

December 3, 2017

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

MINISTRY INVOCATION

“O God: You have spoken to us with power in your Words. We receive those words as law to our being. In Jesus’ Name... Amen.”

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW AND UNDERSTAND

THE APPLIED FULL GOSPEL DISTINCTIVE

We believe in the indwelling of the Holy Ghost for all believers and that the Holy Ghost verifies and validates the Believer as part of the Body of Christ.

Background Scripture –

Key Verse – Acts 3:14-15

Lesson Scripture – Acts 3:11-26

Acts 3:11–26 (NKJV)

Preaching in Solomon’s Portico

¹¹ Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon’s, greatly amazed. ¹² So when Peter saw *it*, he responded to the people: “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? ¹³ The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *Him* go. ¹⁴ But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. ¹⁶ And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which *comes* through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

¹⁷ “Yet now, brethren, I know that you did *it* in ignorance, as *did* also your rulers. ¹⁸ But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, ²⁰ and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. ²² For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘*The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.*’ ²³ *And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.*’ ²⁴ Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. ²⁵ You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘*And in your seed all the families of the*

earth shall be blessed.’²⁶ To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one *of you* from your iniquities.”

COMMENTARY

3:11 Verse 11 is transitional, linking the healing narrative in the temple with Peter’s sermon from Solomon’s Colonnade. Solomon’s Colonnade lay along the eastern wall and thus across the court of the Gentiles and some distance from the sanctuary. Although Luke did not mention any exit from the sanctuary, one has to assume that the group exited the temple by way of the beautiful gate, traversed the court of the Gentiles, and reassembled at Solomon’s portico. The scene was now set for Peter’s speech. The healed man was there as living evidence of the miracle, holding fast to Peter and John. The crowd likewise came running to the scene with a mixture of curiosity and awe. Peter was not about to miss this opportunity for witness.

2. Peter’s Sermon from Solomon’s Colonnade (3:12–26)

Comparison of this sermon with Peter’s sermon at Pentecost reveals many of the same elements. The elements in common are the address (“Men, Israelites”), beginning the sermon by correcting a false impression, reference to God’s “glorifying” Jesus, a contrast of Jesus’ death with his resurrection, reference to the apostles’ witness to the resurrection, the responsibility of the Jerusalemites for Jesus’ death, extensive proofs from the prophets, references to Jesus’ exaltation and God’s divine purposes, and an appeal for repentance.

The two sermons contain significant differences as well. For example, the scriptural proofs in the Pentecost sermon aim at establishing the messianic status of Jesus. Those in this sermon are aimed at the need for the Jews to repent and accept Jesus as the one sent from God. A far greater proportion of this sermon is devoted to the appeal. Also, there are new elements in this sermon: an emphasis on faith, a softer treatment of the Jewish responsibility for Jesus’ death, and a number of striking, perhaps early Jewish-Christian titles for Jesus, such as Servant, Holy and Righteous One, Author of life, and Prophet-like-Moses. The speech itself falls into two main portions. First, Peter established the relationship between the healing of the lame man and the basic Christian proclamation of the death and resurrection of Christ (3:12–16). Then he appealed to the Jews to repent and accept Christ as the Messiah sent from God (3:17–26).

3:12 Verses 12 and 16 go closely together. Verse 12 raises the question about the power behind the man’s healing. Verse 16 provides the answer. In between is

inserted the basic kerygma of the death and resurrection of Christ and the Jewish responsibility in those events. The basic function of vv. 13–15 is to establish the Jewish guilt in rejecting Jesus. The remainder of the sermon is basically an appeal to repent and affirm Christ.

Peter began by seeking to correct any misunderstanding that he or John had healed the man by their own power or piety. No, it was faith in the name of Jesus that healed the man (v. 16). But how could the name of Jesus have such power? Verses 13–15 answer that question. The power is his by virtue of his glorification (v. 13) and his resurrection (v. 15). The “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” had glorified his servant Jesus, raising him from the dead (v. 15). The patriarchal formula was a familiar one in Judaism. It is perhaps not by accident that the same formula appears in Luke 20:37, a passage that deals with the resurrection. God is the God of the living. The glorification refers to Christ’s exaltation to God’s right hand. As the glorified, risen One, Christ has the power to grant healing in his name.

3:13–15 One is struck by the unusual title “servant” applied here to Jesus. It is not a common title for Jesus in the New Testament. Here in chap. 3, particularly in a context dealing with the death of Jesus, it is tempting to see an allusion to Christ as the suffering servant of Isaiah. This becomes even more likely when one considers the possible allusions to the servant psalms.

Finally, the most likely prophecies of Christ’s suffering would be those of Isa 52:13–53:12. The suffering servant concept is prominent throughout the New Testament. The emphasis in the use of a servant Christology in Acts 3:13, 26 is not on the vicarious death but on the election of Christ as servant. God has chosen him, sent him, and exalted him. The Jewish guilt lies in their rejection and denial of God’s chosen servant.

Even though God glorified Jesus, the Jerusalemites did the opposite, handing him over to death and disowning him before Pilate. Pilate is said to have decided to let him go. Both here and in the Gospel, Pilate was primarily a witness to the guilt of the Jerusalem Jews. He “surrendered Jesus to their will”. The Jerusalemites requested that a murderer be released to them, for they were themselves murderers. They killed “the author of life” (v. 15). But the seeming defeat of the cross ended in victory: “God raised him from the dead.” Peter and John were themselves witnesses to the reality of his resurrection. The guilt of the Jerusalem Jews was well established. Their real guilt was, however, not so much in their delivering God’s chosen one to death as in their denial of Jesus.

Peter continued to emphasize this in the remainder of his sermon. God sent the Christ to bless them, the sons of the covenant, but they disowned him.

In vv. 14–15 three additional terms are applied to Christ—the Holy One, the Righteous One, and the Author of life. In the New Testament it appears to be a messianic term. Demons (Mark 1:24) and men (John 6:69) confessed Jesus as “Holy One of God.” There is some evidence for the messianic use of Righteous One prior to Christianity; it appears as a title for the Messiah.

The word has a double nuance, meaning either leader/pioneer or author/originator. In this passage either meaning could be applied. Christ is either the author, the originator and source of life, or he is the leader in the resurrection-life, the firstborn from the dead. The term is not a messianic title as such but an apt summary of the work of Christ in a context that deals with resurrection.

3:16 Having established that Christ has been exalted by God in light of his resurrection, and consequently that he is now in the position to dispense the divine Spirit and power, Peter answered his original question about the power behind the lame man’s healing. Ultimately the name, the power of Jesus, healed the man—not Peter’s or John’s power. But the power of Jesus worked through faith. Whose faith? That of the apostles or that of the man? Perhaps Luke deliberately left it open. Surely Peter worked by faith. But what about the man? If he had little faith to begin with, the miracle that led him to this point—clinging as he did to the apostles was already bringing about in him the greater miracle of faith in Christ, the Author of life. Perhaps this is what Luke wanted us to see by emphasizing faith alone rather than the possessor of faith. For after all, faith is the greatest miracle of all, and that miracle stood open to all in Solomon’s Colonnade that day.

The concluding portion of Peter’s sermon can be divided into two parts, both relating to the need for the Jews to repent. Verses 17–21 give the basic call to repentance and the blessings God will grant them as a result. Verses 22–26 give scriptural support for the appeal.

3:17–18 One is struck by the conciliatory tone of vv. 17–18. The Jews in Jerusalem acted “in ignorance” when they did not recognize Jesus as the Holy and Righteous One, the anointed Servant of God. In actuality, he was the author of life for them, but they sent him to his death. This was a sin of ignorance. Had they known him for who he truly was, “they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” Such sins were considered by the Jews as forgivable sins and were distinguished from conscious, intentional sins, which the Old Testament describes as those done “with a high hand.” Means of atonement were available for sins of ignorance, but not for intentional, deliberate sins. Jesus himself had recognized their ignorance in crucifying him and had already prayed for their

forgiveness. Thus, Peter was offering the Jerusalem Jews a second chance. Once they had disowned the Christ. It was, however, a rejection in ignorance. Now they could accept Christ and be forgiven. Should they fail to do so once Peter gave them a full understanding of Christ's true identity, it would be a wholly different matter, a deliberate, "high-handed" rejection.

In these passages that deal with the Jewish responsibility for Jesus' death, it should be borne in mind that there are four mitigating emphases. One is this emphasis on ignorance. A second is that Acts nowhere contains a blanket condemnation of the Jews: only the Jerusalem Jews are given responsibility in Jesus' death. In Paul's speeches to the Jews of the dispersion, he never charged them with any guilt in Jesus' crucifixion but made clear that only the Jerusalemites were responsible. Third, the Gentiles are shown to have shared in the culpability. Finally, the suffering of the Messiah was bound up with God's own divine purposes (v. 18): God foretold it, the prophets had spoken it, and the death of Christ fulfilled it.

The mystery of the divine sovereignty worked through the tragedy born of human freedom to bring about God's eternal purposes for the salvation of humanity. God took the cross, the quintessence of human sin, and turned it into the triumph of the resurrection. But where did the prophets predict this suffering of Christ?

3:19–20 Peter gave the call to repentance (v. 19) with two expressions: "repent" and "turn to God." The Jerusalem Jews were to have a complete change of mind, turning from their rejection of Christ and turning, or "returning," to God. In rejecting God's Messiah, they had rejected God's purpose for them. Accepting the Messiah would thus, be a return to God. Peter gave the threefold result of their repentance: (1) their sins would be forgiven, (2) the "times of refreshing" would come upon them, and (3) God would send the Messiah whom he had appointed for them. The forgiveness of sins is clear enough. Throughout Acts repentance is closely connected with forgiveness; indeed it is the basis for forgiveness.

The main sin Peter laid upon the Jerusalem Jews was their sin of ignorance in rejecting the Messiah. True forgiveness could only have come from their turning to God by accepting his Messiah. Then only would "the times of refreshing" come from the Lord. The reference is surely to the Messiah, as the presence of the articles indicates, "the Christ," the Anointed One. He is described as having been "appointed for you," i.e., "you Jews."

3:21 Verse 21 concludes Peter's appeal with an explanation for why the Messiah was not then present. He must remain in heaven until the final time when God will restore everything. The concept of restoration is basically the same as that

about which the disciples questioned in 1:6. The Messiah's present location in heaven presupposes the ascension and return at his Parousia (1:9–11). The question still remains: does 3:19–21 presuppose a Jewish messianic concept that understood the first coming of the Messiah as being predicated upon the repentance of Israel? The passage could surely be so viewed if taken in isolation from its context. In the context of Peter's sermon, however, something quite different is expressed. The difference lies in the reference at the opening of his sermon to Jesus' death and resurrection. The Messiah indeed has come as the glorified Servant, the Holy and Righteous One of God. But the Jerusalem Jews did not receive him as Messiah; they disowned him. He is indeed the Messiah appointed by God, but they failed to recognize and receive him as their Messiah. Only in receiving the Christ of God by repentance and turning to him is there forgiveness, refreshing, and restoration.

3:22–23 Still continuing his appeal, Peter then gave the negative side. Jesus is depicted as the "prophet like Moses" whom God will "raise up" and the people must heed (v. 22). Whoever does not listen to him will be utterly rooted out from the people (v. 23).

A new prophet would come, a newer and greater prophet than Moses—one whom the people must hear. The second was the reference to God's "raising up" this prophet. In the original context of Deuteronomy, the word simply meant to bring forth, but in application to Christ it was sure to be seen as a reference to his resurrection. Most significant of all, use of this text shows Moses himself to have been one of the prophets who witnessed to Christ. The application to Christ means that those who do not listen to him and turn to him in repentance will no longer be a part of the people of God.

3:24–25 Moses was not the only prophet who predicted the Christ. "Thus, all the prophets foretold these days, i.e., the days of salvation, the coming of Christ. For whom did the prophets speak if not for Israel? The Jews themselves were "the heirs of the prophets" (v. 25). With their fathers God established his covenants. To take comfort in their privileged position was easy. John the Baptist had already warned them of the danger of relying on their descent from Abraham and membership in the covenant community (Luke 3:8). Here Peter reminded them of the content of the covenant with Abraham: "Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed." It was not Peter's concern to emphasize the missionary imperative implicit in this promise to Abraham. At this point, he probably was largely unaware of it himself; God had to prod him pretty hard to witness to Cornelius (chap. 10). What Peter was concerned to do was to convince

his Jewish hearers that God's covenant with Abraham was fully realized in Jesus.

3:26 The word "offspring" is singular here. Christ is that sole offspring in whom blessing would come. First and foremost, he was Israel's Messiah. God sent him "first to you" (v. 26). Verse 26 serves as a suitable closure to the sermon because it recapitulates various earlier themes: the servant role of Christ (v. 13); God's "raising him up," with its overtone of resurrection (vv. 15, 22); the need for the Jews to repent and "turn" (v. 19). God sent his servant to them, to fulfill God's blessing to Abraham by turning each of them from their evil ways. There is significance in the little word "first," just as there is in Abraham's blessing extending to "all peoples on earth." It may have taken the apostles some time to fully realize the implications of the missionary imperative, but there it is. Peter was primarily concerned with the Jews. The gospel was preached to them first. Soon it would reach far beyond the boundaries of Judaism "to all the peoples on earth."

RELATED DISCUSSION TOPICS

CLOSING PRAYER

My God: I am grateful to have found You and kept You in the forefront of my being. Bless us continually with Your grace and mercy. They represent bountiful blessings for all of us. Amen.