



## Peter's Second Sermon

Peter assessed the situation and used it as an opportunity to preach. His message included: (a) an explanation (vv. 12–16) and (b) an exhortation (vv. 17–26). He attributed the power for healing to Jesus, here described as God's Servant (cf. v. 26; 4:27, 30). This term recalls the title "Servant of Yahweh" in Isaiah 42:1; 49:6–7; 52:13; 53:11. Interestingly forms of the verb handed ... over (paradidōmi) are used twice in Isaiah 53:12 in the Septuagint. This lowly Servant (cf. Phil. 2:6–8) was exalted (glorified; cf. John 12:23; 17:1; Acts 2:33; Phil. 2:9; Heb. 1:3–4, 8) by the God of the Jews' ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (cf. Gen. 32:9; Ex. 3:6, 16; Matt. 22:32; Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37; Acts 7:32). Peter emphasized with sledgehammer effect three contradictions in the people's conduct (3:13–15). First, he said the Jews demanded Christ's death when Pilate ... had decided to let Him go. Second, the Jews disowned the Holy and Righteous One and demanded the release of a murderer. Third, Israel killed the Author of life but God raised Him from the dead. Peter's titles of Christ are interesting: "His Servant Jesus," "the Holy and Righteous One" (cf. Heb. 7:26), and "the Author of life" (cf. John 10:10). In the third title the irony is strong: they killed the Author of life but He was raised to life from the dead!

The crippled man's healing came because of his faith in the name of Jesus. Faith was also evident in many of those whom Jesus healed (e.g., Mark 5:34; 10:52; Luke 17:19). In Bible times a person's name represented him and his characteristics. In Acts, Luke spoke of "the name" (of Jesus) at least 33 times (cf. Acts 2:21, 38; 3:6, 16; 4:7, 10, 12, 17–18; 5:28, 40–41; etc.).

In verses 3:17–18 Peter's exhortation begins. The people with their leaders (cf. Luke 23:13) had acted in ignorance (cf. Acts 17:30; Eph. 4:18; 1 Peter 1:14) in the sense that they did not recognize who Jesus really is. So God gave them further opportunity to repent. Though they crucified Him in ignorance, the suffering of Christ fulfilled Old Testament prophecies (cf. Acts 17:3; 26:23). Then comes Peter's exhortation, as in his Pentecost sermon (2:38), was to repent. Was Peter saying here that if Israel repented, God's kingdom would have come to earth? This must be answered in the affirmative for several reasons: (1) The word restore (3:21) is related to the word "restore" in 1:6. In 3:21 it is in its noun form (apokatastaseōs), and in 1:6 it is a verb (apokathistaneis). Both occurrences anticipate the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (cf. Matt. 17:11; Mark 9:12). (2) The concept of restoration parallels regeneration when it is used of the kingdom (cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Matt. 19:28; Rom. 8:20–22). (3) The purpose clauses are different in Acts 3:19 and 20. In verse 19 a so that translates pros to (some mss. have eis to) with the infinitive. This points to a near purpose. The two occurrences of that in verses 19b and 20 are translations of a different construction (hopōs with subjunctive verbs), and refer to more remote purposes. Thus repentance would result in forgiveness

of sins, the near purpose (v. 19a). Then if Israel as a whole would repent, a second more remote goal, the coming of the kingdom (times of refreshing at the second coming of Christ) would be fulfilled. (4) The sending of the Christ, that is, Messiah (v. 20) meant the coming of the kingdom. (5) The Old Testament “foretold these days” (v. 24; cf. v. 21). The Old Testament prophets did not predict the church; to them it was a mystery (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:1–6). But the prophets often spoke of the messianic golden age, that is, the Millennium.

This offer of salvation and of the Millennium pointed both to God’s graciousness and to Israel’s unbelief. On the one hand God was giving the Jews an opportunity to repent after the sign of Christ’s resurrection. They had refused the “pre-Cross” Jesus; now they were being offered a post-Resurrection Messiah. On the other hand Peter’s words underscore Israel’s rejection. They had been given the sign of Jonah but still they refused to believe (cf. Luke 16:31). In a real sense this message confirmed Israel’s unbelief.

Some Bible scholars oppose the view that the kingdom was offered by Peter. They do so on the basis of several objections: (1) Since God knew Israel would reject the offer, it was not a legitimate offer. But it was as genuine as the presentation of the gospel to any nonelect person. (2) This puts kingdom truth in the Church Age. However, church truth is found before the church began at Pentecost (cf. Matt. 16:18; 18:17; John 10:16; 14:20). (3) This view leads to ultradispensationalism. But this is not a necessary consequence if this offer is seen as a transition within the Church Age. Acts must be seen as a hinge book, a transition work bridging the work of Christ on earth with His work through the church on earth.

In conclusion, Acts 3:17–21 shows that Israel’s repentance was to have had two purposes: (1) for individual Israelites there was forgiveness of sins, and (2) for Israel as a nation her Messiah would return to reign. Then Jesus is portrayed as the “New Testament Moses” in fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18:15–19 (cf. John 6:14). Christ will come not only with deliverance as Moses did, but He will also judge as Moses did (cf. Lev. 23:29 with Deut. 18:19; also cf. Num. 14:26–35). Peter’s mention of Samuel as the next prophet after Moses (cf. 13:20) clearly implies that Joshua did not fulfill Deuteronomy 18:15.

All the prophets (cf. Acts 3:18, 21) in one way or another wrote about these days, that is, the Messianic Age. The Jews were heirs of the prophets of the Abrahamic Covenant given to Abraham (Gen. 12:2–3; 15:18–21; 17:1–8; 22:18) and confirmed to the Jews’ fathers (e.g., Isaac [Gen. 26:4]). The Jews then could be blessed if they, like Abraham, believed (cf. Rom. 3:28–29; 4:3; Gal. 3:6–7). In fact all peoples would be blessed through Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:3; Rom. 4:12, 16; Gal. 3:29; Eph. 3:6). Jesus, God’s Servant (cf. v. 13; 4:27, 30), was sent ... first to you, that is, to the Jews. This chronological pattern was followed throughout the Gospels and Acts (cf., e.g., Matt. 10:5; Acts 13:46; Rom. 1:16). The reason for this is that the establishing of the kingdom depended and still depends on Israel’s response (cf. Matt. 23:39; Rom. 11:26).

