

## The Book Of Acts: Verse-by-Verse

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### Acts 3:11-26

As we finished last time, we saw how the miracle healing of the man born lame created a stir among the crowds at Solomon's Temple.

It's good for us to be reminded that these kinds of miracles, signs and wonders provided opportunities for the apostles to preach the Gospel. The emphasis is never on the miracles themselves, but the witness they made possible.

The miracle took place on the steps of the Beautiful Gate. Afterwards, Peter, John and the beggar entered the Temple courts. The news of the miracle spread quickly, so a large crowd of astonished people formed Solomon's Colonnade.

The colonnade was a "portico" that was formed by a double row of marbled columns and roofed with cedar, which ran all the way along the eastern wall of the outer court. The Gospels indicate that Jesus sometimes walked in Solomon's Colonnade and also taught there.

Seeing the crowd gathering, Peter took the opportunity to preach the Good News. This follows the same pattern we saw on the Day of Pentecost: The miracle of glossolalia provided Peter an opportunity to preach about Jesus.

Now, the cripple's healing provided a second platform for preaching. Peter is consistent in his two sermons: Both will focus on Christ's Messiahship as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

Let's start looking at the text, beginning with verse 11:

"While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade.

When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, 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? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus."

Peter's opening words are a lesson in priorities. He starts by giving the full credit for the miracle to Jesus. His leading question is remarkable: "Why does this miracle surprise you?" Certainly it did surprise them – and it probably surprised many in the apostle's outer circle. Isn't that the whole point of the miracle?

It's the confidence Peter possesses that strikes me. What a remarkable change from just weeks before these moments. The miracle is no surprise to him – the empowerment of the Spirit he and the other 120 received on the Day of Pentecost is being displayed in miracles.

As he points to the man who had been healed, Peter goes on to ask, "Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

Peter is moving the crowd from their first assumption that he and John somehow have done this miracle of their own accord. He asks, “Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?”

Now, that wouldn't have been a novel assumption. Israel's history is filled with prophets who performed miracles in Yahweh's Name. More recently, of course, there were the many miracles of Jesus. So, Peter is redirecting their thoughts from any ideas that he or John are claiming any kind of human-based supernatural abilities.

Instead, Peter immediately moves the sermon to an explanation of Jesus, by whose powerful name the miracle had taken place. Peter takes the current miracle and contextualizes it in the Old Testament as he says, “The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, had glorified his servant Jesus.”

Peter gives us a tremendous lesson just with those words. There is no human claim of extraordinary goodness or holiness. There is no prideful claim of some personal holiness that has generated a miracle. No, Peter points the crowd to Jesus. This is a lesson we all need to continually learn.

Peter's first sentences tie together what has just happened with the Old Testament scriptures his primarily Jewish audience are already familiar with. By calling God, “The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers ...”, Peter makes this connection.

Having identified Jesus as the real source of this outstanding miracle, Peter repeats the progression of his

Day of Pentecost sermon. He immediately outlines the Jews response to God's sending of his servant, Jesus.

In Acts 2:22-23 he told the crowd, "Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross."

Now he tells the crowd at Solomon's Colonnade:

"You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead.

Let's break down these verses into what one scholar has called "the fourfold dishonor" Jesus experienced at the hands of the Jewish authorities who represented all of Israel:

1. They handed him over to be killed.
2. They disowned him before Pilate.
3. They asked for Barabbas to be released, instead of Jesus.
4. They killed the "Author of Life".

I think there is an important point to be made here. Certainly, Peter is not saying that every person gathered at Solomon's Colonnade was responsible for this "fourfold dishonor" done to Jesus. He is speaking in corporate terms. Since Israel's leaders had done these things, the rank and file of Israel were also responsible.

This idea of corporate responsibility is found throughout the Scriptures. For example, Adam's rebellion is seen as the rebellion of all subsequent humans. Likewise, Achan's theft of items from the battle at Jericho was seen as Israel's sin – which is why they lost the subsequent battle at Ai.

Peter is using the same kind of language of corporate responsibility here. The sins of the religious leaders have fallen on the rank and file of Israel.

Let me point out another great consistency between Peter's first two sermons. In both cases, as Peter focuses on Jesus, he presents several titles for him. These sermons are decidedly "Christ-centered".

In the sermon before us Peter will allude to numerous titles for Jesus:

- In verse 6, he will call him, "Jesus Christ of Nazareth" and "God's Servant".
- In verse 14, he will call him, "The Holy and Righteous One".
- In verse 15, he will call him, "The Author of Life".
- In verse 22, he will call him, "The prophet foretold by Moses.

Let's come back to verse 15. Peter tells the crowd, "You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. 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 completely healed him, as you can all see."

As in the Acts 2 sermon, Peter is drawing a contrast between the Jewish response to Jesus and what God the Father did. They killed the "Author of Life", but God raised him from the dead.

Peter goes on to tell the crowd that the real source of the crippled man's healing was faith in Jesus. He's pointing back to what had happened at the Gate Beautiful. When the crippled man asked for a donation Peter told him he did not have silver or gold coins, but he did have something better.

Using the now familiar formula, Peter used the "Name of Jesus" and told the man, In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." – Acts 3:6

It's interesting that Peter says the man's miracle was a result of faith in Jesus. I'm not sure Peter means the crippled man's faith – after all – he had very little time to develop faith. It's probably more helpful to see Peter's statement as his own faith in Christ, which was transmitted to the crippled man at the time of his healing.

Now that Peter has contrasted the response of the Jewish leaders, and by association, the rank of file of Jews, he seems to soften his accusation somewhat as he says, "Now, fellow Israelites, 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 Messiah would suffer."

As others have noted, Peter was echoing the Old Testament distinction between sins of “ignorance” and sins of “presumption”. An example of this is seen in Numbers 15:27-29, where we read,

“But if just one person sins unintentionally, he must bring a year-old female goat for a sin offering. The priest is to make atonement before the LORD for the one who erred by sinning unintentionally, and when atonement has been made for him, he will be forgiven. One and the same law applies to everyone who sins unintentionally, whether he is a native-born Israelite or an alien.”

Peter’s next words indicate that, although Israel acted in ignorance, their decisions were used by God for his own predetermined intentions. In verse 18, Peter says, “But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer.”

Here, again, we have this theology of God working through the decisions of humans to accomplish his will. As with the actions of Judas or Pharaoh, God used their decisions to accomplish his own purposes, without forcing them to do so.

Just the same, Peter does not indicate that the decisions of the Jewish leaders, despite their ignorance of God’s plans, exonerated or excused their actions. Instead, in verse 19, Peter tells them that they must “repent ... and turn to God.”

Again, this reminds us of Peter’s Acts 2 sermon, in which he promised his hearers, “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.” – Acts 2:38

Here, in his second sermon, Peter tells those gathered that they must “repent ... and turn to God, and follows this directive with the promise of three successive blessings:

### **1. Their sins will be wiped out:**

In verse 19, Peter says, “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out...” For “wiped out”, Peter uses the Greek word, “Exaleiphoœ”, which means, to wash off, erase, or obliterate.

It is used in the book of Revelation both of God who wipes away our tears and of Christ who refuses to erase our name from the book of life.

William Barclay explains the allusion this way: “Ancient writing was upon papyrus, and the ink used had no acid in it. It therefore did not bite into the papyrus as modern ink does; it simply lay upon the top of it. To erase the writing a man might take a wet sponge and simply wipe it away.”

In essence, Peter was promising his hearers that when God forgave their sins, he would wipe the slate clean.

“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.

### **2. Times of Refreshing Will Come From The Lord:**

Peter says, “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” The Greek word here for



“refreshing” is “anapsyxis”, It can mean rest, relief, or refreshment.

### **3. God Will Send Christ (Again):**

In verse 20-21, Peter tells the crowd, “... That he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.”

Peter is telling us, that, although Christ is continually giving us his forgiveness and his refreshment, He will remain with His Father’s until the time comes for God to restore everything – as promised through the prophets.

There is some debate as to whether Peter has in mind the overall promises of God or the restoration of the universe. The Greek word for “restoration” here is “apokatastasis”. The most natural rendering is the context of the “end times”. As such, Peter probably is thinking of the time when God reveals a new heavens and earth – following the Second Coming of Christ.

In Greek literature, many writers spoke of the universe’s “cycles”. This involved periodic destruction by fire, followed by a form of rebirth. The Jewish people expected something else.

They anticipated Israel’s restoration since this was a central message of the Old Testament prophets. (See: Isaiah 40:9-11; Jeremiah 32:42-44; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Hosea 11:9-11; 14:4-7; Amos 9:11-15.

Years later, Peter will place these expectations within the framework of the “end times” when he writes this in his

second epistle:

“... The present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.” – 2 Peter 3:7-10

Peter strings all these Old Testament prophecies of Jesus together. He tells the crowd that repenting and turning to God will put them in line with God's promises of forgiveness, spiritual refreshment, and the ultimate restoration of all things.

Since all these things were outlined in the Old Testament, Peter continues his sermon with some quotations and allusions. This, again, is reminiscent of his Acts 2 sermon in which Peter quoted both the Psalms and Isaiah as he presented Christ's Messianic role in salvation.

In this Acts 3 sermon, he refers to three major prophetic strands which are associated with Moses, Samuel, and Abraham.

**The first quote is from** Deuteronomy 18. Moses says, “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 (22), for anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people” - Deuteronomy 18:15,18,19

**The second quote is from** 2 Samuel 7:12-14. It says, “When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men.”

Peter is using 2 Samuel to remind the Jews that God promised a forthcoming Messiah that would descend from the kingdom of David, which began under Samuel’s ministry.

**The Third set of quotes** from God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 28 where he says, “Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.” -Genesis 28:14

As many commentators have pointed out, this was a foundational promise of the Old Testament. Through Abraham’s decedents, God would bless the world. In keeping with God’s order of revelation, the Jews were meant to be the first beneficiaries of this promise. As such, Peter tells them, “When God raised up his servant Jesus, he sent him first to you to bless you”.

If we summarize what Peter has said so far, we see a definite progression of revelations taken from the Old Testament:

1. In verses 13,& 18, Peter presents Christ as the “Suffering Servant”.
2. In verses 22-23 He is the “Moses-like Prophet”.
3. In verses 25-26, He is the “Davidic king”.
4. In verses 25-26 He is “The Seed of Abraham.

Combined with Peter’s Acts 2 sermon, and his later defense before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4, we find a thorough portrait of Christ as Israel’s Messiah.

If, as John Stott suggests, we look at these references chronologically, we find Jesus’ ministry well documented by Peter. It looks something like this:

1. He was descended from David - Ps. 132:11
2. He suffered and died as God’s servant – Isaiah 53
3. As the “Capstone” He was the stone the builders rejected. – Psalm 118:22
4. God raised him from the dead. – Isaiah 52:13
5. God exalted him to his right hand, to wait for his final triumph. - Psalm 110:1.
6. In the meantime, through Him the Spirit has been poured out. - Joel 2:28.
7. The Gospel is to be preached world-wide. – Isaiah 57:19

8. People must listen to him or pay the penalty of their disobedience. – Deuteronomy 18:18–19.

9. Those who listen to Christ and respond will inherit the blessing promised to Abraham. – Genesis 12:3; 22:18.

I think you would agree that Peter gave his audiences a very comprehensive testimony of Jesus' ministry and messianic role. It follows that, having presented such a straightforward outline, Peter could justifiably insist that repentance and turning to God were the only means of salvation.

Peter has given them the necessary evidence to make such a decision to accept the One that they had previously rejected. God has vindicated Jesus not only by the Resurrection, but the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

As the Peter told the crowd, the authority of the Name of the "Author and giver of life" had enabled the crippled man to be healed by faith in Jesus.

Next, we will see the response of the crowd and the persecution it aroused from the religious leaders.