

8. Peter's Second Gospel Sermon: Acts 3:13-26

Chapter 3 began with the healing of the man, crippled from birth. This was a man known to all who had entered by the gate called Beautiful over the years, for he was placed there to beg. All the people were astonished and rushed to the apostles who were on Solomon's colonnade.

11 While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. 12 When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

As seen in the previous lesson, the happenings of this episode occur on Solomon's Colonnade—sometimes called Solomon's Porch. Solomon's Colonnade was inside the East Gate. That all the people were astonished and came running, established the authenticity of the miracle. With the crowd excited, Peter begins his sermon. After he recognizes them as men of Israel, he asks two rhetorical questions that set the stage for his sermon in the following verses. Why were they surprised? After all, they had been witnesses of the miracles of Jesus and the demonstration of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Why did they think it was by the power or godliness of the apostles? This last question demonstrates that miracles and signs are never by the power of man, but they are by the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

Peter Presents the Facts of the Gospel

Acts 3:13-14

13 *The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go.*
14 *You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you.*

Peter begins this sermon differently from how he began his first sermon (Acts 2). In that first sermon, he started in Acts 2:16, "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel." Here Peter begins by alluding to their venerated ancestors—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—saying that their God has glorified his servant Jesus. Peter speaks the facts of the gospel in harsh, convincing words: you handed him over to be killed, and you disowned the Holy and Righteous One. That Pilate had decided to let him go and that they asked for the release of a murderer only accentuated their guilt. Thus, Peter accuses them harshly and directly, "You killed the author of life." All of this leads Peter to the second fact of the gospel, "God raised him from the dead." Finally, Peter asserts that they are witness to this resurrection. In every regard, these facts of the gospel are the same as Peter preached in chapter 2 and Paul listed in 1 Cor 15:3-8:

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

That the Jews traded the life of Christ for the life of a murderer further condemned them for their acts. The indictment becomes even harsher, since they disowned the *Holy and Righteous One*.

Acts 3:15-16

15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. 16 By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.

The *author of life* speaks to the deity of Jesus in his capacity as the only begotten son of God (John 3:16) through whom all things were created and in his capacity as the author of salvation. John, Paul, and the Hebrews writer tell of the Son of God through whom all things exist. John wrote in John 1:3-5:

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

Paul taught that this authorship extended to all things in Col 1:16: "16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him." Heb 1:3 confirms this all-inclusive nature of the power of Christ in creation: "3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."

Important along with this authorship of the Son of God in the physical creation is his authorship of salvation. Heb 2:10 explains the role of Christ in salvation: "10 In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering." The Hebrew writer also states that Christ is both author and perfecter of our faith in Heb 12:2: "2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Peter states the facts of the gospel clearly in verse 15: they killed the author of life; God raised him from the dead; and the apostles and others present were eyewitnesses. Compare these facts to those presented by Paul in 1 Cor 15:3-8 cited above.

Acts 3:16 conclusively states that the power in the miracle was the power of the Lord Jesus. The faith necessary was the faith of the apostles. Indeed, the crippled man was unaware of what was happening to him until the miracle was complete. It is also important that the miracle was a complete healing of the man and it was apparent to the Jews. Present day, alleged miracles lack these characteristics of proof.

Repent, Then, and Turn to God

Acts 3:17-18

17 "Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. 18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer.

Peter transitions from accusing the Jews to a position from which he can teach them what they must do to be saved; therefore, he addresses them as brothers. Both they and their leaders acted out of ignorance. Their ignorance was no excuse as Paul was to teach in Acts 17:30-31:

30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.

God had foretold this suffering of his Christ. Now Christ becomes the fulfillment of those prophecies. Christ had taught that he was the fulfillment of the law and the prophets in Matt

5:17: "17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

Acts 3:19

19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you – even Jesus.

Repent and turn to God follows the teaching of Acts 2:38 when Peter taught, "38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." In Acts 3:19, sins that are wiped out parallels Acts 2:38 where Peter says that sins are forgiven. The phrase, *times of refreshing*, parallel the phrase, *the gift of the Holy Spirit*. "That he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you – even Jesus," must speak of the return of Jesus in the last day. That Jesus' return in the last day is the consummate conclusion to the gospel story becomes evident in the next verse.

Acts 3:21

21 He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

The restoration of the kingdom of God was promised from the beginning – a fact known by the Jews to whom Peter is speaking. It was this restoration that the apostles asked about after the ascension of Jesus in Acts 1:6: "6 So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" James quoted Amos in speaking of the restoration of the kingdom which included Jews and Gentiles in Acts 15:15-18:

15 The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:

16 "After this I will return
and rebuild David's fallen tent.

Its ruins I will rebuild,
and I will restore it,

17 that the remnant of men may seek the Lord,
and all the Gentiles who bear my name,
says the Lord, who does these things'

18 that have been known for ages.

Peter also wrote of the time when God would restore all Christians to his eternal glory in 1 Peter 5:10-11:

10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 11 To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

However, it was Paul who specifically placed the restoration of the kingdom at consummation of all things in 1 Cor 15:22-26:

22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

It is very clear that the New Testament teaching excludes modern millennial theories. The Christ reigns now as King of Kings and Lord of Lords

Christ Fulfilled All the Prophets

Acts 3:22-23

22 For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. 23 Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.'

In the preceding verse, Peter referred to the restoration of all things as prophesied; now, he connects the Christ whom they crucified to the promise of God to Abraham to raise up a prophet like him. The promise, found in Deut 18:15, 18,19, included commands for these Jews to whom Peter speaks: "You must listen to everything he tells you." And if do not "listen to him [you] will be completely cut off from among his people." These charges are just as true to hearers today as they were when they were first spoken.

Acts 3:24-26

24 "Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days. 25 And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.' 26 When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."

Peter's argument that Christ was the fulfillment of God's prophecies is now made the stronger by reminding these Jews that all the prophets from Samuel on had foretold these days. Finally, Peter shows that the promise to Abraham is now fulfilled so that all the peoples of the earth are blessed in the Christ, Abraham's offspring.

Peter concludes this powerful sermon by asserting that God raised up his servant, Jesus Christ, and sent him first to the Jews. However, Peter preaches that the blessing is only available if they, and all mankind by implication, turn each one from their wicked ways.

In chapter 4, the narrative turns to the responses of the Jewish leaders to the power of the miracles and to the power of the words of the apostles.