

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS 3:12-26

OUTLINE

- I. Jesus promises power for witness to the nations 1:1-11
- II. The apostles' witness in Jerusalem and Judea 1:12–6:7
 - A. The church in Jerusalem is planted 1:12–2:47
 - B. The church in Jerusalem expands 3:1–6:7
 1. Peter preaches the gospel in the temple 3:1-26

CONTENTS

The Book of Acts, chapter 3, verses 12 through 26, remain of historical interest, for it reflects the earliest-known, Jewish-Christian Christology, especially that of Jesus' apostle Peter.

Although the author, the physician Luke, was a companion of the apostle Paul, missionary-theologian to Gentiles, he spent several months in Judea interviewing Jesus' apostles, including Peter, while Paul remained incarcerated at Caesarea between the years 57 and 60 CE.

Thus, the main points of the apostle Peter's public message to Jewish pilgrims in Jerusalem, proclaimed in the year 33 CE, can be reliably recovered from Acts 3:12-26, which was published in Greek sometime after about the year 62 CE.

Peter's discourse, or sermon, can be divided into three parts:

1. How the Name of Jesus healed a lame beggar, which Peter's hearers saw to be true. 2:14-16
2. How Jesus fulfilled promises that God had made through the Hebrew prophets. 2:17-24
3. How God will bless Israelites who repent by turning away from their sins of disbelief. 2:25-26

Acts 3:12-26 explicitly mentions:

- No fewer than 12 names, titles and descriptors applied to Jesus.
- No fewer than 14 events associated with Jesus, past, present and future.
- No fewer than 3 citations from the Hebrew prophets that some Jews regarded as messianic prophecies, besides allusions to several other passages.

Peter's discourse opens and closes with references to Jesus as God's "Servant," in verses 13 and 26. The Greek term used for Servant in these verses is *pais*, apparently referring to the Greek version of Isaiah 52:13, which speaks of a Servant who would one day suffer on behalf of many nations. (More about this below.)

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If you lead a bible study group, then ask the learners to find all the names, titles and descriptors used of Jesus in verses 12-26

Peter's discourse refers to recent events, including Jesus' death and resurrection in verse 15. He then calls the hearers to repent in verse 19, citing promises of future blessing for those who do so.

If you lead a bible study group, then have the participants identify all those events, past and future, making a list of them.

In verse 22, Peter cites from the Book of Deuteronomy 18:15, 18, identifying Jesus as the "prophet like Moses" who had predicted he would come someday: "The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your countrymen; to Him you shall listen."

Several religions try to make Deuteronomy 18:15 a prediction of their own founding prophet. In your bible study group, discuss reasons for which those religions are wrong on this point.

In verse 23, Peter quotes Deuteronomy 18:18: "And it will be that everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be utterly rooted out of the people."

In your bible study group, discuss reasons for which this verse should apply to faith in Jesus.

In verse 25, Peter cites from the Book of Genesis 22:18, "In your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

In your bible study group, discuss ways in which this promise was fulfilled by Jesus and is still being fulfilled to this day.

COMMENTARY

Let us now make a few observations about several phrases in Acts 3:12-26, referring to the Greek text.

11 Solomon's Portico. The eastern wall of the temple grounds had a covered colonnade where worshipers could gather. This is where the apostles would teach seekers and believers, every day.

13 Some of the oldest Greek manuscripts repeat the phrase "the God of" before Isaac and before Jacob. Bible translators who retain those repeated phrases must avoid implying that there be three of four Gods.

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The terms “Servant” and “glorified” would be understood by Peter’s hearers to refer to Isaiah 52:13 where they occur together: “Behold, My Servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted [=glorified].”

14 “The Holy and Righteous One” clearly refers to an individual, because of its grammar whereby a single definite article occurs before two nouns connected by a conjunction.

15 The word translated “raised up” sometimes means to appoint or to empower someone, and other times is used of God raising Jesus from death. Either meaning makes good sense in this verse.

16 By repeating the term “Name”, Peter draws attention to it. “The Name” was an expression commonly used by Jews when referring to the God of Israel. In 4:17, Jewish authorities will ask, “By what power, or in what name, have you done this?”

The term for “faith” sometimes means “faithfulness.” In this verse can mean “the faithfulness of the Name” to fulfill his promises, hence the next phrases: “his Name has made this man strong,” and “the faith(fulness) that comes through him has made him well.” Whether you take the verse to mean the apostles’ faith in Jesus, or to mean Jesus’ faithfulness to God, both remain true. In any case, it was not the lame man’s faith that secured his healing.

18 The Greek for “all” (of the prophets) often means “taken together” rather than “each one separately.”

19 The two imperative verbs “repent and return (or turn around, or go back)” form a *hendiadys*, that is, two words for a single action, which could be translated, “repent by turning.” Both words are used in the Greek Septuagint for repentance, returning to faith in the God of Israel, and in the New Testament for turning to the Lord Jesus.

20 Some ancient manuscripts read “Jesus, the Christ” (χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν), recognizing that Jesus defines who the Messiah is. Others invert this to “Jesus Christ” (Ἰησοῦν χριστὸν).

22 Deuteronomy 18:18-19 appears in Dead Sea manuscript 4Q175, dated from the second century BCE, which contains five biblical quotations about a future messiah or teacher, reflecting beliefs held by some Jews of the “second temple” era. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/4Q175>

25 The Greek term for “sons” (*huioi*) usually implies rights of inheritance. Here it is used in parallel with “seed,” a Hebrew idiom for descendants.

26 The Greek term for “Servant” can be translated “child” or “son” in different contexts. Whether you translate it “God’s Servant” or “God’s Son,” it remains the same Jesus who uniquely fulfills God’s promises made to Israel and to the Gentile nations.