

God's Restoration: Exhibited and Explained

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[0 : 00] 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 daily laid at the gate of the temple that is called 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.

And 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 their 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.

[1 : 12] And all the people saw him walking and praising God and recognized him as the one who 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, and 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.

[2 : 31] 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 did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.

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.

[3 : 58] 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.

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 men came to about five thousand.

Well, please have that passage from Acts chapter 3.

[5 : 03] It's in your service sheets there. Do you have that open? And we're going to be thinking about the implications of this for us today, this Easter Sunday. And I want to begin by asking the question, what difference does the resurrection of Jesus make?

What difference does the resurrection of Jesus actually make? To put it another way, given the resurrection of Jesus, what is the Christian message?

What is the gospel? Now, we may answer that by saying, it is all about the forgiveness of our sins. And that is certainly part of it.

That's a huge part of the message of the Christian gospel. But the gospel is more than that. It is more than just about the forgiveness of my sins and your sins.

Perhaps as you answer that question, what is the gospel? You might say, well, it's all about the good life now. It's all about what God can give me right now to enjoy in this life.

[6 : 10] General well-being, general happiness. Perhaps you read a chapter like this, and you read about the healing of this lame man, and you think, well, the gospel is all about healings right now.

Health and wealth. Now, these different things I've mentioned, they are aspects of the gospel. They have part of the reality, the part of the truth of the whole thing.

But we need to grasp the full implications of the resurrection of Jesus. Because the resurrection of Jesus is the turning point in all of human history. It transforms everything.

And this passage in Acts chapter 3, it gets to the very heart of what the gospel is all about. It gets to the heart of what the gospel is, and when it is.

When do we experience the full fruit of the resurrection of Jesus? Look at what Peter says in the very heart of our passage this afternoon.

[7 : 14] Look at verse 18. Listen to what Peter says. Peter tells us that in light of who Jesus is and what he's done, he says we are to repent.

Repent, therefore, says Peter. And then three things he mentions. Three implications of our repentance. One, verse 19.

Yes, our sins are blotted out. That's the first thing, but it's not just that. Times of refreshing come, verse 20. And also, the restoration of all things, verse 21.

That is the big picture. Christianity is not just about the forgiveness of sins, or your sins, or my sins. It's more. It is ultimately about the restoration of everything.

All things. That's what Peter says there. It's the restoration of all things. And that is what this chapter is all about. It is about restoration of all things, and it's about that restoration being found only, only in Jesus.

[9 : 02] And that is wonderful news. The restoration of everything, for those who belong to Jesus, restoration for everything. Is that not what your heart longs for this afternoon?

Restoration? There is so much brokenness in our world. You don't have to think very long, do you, to realize that things are not as they ought to be.

A whole range of things can crash into your mind, I'm sure, as you think about the world and your own situation in it. broken relationships, broken families, broken bodies, broken workplaces, broken organizations, broken economies, broken governments, a broken world where earthquakes shatter and tsunamis sweep away.

Does not your heart long for a world where those things are undone, where all that is broken is unbroken, well, chapter 3 of Acts is good news for us, because that is what it proclaims, restoration. But it's also a chapter that helps us get our timings right. What is being restored and when? This chapter gets our perspective correct.

[10 : 27] What are we to expect now, today, as Christ reigns from heaven? What are we to expect for life now? But what must we wait for?

What will only be true when Christ returns and reigns over his new creation? This chapter tells us. And we're going to look at it in three sections.

It begins with extraordinary events, the healing of this lame man. Then we get the explanation of that event. We heard this morning, didn't we? The Bible is never just pure event, is it?

It gives us the explanation, the meaning. And then thirdly, we'll see the response. How do people react to what they see and what they hear? And all we read about here is made possible because of the resurrection of Jesus.

That is what the priests and the Sadducees get so cross about, isn't it? In chapter 4, verse 2. It's because Peter and the others were preaching the resurrection of the dead.

[11:30] That is why they get so annoyed. That's what this whole thing is about. It's the implications of the resurrection of Jesus. What difference does this resurrection make for life? So three points.

Number one, looking at verses 1 to 10, we see God's restoration exhibited. You see it. Now look over these verses.

It's a pitiful scene, isn't it? It's hopeless. We read about Peter and John. They're going up to the temple, and they pass. A man who cannot walk. A lame man is sat by the temple gates.

And this man has been unable to walk from his earliest days. People carried him to the gate of the temple, and there he begged. And he's been doing this for years. We read later on in chapter 4 that he's about 40 years old.

Day after day, month after month, year after year, he is sat there at the gate, eking out a living. It is a picture of hopelessness.

[12:35] But by the end of the paragraph, things are very different, aren't they? No longer is the man camped outside the temple, but verse 8, he's entered the temple, and he's done so in his own two feet.

He's walked in. But more than that, we get this wonderful description, don't we? Look at verse 8. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk and enter the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

And all the people saw him walking and praising God. It is a wonderful, very vivid, graphic illustration of God's restoration. Here is this man unable to walk, and he's leaping up and praising God and entering the temple.

From being lame to walking, from being outside the temple to being in it. 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 is now able to be restored. And this is just exactly what was promised by the prophets years before.

[13:44] Jesus has fulfilled what you read about in the Old Testament Scriptures. He is bringing about the great restoration that God has promised. That's the connection that Luke intends us to make as we read these words.

This repeated reference to walking and leaping and praising God. He is pointing his readers to something that Isaiah said many hundreds of years before. Now Luke does not need to make the point explicit.

He doesn't need to say, look, I'm referring to Isaiah 35 here, verses X and Y. He doesn't need to point it out like that, because by saying these words, these people who knew their Scriptures would immediately be thinking about Isaiah.

As soon as they read these words about leaping and praising God, their minds would suddenly zoom back. Of course, Isaiah. And Luke has already referred to Isaiah over and over again, not just in Acts, but also his first part of the account in Luke's Gospel.

Many references he makes to Isaiah. And he's making the link to Isaiah 35, which says this, In his Gospel account, Luke has already referred to that same passage in Isaiah.

[15:12] In Luke chapter 7, 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 good news is preached to the poor.

Those verses in Isaiah that Luke keeps going back to, they anticipate the coming day of salvation and restoration of creation, when they'll be shouting for joy in Zion, and the lame will leap like deer. This healing of the lame man here in chapter 3, it is evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, the exaltation of Jesus.

It is saying, the days that have been promised by the prophets long ago, those days of restoration, they are now here. That is the point being made.

All those great hopes through the Scriptures that a coming day would come, when restoration would come, when the lame would walk, when the deaf would hear, come, now hear.

[16:24] And it is a real restoration that Jesus brings. It is not merely a spiritual restoration, but it is a real physical restoration that Jesus brings.

The new creation that we look forward to, if you're a Christian here, this is your future. It is a real physical new creation, a place where those who are Christ will rest in resurrection bodies. It's real. It's physical. And this healing of this lame man is a demonstration of that reality. It's a demonstration of the reality of restoration that will one day be complete when Christ returns, and we reign with Him forever in the new creation.

But Luke doesn't just record the event, amazing as that is, this lame man standing up and walking into the temple.

He records also for us Peter's explanation of it. As we see, the people are astonished. They can't believe what they're seeing, and Peter explains what they've just witnessed.

[17:35] Well, let's look on from verse 11 in Acts 3, and consider Luke's explanation of what we just witnessed, of this lame man being able to walk again.

And the people who witnessed this incredible event are, verse 11, absolutely astounded. They rush to see Peter and John, and they want to know what has just happened.

Well, Peter is pretty quick to deflect the attention away from himself, isn't he, and from John. Just look at his opening question to the crowd. He says, verse 12, Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this?

Why do you stare at us as if we did it? No, this is all because of Jesus. It is in His name that this man has been restored.

Jesus is the one who's able to restore this man because Jesus is the one who has been glorified by God the Father. Notice that Peter there in verse 13, he grounds all that he says in the historical faith of Israel.

[18:47] This isn't some new religion, says Peter. No, no, it's the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, who has glorified Jesus. Jesus. And he says that you killed him.

Looking on verses 13 and 14. You killed him, but God raised him from the dead. And we are witnesses to that.

We are witnesses to his death and resurrection. And it's because of who Jesus is and what he has done that this lame man now walks. You shouldn't be surprised, says Peter, by what you've seen. This was always what was going to be. This is what God promised. Remember Isaiah? God promised this sort of thing would happen in the day of fulfillment.

You see, with God raising Jesus from the dead, the scriptures are fulfilled. All those words from Isaiah, they are now coming to fruition. Restoration is now coming.

[19:56] But we need to be careful with our timings. Restoration that the Bible speaks about is not simply that's all in the past. Nor is it something that's only for the future.

Nor is it just for the here and now. Peter is careful here as he unpacks the implications of this. And we need to be careful 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 there verse 15. It says, You killed the author of life, whom God raised from the dead. That is the key moment in all of history. Death is undone.

Christ has risen from the dead. That is a past event. Historical fact. His resurrection guarantees the resurrection of all who believe in his name.

With the resurrection of Jesus, the promised restoration now begins to unfold. So does that then mean that we should expect all the blessings of the promised restoration now?

[21:11] All those things we read about in Isaiah, about the lame walking, the deaf hearing, the dead being raised. Do we expect that now? Should we be rushing to the hostiles of Glasgow and doing what Peter and John did with the lame man?

Well, no, is Peter's answer. Just look at what he says from verse 19. We see here what restoration looks like now, but also in the future.

He says, Repent, therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come, that he may send the Christ, whom heaven must receive until the time for the restoring of all things.

So three things result from repentance, says Peter. Number one, sins are blotted out. That is something that we enjoy now.

As we repent and turn to the Lord, our sins are dealt with. They are gone, blotted out. If we trust in the name of Jesus, we are no longer dead in our sins, but alive in Christ.

[22 : 30] That is a present reality. Sins dealt with. That's the first thing. Number two, he speaks about times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

Now, it's a bit hard to be precise about what that actually means, but it certainly seems to be something that is enjoyed in the present by believers. This refreshing is the experience of all Christians through all of history.

We know something of the Lord's kindness to us, times of refreshing. See, the Lord is kind to us, isn't he? Kinder than we deserve. And we can look back at points in our own lives when the Lord has refreshed us.

Not least, as we gather together here week by week, as a church, as we enjoy fellowship together. It is the place where God promises to dwell with his people, to meet with his people, as we gather together.

This is where we enjoy the refreshing of the Lord. And that is something we enjoy in part now. So there's repentance that brings forgiveness of sin.

[23 : 41] There is this refreshing from the Lord. But the third thing that Peter mentions is that he will, the Lord will send the Christ. He will send the Christ.

When will that happen? When will Christ return, bringing in the new creation? Well, it says, at the time appointed.

At the time for the restoring of all things. And that is not yet. The full and final restoration of all things 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 be finally and ultimately fulfilled. Only then, will every deaf man hear.

Every lame man walk. Only then, will physical restoration be complete. And so, here's the thing, we must wait. We must wait for that ultimate, final restoration.

[24 : 50] You see, the Christian gospel is about real restoration, real physical restoration of all that is broken in our worlds. But it's a future restoration.

And that is surely a restoration that we want all people to enjoy. And so, we must point people to the future restoration and the only route to that restoration, which is in Jesus Christ alone.

The route to restoration that we see here is not found in our own efforts. It's not something that's within our power to achieve. It is not to be found in our own moral effort.

It is not to be found in scientific and medical advances. Good as those are, those cannot bring about the restoration that God has promised. It only comes in turning to Jesus.

Only in His name, only by repenting and turning to Him is there true hope for people like you and for me. Only in Jesus is the restoration that we crave and long for found.

[26 : 05] It's only in Him. That is the stark warning, isn't it, that Peter makes very clear there. Look at verse 22. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.

See, there's only one route. There's only one way to restoration. There's only one place where it can be found. And so it's not surprising then as we think about our third and final point.

we've seen the restoration exhibited. We've seen it lived out with this lame man. We've seen it explained. Peter's outlining what this restoration looks like and when we can have it. But the thing is, this restoration, if we're to receive it, requires repentance.

And that, therefore, brings division. People respond differently to the message of restoration. And we see that at the start of chapter 4. And as we think about what we see here, God's restoration, it is truly wonderful, isn't it?

Who does not long to know this restoration that is spoken about here? Who doesn't want to see the restoration of all things? But it does mean repenting.

[27 : 22] That is the only way that we'll know and experience the full restoration that Jesus promises. And the thing is, that flies in the face of our desires.

Certainly flies in the face of my desires. I don't want to be told what to do. I've got to repent. I've got to admit that I've been totally wrong, that I've been living life my way, ignoring the Lord.

I've got to repent. We don't want that. 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 contrasting responses to Peter's message here.

His message proclaiming the implications of the resurrection of Jesus. There are two responses. On the one hand, there is opposition. But on the other, there is repentance.

[28 : 28] Two responses. And the first one that we've drawn our attention to is the opposition. Look at verse 1 and 2. The temple authorities come and arrest Peter and John because of what they were saying.

Specifically, they are greatly annoyed, verse 2, because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. restoration, resurrection from death. That's what their message was.

The authorities hated us. But, on the other hand, look at verse 4. Many of those who heard the word believed. And the number came to 5,000 men.

So, Luke, as he writes this account for us, he wants us to be clear not only about the fullness of the gospel, the maximum understanding of the restoration that it promises, it is about the restoration of all things.

Not only does he want us to be clear about the timings of that, yes, in part now, but fully in the future, it's begun already with Christ's resurrection. We do enjoy something of it now, but only in the future when Christ returns we enjoy the fullness of it.

[29 : 40] Luke's making us clear about that, but also, he wants us to be clear that as we hold to these truths, as we proclaim these truths, we share the hope of the restoration of the gospel.

We will be opposed by some, but also many will believe. And that is a wonderful prospect, isn't it? That people we share this message with faith.

They will enjoy with us the great restoration that will come as they repent and believe. So, some questions for us to think about as we close.

Questions for you to ponder. And the first question is to those who have never repented. That's Peter's own application here, isn't it? Having just spelt out who Jesus is and what he's done, he says, verse 19, repent, therefore.

And so, my question to you is, will you repent? In fact, it's more than a question. I plead to you, repent.

[30 : 53] Repent. Look at what Jesus is holding out here. Look at the hope of the gospel. Restoration. Future. Future. With him. Forever. Life. Eternal.

Forgiveness of sin. That is what he's holding out. And the reality is, as we've seen, that everyone who does not listen to Jesus shall be destroyed from the people.

So, I ask you, turn to Christ. Repent. Only through repenting of your sin will you enjoy the forgiveness of your sin being forgiven. And the ultimate restoration that Jesus will bring one day. Only by repenting. That's my first question to you. If you've never done that before, if you're not yet one who follows Jesus, will you?

Will you turn to him? Will you repent? That's the first question. Second question, for those who do profess faith, those who do know and love the Lord Jesus, my question is this, do your priorities in life reflect that ultimate full and final restoration that comes only through Jesus and only when he returns?

[32 : 08] Does your life reflect the realities of this chapter and the timings of this chapter? Are you looking for the sorts of things now that will only be delivered when Christ returns?

Are you putting your hope in the things of this world which, given enough time, will be destroyed by rust and by the moth? Are you putting your hope in the things of this world?

Or are you putting your hope in what Jesus promises for the next? The reality is that some things will never be fixed in this life. Only when Christ returns will all things be restored.

And so that must be the hope of our hearts, mustn't it? as we deal with the brokenness in our lives and our worlds, this must be the hope.

This must be where our yearnings find their fulfillment. Do you expect everything to fall into place in your life because you've repented?

[33 : 13] Well, we're not promised that. Yes, one day, but not yet. One day, everything will fall into place when Christ returns and we live with him forever in the new creation.

Every tear will be dried one day, but it's not yet. And so can I encourage you this Easter Sunday, this Resurrection Sunday, do you think about the restoration to come?

Is that where your gaze is fixed? Is that where your hope is found? Or is it in the temporary things of this world? How amazing will it be on that day when all things are restored, just as the prophets spoke of?

Wonderful. Let us encourage one another to look forward to that day. It is coming. And let's encourage each other to tell others so they might repent and know that same joy, that same hope. Because only in Jesus' name, only in listening to his words, that people just like you and me can look forward with certainty that day of restoration. It's only in Jesus.

[34 : 22] So will we hope in that? Will we share that? That's the message of Acts 3 this Easter Sunday. What can I pray? And I'm going to listen to our choir sing for us again.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for the clarity of your word. We thank you that it speaks of a real, solid hope. hope. And so we ask this Easter Sunday that you'd help us in our minds and our hearts to have our hope fixed on ultimate eternal realities.

Help us to be a people that live and walk not by sight, but by faith in your promises. Help us, for we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.