

## Week 2

### Summary of Acts 3-4

Acts 2:42-47 serve as a transition from Luke's introductory chapters to his sequel. Luke is expanding on his imagery of the church being the new Temple (as seen in the Ascension and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost). We have here the addition of the Jewish *beth av* (father's house). They are not just the new Temple, they are starting to act like a family.

#### **Acts 3:1-10**

Peter and John are on their way to the old Temple to pray for it was the customary time of prayer. I suggested that the reason Luke included this use of the old Temple despite his description of the church in Temple terms (Acts 2:2,3) and Jesus announcing its destruction (Luke 21:5,6) was to juxtapose the old and new. By placing them side by side we can see more clearly what is happening.

Oddly, we never get to praying in this passage. Human need always trumps religious duty. Think of those who passed by the victim in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Peter invokes the name of Jesus and heals a man who had been born lame. A man who was over the age of 40 and was excluded from full participation in the religious life of Israel. This results in the man praising God while onlookers were filled with wonder and amazement.

#### **Acts 3:11-26**

Now comes the explanation of what just happened. The name of Jesus is not magical (we will meet people who think this later in Acts). The power is in the connection to Israel's God. Peter uses a number of titles for God to describe the source of this healing (new creation) power.

1. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This first appears in Exod 3:4 linking this to the exodus.
2. The God of our fathers. Emphasizing that this is an Israel deal.
3. ...glorified his servant Jesus. Jesus is the servant of YHWH (Isa 40-55).
4. The Holy One and Righteous One. This comes from Ps 16:10. This passage has already been used by Peter in Acts 2:25-28 as part of the explanation of the manifestation of the outpouring of the Spirit by showing it as a result of the resurrection of Jesus.
5. Author of Life. The word translated here as "Author" (same word translated "Prince" in 5:31) conveys the idea of someone who leads the way. Combine Jesus' introduction in Rev 1:18 (I am alive, I was dead, behold I am alive forevermore) with Jesus' call for people to "follow me". He has pioneered the way for us through death to life in God.

Although “you killed Jesus,” God has raised him from the dead (resurrection). “It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him” (NIV) that has accomplished this healing.

Peter extends an olive branch. You acted in ignorance in all this. This was the way God had always planned to fulfill his promises. Look back at the titles of God above and Peter’s emphasis on the resurrection. Remember the challenge of Scot McKnight to present the Gospel as the climax or fulfillment of Israel’s story. On the basis of the resurrection of Jesus in accordance with the plans of Israel’s God, Peter calls for the people to repent. Three things will happen as a result. First, your sins will be wiped out. The death of Jesus is an atoning death. Second, times of refreshing will come from the Lord. Third, that he may send the Christ appointed for you. Remember, salvation is for the Jew first then also the Greek (Rom 1:16). This sequence is also in line with Luke’s outline from chapter 1 that the church would witness first in Jerusalem (where we are in chapters 3 and 4), and then Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

Peter emphasizes his call to repentance by reminding the people that Jesus is the Prophet who was to come (Deut 18). Failure to listen to him would result in being completely cut off from Israel which contrasts nicely with our healed man who has been brought near. V26: the resurrected Jesus is sent first to Israel (Rom 1:16) to turn them from their sin as a blessing.

#### **Acts 4:1-22** (No good deed goes unpunished)

The rulers of the old temple which include the Sadducees (who do not believe in resurrection) detain Peter and John because they were announcing that the resurrection had already begun in Jesus. The next day they demand to know what name was used to heal the man. The answer is much sharper than in chapter 3. It’s the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified but God raised from the dead (resurrection has begun). Instead of being kind and allowing for ignorance on their part Peter turns the knife and draws upon Ps 118:22 as a further explanation. This is the exact verse Jesus had used probably two months ago when he explained his parable of wicked tenants who would rather kill the owner’s son than be faithful stewards of the vineyard. But where Jesus quoted the psalm “the stone the builders rejected has become the headstone”, Peter says to the temple rulers, the stone **you builders** rejected...” Since they could not deny the outstanding sign performed by Peter and John, they issued many threats and warnings before releasing them. From here on through Acts we see the church having to navigate first Herod’s world and then Cesar’s: how do we obey God rather than human authorities?

#### **Acts 4:23-31**

And now how does the church respond to this specific threat? They turn to prayer. Here, as elsewhere, they pray the psalms which are focused around Jesus. Although Luke records only Ps 2:1,2 we must hold the whole psalm in mind. This conspiracy of kings is happening in real time around them. Herod, Pilate (Cesar’s rep), Gentiles and people of Israel have

literally conspired against the Lord and his anointed (Messiah). But how does the psalm continue? “Ask of me and I will give the nations as your inheritance, the ends of the earth as your possession.” We are reminded that the focus is (indeed always has been) global. Their request is not that God remove them from impending danger (John 17) but that they be given boldness to speak the word of God and that God would continue to perform signs.

### **Acts 4:32-37**

This passage serves two purposes. Literarily, it provides an introduction to the scene with Ananias and Sapphira using Barnabas who will figure prominently later. Pastor David will have more to say about that in week 3’s study.

This section also expands Luke’s earlier description of the church given in 2:42-47. We are a family. The key verse in this passage is 34: “there were no needy people among them.” Luke is echoing Deuteronomy 15:4 with this almost direct quote. Deuteronomy 15 concerns the sabbatical year which occurred every seventh year. The year was characterized by cancelling debts and freeing servants. “The Lord’s time for cancelling debts has been proclaimed. . . There should be no needy among you . . . for the Lord is sure to bless you” (Deut 15:2.4). Luke is saying that we’re doing it. We are forgiven by God and we forgive one another.

## **White Board**

### **Gospel of Luke**

Temple/Fulfillment

Temple/Fulfillment

Jesus proclaims/inaugurates Kingdom of God

### **Acts of the Apostles**

Kingdom of God

Kingdom of God

Temple