

6. Jesus' Resurrection spells Restoration

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[0 : 00] to Acts chapter 3, page 9-11 in the Visitor's Bibles. And my title this morning is this, Resurrection Spells Restoration, but not quite yet.

If you read the newspaper comment writers, you'll know that by and large they tend to have a very patronizing view of the church. At worst, of course, they regard that religion in general, and probably Christianity in particular, is to be regarded as a rather nefarious influence, to be stamped out at all costs, to stop poisoning people's minds.

So you get, for example, a Guardian columnist, Polly Toynbee, ranting regularly against the Christian faith, especially against things like church schools. Or you have Richard Dawkins, who I read just the other day, is now turning his mind to writing books for children, so as to warn them off the evils of religion, and to preserve their sanity when they become adults.

That's why he's given up his job as professor at Oxford University, apparently, to concentrate on that sort of thing. Of course, not all the columnists and the commentators are like that, but at best, it would have to be said that the world and our society generally tends to see the church rather like, I suppose, Dr. Bernardo's or Oxfam, just there to help the sick, to help the disadvantaged, to make people's lives a little bit better in this world.

That's really what the people in general tend to think the Christian gospel is about. It's really just about charitable work in this world. Countless times I've read in the newspapers, columnists telling the church to get on with what their real job is, helping the poor or the sick and so on.

[1 : 57] Society will tolerate the church and even commend it if it sticks to that task, if it sticks to charity and compassion. But it won't tolerate it if it turns all extremist and fundamentalist and starts to talk about quite different things like personal conversion.

And actually, the state is sending out increasingly loud and clear warning signals about that sort of thing, don't you think? So, for example, we're hearing a lot today about charitable status and how the church may very well be stripped of its charitable status.

People don't think that speaking about Christianity alone is enough of a public good. So soon it's going to be getting assessed to see whether churches and other religious organizations, too, should really be counted as charities.

Unless they're doing enough of what the state thinks they ought to be doing. So it was Hutchinson's grammar this week, wasn't it? Falling foul of Oscar. Well, it won't be long before it's the church, too. But let me tell you this. One of the main reasons that our so-called Christian societies haven't got a clue about the true message of the gospel is because, sadly, by and large, the churches and many Christians haven't themselves got a clue about the Christian gospel.

[3 : 17] So many people think that the gospel really is all about the here and now. They've just got no idea that the fact of Jesus' resurrection from the dead really means for them and for the whole world something totally and utterly radically different.

Total transformation and restoration of the universe. But this chapter here tells us very plainly that the Christian gospel is absolutely not primarily about charity in the name of Jesus.

Certainly, of course, charity is a very present fruit of the gospel. Just read the end of Acts chapter 2 once again and you'll see exactly what the church was like.

Caring for one another. Selling and giving to those in need. But that is not the gospel. It's not the gospel's focus, nor is it the gospel's message.

No, the gospel of Jesus proclaims not charity, but cosmic restoration in the name of Jesus. Nothing less than that. The message of the gospel is this.

[4 : 24] Jesus' resurrection spells restoration for the whole universe. And that means that in the name of the risen Jesus Christ lies the key to the future of both time and eternity.

Both for us as individuals and for us collectively as a planet. Well, if that's true, and I think it is true, then we better take this chapter of Scripture seriously, don't you think?

So we're going to look at it very carefully in its three sections. And you'll notice, I think, exactly the same pattern as we find in Acts chapter 2. First of all, there's the sign in verses 1 to 10. Then there's the sermon based on the sign in verses 11 to 26.

And then today we'll see, in the first four verses of chapter 4, the separation that follows the sermon. So first then, the sign in verses 1 to 10. And it's a demonstration, a demonstration of what Jesus' resurrection really means.

A great demonstration of the new creation through the name of the risen Jesus. Begins with a very bleak and tragic picture, doesn't it? He is a congenital cripple, a man in his forties actually.

[5 : 40] Chapter 4, verse 22 tells us that detail. And he's in the process of being carried and deposited at his regular begging spot, ready to catch the worshippers as they go to play.

Well, I guess it was a pretty good spot, a good pitch, because people were coming to the temple to read about the true and living God, the God of mercy and grace, the God who urged in his law that the poor and the despised and the needy in distress should always be cared for and looked after.

And so this poor man must have eked out a living just by the compassion of those who came to the house of God. It's a very stark contrast, isn't it, to a place like India.

When I was there this time last year, I saw more beggars than I think I'd seen in my whole life put together. My abiding memory, I think I've told you this, was of the middle of a four-lane highway and a beggar who was a cripple with no legs and two crutches, having his crutches kicked away by the policeman who'd just finished beating him and leaving him in the middle of that four-lane highway with cars and buses coming.

Because he had no compassion, he just had a belief in karma that it was this man's fault that he'd been born a cripple. Isaac Shaw, the director of the Delhi Bible Institute, said to me, he said, you know, people in the West who think that Eastern mystic religions are wonderful, he said, they need to come to India and see what Hinduism has done to a society.

[7 : 14] But you see, this man here knew he could expect kindness because he was sitting at the temple of the God of kindness and mercy and compassion. And so he sees Peter and John, it says in verse 3, and he wants to ask them for help.

But he's not expecting anything like the kind of help that he's about to receive. Peter says, look at us. He wants to get his attention and he opens his mouth.

Silver and gold, that's his first words actually in the original, silver and gold, I wonder if the beggar's ears pricked up at the words silver and gold. But I have none, he says.

I don't know, maybe he thought they were playing with him. But he wasn't playing with him, he went right on. But what I do have, I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Nazareth, rise up and walk.

Maybe there was a pause, we don't know. Maybe he thought for himself, what a joke, that's the one thing I can't possibly do. But Peter took his hand and raised him up, notice the phrase, and instead of collapsing into a heap, this is surely what he expected was going to happen, instead, instantly, there is a totally miraculous restoration of his whole body.

[8 : 39] It wasn't just an improvement, this man had been born a cripple, it was a total new creation. Bones and joints and tendons and ligaments and muscles and brain synapses and nerves instantly healed and coordinated so that he's just like an athlete.

Something that takes months and months even for a healthy child to begin to learn to do instantly. He's up and he's walking and he's leaping for joy and he's singing hallelujah.

And everybody in the temple is absolutely amazed. Now that's nothing like, is it, the charlatan claims of the TV evangelist today where people throw their sticks away but then what you don't see is at the end of the night they're back in their wheelchair being taken home and the next meeting on the next day they're back in their wheelchair praying for healing again.

No, it's totally different. It's public, it's instant, and it's total restoration. No wonder people are absolutely speechless. Verse 10, they're amazed.

What on earth does this mean? Well, Luke tells us what it means. It wasn't just a wonderful act of compassion although it was that.

[9 : 58] It was far more than that. If you look at chapter 4 verse 22 this healing says Luke was a sign. Now a sign in the Bible in the Old Testament a sign or a wonder was often what accompanied a great new revelation from God to authenticate it, to draw attention to the revelation of one of the

great saving acts of God.

Above all in the Old Testament signs and wonders were associated all around the time of the Exodus and the great deliverance of God's people out of Egypt and the establishing of his covenant at Sinai.

And actually if you read through Bible history you'll find that the manifestation of signs and wonders was actually quite rare. But when they do occur it's to carry a great message.

A great revelation about key movements in God's saving plan. And of course the greatest revelation of all in God's saving plan was the climax of that salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ when he came. You remember in Peter's sermon in chapter 2 he said of Jesus that he was attested by mighty works and signs and wonders from God. Well here is another sign indisputable sign of Jesus continuing work from heaven.

[11:14] That's what Luke's writing about in Acts. It's a sign that bears witness again to the birth of a new age in the resurrection of Jesus. But what does the sign mean? Well you see that would be very very obvious to absolutely everybody in the temple that day.

It was a sign that all the prophets spoke of being fulfilled at last on the day of the Lord. Remember when in chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost Peter quotes from the prophets and he says this that you read of this what you see rather is that what was spoken by the prophets.

Well this is exactly what's happening again in a visible form. This what you're seeing is what the prophets spoke of. Just one example is the words from Isaiah 35 that we began our service with. In Isaiah 34 he's speaking about the coming day the day of God's judgment on the nations but also the day of great salvation when the desert will bloom and blossom like the crocus when they will all see the glory of the majestic Lord when God will come with vengeance but also salvation and then the eyes of the blind shall be opened the ears of the deaf unstopped the lame man shall leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

He goes on to say the redeemed of the Lord shall return with singing and there will be everlasting joy and sorrow and sighing will flee away. Now everybody in the temple that day I can guarantee you knew those words off by heart.

[12:50] And now Luke is saying to them look here's a man leaping for joy and singing the hallelujah chorus. It's a sign. It's a demonstration of what Jesus' resurrection means for the whole world.

See in Acts chapter 2 Peter had declared Jesus' resurrection was true and was certain but now he's declaring more than that. He's telling us the significance of it for the whole world.

He's saying it's the promise of the restoration of all things that is now at last beginning to be fulfilled. Jesus' resurrection signifies the beginning of the recreation of the universe.

Signifies the reversal of the very curse of death and sin and hell. You can't get a more graphic picture of that can you? Of restoration from sin's curse than a congenital cripple being restored to fullness of true humanity in an instant.

Jesus himself made that clear connection I'm sure you remember. In fact I don't think it's an accident that right here at the beginning of Acts Luke records for us right at the very start of the apostles' ministry something that he recorded almost exactly the same at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry.

[14:08] Don't look it up but in Luke chapter 5 you can read it later. Jesus healed the paralytic didn't he? And on that occasion he very explicitly said that the physical healing was just a mark of something far far greater the healing of the curse of sin because it's that curse that's the root cause of all these tragedies in our human existences.

And that's been the message all the way through from the Bible right at the beginning in Genesis 3 isn't it? Mankind is under a curse the whole creation is cursed separated from God because of the rejection and rebellion of human beings against God.

So surely it's no accident that the very first and by far the most detailed account of any miracle in Acts is full of allusions to this crippling power of sin.

It's a graphic illustration isn't it? Of the predicament of every human being. Here's a man who's made in the image of God and yet he's vitiated he's reduced to just a caricature of what true humanity ought to be.

He's a pauper he's a beggar he can't help himself he's so near to the temple where God himself dwells and yet he can't get himself in there and yet wonderfully and miraculously he's utterly

restored and immediately where is he?

[15 : 34] He's right in the temple praising God through the power of the gospel of the risen Lord Jesus Christ and that restoration that's for the whole world through Jesus' work is not just a spiritual thing that's what Luke's telling us here.

It's not going to be just a matter of present forgiveness and a sort of new earthly communion with God. Far less is the Christian gospel just a sort of crutch for charity cases here in this world people who can't cope with life without a bit of religion.

No, no says Luke it's far more than that. It's actually going to mean real bodily physical restoration for all Christ's people. It's going to be restoration for the whole universe.

It really is going to be about permanent bodily resurrection and restoration for everyone who belongs to Jesus. It's the reversal of the curse of the decay of the disaster of death that blights this world.

And that's what this sign was. And this sign says Luke it shows its beginning because of Jesus' resurrection. I'm getting like Bob I have to quote Narnia all the time.

[16 : 54] But you remember in Narnia after Aslan rises and the snows begin to melt and the stone statues begin to come back to life and Aslan says it's the beginning of death working backwards.

And that's what this is a sign of says Luke. It's the beginning of death working backwards. But why then, why then doesn't everyone get healed right now?

Why does anyone still die at all for that matter? And why didn't the apostles, having done this great miracle, spend their entire lives going around the whole world healing every cripple and healing every disease and bringing everyone back to life?

life? That's quite a good question, isn't it? If this is the beginning of all of that. And maybe there were those there on that day who thought exactly that.

Well, if this is the paradise we've been longing for, is it here now just like that? Well, it's precisely to answer that kind of question that Peter stands up to speak.

[17 : 59] And in verse 11, we move from the sign to the significance. We move on from the demonstration of the resurrection to a declaration of what Jesus' resurrection really means for the world.

And Peter's sermon is a great declaration about the new creation through the name of the risen Jesus. Let me explain, says Peter. I don't want you to be confused about this. Obviously, there was a danger of confusion.

Verse 11 says this man was clinging on to them as though they were kind of special people with magic powers. verse 12 tells us the crowd were obviously in danger of thinking the same thing too. But it's very interesting, isn't it? Peter did not do what the charlatan preachers of today do. He did not say silver and gold have I none, but now since I've done this great thing, how about giving me some of yours?

I'll pass a hat round. I'll even take credit cards. No. That's never what genuine Christian preachers do. They don't be taken in by anybody who asks for your money like that.

[19 : 05] Now what he does do is immediately deflect all the attention off himself and onto Jesus. Verse 12. Don't stare at us. Look to Jesus. It's all about him. And he speaks all about Jesus, doesn't he?

Verse 13. God's servant Jesus. Verse 16. It's the name of Jesus. Verse 18. It's the Christ. Verse 26. It's God's servant Jesus who's raised up.

And notice again, he doesn't say either, I'll let you into a secret of some special revelation God's just given to me. He says the opposite. He says, don't be surprised at this.

He says, it's all in the scriptures. It's all public knowledge. And again, just like Acts chapter 2. It's a very simple message, isn't it? a message all from scripture and all about the Savior.

None of this is new, he says. It's all in the Bible. The whole of God's story from the very first promise back in Genesis 3. It's always been about God's promised Savior, the promised seed.

[20 : 10] It's always been about the blessing of all the nations of the earth through him. It's always been about the restoration of all things through him. And now, yes, what God promised, now he has accomplished, he's fulfilled through the resurrection of Jesus.

That's his message. But, and here Peter is bringing clarification to his hearers, clarification that he heard from Jesus, all through Jesus' public ministry, and perhaps especially also from Jesus during these 40 days of intense teaching that he gave them before he ascended.

But, he says, there's actually still more to be fulfilled in the future. What God has promised, he has fulfilled through the resurrection that declares Christ's atoning work is complete, but, Jesus' resurrection, it's just the beginning.

It's the first fruits, as it were. It's the beginning of the great universal restoration of all things. But it's not the end. The consummation is still to come.

What you see demonstrated in this man's healing points to that far greater hope. It's a small sign, but it points to something far greater and more wonderful that one day will certainly come.

[21 : 35] And Peter says, I want you to grasp this really, really clearly, what God has fulfilled already, but also what is not yet fully consummated. created. And I want you to do that so that you will focus on what must be your focus right now, today, in the present.

I want you to know the response that God has for you now, in between the time of Jesus' resurrection, which is now in the past, and the great and final restoration, which is still in the future. Now, friends, I'm so glad Peter made that clarity on that sermon that day, because there is no more important lesson for the church today to understand, than to understand what Peter lays out here for us.

If only we grasp Peter's true gospel here, then we would free ourselves from all sorts of total confusion about what the church's task is really about in our world.

And our whole society would be an awful lot clearer on the truth of the gospel. So I want you to look, and I want us to summarize together Peter's sermon. He makes three points, each explaining Jesus in terms of what the scripture promised, and clearly telling us what has been fulfilled already, what's still to come in the future, and what must take place now in the present time.

[22 : 58] So look first at verses 13 to 18. Where Peter declares that just as the scripture promised, the resurrection and the rule of Jesus has been accomplished already.

Verse 13. The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus. That's done. Verse 15. He raised Jesus from the dead.

Done. Verse 18. What God foretold, by the mouth of his prophet, he thus fulfilled. Already. It was a matter of biblical prophecy, he says, from the earliest times.

Reference to the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. That goes right back to Exodus 3. Do you remember the burning bush? But now, it's a matter of historical fact. And we are witnesses of it.

Verse 15, he says. And now you also are witnesses of the fruit of Jesus' resurrection. Verse 16. It's his name that has done this mighty thing.

[24 : 00] He has made this man strong whom you see and know. He's right here before you in perfect health. Already, God has raised Jesus to life, fulfilling all that he promised through the prophets.

Now, he doesn't quote for us the prophets here. He's quoted several times. We remember in chapter 2. And Luke doesn't tend to repeat everything in the sermon summaries again and again. He assumes that you read it the first time and understood. But what he does tend to do as he goes on and records these sermons is he focuses on new elements of emphasis.

And here, you see, what Peter is emphasizing for us is the unstoppable nature of God's marvelous plan. He has fulfilled it all, says Peter, despite every opposition from earth and heaven and hell itself.

Every opposition imaginable to man. But what God promises, he accomplishes, despite all attempts of his enemies to stop it. In fact, all these heinous attempts, God only turns around and makes them serve his ultimate purpose.

[25 : 14] And he has accomplished it. Do you see the full frontal he hits them with in verses 13 to 15? God glorified his servant Jesus despite you and your shocking opposition to him at every turn.

Verse 13, despite you are delivering a transparently innocent man to death. Even the pagan pilot wanted to release him, but no. No. Standing witness, isn't it, to the sheer dishonesty of human sin and rejection of God.

Deliberate rejection of truth. Even the pagan pilot could see. And yet God glorified his servant Jesus despite that. And despite, verse 14, your rejection of a transparently holy and righteous man, the son of God, and choosing in his place a murderer.

That's a shocking testimony too, isn't it, to the sheer perversity of human sin. Jesus was plainly to everybody, holy and righteous, and his way was perfect, and yet human beings far rather would have a total criminal morality than the way of the living God.

It's a story of history, isn't it? Quite perverse. And verse 15, God glorified his servant Jesus despite your refusal and your murder of the author of life himself.

[26 : 48] What an oxymoron that is. Yet God raised him from the dead. Death could never possibly hold him. Was there ever such an example of the sheer absurdity of human sin?

To pick a fight with and choose for an enemy, the very one who has the power of life and death. And yet they scorned and they rejected the life that was in him.

Striking, isn't it? God revealed himself in Jesus, and Jesus says, I am the way and the truth and the life. And yet you, says Peter, denied his truth, you rejected his way, and you scorned his life.

And yet, notwithstanding all of this, every rejection of God, all down through history, God has fulfilled what he's promised.

Jesus is risen, and he has risen to glorious rule. God has glorified his servant Jesus. Indeed, verse 18 says, not only has God accomplished his purpose for the Messiah, he thus fulfilled it.

[28 : 01] That is, in this very way, through the suffering and death of the Messiah at the hands of sinful and rebellious human beings, in exactly that way, he fulfilled his purpose for time and eternity.

So extraordinary is our God. So wonderful is the plan of his redemption that even the most heinous opposition of his enemies, he takes and he turns in a marvelous reversal so that the vilest wrath of man and the foulest schemes of hell rebound to the eternal glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the merciful salvation of his people.

Remember what Joseph said to his brothers? You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good, for the saving of many lives. Well, that's what Jesus' resurrection declares, says Peter.

And already, it's accomplished. But there's more, says Peter. Look at verses 19 to 21. Peter's gospel also declares that just as the scriptures promised, the return of Jesus will usher in the restoration of all things.

Repent, therefore, and turn again that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for the restoring of the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

[29 : 38] You see what he's saying? Not everything is fulfilled yet. Jesus is risen bodily, with a restored body for a redeemed world. And that makes certain the bodily resurrection and restoration of all his people when all things are restored.

At the very last. This healing, he says, of a corrupted body that you've seen today is a sign of that. It's a foretaste of that. But this man's going to die again.

And the days that you long for, they're not yet. Those times of wonderful refreshing. The word actually means respite from judgment. The time of the restoration of all things that we sang about and that Isaiah spoke about.

When will they be? Only, says Peter, when Jesus returns. When the appointed Christ, Jesus himself, returns from heaven. He's got to remain there until, well, as he quoted in chapter 2, until he makes all his enemies his footstool.

Only then will the curse of sin and death at last be done away with forever. Not before and not otherwise. You see, if only the church would always listen to Peter and what he said that day, what disastrous disappointments we would have avoided.

[31 : 00] Isn't that right? The folly of the liberation theologians who think that the restoration of all things can be brought about by revolution, by arms. The folly of liberal theology that thinks that an earthly paradise can be brought about by politics and by economics and things like that.

Or the health and wealth brigade who think that fervent faith and great healing crusades can somehow usher in the kingdom in that way. No, says Peter. You're wrong. You're not listening to me.

These things will come only when Jesus returns. His resurrection, his heavenly rule is fulfilled. It's already happened. But his return and the restoration of all things that that will bring.

Well, it's not yet. But it is certain. It's guaranteed because of the resurrection of Jesus, which is a historical fact.

Jesus is risen. That's already. He's going to return, but that's not yet. And therefore, Peter says, thirdly, my gospel declares the pressing need now for what?

[32 : 14] Verse 19. Repentance to Jesus. Repent, therefore, and turn again that your sins may be blotted out. So that on the day of Christ's return, it may be for you a great time of respite from

judgment.

Great day of restoration. And he says, once again, that's just the scriptures being fulfilled. Look at verse 22. Moses promised that this would happen.

One just like him, the mediator of God's covenant. Moses' word was so closely bound up with God's word that to reject Moses meant being cut off from the people. And how much more, he says, with Jesus.

Verse 24. All the prophets were looking forward to this day. But it goes right back to the beginning, he says in verse 25. Right back to Abraham. God spoke to him about the blessing of all the nations through him.

Well, that time is now, says Peter. It's begun with Jesus' resurrection. It'll go on until Jesus' return. But now, now is the age of mercy.

[33 : 19] Now is the day of salvation. And something that's clearer now, says Peter, than in any of the prophetic writings. They couldn't see it with such clarity as we can.

They couldn't see that so great and infinite was God's mercy that God had programmed into his whole plan of salvation time. Plenty of time for repentance.

For the message of Jesus to go out to the wicked rebels of this world to give them time to turn to Jesus. That the blessing promised to Abraham might come to all the nations.

And as Peter says here, by the way, notice, first to the Jews. There was a great privilege, wasn't it? As Paul said, to them belonged the adoption and the covenants and the law and the promises and the patriarchs and so on.

What a privilege! He's come to you first. But notice, verse 26, he's come to you first because you also need to repent.

[34 : 22] You need to turn from wickedness of rejecting God in your heart by nature all your lives. If you needed proof of it, I've told you, you rejected and crucified Jesus himself.

And of course, you see, that is the sting, isn't it, of the true gospel. You see what Peter's message has been? The gospel, he says, is all about Jesus.

It's about what God planned and purposed in him from the very beginning of time. And you can't stop God's gracious purpose of blessing for this world, not even by your worst opposition and your rebellion against him.

the resurrection of Jesus proves that forever. And the return of Jesus will confirm that too. You can't stop God's plan, but you can, you can write yourself out of the script.

You can write yourself out of sharing in that wonderful blessing of the restoration because you can't share in that blessing without repentance.

[35 : 34] See, it's either verse 19, isn't it, repenting and turning and having your sin blotted out so that you face the day of Jesus' return with joyous expectation. Either that or it's verse 23.

You refuse to listen to the one that has been predicted and spoken of ever since Moses. you refuse and you reject this Lord Jesus Christ.

And you also are rejected, cut off from his people, destroyed on the day of his return. That's the gospel of the apostles of Peter here. That's the gospel of the scriptures, says Peter.

That's the message of Jesus himself. And of course that's not a message people want to hear, is it? That explains the first four verses of chapter 4.

The separation. Because true gospel declaration always, always leads to division. And this is just an example, isn't it, of the division that Jesus' resurrection brings to the world.

[36 : 42] There will always be division forged between the new creation and the old creation whenever the true message of Jesus is proclaimed. Always. And very often as it was here, alas, it's in the barren deadness of the religious establishment that leads the crusade against the true liberating power of the gospel of Jesus.

The Sadducees and the priests and the rest of them. The Sadducees were the rationalists of their day. They're still among us today. They're the kind of people who love religion, love church, love ecclesiastical things, choirs and committees and buildings and sacrifices and vestments and thought for the day.

But mention the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Mention the bodily return of Jesus. Mention the day of judgment. Mention the uniqueness of the need to repent in Jesus' name alone for salvation.

Mention the wrath of God. The possibility of anyone, as it says here, being cutting off from the people of God. Mention any of that and you get an apoplectic rant. About dangerous

fundamentalists.

And if they could, they would put you in prison. But at the very least, they'll keep you out of presbyteries and dioceses and certainly out of schools and hospitals and anywhere where your dangerous message could cause a problem.

[38 : 11] But that's always the reaction of many. Especially those who've grown up within a background of state religion when the true gospel is heard. Just what we see here. And so they put them in prison.

But don't forget verse four. Because that's also and equally always a result of true gospel declaration. Many of those who heard the word believed.

And the church grew. And now it's up to 5,000 men as well as the women and children. It was painful. Yes, it was very painful. The apostles' reputation was damaged.

Their liberty was compromised. It was very costly. And the true gospel and the demands that it makes will always divide. Even among the visible church. Even among people who previously perhaps thought themselves all to be of the same ilk.

But there will be those who believe and are saved. So that's Peter's message. The sign that demonstrates what the gospel is really all about.

[39 : 20] The resurrection and the restoration of the cosmos. A sermon that declares God's timetable. What is already, what is not yet, and the pressing need for now. And the separation, the division to expect.

Great clarity isn't there in Peter's preaching and in Luke's presentation. I hope I haven't muddled it. I hope it's clear. Let me just finish by three implications of all of this for us today.

First, we need to be just as clear as Peter was about what the true gospel really is. The true gospel is not about charitable tinkering in this world.

It's about the cosmic transformation of the whole world through Jesus' resurrection. And that transformation, though made certain through the resurrection of Jesus, is still in the future.

And it will only be, and it can only be, when Jesus returns to restore all things. And that means that Christians who really understand the true gospel will always be people who are living for and looking for that day, won't it?

[40 : 25] Ours is a future hope. And we should never be deluded by any kind of deception that tells us we can find paradise now either by politics or prosperity theology or anything else at all.

The day of Jesus' return. Second, we need to be as clear as Peter was about what the church's real priority is now, therefore, in this present age.

Our priority can never be the temporary amelioration of the social condition or the medical condition or the financial condition even of the people of this world. Now don't misunderstand me.

I'm not saying that we're not to be concerned about that. Jesus himself said plainly, the poor you will always have with you. And he said it assuming obviously that people would always be caring and compassionate and generous.

That Jesus' people will always be people moved to do everything we can to help the poor and the needy of this world. Christians always have. They've been at the forefront of every great medical advance, hospices, care for the poor, everything.

[41 : 37] Because we're Christians and we worship the God of mercy and compassion. But I'll say it again. The temporary improvement of the consequences of the curse of sin can't ever be the Christian church's great priority in this world.

Because our priority is the removal altogether of the curse of sin itself. We have a far, far bigger concern. We want the restoration of all things, not just a few things.

And we know that it's coming, that it's promised, that Jesus returns. We know it's certain because of Jesus' resurrection. And therefore knowing this, and knowing that when Jesus returns, there will be a great division for all eternity, a great separation forever, and a great exclusion forever from the presence of God's eternal kingdom because of human sin and guilt, then our priority must be Peter's priority.

To proclaim the restoration and the rule of Jesus at his return. To proclaim the certainty of his judgment and therefore to proclaim now is the day of salvation.

Call people to repentance in Jesus' name. Do you long for peace and justice and happiness in this world? Do you long for the end of wars, for the end of murder and rapes and oppression and slavery and all of these things and sickness and bereavement?

[43 : 14] Whether you're a Christian or not, I'm asking you, it's the same issue for all of us because the answer is the same. That's what you long for, Peter says. Then repent, all of you, that times of refreshing may come, that the Lord Jesus may speed his return, that the restoration promise may at last be upon us.

Jesus says, the gospel must be preached to all the earth and only then will the end come. You see, if that's what we long for and we're Christians, then our pressing priority will be to take the gospel to the world, won't it?

And if you're not a Christian, your repentance, your returning to Jesus is part of that whole process, part of making that fulfillment come about. Third, and last, we need to be just as clear as Peter, that a church that proclaims the true gospel of the risen Lord will always cause division, will always arise opposition.

That's not a sign of failure, but of faithfulness. I'm not talking about arising opposition for being stupid or offensive or gratuitous, that's quite different, but the true gospel of Jesus will never be loved by this world.

It will never be loved and accepted by society or the religious establishment that courts society. The world will always accept and will even applaud the church's charity, but it will never rejoice in the gospel's clarity.

[44 : 47] Peter and John would never have been put in prison, would they, for giving a lame beggar a big bag of gold. They'd never have been put in prison for starting a home for the cripples of Jerusalem.

But proclaim a message that tells upright, moral, self-respecting people that they have to repent because they're sinful just like the rest, or dare to tell somebody that their chosen way of life is wrong in God's eyes and they have to turn from it and change.

That's very different. We can talk about love in vague terms and we'll be fine. Declare Jesus as the risen Lord who returns to judge the earth.

And our society, well, they may not be able to put us in prison, but they will put us in the dog house. So be clear about that, friends. You need to know that. That will be so at work if you speak to your friends the true gospel.

It will be so in the school, university, your family, wherever you sell it. But don't forget verse 4 of chapter 4.

[46 : 02] Take heart and have faith because Jesus' name and his true gospel will always bring miracles of grace. faith in faith in his name has healed this man, said Jesus.

There wasn't any evidence in that passage of that man having faith. If he did have faith, it was thrust upon him. But Peter had faith in the name of Jesus. Peter had boldness to declare the gospel of the risen Christ.

And a great and wonderful miracle took place that day. and a greater and more wonderful miracle for the thousands who went on to believe the message and were added to their number.

That's a gospel worth risking the doghouse or even the prison house for, isn't it? And that's the gospel that we're called to proclaim. Well, let's pray together.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have raised our Lord Jesus Christ and seated him at your right hand on high and to him is all the power and the glory in heaven and in earth.

[47 : 17] We thank you that we know that he shall come again to restore all things and to bring us the great refreshment and the joy and the wonder that you have promised from the beginning of time through your great salvation.

And so, Lord, we pray that you would teach us, what it means to be your people now and to call to repentance others who in bowing the knee like us and acknowledging our sin will receive by your grace the wonderful restoring resurrection joy of being raised up with Jesus on the day he returns. Fill us, we pray, with this great hope and give us strength for the task. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.