete picture of the work of the Triune God in Salvation. The topic of "completeness" will be discussed further when we are considering Peter's sermon in its entirety.





