

Preaching Jesus—Acts 3:13-18—4/28/24
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Open your bibles to Acts chapter 3 as we continue to study this history of the church & pick up after Peter healed this crippled man.

Follow along as I read the whole chapter: Acts 3:1-26. [READ]

This healing was an example of what Acts 2:43 referred to as the wonders & signs done through the Apostles.

Last week from verses 1-10, we saw this healing as undeniable & immediate & complete & public so that no one doubted it.

Verses 11-12 say all the people were full of amazement & ran to see this man & to hear Peter's answer to their amazement.

And now today we come to verses 13-18 to learn from Peter preaching Jesus in response to the crowd's wonder.

In this narrative about how the church began to expand, we can learn from how the Apostles preached as Jesus had promised.

Since we are preaching the same Jesus, we want to soak in the Apostles' messages to examine how we speak about Jesus.

The sermons in Acts are the Apostles' teaching on which the church was established that framed further NT writings.

Such sermons are helpful in evaluating what we've been taught & how we pass on the preaching of Jesus to others.

Realize that at any time in church history, we inherit whatever theology & practice was believed & taught in the generation before us.

And since that's never perfect, we need to be ready to examine what we've received by the standard of Scripture.

Do you ever think about that?

Every generation must have the goal of always reforming the church, not because we want to change things, but because we want to evaluate everything according to Scripture.

Such honest assessment must even include how & what we preach.

I know I've corrected & refined & improved a lot in how & what I preach about Jesus in my lifetime.

Sometimes those changes are easy to see & share with others & sometimes they are hard, but we always want to be open to learn.

And Peter's sermon in Acts 3 gives us a helpful opportunity to carefully assess the ways that we preach Jesus.

So our goal today is to learn from Peter preaching Jesus in ways that can both encourage our faith in Jesus & inform our preaching of Jesus.

We'll outline 3 ways to preach Jesus from Acts 3:13-18 that can strengthen our faith & improve our proclamation.

Verses 13-18 cover a LOT of material & it's all interconnected, but we'll unpack it under the headings of 3 ways to preach Jesus.

The 1st of those is that we preach Jesus historically.

Historically is the first adverb describing how Peter preached Jesus & how we also should preach Jesus if we grasp the lessons modeled here.

Point #1 is that we preach Jesus historically.

By historically, I mean Peter explained who Jesus is from both OT history & NT history, from both the promises & the fulfillments.

It's obvious, but we should be clear that Peter preached Jesus as a real historical Person & not a phantom or phenomenon.

Peter appealed to the explicit knowledge that his Israelite hearers knew about this majestic Man named Jesus who had walked among them.

Yet Peter also described Jesus with titles & categories promised throughout the OT that anchored expectations of Jesus far back in time in the mind of God.

Let's read Acts 3:11-13 to lead back into this to see this point. [READ]

Remember that Peter was replying to the people in verse 12.

The word Luke used is the word for 'answer' or 'reply' & not merely the word for speak or say or preach.

Peter was answering where this came from, explaining where to focus their marveling & he made clear it was not on him.

The focus was also not on a new revolutionary or new religion.

Rather, the first words of verse 13 point to the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, meaning the God who chose Israel & the Jews' ancestors & patriarchs.

The God who created the heavens & the earth in the beginning & governed all of history was the focus of Peter's sermon.

The God who promised a Deliverer to crush sin & Satan after the first sin & who punished the world by a global flood & scattered the nations at the Tower of Babel was the focus.

That God had chosen Abram to be the father of many nations & have a special descendant Seed who would bless all the families of the earth.

The God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob is how God referred to Himself to Moses in Exodus 3:6 & 15 & at other times.

So this name captured God's OT revelation all throughout history.

Peter addressed his listeners as men of Israel in verse 12 & then began verse 13 with the covenant-keeping God of their fathers.

That God they gathered to seek in prayer & praise was the source of the miracle they had witnessed.

That same God had glorified His Servant Jesus by fulfilling past promises & by exalting Jesus as the resurrected Lord.

So to understand & preach Jesus, we must do so historically.

We must be anchored in the revelation of the Creator God who promised a Savior through Abraham, Isaac & Jacob.

As I grew up in church, I don't remember learning such OT themes.

Kids, that's why we want you to know the promise of Genesis 3:15, the Seed of the woman who would save us from sin.

Maybe you started learning that promise from Kevin DeYoung's book *The Biggest Story* that called that Promised Savior the snake-crusher.

Jesus was promised from the beginning as the only hope of all history & that promise was narrowed to be through Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob & later through King David.

All of history was somehow carrying forward that promise of Jesus.

We must all know the proper way to see Jesus in all Scripture.

It's not by inserting symbols of Him where He's not spoken of—but it is by tracing these themes like the promised Seed.

That Seed is described as God's Servant in the prophet Isaiah.

And Peter's words in verse 13 point to the prophet Isaiah in His descriptions & predictions of His Servant.

The word for Servant in verse 13 is not the word for slave or bondservant, *doulos* in Greek, & it's also not *diaconos*.

It's a word that can also mean son or child—it's *Pais* in Greek.

And it's only used for Jesus 3 other times in Acts & once in Matthew 12:18, which is a quote from Isaiah 42.

The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT, uses the term for God's Servant in Isaiah 42 & God's Suffering Servant in Isaiah 49-53.

In Isaiah 42:1, God said, "*Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.*"

In that same section, Isaiah 42:6 is where God says this Servant will be a light to the nations.

This is the One that Yahweh spoke to in Isaiah 49:3, saying "*You are My Servant, Israel, in Whom I will show My glory.*"

In Isaiah 49:5-6, He said, "*now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the LORD, And My God is My strength), He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."*

Do you remember Isaiah 49:6 from when we studied Acts 1:8?

The phrase—to the end of the earth—is in Isaiah 49:6 & gets repeated in Acts 1:8 when Jesus commissioned the Apostles to be sent out.

Isaiah 48:6 says God's Servant is a light to the nations because it's too small for Him to only raise up the tribes of Jacob & restore the preserved ones of Israel.

This Servant of God is so worthy that His glory must be known to the end of the earth—that was Isaiah 49:6.

That's who the men of Israel should have thought of when Peter said the God of their fathers had glorified His Servant.

That Servant was promised to bring Jacob back to God so that Israel might be gathered to Him, as Isaiah 49:5-6 say twice.

Yet Peter was moving to the reality that this Servant of God was also mocked & mistreated & killed by His own people.

Listen to what this Servant of God said in Isaiah 50:4-7—in Isaiah 50:4-7, this Servant said, "*The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. The Lord GOD has opened My ear; And I was not disobedient Nor did I turn back. I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. For the Lord GOD helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed.*"

Do you hear the words written by Isaiah 700 years before Peter spoke what was fulfilled in Jesus?

The abuse & humiliation & spitting on Jesus were all predicted.

And that is God's Servant that Peter was preaching, God's Son.

Peter stated His name as Jesus, which was the name given to emphasize that He will save His people from their sins.

God had glorified His Servant Jesus that everyone knew about.

They knew Jesus the Nazarene as the transcendent teacher & miracle-worker whom they delivered over & denied as verse 13 says.

Peter preached Jesus as a real Person who came to His own & His own did not receive Him as John 1:11 says.

Everyone in the first century would've laughed at the blasphemous quests for the supposed historical Jesus in the past century.

Such quests would've been ridiculous because everyone knew Jesus as He was presented in the NT.

The Jews as a crowd & as a nation had betrayed & denied & rejected Jesus & handed Him over to the Roman rulers to be crucified.

And the chief Roman ruler was Pilate, who tried repeatedly to release Jesus as Pilate judged Jesus to be free from any guilt.

Luke 23 records 3 of the times Pilate declared Jesus' innocence—he found no guilt in Him—& also Pilate's attempts to free Jesus.

Matthew 27:19 reports that even Pilate's wife warned him to have nothing to do with Jesus because of Jesus' innocence.

But when Pilate tried to release Jesus, the Jewish crowds followed their leaders in frenzied rage calling for Pilate to crucify Him.

You know that story & can read it in detail in the Gospels.

Yet it's more than a story—it's true history about the Jesus we preach.

And it's also a model of the saving Gospel that Jesus provides.

Read Acts 3:14 to recall the exchange of Jesus for a condemned sinner like His exchange with us who trust Him for salvation. [READ]

As you can read in the Gospels, when Pilate tried to release Jesus, the crowds cried for Barabbas to be released instead.

Barabbas was a murderer, clearly guilty & condemned.

But Jesus was the Holy One set apart to God as completely pure & undefiled by sin.

John 6:69 says Peter confessed that & Luke 4:34 says demons knew it.

We saw that title of Jesus as Acts 2:27 quoted Psalm 16:10 about the Holy One who will overcome death & live forever.

And Isaiah 53:11 mentions Him as the Righteous One, the One who totally fulfilled every righteous requirement of God's law.

Jesus deserved honor, but they dishonored & Peter was reminding the men of Israel of their guilt in doing so.

A murderer was set free & the Holy & Righteous One was punished & they were the ones who called for it & denied their Promised Christ.

Yet that was the plan of God to pay the penalty for sin for all who ever trust God's Holy & Righteous Servant Jesus.

Turn to Isaiah 52-53 as we must read this prophesy of God's Suffering Servant who was glorified as the Righteous One who died for others.

Let's read that whole section—Isaiah 52:13-53:12. [READ]

That's God's Servant & our Savior—& that's 700 years before came!

Oh how wonderful it is to know Him & trust Him & love Him!

I trust you know this passage—please memorize at least the reference to Isaiah 53 as the Suffering Servant passage.

We must preach Jesus historically & we do so from Genesis 3:15 & Isaiah 53 & many other passages, but those 2 are key.

We trust & preach Jesus as the only hope for all history, promised throughout the ages & proven in His life, death & resurrection.

Jesus & His followers did not begin Christianity as a new religion in the 1st century AD.

Rather, Jesus was the hope of all faith in the true God from the beginning & His followers made that clear in their preaching.

They preached Jesus historically & so should we.

Faithful preaching of Jesus comes both from OT history & from the NT history that the Apostles lived & wrote that has been passed on.

Jesus is not a feeling or an experience or a myth or fable or movement or nice idea or set of morals.

Jesus is a real Man from history who was promised to come because He already existed as God the Son & the Giver of Life.

Yet in strange contrast, the Jews had put Him to death.

They killed the Author of life & yet God raised Him from the dead.

Read Acts 3:15 where Peter said that. [READ]

As Isaiah 52-53 predicted, Jesus' death was part of God's plan so that He could glorify Jesus by raising Him from the dead.

That was another historical fact that no one disputed here.

Jesus' resurrection was not debated or questioned—it was proven by the testimony of many witnesses like those listed in 1st Corinthians 15.

Peter said he & John & other Apostles were witnesses that God raised Jesus from the dead, the same Jesus the Jews had denied & delivered over to death.

The Jewish listeners were guilty of putting Jesus to death because they had gathered in Jerusalem & cried out for Jesus to be crucified.

Though they had not driven the specific nails into Jesus' body, they were still guilty as Peter said they put Jesus to death.

But God had raised Him up & that resurrection is vital to the Gospel.

Preaching Jesus must include preaching the resurrection because Jesus was not only historical but also victorious.

So let's note that as a 2nd point about the way Peter preached Jesus & the way we must do likewise—#2, we must preach Jesus victoriously.

We must preach Jesus, #1, historically & #2, victoriously.

Jesus was to be known not only as the Prince of Life, but also as the Conqueror of death because He rose from the dead.

That word for Prince is the word for Author or Originator or Founder as it's translated in Hebrews 2:10 & 12:2.

We need to see it as a reference both to Jesus' deity & to His ability to provide life to others physically & spiritually.

Jesus went ahead & prepared the way to life.

Jesus' resurrection proved He held the power of life in Himself such that no power could keep Him in the grave as Peter said in Acts 2:24.

Peter preached Jesus victoriously in His power to give life & in His power to overcome death & return to Life as a man.

Jesus had declared He has life in Himself in John 5:26 & that He is the resurrection & the Life in John 11:25 & that He is the Life in John 14:6 & that knowing Him is eternal life John 17:3.

So it's no wonder that John began his Gospel in John 1:4 by saying that in Jesus was life & then ended his 1st letter in 1st John 5:20 by saying that Jesus is eternal life.

Jesus was victorious over sin & death once for all in His resurrection.

So we must preach Jesus as the Victorious Conqueror of sin & death & never let His death be seen as a real defeat.

He never stopped being victorious as He continues to build His church & the gates of Hell cannot prevail against it as Matthew 16:18 says.

Every time God awakens a soul from spiritual death to spiritual life, He proves Christ's powerful victory yet again.

When His name is trusted, His power to save is unleashed & His Spirit's power to preach & serve & give & love is continued.

We know that from the rest of the NT & we see the power of the Apostles' faith in His name when they healed.

Read Acts 3:16 to see that. [READ]

The same emphasis on faith in the name of Jesus is stated three times in this verse & the faith is that of the Apostles.

Peter & John had faith in the name of Jesus to perform signs as Jesus had promised them & so this miraculous healing was done by their faith in the name of Jesus.

The man stuck closely to Peter & John after he was healed & so he likely also came to faith in Jesus, but the faith to do the healing was in Peter & John.

Yet the emphasis was the object of faith, not the faith itself.

Faith in itself does not heal or save anyone or do anything.

Only God does any of that & that's why Peter did not boast in himself for this healing just as we can't boast in salvation by faith in Jesus.

Faith points to & rests in the One who does heal & save you.

The object of faith here is the name of Jesus, which is His Person & character & attributes & promises.

The name of Jesus was the basis for this healing.

The next words of verse 16 refer to this one who was healed, whom the Jews there see & know as a verifiable miracle.

The name of Jesus, which translators add *Jesus* to clarify it was His name that strengthened or made firm this man.

Then Peter emphasized that the faith which comes through Jesus gave the man complete wholeness or perfect health.

On the basis of faith in Jesus' name this miracle happened.

The name of Jesus strengthened this man.

And faith through Jesus graciously gave the man perfect health.

Peter gave those 3 answers in verse 16 to the amazement that called for explanation.

It was not about Peter & John or the healed man—it was about Jesus.

Jesus' name is how miracles happened through the Apostles.

But Jesus' name was not as a magic formula to name-it-and-claim-it.

It was a submissive trust in the promised power of Jesus.

And we have that spiritual power as we proclaim Jesus & practice His commands for the Christian life with the promised presence of Jesus.

We know that from the Great Commission in Matthew 28.

And we may quote Ephesians 3:20, which says, God “*is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think*”, but we need to remember the rest of the verse & the context.

The rest of the verse says, “*according to the power that works within us,*” meaning the emphasis is on the Spirit working in us to know the love of Christ experienced in the church.

That’s the context as Ephesians 3:21 adds next, “*to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.*”

The power of the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us who believe & are indwelt by the Spirit.

That begins with faith in the Gospel which is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes as Romans 1:16 says.

And that’s why we still preach Jesus victoriously as He continues to conquer sin & death today as He saves & sanctifies His people & uses us for His glory.

We learn in Acts 3 to preach Jesus (1) historically & (2) victoriously & then 3rdly we learn to preach Jesus convincingly.

Point #3—we preach Jesus convincingly.

Read verse 17 to see the ignorance Peter contrasted with. [READ]

Peter had spoken to his listeners as “Men of Israel” & had referenced the God of OUR fathers & he connected those realities here by addressing them as brethren.

That’s not the in the NT sense of adopted into family of God in Christ, but in the sense of fellow descendants of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob.

Then the rest of verse 17 is incredibly gracious after he had repeatedly indicted them for what they did.

He had already said they were to blame for their response to Jesus.

He had said you delivered, you denied, you asked for a murderer, & you put to death.

In that sense, they were murderers & they freed a murderer & condemned & abandoned & rejected the holy & righteous One.

And he said they could see & know the man who was healed.

So the time of ignorance was over—they were being clearly told again.

They were responsible & would be punished for their unbelief that had darkened them in ignorance.

But first, Peter was offering a way out with language like OT categories of sins as unintentional rather than high-handed or defiant.

This language of ignorance is like the category of unintentional sins in Numbers 15:22-31 or like an unintentional manslayer who fled to a city of refuge in Numbers 35.

Such sins deserved punishment but could be forgiven in God’s design.

Similarly in the NT, 1st Timothy 1:13 & 1st Peter 1:14 mention sins of unbelief as sins of ignorance where mercy was offered.

Peter spoke like Paul in 1st Corinthians 2:8 who wrote, “*if they would have understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*”

Peter’s words are like Luke 23:34 when Jesus prayed, “*Father, forgiven them, for they do not know what they are doing.*”

That ignorance—or not knowing—is what Peter applied to all the Jews & their rulers although he certainly knew they were guilty.

Just as he had in Acts 2, Peter was calling his listeners to repent & trust in Jesus the Lord & Christ & be saved.

As he had said to Jews in Acts 2:23, this Jesus “*delivered over by the predetermined plan & foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*”

In contrast to those former sins of ignorance, Peter was offering sure forgiveness as he preached Jesus convincingly.

Read verse 18 to see the certainty. [READ]

In contrast to their ignorance, verse 18 begins with reference to God & what He had announced beforehand, meaning He predicted & foretold & promised & made it all known.

God had sent messages down from heaven beforehand to tell things.

And He did so through the mouths of all His prophets.

God’s prophets were His messengers & they carried that promise of a Seed who would be bruised on the heel & yet crush Satan’s head.

They carried the message that God’s Christ, His Messiah, was predicted to suffer just as Jesus had taught in Luke 24.

We see that in Genesis 3:15 with His heel bruised & we also see it obviously & explicitly in Isaiah 53 that we read earlier.

Suffering of God’s Messiah is also found in Psalms 22 & 69 & in Daniel 9:26 & Zechariah 12:10 & 13:7.

From the range of Moses to David to the major & minor prophets, there was mention that God’s Messiah or Christ would suffer.

That was all certain to happen as fulfilled prophecy & verse 18 says, God *has thus fulfilled* it all.

Peter appealed to what his listeners had seen & knew & what was known from witnesses about Jesus & all that was certain.

With all that clarity, Peter had preached Jesus convincingly.

And then he was ready to call his listeners to repent & return, so that their sins may be wiped away as verse 19 says.

We’ll get into that next week.

But for today notice how Peter pointed out the sins of his listeners & then recognized their unbelief as he appealed to them to repent.

We must similarly show people their sin & not worry if they agree or argue or persecute or arrest us like they did to Peter.

It is necessary to know you are a sinner to be saved.

So we must be clear about sin for the Spirit to convict people & lead them to repentance & saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That’s what Peter did as he contrasted the glory & holiness & righteousness & life & victory & certainty & power of Jesus with the shame & sin & betrayal & denial & murder & ignorance of the Jews.

Peter preached to show how they were great sinners, but also how Jesus was the great Savior.

We should want to preach Jesus similarly.

We should want to preach Jesus (1) historically, (2) victoriously & (3) convincingly as Peter did.

If you don’t know this Jesus, we’d love to lead you to Him.

And if you do know Him, I pray Acts 3 will inform & enflame your pursuit of preaching Him.

Pray with me to that end as we close.