

Restoration in Jesus Name

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[0 : 00] Well, good afternoon and welcome to the Wednesday lunchtime service. It's very good to see you here and please do stay on afterwards and enjoy some tea and coffee and some sandwiches and some lunch together. But let's get started and we're back in the book of Acts this week.

We're continuing our series, looking at this opening chapters together and we're in Acts chapter 3 this morning, this afternoon even. So do turn there to Acts chapter 3 and you'll find that on page 911 if you've got one of the church Bibles there. Acts chapter 3 and reading from verse 1.

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a man, lame from birth, was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the beautiful gate, to ask alms of those entering the temple. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, look at us. And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand and raised him up. And immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God and recognized him as the one who was sat at the beautiful gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. And when Peter saw it, he addressed the people. Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this? Or why do you stare at us as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate when he had decided to release him. But you denied the holy and righteous one and asked for a murderer to be granted to you. And you killed the author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And his name, by faith in his name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. And the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as also did your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfills. 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 restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

Moses said, the Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people. And all the prophets who have spoken from Samuel and those who came after him also proclaim these days. You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, and in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness. And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

[5 : 01] And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the word believed. And the number of the men came to about five thousands. Amen. Well, this is the word of the Lord. May he bless it to us. Now a brief moment of prayer as we gather together and we'll think together about these verses. Let's pray,

shall we? Let's pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.

answer to the question, what is the gospel, might be just a little bit narrow. Perhaps we think it's all about forgiveness of sin. Now that is certainly part of it, but the gospel is certainly more than that. Perhaps for you it's all about the good life now, what God can give you now today. Perhaps we read the opening chapters of the book of Acts and we think the gospel is all about healing and things like that now, health and wealth now. Now these things each have a grain of truth, but they're not the whole picture. You see our passage this lunchtime gets to the very heart of the gospel about what it is and when, when it is. Just look what the apostle Peter says, just look what he says at the very heart of our passage this afternoon. Look at verse 18.

He says, but what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that is Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and turn again that your sins may be blotted out.

[7 : 56] But it's not just that. Look on, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. But it's not just that. Look on, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring of all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. So Peter tells us here, verses 18 and 19, that in light of who Jesus is and what he's done, we are to repent. And then there are three things he mentions. Yes, our sins are blotted out, but also times of refreshing will come and also the restoration of all things.

That is the big picture. Christianity is not just about the forgiveness of my sins, but it's more. It is ultimately about the restoration of all things. And that is what this chapter of Acts is really all about. It is about the restoration of all things, cosmic restoration. And it's about that restoration being found only, only in Jesus' name. But it's also a chapter that helps us get our timings right. What is being restored and when? It helps us get the right perspective. What are we to expect now? And what must we wait for? We'll look at this chapter in three sections, and it matches very much the same pattern from chapter 2 we saw the last two weeks. It begins with an extraordinary event from verses 1 to 10. And then we get Peter's explanation of that extraordinary event.

And then we get the response at the start of chapter 4 from those who are there who saw it and who heard what Peter said. So firstly then, verses 1 to 10, we see God's restoration demonstrated. The gospel is about the renewal of all things. God's restoration demonstrated. Look at these verses here. It begins with, well, it's a pitiful scene, isn't it? It's a hopeless scene.

We read about Peter and John going up to the temple, and they pass a man who couldn't walk. And this man had been unable to walk from his very earliest days. People carried him to the gate of the temple, and there he begged every day. And he'd been doing this for years. We read later on in chapter 4 that this man was in his 40s at this point. Day after day, month after month, year after year, sat at the gate of the temple, eking out a living. It is a picture of hopelessness, isn't it?

[11 : 01] But by the end of this paragraph, the picture is a very different one indeed. No longer is the man camped outside the temple. But look at verse 8. He has entered the temple, and he's done it on his own two feet. He is able to walk. But more than that, we get this wonderful description, don't we? Just look down there, verses 7 and 8. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. It is a wonderful picture of God's restoration from being lame, to walking, from being outside the temple, to being inside the temple and praising God.

And it was in Jesus' name that this man was healed and restored. It was because of the resurrection of Jesus, his rising from the dead, that this man was able to be restored. And this is just what was promised by the prophets. Jesus has fulfilled what was promised. He is bringing about the great restoration. And that is the connection that Luke intends to make with his repeated references to the walking and leaping and praising God here. And Luke is pointing us to something that Isaiah said. Now Luke doesn't need to say, now I'm making a reference to Isaiah 35 here, in particular these verses. His repetition of the leaping and dancing and lame walking should do that for us. It should remind us of what we know about Isaiah. Let me give you an everyday example of this. My daughter just has to ask one simple question in a sort of sing-song voice, and I'm transported to a whole other world of meaning. She just has to utter the words, do you want to build a snowman? And I'm transported to a place I really don't want to be, the world of the Disney princess. She doesn't need to say, dad, I'd really like to pretend that we're living in the world of Disney's Frozen,

and I'm Princess Anna, and you can be the talking snowman. She doesn't need to do that. She just has to sing a few lines from one of the songs, and I'm with her. I know what she's talking about. And so too here, Luke knows that his readers will know something of Isaiah. He's already made lots and lots of references to Isaiah already in Acts, and also in his first volume, his gospel. [13:48] And so here, he is making a very clear link, which he knows his readers will get, to Isaiah 35. Let me read these verses from Isaiah 35. Isaiah writes this, Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

Back in Luke's gospel, his first half of his account in chapter 7, he has already alluded to this very same passage. Jesus describes his ministry as one in which the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. That is what Jesus says in Luke chapter 7, referring back to this same section in Isaiah 35.

And these verses in Isaiah, they anticipate that in the coming day of salvation, there will be restoration of creation, there will be shouting for joy in Zion, and the lame will leap like the deer. That is what Isaiah looked forward to. And Jesus is fulfilling that. In light of all that we've seen in the first couple of chapters of Acts, this healing of the lame man in chapter 3 is yet more evidence that with the resurrection of Jesus, with his exhortation, the last days are now here.

The promised restoration that all the scriptures look forward to has begun. And it's begun with Jesus, with his work, with his death, with his resurrection. The restoration is now beginning. And it is a real restoration that Jesus is bringing about. It isn't merely a spiritual restoration, but a physical one.

The new creation that we look forward to, that is the hope of every Christian, that is a real, physical, new creation. It's a place where those who are Christ will live in resurrection bodies.

[16:08] It's a real restoration. And this healing of this lame man is a demonstration of the reality of the restoration that will one day be complete when Christ returns. We see God's restoration demonstrated here with this astonishing event, with this man being able to walk. But Luke doesn't just record the bare event.

He records for us Peter's explanation, which gives us clarity and certainty about the events we've just seen recounted. And so our second point is to look on to Peter's explanation, verses 11 to 26. We see God's restoration declared. The gospel is proclaiming restoration in Jesus's name according to God's timetable.

Just look on there at verse 11. The people who witnessed this incredible event, they're absolutely astounded. They rush to see Peter and John. They want to hear what they have to say. But Peter is very quick, isn't he, to deflect the attention away from himself, away from John, and just look at their opening question to the crowd. Why do you wonder at this? Why do you stare at us as if we did this?

It's not us. It's not us. No, it's all because of Jesus. It is his name that has restored this man. Jesus is the one who is able to restore this man because Jesus is the one who has been glorified by the God of our fathers. Notice that Peter, there in verse 13, he grounds all that he says in the historical faith of Israel. This isn't some new religion, says Peter. No, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac. That God has glorified Jesus.

Jesus. And you killed him. But God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses to that. It is because of who Jesus is and what he has done that this lame man now walks.

[18:34] You shouldn't be surprised by what you've just seen because this was always what was going to be. This is what God promised in the scriptures. And with God's raising Jesus from the dead, the scriptures are fulfilled. Restoration is now coming.

But we need to be careful with our timings. Restoration, the restoration that Jesus brings, that God is bringing through Jesus, is not simply something that is in the past, nor is it something only for the future, nor is it all about the present.

Peter is careful here. And we must be too, as we think about the restoration that Jesus brings. Now is the time of restoration because it begins with Christ's resurrection. We see that there in verse 15. You killed the author of life whom God raised from the dead. This is the key moment in all of history. Death is undone. Christ is risen from the dead. That is a past event.

It's a historical fact. And his resurrection guarantees the resurrection of all who believe in his name. So does that mean that we should expect all the blessings of God's promised restoration now?

[20 : 05] Given that Christ has been raised from the dead, given that death has been undone, do we expect now all the blessings that God promised in that great day of restoration?

Should we be rushing out to the hospitals in Glasgow and do what Peter and John did here? Well, Peter's answer to that question is no.

Just look what he goes on to say from verse 19. We see here what restoration looks like now and in the future. So Peter says there, verse 19, 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 a restoring of all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his prophets long ago.

So three things come from true repentance. Three aspects of that restoration. The first one is that our sins are blotted out.

That's what he says there in the second half of verse 19. Your sins are blotted out. That is something that we enjoy, at least in part, now. If you trust in the name of Jesus, you are no longer dead in sin.

[21 : 37] You're alive in Christ. We are no longer counted sinners. But we do still struggle with sin. But that is part of God's restoration now.

You are forgiven. Your sins are blotted out. But secondly, at the start of verse 20, we see times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

I'm not entirely sure what that exactly means, but it certainly means something to be enjoyed in the present by believers. And that is the experience of Christians through all the ages, isn't it?

God is kind to us. He's kinder than we deserve. He shows us kindnesses every day. We can, I'm sure, point to moments in life when the Lord has truly refreshed us, not least as we gather week by week as his people, as the church.

We enjoy fellowship together. It is the place where God promises to presence himself with us, to enable us and equip us. Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, he promises to be with us.

[22 : 53] Times of refreshing. That is a presence reality of restoration that we enjoy. But thirdly, the third aspect of this restoration, second half of verse 20, is that the Lord will send the Christ.

And when will that be? That will be at the time for the restoring of all things. And that is not yet. The full and final restoration that Peter speaks about here in verses 19 and 20, that full and final restoration, that will only happen, that will only come when Christ returns at the appointed time. Then, and only then, will the restoration of all that was promised in the scriptures will be finally and fully fulfilled. Only then will every deaf man hear.

Only then will every lame man walk. Only then will physical restoration be complete. And so we must wait for that full restoration.

We have to wait. It's not yet. We must wait. And we must be clear in what we believe and what we proclaim about the Christian gospel.

[24 : 25] It is about real restoration. It is about real physical restoration of all things. But it is a future restoration.

And that is surely a restoration that we will want all people to enjoy. And so we must point people to the future restoration and to the only route to that restoration.

And the route to that restoration is not found in our own efforts. It's not to be found in recycling. It's not to be found in moral effort.

It's not to be found in scientific and medical advances. But only in turning to Jesus. Only in his name. Only by repenting in his name is the true hope of real restoration going to be a reality for people like you and me.

Only in Jesus is the restoration we crave for found. And that is the stark warning there in Peter's words.

[25 : 34] Look on to verse 22. Only in Jesus. He says there, verse 22, You shall listen to him, that is Jesus, in whatever he tells you.

And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people. So God's restoration is declared by Peter.

It is found only in Jesus. And it is a restoration that is enjoyed in part now, but not fully. We must wait.

There is a great and full and final restoration coming. That's in the future only when Christ returns. God's restoration divides.

God's restoration divides. The gospel produces opposition and repentance. God's restoration is truly wonderful, isn't it?

[26 : 46] God's restoration is truly wonderful. The picture we have here of God's restored world is just beautiful. Who doesn't want that? Who doesn't want to see the restoration of all things?

But it does mean repenting. That is the only way that we'll know and experience the full restoration that Jesus promises. And that flies in the face of my desires and your desires.

We don't want to be told what to do. We don't want to be told that the restoration of all things is out of our hands. We don't want to be told that we must submit ourselves to Jesus' lordship.

We by nature hate that. And so we see again, as we have done already and as we will continue to see through Acts, the responses to the gospel.

We see that God's promised restoration divides. It is met with opposition. But also repentance. Just look there at the start of chapter 4.

[27 : 47] We see the temple authorities. They come. They arrest Peter and John because of what they were saying. But, verse 4, many of those who had heard the word believed.

And the number of the men came to about 5,000. So Luke wants us to be clear that not only... Luke wants us to be clear not only about the fullness of the gospel.

It is about the restoration of all things. Not only does he want us to be clear about the timings of that restoration. Yes, it has begun already with Christ's resurrection.

Yes, we enjoy something of that restoration now. But it will only come to completion when Christ returns. Luke wants us to be clear about that.

But he also wants us to be clear. But as we hold to these truths. As we proclaim them. We will be opposed by some.

[28 : 55] That is inevitable. But also that many will believe. And that is a wonderful prospect, isn't it?

That people, as we share this with them, this gospel of restoration, as we share it with them, we will enjoy that with them one day in that great and final restoration.

Let me pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your wonderful gospel.

in all its fullness. We thank you for the picture of that wonderful day that we have here. That day of restoration, which is in part now, but one day fully will be realized.

So help us to believe. It seems so hard as we look at the world around us to believe this, but would you help us? Would you strengthen us?

[30 : 10] That we might hold to this truth and proclaim this truth, no matter the opposition. But help us to remember that many will receive this with joy and will stand with us in that new creation, walking and leaping and praising God.

We pray this in Jesus. Amen.