

03.15.17

Serves In And By The Name of Christ Acts Chapter 3

We are walking through the Book of Acts, and I thought it would be good to talk about the title, Acts of the Apostles. What is that about? A strange name. It was difficult to actually find the definition of the word “acts” because the concordance does not define the titles of the books. The next question is what was the Greek word used to define “acts”. I had to pull out the interlinear and the Greek lexicon and finally found the particular word that was used. They could have used a number of different words to describe the word “acts”. What does that word mean? The word that we have here is “*praso*”. For those of you who are interested, the Greek word does not look like that. “P” looks more like “pie”. As an aside, yesterday was “pi” 3.14. I was going to tell Stella that it was “pi” day yesterday. And I thought I might get a free pie out of it. OK, anyway, talk about a sidetrack. What is interesting

about the word “*praso*” is that there is a word that spins off of this word with which we are very familiar. In fact, you will recognize it right away as I give the Greek word “*pragma*”. Pragmatic is the English word taken from that particular word form. What does it describe? That is what we are going to be talking about because this is a book of the Acts of the Apostles. Now I just want to say this: “apostle” means “1¢”. Just like a US penny. That might help you remember it. The fact of the matter is that God was sending these men out. Why? The best way I can describe the word is “the business of those being sent out,” the job that they have. It is a description of the work or the purpose of their existence. God had called them to do a particular work, and we see them rolling up their sleeves. You could literally call it the work of the apostles. What are they trying to accomplish? If you are to go back to

(Acts 1:8) “but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both

in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

What is Christ calling them to do? He is telling them to go to the remotest part of the earth, to the atheists, to those worshiping idols in whatever form. “You shall be my witnesses.” They are being sent out to be the first witnesses of Christ. The work or the job of the apostles is going to be to lay the foundation of the work of Christ or the witness of Christ. They are going to lay the foundation by bearing witness to Christ. This is the church. We are building upon this foundation, this most holy foundation. Referring to Matthew Chapter Sixteen where Jesus is talking to His disciples, He says,

(Matthew 16:13) “...’Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’”

(Matthew 16:14) “And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah, but still others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.’”

(Matthew 16:15) “‘But who do you say that I am?’”

(Matthew 16:16) “Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”

Jesus responds, “This is foundational, Peter.” In fact, let us look at

(I Corinthians 3:10) “According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it.”

(I Corinthians 3:11) “For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

This is talking about the foundation of the church. There is only one foundation. Each man must be careful how he builds on it.

(I Corinthians 3:11) “For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Jesus Christ. Therefore, we know that the confession of Peter in

(Matthew 16:16) “Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”

is the foundation of the church.” He is the Christ, the Son of God. We believe that. What are the apostles doing in the Book of Acts? They are laying the foundation. They are doing the business of God. What is the business of God? Laying the foundation of the church. How do we know they are foundation-layers?

(Ephesians 2:19) “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household,”

(Ephesians 9:20) “having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,”

(Ephesians 9:21) “Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,”

What does it say about those guys, those apostle guys? Ephesians 2:19,20 talk about the fact that we are a part of the household of God, aren't we? We are laying a foundation of the household of God. Who is responsible for the foundation? Jesus Christ. The apostles and the prophets are responsible for laying that foundation. Does

it not say that within that text? It should not surprise you that when you see the heavenly city in Revelation 21:14, the foundation of the city is the 12 foundation stones of the apostles. The twelve gates are the patriarchs of the Old Testament, but the foundation of the city is the apostles. It should not surprise us because what is their main purpose? Their job was to lay the foundation. The Book of Acts is about building the foundation. It is the beginning of the church. The foundation is going to be, in many respects, very different. Yet it is to be placed on that same Rock that is Jesus Christ. We begin to see the church building on that, or another way of putting it is that the body of Christ is being built up. What we are going to see if we were to put the metaphor of this building in terms of a body, which is what Scripture wants us to do, is that the church is not an organization. It is an organism. It is breathing. It is living. It is the body of Christ. How do we know that? Let's look at two passages:

(Colossians 1:18) “He (Christ) is also head of the body, the church;...”

Colossians talks about the body of Christ, which is the church.

Once again, we see in Ephesians 1:22, 23, that the body of Christ is the church. It is pretty clear what the body of Christ is. In Matthew, Jesus says to Peter that He will build His church upon the Rock. The word for church is “*ekklesia*” meaning the called-out ones. Called out for the purpose of declaring the name of Christ. “You shall be My witnesses.” They are establishing the veracity, the validity of Who Jesus Christ is. How are they going to do this? They are going to proclaim it, and they are going to oversee the writing of Scripture. This is why the New Testament is so foundational--because it is overseen by the apostles who were eyewitnesses of Jesus’ life and ministry. John will say,

(I John 1:1) “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—”

(I John 1:3) “what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also...:”

Eyewitnesses. They were there. That had to have been an amazing thing!

Hebrews tells us this:

(Hebrews 2:1) “For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard so that we do not drift from it.”

The message that the apostles had is far grander than the message of the law, which was given by angels.

In Hebrews,

(Hebrews 1: 5) “For to which of the angels did He ever say, ‘You are My Son?...’”

As we read in Chapter Two,

(Hebrews 2: 1) “For this reason, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.”

(Hebrews 2:2) “For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty,...”

(Hebrews 2:3) “how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard.”

That is pretty powerful. The Lord Himself spoke. We are not talking about servants of God. We are talking about the Son, our King.

(Hebrews 2:4) “God also bearing witness with them both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.”

Why is it that the apostles were able to do such great miracles? Because God was substantiating their veracity and their validity just like He did with Moses. Moses was going to write the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible--Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. But Moses was going to oversee that. What tells us that he came in contact with God? The miracles of

Moses testify to that effect. Moses takes his staff and the sea parts, manna comes down from heaven, and we see that Moses has authority. Moses is proclaiming words from God when he came down from the mountain. Why do you think they listened to Moses? Because he had the authority of God backing him. Nobody can do these sorts of things in his own power. Nicodemus said to Jesus, (John 3:1) “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a Teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

Jesus demonstrates that He is sent from God, and He must establish that His men are sent from Him. How is He going to do that? By signs and wonders and miracles. Even when Paul is in Ephesus, people are falling under his shadow and being healed. Magnificent things are happening. It is an arbitrary healing. No one can say that he was going around choosing people or making money by performing miracles. You recall that Simon, the magician, wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter was doing great miracles. What we are going to see

in particular in Acts Chapter Three, of course, is the healing of the lame man right there at the temple gate where he had been laying. He will then declare that this is the power of God. This is Christ. The Book of Acts begins fifty days after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. On this particular day, the day of Pentecost, the first fruits will be waved. God will demonstrate the first fruits of His work. The Feast of First Fruits is the day of Pentecost, 50 days after Christ's resurrection. This particular feast starts on what day? Sunday. That is right. Sunday. This is a Sunday feast. This is the beginning of the church. From this day forward, the body of Christ will begin to meet on the first day of the week, not the last day of the week. What is the first day of the week? It is resurrection day. So why is it so dear to us? We celebrate every Sunday on resurrection day. That is what we celebrate. We come together on this miraculous day. The first fruits are reflective of the very best that we are waving before God. God is declaring on this day, "That which you wave before Me is better than any gift that there has ever been." Why

is this day going to be so grand? Because the gift that is being waved before God is the Spirit of His Son in our hearts. The primary thing that God wants to see is the Spirit of His Son within our hearts. Man had given gifts up to this point. We know that alms were given in the Old Testament, but there is no greater gift that you could ever give God than your heart.

(Matthew 3:17) “...This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.”

The text reveals that this is a marvelous moment in which fruit is going to be born, a fruit that is very unique. That is the purpose of the Feast of the First Fruits. That is the purpose of Pentecost--to point to this miraculous time in which the Spirit of God is poured out upon mankind. Now the picture is this--that we are coming to the birth of the church. The church is being born and not unlike what we talked about in Genesis where we see this clay body laying down. Then God breathes into the body. The same thing is true with the church. Jesus comes and says to them, “Now stay until I breathe in you. And when I breathe in you,

then you will be alive.” But it was not until God breathed into them that the church was alive. In other words, up to this point--and Peter gives us a good example of this--they were trying to do things in their own power. It did not work too well for Peter right (when he denied knowing Christ)? But Peter will now stand up in the power of the Spirit of God and will be extremely bold, unashamed, and willing to die at this moment, knowing that he is speaking before the same audience that had crucified his Lord and Savior. It is just fifty days later. It is a pretty intense moment, really, if you consider that he is going to stand up there and proclaim that they had nailed Him to the cross. We are to proclaim Him today just as boldly. You can just see Peter pointing the finger. The thought almost instantly is, “Well, Peter, you had better run when you get finished with this message.” But Peter is just standing there, and the people are running. In fact, the people are crying out, “What must we do to be saved?” The message must have been very bold. Once again, we will see this in Chapter Four of Acts. One of the great signs of the Spirit

of God within you is boldness, a confidence about proclaiming Jesus. This is not confidence about how you look. Not like, “Oh, I look good.” That is not the confidence we are talking about. What we are talking about is the confidence of Christ in proclaiming Him. You will see that in Acts Chapter Four. Their persecutors will go, “Wow! We know these are fishermen, but the boldness. They must have been with Jesus, the resurrected Christ.” They are going to be proclaiming this. This is what we see in Chapter One; to summarize. Lord willing, tonight we are actually going to go through Chapter Three. We are walking through the book, aren't we? Chapter One is the gathering of the body around the hope of Christ. Christ says, “Now I want you to wait, and I will come back.” In fact, the return will be in the same place as the ascension, on the Mount of Olives. We have often made reference to Zechariah 14 in which it literally proclaims the prophecy of Christ's return, stepping on the Mount of Olives which then splits open. The contour of the whole world begins to change. That is going to be a

wild day, isn't it? When Jesus comes back in all of His glory, puts His feet on the Mount of Olives, and the contour of the world changes? Jerusalem becomes the highest mountain of all the earth, and all the other high mountains become valleys. That is going to be interesting. That is going to be wild. But anyway, gathering the body around the hope of Christ is what we see in Chapter One. You will be my witnesses. But you have to wait until you receive the power of the Spirit of God. Just wait. So here is the body. Just waiting.

Acts Chapter Two explains the breathing. The church breathes for the first time. At the birth of each of my children, I was privileged to see them take those first breaths. It is an amazing thing to see them take a breath. Here is the body of Christ breathing the amazing life of Christ. You are listening to Peter, and you comment, "Peter, Peter, you are not the same guy. You are seeing the one hundred and twenty that are in the upper room. We understand they are probably at this juncture by the temple because it is the celebration of the Feast of First

Fruits. While they are at the temple, the apostles begin to proclaim the great and mighty deeds of God. Scripture says that each one could hear in their own language. We realized that the indictment of God is to the Jews. The indictment is: "You chose not to listen to me. I am going to all the world, and I will proclaim my message to the Gentiles. The message and the mighty deeds of God were being declared in Latin, in the Hispanic language, in Aramaic, to the Ethiopians, and in all these other languages. Each person there heard in their own language. God was making the message clear. It was not a time of confusion. It was a time of clarity. It was also an indictment against the Jews that the message was going to the Gentiles. It was a day of tremendous joy although the Gentiles will not know about it until later when Cornelius hears the message . It will be a day of celebration for the Gentiles when the message comes to them. They were breathing in the amazing life of Christ, you see, because of the power of the Spirit of God. What happens after Peter finishes talking? Three thousand are

crying out, and we believe those are probably men. That means that there are probably families that are involved in this. You have an instant church. Shortly after the three thousand, there are another five thousand (Acts 4:4). Suddenly, Jerusalem is bulging with Christians. On this incredible day, we see the breathing of the amazing life of Christ.

Now we come to Chapter Three. The body of Christ is united for the purpose of true worship which will only be through Christ. Let me reemphasize that this is part of establishing the foundation of the church. We are seeing worship do a huge paradigm shift. Especially when you consider this temple. It was virtually constructed by Herod the Great who poured in tons of money in order to appease the Jews. He was the one who tried to kill the Christ Child. One of the reasons we know this is because we actually know the dates of the reigns of the Herods. The Herods help us with a timeline. We know that Herod the Great came into office around 70 BC. We do not know exactly, but this is quite close. He will die in April. We do

know that the Christ Child was born while he was still alive because he tried to kill Him. For that reason, the Christ Child must have been born around April. Most theologians will agree with this. The calendar was messed up later by a Roman monk. We see this thing begin to happen through the Herods. The Herods were Edomites who were descended from Esau. There was clearly this thought that they were trying to kill off their brother, Jacob. Esau is trying to kill Jacob. Herod had worked diligently to destroy the lineage of the Hasmoneans. That probably does not mean a lot to all of you. Have you heard of the Maccabeans? The Maccabean brothers were Jews of the Hasmonean lineage. They were in positions of authority when Herod first came into power. Herod made it his job to wipe them out. He ultimately wipes out the whole lineage of the Hasmoneans. He tried to wipe out anybody that could be a threat to him. Because he heard that the Christ Child was born, he decided to kill all the babies. He also killed two of his sons and his wife. (He was a little paranoid.) Even as we see the Herods come

into play, God's hand was at work. God had established the time clock. When Herod the Great was about to die, he gathered a lot of dignitaries together. He lived in a big castle in Jericho. He secretly told his family, "When I die, I want you to slaughter all these dignitaries." The reason was that he did not feel like anybody would be sympathetic towards his death, and he wanted people crying when he died. He was going to make sure that people wept when he died even though they were not weeping for him. His son did not kill them which brought him some favor. However, right before Herod dies, he does kill two Jewish Rabbis and forty of their students. Let me tell you that story. Herod had wanted to put a golden eagle above the Temple which was a Roman and an Edomite symbol. If you have ever read Obadiah, you realize that they lived in the mountains. As Herod was putting this eagle above the temple, these two Rabbis and their forty students took their axes and started tearing it up. Herod then had them killed. This caused a lot of people much grief. In their anger, they rose up against

him. Then he dies. Once his son Archelaus took office, he learns about this incident. Archelaus then kills 3,000 Jews which is not a good start to his reign. This is one of the reasons why, according to Matthew, when Joseph returns from Egypt and finds out that Archelaus is reigning, he decides to not stop there. He went to Nazareth instead. The area was quite volatile. Therefore, Joseph moves his family to Nazareth. Archelaus only stays in office about three years. Next, Herod Antipas will come into office. This is the Herod that will kill John the Baptist and will agree to kill Christ. He will not have the same power as his father. He will reign mainly over the Galilean region and the upper region. He will be called a tetrarch which indicates that he has a quarter of the power. Because of this, he will not be known as the king of Judea. Pilate comes in and controls Judea at that time. I am telling you this to give you some background in the politics and volatility of the region when Peter begins to preach. By this time, Herod Antipas has killed John the Baptist and has overseen the killing and the murdering of Jesus Christ.

This is 39 AD. The area is not peaceful. Of course, that does not change the power of the Spirit of God. When the Spirit of God is flowing, you are just going to say what He directs. You are not going to sit around trying to psych out what is going to happen. Had the apostles thought it through, they would have concluded that it would just be a really bad time to do this. Yet, there is boldness, and it begins to convey itself. What you see in Chapter Two is this life that is so powerful; it just cannot be stopped. And the church is defined when these people gather together to talk about the Lord. What you do not see is the sacrificing of bulls or goats or anything else. They are devoting themselves all the time to the Word of God and the apostles' teaching. Things are starting to change. Let's look now at Acts Chapter 3. You see the time of day in Chapter 2:15, where he says,

(Acts 2:15) “For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day;”

Looking at Chapter 3,

(Acts 3:1) “Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer.”

Basically, the day is divided into sections in that there is the third hour, the sixth hour, and the ninth hour. Some believe that they were following Daniel’s pattern because we know that he prayed three times a day. Scripture is telling us that these were the times of what? What does it say verse one? Prayer. It was the hour of prayer. There are basically three hours of prayer. The ninth hour is 3 p.m. The two earlier hours of prayer would be at 12 Noon and 9 a.m. Those were the times when they would gather together for prayer. Where would they go for prayer? The Temple because they are celebrating the Feast of the First Fruits.

(Acts 3:1) “Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer.”

(Acts 3:2) “A certain man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is

called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple.”

Here we have a man who has been lame from his birth. He is obviously a Jew; he is in town, he is carried to the Temple. Because he is lame, he cannot go in. They must set him at the gate. Right? What does the passage say?

(Acts 3:2) “A certain man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple.”

Oddly enough, nobody knows what gate that is. I think in some ways, there is a connection with Romans 10 which quotes

(Isaiah 52:7) “How lovely on the mountain are the feet of him who brings good news...”

In a way, God is making reference to the beauty of this message which is to be proclaimed at the gate. What is this gate? We believe that this particular gate is an outer

gate. This man cannot go into the temple because he is unclean. So he is placed at the gate. We also believe that this particular gate is probably the most crowded gate. It has the most people entering because it is the gate of the common man. This makes sense that the fishermen would not go in a priestly gate. They would go into the common gate. They are still looked on as commoners. This is the place that would take them into what was called the Gentile court. The porticoes of Solomon are located there. This is going to pan out in the description as we continue. We are about to be privy to a worship service, but the worship service is not going to be in the Holy of Holies. It is going to be at the gate. This is very interesting. What we are seeing is the establishment of the church outside of the temple gate. I reference you to

(Hebrews 13:10) “We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.”

Now when he is talking about those who serve the tabernacle, who is he talking about? He is talking about the religious leaders and the priests. He is saying we have

a place that we meet where the commoners and unclean are not allowed to enter. As you know, this poor, lame man and many others were not allowed to go into the court of the Gentiles. The Gentiles can, but they cannot go beyond the women's court. The women cannot go into the men's court. Then you have the Holy of Holies which only the High Priest can enter. But now we are at the gate. We are outside of the temple. That is what we are talking about.

(Hebrews 13:10) “We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.”

(Hebrews 13:11) “For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin are burned outside the camp.”

Where? Outside. Outside the camp.

(Hebrews 13:12) “Therefore, Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.”

Where? Outside the gate.

(Hebrews 13:13) “Hence, let us go out to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.”

(Hebrews 13:14) “For here, we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.”

Therefore, what is our sacrifice going to be? Watch Verse Fifteen.

(Hebrews 13:15) “Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit, (the first fruits,) of lips that give thanks to His name.”

(Hebrews 13:16) “And let us not neglect to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

That is what Jesus did. He died for us, so we ought to give our lives for others. See what He is saying? What are the fruits? The fruits are the praise and the honor to God as we begin to do good unto others. It is for the sake of giving all of the glory to Christ. God is having the apostles establish the pattern, the foundation of the church. Let's read and see what happens. I am not going to read every single verse of the chapter because then I would not have

time to finish. This guy is sitting at this gate because he is lame. He is looking for people who will give. I look. I see people at McDonald's and other places who are pandering or trying to find somebody to give them money. I have yet to have them ask somebody else other than me. It just seems like they zero in. I do not know why, but it does give me an opportunity to witness to them. Sometimes I buy them a drink or a sandwich. They will come up to me. If I make eye contact, they will look at me more intently. That is exactly what happens in this particular text. This guy is checking out the people around him, and he sees Peter. You would think that Peter and John would give him some money and pass on by. But they do not because the Spirit of Christ is in them. They now gaze right at him. What is interesting about this is the time of day. What do they do? Pray. This is a time to pray. What is this man doing outside the gate? He is not praying. He is asking for money from men. That is what religion does. See, religion perceives the meeting of man together as an opportunity for man to benefit man. But

that is not why we meet. We meet and gather before the Throne of Grace. That means that we should be talking to God about things. It is an interesting phenomenon that man should be praying to God about everything. Yet, the lame man begins by begging (i.e., praying) to man and seeking that man would rescue him. What is the fundamental way that man rescues man? Money! That is what he is looking for. When you think about it, God is establishing at the very foundation of the church what cannot run the church. What cannot run the church? Money. What do you need in order to minister? Not money! The disciples are going to look at him and say (Acts 3:6) “But Peter said, ‘I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you...’”

Now we know that Peter and John have by now probably been out of work at least sixty days. I mean, if they came down for the Passover, we believe that they probably have stayed until Pentecost. We are looking at about sixty days in which they have not been fishing. That means that they have not had any income. Therefore, when they say that

they do not have any money, it is because they do not. They have been so immersed in the crucifixion and its aftermath. Remember that Jesus' last words to them were to not leave. Do not go back up to Galilee. Just stay. They may have had a short go as they did talk with Jesus a little bit up in Galilee, but they had to come right back because they had another feast approaching. They do not have money. He is telling the truth. God purposely does not allow them to have money. That way, money is not what establishes ministry. Ministry is something that we do by virtue of the Spirit of God within us. We share Christ. We point to Christ. Our goal is not to fix... That is why the church is not really a social institution. We are not a fundraising institution because the moment we start doing that, the world begins to perceive, "I get it. The church saves, gets enough money, and that is how it ministers to people." This is why so many people are not ministering--they begin to believe that they are paying somebody to do that for them. "Have you led somebody to the Lord this week?" "I don't need to. I gave to the

church so that somebody else will take care of that. That is what I pay those missionaries to do.” But that is not the way a church operates. In fact, the power of the church is that you have been so transformed that you begin to minister to people whom the church would never see, people who would never enter in through its doors. Clearly within the passage, the boundaries are being established. What happens next? When he gazes at them, they gaze at him; and he is healed. That is a lot better than what man could do, isn't it?

The point of the healing, though, is going to be setting another precedence. When the church ministers to people, there is only one reason: to point to Christ. There is only one reason why we do it. There is no other reason why we do it. The only reason that a church is doing something that seems altruistic and benevolent is because what they are doing is pointing to Christ. When we help somebody who comes off the street, we will tell them, “Look, we will be glad to help you out, but we expect you to stay through the service. We would like for you to hear

the message, and we would like to go over the plan of salvation with you. And it is for this reason that we will help you out.” The declaration is very clear as you come to Acts 3 as Peter says,

(Acts 3:6) “...in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!”

(Acts 3:7) “And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened.”

(Acts 3:8) “With a leap, he stood upright and began to walk...”

He begins leaping. Right? He would be pretty excited, which is obvious. I mean, I would be excited, too. He had had this problem from birth. Note that Peter declares “in the name of Jesus”. Right? This is the healing. “In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!” He is jumping. This guy stands right up, and he begins to walk. For the first time probably in his life, he enters the temple. It is an

amazing day for him. He begins walking and leaping.

Watch what he does besides walking and leaping.

(Acts 3:8) “...and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.”

Praising God! Now this is very interesting. I do not know if you caught it or not. Did Peter mention anything about God when he said, “in the name of Jesus the Nazarene”? Remember that the people had just declared Jesus to be a criminal? So obviously not a divine being. And yet, what comes out of his lips but words of praise to God. That tells us that when the Spirit of God works in the name of Jesus, He always points to and gives glory to God. He always gives glory to God. How will that happen? I do not know how it happens. But if you just keep pointing at Jesus, God will get the glory. He will get the glory because there is only one name that is pleasing to the Father. So he begins praising God. And then it says in

(Acts 3:9) “And all the people saw him walking and praising God.”

This is the man.

(Acts 3:10) “and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.”

(Acts 3:11) “While he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran to them at the so-called Portico Of Solomon, full of amazement.”

The Portico of Solomon is where the scholars, i.e. the rabbis, would gather together to do their teaching.

Obviously, brilliant men are seeing this. Now everybody is full of amazement at what God has done.

(Acts 3:12) “But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, ‘Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety, we had made him walk?’”

Once again, setting precedents for the church. Are we worshiping Peter? Are we worshiping John? “Why are you looking at us like that? Wait. Do you think we are

righteous? Are you bowing down to us? Are you marveling at us? We did not have anything to do with this. See?"

(Acts 3:13) "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate even though Pilate had decided to release Him."

That is an interesting statement that he seems to make here. He said that Pilate had already decided to let Him go, but "you" called him back. You put to death the Prince of Life, the One Whom God raised from the dead. How do I know that Jesus is really from God? He was the only One who was raised from the dead. You say, "Well, I know of other people who were raised from the dead." No. You do not. Jesus was the only One Who was raised from the dead and Who never died again. That was the true resurrection. All the others would die again, whether it was Lazarus or those mentioned in the Old Testament. Let us look at:

(Acts 17:31) "...because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He

has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

The text is declaring that the mark and the proof that Jesus was God's servant is the resurrection. What is it? He rose again, never to die again. As you look at the passage, Peter is very bold. His statement here in

(Acts 3:16) “And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.”

Once again, this is foundational to the church. Who is he pointing to? Christ. His faith is in Christ. What is the job of the church? What is the business of the church? To proclaim Jesus. It is the foundation of the church. In Him is salvation. There is salvation in no other. He will declare this again in Acts 4:12. Our story in Acts Chapter 3 continues:

(Acts 3:17) “And now, brethren, I know that you acted ignorantly just as the rulers did.”

I can just see some of the rulers going, I wish he would not use the word ignorant.

(Acts 3:18) “But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled.”

(Acts 3:19) “Therefore, repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.”

Once again, the message of the gospel is the foundation. Repentance and turning to Christ are two things that are inextricably tied together. You have to repent. Your sins have to be sent away. You have to let God have them before refreshment comes. People say, “Well, I asked Jesus in my heart.” Good for you! “But times of refreshment have not come. Why do I not feel good?” Did you send your sins away? “No, I am still hanging onto them.” Then you are not going to feel refreshed.

(Acts 3:20) “and that He may send Jesus the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive unto the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient times.”

In Acts 3:21, he quotes from Deuteronomy Chapter 18 which is a conversation between God and Moses.

(Acts 3:22) “Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up a prophet like Me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you.’”

He is going to be just like you in the sense that He will be a man. He is going to bring a new law. But you really need to listen to everything He says.

(Acts 3:23) “And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people.”

If you do not listen and obey, you are not going to live. This is why Scripture says,

(John 3:16) “...whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

But you had better listen to Him because if you do not, you will perish and not have everlasting life. See, this is big stuff here. This is not like Moses going, “Okay. You are going to be “toast.”” You go, “Oh, well, toast. That is all I can be is toast. No big deal.” But with Jesus in the picture, you could die forever. That is a horrible thing. Peter begins to now switch from the law. The church is now overshadowed by what? Christ and not the law. Why? We have a new Lawgiver. This is why. If you look with me in Matthew Chapter 5, here is the Lawgiver. He is giving a new law, right? Throughout this, He will say in

(Matthew 5:21) “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder.’”

(Matthew 5:22) “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court.”

(Matthew 5:27) “You have heard that it was said you shall not commit adultery;”

(Matthew 5:28) “but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

There is a new law. The standards are higher. If you look with me in the beginning of the Beatitudes in Matthew Chapter 5:

(Matthew 5:3) “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

(Matthew 5:4) “Blessed are those who mourn for they should be comforted.”

(Matthew 5:5) “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.”

(Matthew 5:6) “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

(Matthew 5:7) “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

(Matthew 5:8) “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

(Matthew 5:9) “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

If you look at that list, every one of these describes an aspect of the nature of a person. The nature of the person. They do not describe the deeds of a person. Do you understand that? This is new law. See? This is a new law. This is why Jesus will say that many will come to Him on that day and say, “Well, did not we do all these deeds?” He answers, “You did not do what I told you to do.” You reply, “What did You tell me to do?” He says, “I told you to change your heart because this whole list is all about the nature of the poor in spirit.” It is not about how I do something. Somebody might say, “Does that mean I take out the garbage?” People are thinking so tangibly. And God responds, “No. It means you are humble.” Those who mourn, about what do you mourn? James says,

(James 4:8) “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

(James 4:9) “Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.”

(James 4:10) “Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”

Weep and cry over your sins. If you cannot seem to shed a tear over your sins, then you are not sorry. The passage is dealing with the heart. We begin to see that the law of Moses is being replaced. Life in Christ is not just about the laws of do's and don'ts. It is about the heart, and Christ is about the heart. This is the message that is going to be proclaimed. Let us look in

(Acts 3:23) “And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.”

(Acts 3:24) “And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward also announced these days.”

(Acts 3:25) “It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying

to Abraham, ‘And in your seed, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”

Of course, the lineage brought forth the Messiah.

(Acts 3:26) “For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.”

That is a great description of the Christ, is it not? Of course, Philippians will say that He took on the form of a bondservant, but it really is the prophecy of Isaiah 42:1-4. It is also the prophecy of Isaiah 49:5-7. The prophecy is of the Servant who would come in God’s name. I will not go into those passages, so you can read them on your own.

(Acts 3:26) “For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.”

God sent His Son to bless you. It is very important that we read the whole text because, once again, the blessing does not come until we have turned away from our sins

and turned toward Him. That is when the blessing comes. The passage reads this way.

(Acts 3:26) “For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.”

It is only when we come to Christ and receive Him as our Lord and Savior that our lives can change. It is the moment that we say, “I do not want to live my life the way that I have lived in it anymore. I want to follow You. I am turning away from my sins.

(Isaiah 53:6) “All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way. But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to be laid on Him.”

Is this the time now to change? I do not want to do this anymore. We begin to call Him Lord. Then the blessing comes. This is why Jesus will say, “I tell you, blessed are you if you do these things.” (John 13:17) If you come to Christ, repent, and humble yourself to His will, there are always blessings. Too many people can quote chapter and

verse. They can talk about all the Bible studies in which they are involved. But if you are not applying these things, then there is no power. What He is establishing is the uniting of the body in true worship, the worship of Spirit and Truth. Then there is a change. There is a heart change. There is a desire to change. The deeds of God are being performed in the name of Christ, and it is all pointing to Christ. This is what the church is all about. This is how the church is to be established in Jerusalem.

After God gets this church established, He is going to scatter them beyond Jerusalem. He is going to say, “Now go! Be missionaries.” They are going to stop in Antioch to plant a church. They will go to Judea, Samaria, and the outermost parts of the earth. And God is going to use one of the people who was ravaging the church. He is going to say, “I will make you head honcho of the group.” He takes Saul, converts him, and changes his name. Instead of Saul, he will take on the name of Paul, which means “little man”, and he will begin to minister in that name. We know him as the great apostle Paul. As we will read in the

Book of Acts, he will go to many different places that are well beyond Samaria. Philip covered some of Samaria, but Paul will go beyond these particular regions. He will go to Lystra and Iconium and even beyond. He will finally even receive a vision to head into Greece. He will go to Rome, which is where Book of Acts ends. Most of the Paul's epistles of the letters were sent to places where he had been. We will journey with him throughout the Book of Acts. We will see him visit these places, and later on he will write to them. A lot of the people that he will write live at the places that he visited. The Book of Acts ends with Paul in Rome in prison. He will write letters from prison. The authorities actually give him a house to live in, and he will write letters from there. We call them his prison epistles. He will write that he remembers them, remembers being with them. We will see those exploits as we go on. In every case, we are going to see the church being established. These letters, these epistles, are different from a personal letter. It is not just a letter. An epistle is a letter written for the purpose of direction and

correction. He will write these letters of direction and correction to the churches he has planted which will begin to establish the church. We will call it church decorum. His letters will start directing the church. What happens if this happens in your church? Or what happens if that happens? All these letters are going to tell us what to do and how to handle things. God is gathering the body together. He is breathing life into the body, and now he is uniting the body in Chapter 3 around true worship. We are going to see that it is all about pointing to Christ.

Prayer

Father, we give You thanks once again for Your wonderful, marvelous message that brings us to the throne of Jesus Christ. We realize that this is the job of the church. It is not complicated. It should not go beyond these boundaries. We are established upon the foundation of Jesus Christ being the Cornerstone and the foundation of the apostles who bore witness that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the One Whom we should follow. He is the

One to Whom we should point. He is the One to Whom we give praise. God is glorified in us. Lord, we believe this to be true. We believe that the power is in His name. We proclaim this name in Jesus Christ. Amen.