EN ΤΩΙ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΙ ΤΟΥ ΝΑΖΩΡΑΙΟΥ

In the Name of the Nazarene

TA TOU DRAMATOS PROSOPA

ΛΟΥΚΑΣ
ΙΕΡΕΙΣ
ΠΕΤΡΟΣ
ΧΟΡΟΣ (ΛΑΟΣ ΙΣΡΑΗΛ)

The scene is set in Jerusalem, ten to a dozen weeks after the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth by the Roman governor at the instigation of the Jewish religious authorities.

Led by Peter, the disciples of Jesus have been inspired to continue the mission of their teacher, whom they now proclaim as the Messiah, the divinely-anointed (‘christos’) Saviour King, foretold by the prophets.

Peter has just performed his first recorded miracle (the healing by faith of a man who was born a cripple) and preached to a large crowd in the city. He told them that God ‘gave the highest honour to his servant, Jesus’ and ‘raised him from the dead’; that anyone who calls on God in his name shall have his sins forgiven; and indeed that salvation is to be found in Jesus alone (hence, not simply in the strict observance of Mosaic Law, as interpreted by the priests and doctors of law). Fighting words...

That evening, on the orders of the high priests, Peter and John are arrested and put under guard until the following day.

1 The play is a dramatisation of the fourth chapter (vv. 1-31) of the Acts of the Apostles.

It was conceived as a sequel to The Conquering Hero Comes (which was taken from Psalm 24, 7-10; cf. notes 3 and 4 below). In other words, it was first intended as a tool for the teaching of Ancient Greek by direct method to beginners at a primary school, providing a simple but powerful text, more than 2000 years old, for them to learn and perform in the original language. In its shorter recension, it would be suitable for the same class who gave the premiere of the earlier play.

The text has been abridged, but apart from the replacement of the participle ‘saying’ to the finite form ‘you who said’ in verse 25, the only changes are to the punctuation (minimal) and to the lay-out: the lines have been printed as free verse to assist declamation; and the names of the speakers have been added in English. Verse numbers are given at the beginning of each speech.

2 The didascalia draws on the first three chapters of Acts. The estimate of ‘ten to a dozen’ weeks allows enough time (after the elapse of seven weeks from the Crucifixion down to the feast of Pentecost (2.1; cf. 1. 3) for the first period of growth during which the new community rose in numbers ‘day by day’ (2. 47) from the original 120 (cf. 1. 15) via the arrival of an extra 3000 (cf. 2. 41) to the present figure of 5000 (4. 4).

The phrase ‘God did the highest honour to’ (3. 13) is in keeping with the cautious wording of Peter’s earlier statement on the day of Pentecost itself, that Jesus was ‘a man singled out by God and made known to you by miracles, portents, and signs, which God worked among you through him’ (2. 22). But it was provocative to claim that the disciples were able to ‘forgive sins’ through Baptism in Jesus’s name (2. 38), as we know from the opening of the Gospel of Mark (1. 5-6.)

Peter has twice already asserted that Jesus is the anointed Messiah, prophesied by Moses, David, and all the prophets (2. 25 ff. and 3. 17), although it is clear that his present understanding of the Messiah is still that of a king who will ‘establish once again the sovereignty of Israel’ (cf. 1. 6). But Jesus is not yet the ‘Son of God’. His followers are recognised by the priests simply as ‘having been with Jesus’ (4. 14); and Peter pins him down as the ‘Nazarene’ — hence my title.
EN ΤΩΙ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΙ ΤΟΥ ΝΑΖΩΡΑΙΟΥ

In the Name of the Nazarene

STORYTELLER (LUKE)

1Οἱ ἱερεῖς καὶ ὁ στρατηγὸς τοῦ ἱεροῦ
3ἐπέβαλον αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας
καὶ ἔθεντο εἰς τήρησιν εἰς τὴν αὔριον·
5ἡν γὰρ ἐσπέρα ἡδη.

5Πολλοὶ δὲ τῶν ἀκουσάντων τὸν λόγον ἐπίστευσαν,
καὶ ἐγενήθη ὁ ἀριθμὸς τῶν ἄνδρων ὡς χιλιάδες πέντε.

6Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐπὶ τὴν αὔριον συναχθῆναι αὐτῶν
tοὺς ἀρχόντες καὶ τοὺς πρεσβύτερους καὶ τοὺς γραμματεῖς
ev Ἰερουσαλήμ,
καὶ Ἀννας ὁ ἄρχων, καὶ Καϊάφας,
καὶ στήσαντες αὐτούς ἐν τῷ μέσῳ ἐπυνθάνοντο·

THE PRIESTS

7Ἐν ποίᾳ δυνάμει ἢ ἐν ποίῳ ὄνοματι ἐποίησατε τοῦτο ὑμεῖς;

PETER

8Ἀρχόντες τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ πρεσβύτεροι,
10γνωστὸν ἐστώ πάσιν ύμῖν, καὶ παντὶ τῷ λαῷ Ἰσραήλ,
ὅτι ἐν τῷ ὄνοματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Ναζωραίου,
ὅτι ὑμεῖς ἐσταυρώσατε,
ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἤγειρεν εἰς νεκρῶν.

12Καὶ οὐχ ἦσαν ἐν ἄλλῳ οὐδενὶ ἡ σωτηρία.

STORYTELLER

13Θεωροῦντες δὲ τὴν τοῦ Πέτρου παρρησίαν καὶ Ἰωάννου,
καὶ καταλαβόμενοι
ὅτι ἀνθρώπων ἀγαθοί εἰσιν καὶ ιδιώτατοι,
ἐθαύμαζον,
ἐπεγίνωσκόν τε αὐτούς ὧν αὐτῶν ἦσαν.

15Κελεύσαντες δὲ αὐτοὺς ἐξω τοῦ συνεδρίου ἀπελθεῖν,
sυνέβαλλον πρὸς ἄλληλους, λέγοντες:
Τί ποιήσωμεν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τούτοις; ὡς μὲν γὰρ γνωστὸν σημεῖον γέγονεν δι’ αὐτῶν πάσιν τοῖς κατοικούσιν Ἰερουσαλήμ φανερόν, καὶ οὐ δυνάμεθα ἀρνεῖσθαι.

Ἀλλὰ ἵνα μὴ ἐπὶ πλείον διανεμηθῇ εἰς τὸν λαόν, ἀπειλησόμεθα αὐτοῖς μηκέτι λαλεῖν ἐπὶ τῷ ὄνοματι τοῦτῳ μηδενὶ ἀνθρώπων.

Καὶ καλέσαντες αὐτοὺς παρήγγειλαν τὸ καθόλου μὴ διδάσκειν ἐπὶ τῷ ὄνοματι τοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

Εἰ δίκαιόν ἐστιν ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ὑμῶν ἀκούειν μᾶλλον ἢ τοῦ θεοῦ, κρίνατε· οὐ δυνάμεθα γὰρ ἡμεῖς ἡ εἰδαμεν καὶ ἡκούσαμεν μὴ λαλεῖν.

Οἱ δὲ ἀπέλυσαν αὐτοὺς, διὰ τὸν λαόν, ὅτι πάντες ἐδόξαζον τὸν θεὸν ἐπὶ τῷ γεγονότι.

Ἀπολυθέντες δὲ ἠλθον πρὸς τοὺς ἰδίους καὶ ἀπήγγειλαν ὡσα πρὸς αὐτοὺς οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι εἶπαν.

Οἱ δὲ ἀκούσαντες ὁμοθυμαδὸν φωνὴν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ εἶπαν·
THE PEOPLE (in prayer to God)

24Δέσποτα,
sù ὁ ποιήσας τὸν οὐρανὸν
καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς. 3

25σὺ τοῦ στόματος Δαυὶδ εἶπας,
“παρέστησαν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς
καὶ οἱ ἀρχόντες συνήχθησαν
κατὰ τοῦ κυρίου καὶ κατὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ”. 4

27συνήχθησαν γὰρ ἐπ’ ἀληθείας ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτη
ἐπὶ τὸν ἁγίον παιὰ σου Ἰσραήλ, ὃν ἔχρισας,
Ἡρῴδης τε καὶ Πόντιος Πιλάτος
σὺν έθνεσι καὶ λαοῖς Ἰσραήλ,
ποιῆσαι ὅσα ἤ χείρ σου καὶ ἢ βουλή προώρισεν γενέσθαι.

29Καὶ τὰ νῦν, Κύριε, ἐπιδε ἐπί τὰς ἀπειλὰς αὐτῶν
καὶ δὸς τοῖς δούλοις σου
μετὰ παροιμίας πάσης λαλείν τὸν λόγον σου.

STORYTELLER

31Καὶ δεηθέντων αὐτῶν
ἔσαλεν ὁ τόπος ἐν ὁ ἦσαν συνηγμένοι,
καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν ἀπαντες τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος
καὶ ἔλαλουν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ παροιμίας.

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4 Psalm 2. 2. It is this quotation (known to Luke in the Septuagint) that determined the lexical choices in verse 6.

In this adaptation I have cut the first verse of Psalm 2 and the explicit quotation of Psalm 118. 22 in verse 11.

In the first three chapters of Acts, Luke makes Peter quote from the Psalms six times: (in order) 69. 25; 109. 8; 16, 8-11; 132. 11; 118. 22; 146. 6. (He also quotes Gen. 22. 18; Exodus 3. 6; Deut. 32. 5; 18. 15, 19; Lev. 23. 29; Isaiah 57. 19; 52. 13; and Joel 2. 28-32; 3. 5).

David is referred to by name four times in the first two chapters (1. 16; 2. 25, 29, 34) as well as in verse 25 of chapter 4 (retained in this dramatisation). Incidentally, it was prophesied that the Messiah would be a ‘son of David’.