
ACTS 3: 1 Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

Peter and John go to the temple at the hour of prayer, and heal a man who had been lame from his mother's womb, Act 3:1-8. The people are astonished, and the apostles inform them that it was not by their own power they had healed the man, but through the power of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, Act 3:9-16. Peter both excuses and reproves them, and exhorts them to repentance, Act 3:17-21. Shows that in Jesus Christ the prophecy of Moses was fulfilled; and that all the prophets testified of Jesus and his salvation, Act 3:22-24; and that, in him, the covenant made with Abraham is fulfilled; and that Christ came to bless them by turning them away from their iniquities, Act 3:25, Act 3:26.

Verse 1

Peter and John went up together - The words ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, which we translate together, and which are the first words in this chapter in the Greek text, we have already seen, Act 2:47, are added by several MSS. and versions to the last verse of the preceding chapter. But they do not make so good a sense there as they do here; and should be translated, not together, which really makes no sense here, but at that time; intimating that this transaction occurred nearly about the same time that those took place which are mentioned at the close of the former chapter.

At the hour of prayer - This, as is immediately added, was the ninth hour, which answers, in a general way, to our three o'clock in the afternoon. The third hour, which was the other grand time of public prayer among the Jews, answered, in a general way, to our nine in the morning. See the note on Act 2:15.

It appears that there were three hours of the day destined by the Jews to public prayer; perhaps they are referred to by David, Psa 55:17 : Evening and Morning, and at Noon, will I pray and cry aloud. There are three distinct times marked in the book of the Acts. The Third hour, Act 2:15, answering, as we have already seen, to nearly our nine o'clock in the morning; the Sixth hour, Act 10:9, answering to about twelve with us; and the Ninth hour, mentioned in this verse, and answering to our three in the afternoon.

The rabbins believed that Abraham instituted the time of morning prayer; Isaac, that at noon; and Jacob, that of the evening: for which they quote several scriptures, which have little reference to the subject in behalf of which they are produced. Others of the rabbins, particularly Tanchum, made a more natural division. Men should pray,

1. When the sun rises;
2. when the sun has gained the meridian;
3. when the sun has set, or passed just under the horizon.

At each of these three times they required men to offer prayer to God; and I should be glad to know that every Christian in the universe observed the same rule: it is the most natural division of the day; and he who conscientiously observes these three stated times of prayer will infallibly grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord.

ACTS 3: 2 A certain man who was lame from his mother's womb was being carried, whom they laid daily at the door of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask gifts for the needy of those who entered into the temple.

Verse 2

A - man lame from his mother's womb - The case of this man must have been well known:

1. from the long standing of his infirmity:
2. from his being daily exposed in a place so public.

It appears that he had no power to walk, and was what we term a cripple, for he was carried to the gate of the temple, and laid there in order to excite compassion. These circumstances are all marked by St. Luke, the more fully to show the greatness and incontestable nature of the miracle.

The gate - which is called Beautiful - There are different opinions concerning this gate. Josephus observes, Bell. Jud. lib. v. cap. 5, sect. 3, that the temple had nine gates, which were on every side covered with gold and silver; but there was one gate which was without the holy house, and was of Corinthian brass, and greatly excelled those which were only covered with gold and silver: πολυ τη τιμη τας καταργυρους και περιχρυσους υπεραγουσα. The magnitudes of the other gates were equal one to another; but that of the Corinthian gate, which opened on the east, over against the gate of the holy house itself, was much larger: πεντηκοντα γαρ πηχων ουσα την αναστασιν, τεσσαρακοντα πηχεις τας θυρας ειχε, και τον κοσμον πολυτελεστερον, επι δαψιλες παχος αργυρου τε και χρυσου. for its height was fifty cubits, and its doors were forty cubits, and it was adorned after a most costly manner, as having much richer and thicker plates of silver and gold upon them than upon the other. This last was probably the gate which is here called Beautiful; because it was on the outside of the temple, to which there was an easy access, and because it was evidently the most costly, according to the account in Josephus; but it must be granted that the text of Josephus is by no means clear.

ACTS 3: 3 Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive gifts for the needy.

ACTS 3: 4 Peter, fastening his eyes on him, with John, said, "Look at us."

Verse 4

Look on us - He wished to excite and engage his attention that he might see what was done to produce his miraculous cure, and, it is likely, took this occasion to direct his faith to Jesus Christ. See note on Act 3:16 (note). Peter and John probably felt themselves suddenly drawn by the Holy Spirit to pronounce the healing name in behalf of this poor man.

ACTS 3: 5 He listened to them, expecting to receive something from them.

Verse 5

Expecting to receive something of them - Because it was a constant custom for all who entered the temple to carry money with them to give to the treasury, or to the poor, or to both. It was on this ground that the friends of the lame man laid him at the gate of the temple, as this was the most likely place to receive alms.

ACTS 3: 6 But Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none, but what I have, that I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!"

Verse 6

Silver and gold have I none - Though it was customary for all those who entered the temple to carry some money with them, for the purposes mentioned above, yet so poor were the apostles that their had nothing to give, either to the sacred treasury, or to the distressed. The popish writers are very dexterous at forming analogies between St. Peter and the pope; but it is worthy of note that they have not attempted any here. Even the judicious and generally liberal Calmet passes by this important saying of the person whom he believed to have been the first pope. Thomas Aquinas, surnamed the angelical doctor, who was highly esteemed by Pope Innocent IV., going one day into the pope's chamber, where they were reckoning large sums of money, the pope, addressing himself to Aquinas, said: "You see that the Church is no longer in an age in which she can say, Silver and gold have I none?" "It is true, holy father," replied the angelical doctor, "nor can she now say to the lame man, Rise up and walk!" This was a faithful testimony, and must have cut deep for the moment. One thing is very remarkable, that though the saints of this church can work no miracles while alive, they work many when dead; and it is the attestation of those post mortem miracles that leads to their canonization. Thomas a Becket, who did no good while he lived, is reported to have done much after his death. Many have visited his tomb, and, in days of yore, many were said to be healed of whatsoever disease they had. The age is more enlightened, and the tomb of this reputed saint has lost all its power.

ACTS 3: 7 He took him by the right hand, and raised him up. Immediately his feet and his ankle bones received strength.

Verse 7

Immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength - The suddenness of the cure was the proof of the miracle: his walking and leaping were the evidences of it.

ACTS 3: 8 Leaping up, he stood, and began to walk. He entered with them into the temple, walking, leaping, and praising God.

Verse 8

Walking and leaping, and praising God - These actions are very naturally described. He walked, in obedience to the command of the apostle, rise up and walk: he leaped, to try the strength of his limbs and to be convinced of the reality of the cure: he praised God, as a testimony of the gratitude he felt for the cure he had received. Now was fulfilled, in the most literal manner, the words of the Prophet Isaiah, Isa 35:6 : The lame man shall leap as a hart.

ACTS 3: 9 All the people saw him walking and praising God.

Verse 9

And all the people saw him - The miracle was wrought in the most public manner, and in the most public place, and in a place where the best judgment could be formed of it; for, as it was a Divine operation, the priests, etc., were the most proper persons to judge of it; and under their notice it was now wrought.

ACTS 3: 10 They recognised him, that it was he who used to sit begging for gifts for the needy at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. They were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

ACTS 3: 11 As the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

Verse 11

Held Peter and John - He felt the strongest affection for them, as the instruments by which the Divine influence was converted to his diseased body.

In the porch that is called Solomon's - On this portico see Bp. Pearce's note, inserted in this work, Joh 10:23 (note).

ACTS 3: 12 When Peter saw it, he responded to the people, "You men of Israel, why do you marvel at this man? Why do you fasten your eyes on us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made him walk?"

Verse 12

As though by our own power - Δυνάμει, Miraculous energy.

Or holiness - Η ευσεβεία, Meaning religious attachment to the worship of God. Do not think that we have wrought this miracle by any power of our own; or that any supereminent piety in us should have induced God thus to honor us, by enabling us to work it. Instead of ευσεβεία, holiness, the Syriac of Erpen, Armenian, Vulgate, and some copies of the Itala, have εξουσία, power or authority; but the first appears to be the legitimate reading.

ACTS 3: 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up, and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had determined to release him.

Verse 13

The God of Abraham, etc. - This was wisely introduced, to show them that He whom they called their God had acknowledged Jesus Christ for his Son, and wrought this miracle in his name; and, by thus honouring Jesus whom they slew, he had charged home the guilt of that murder upon them.

Denied him in the presence of Pilate - Ἡρνήσασθε, Ye have renounced him as your king, and denounced him to death as a malefactor, when Pilate, convinced of his perfect innocence, was determined, κρινάντος, judged it proper and just, to let him go. Pilate wished to act according to justice; you acted contrary to justice and equity in all their forms.

ACTS 3: 14 But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,

Verse 14

Ye denied the Holy One - Τον ἅγιον. A manifest reference to Psa 16:10 : Thou wilt not suffer thy Holy One to see corruption; where the original word ἁγίος Chasideyca, thy Holy One, is translated by the Septuagint, τον Ὁσιον σου, a word of the same import with that used by Peter.

And desired a murderer - Barabbas: the case must have been fresh in their own remembrance. Like cleaves to like, and begets its like: they were murderers themselves, and so Christ calls them, Mat 22:7, and they preferred a murderer to the holy and righteous One of God.

ACTS 3: 15 and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, to which we are witnesses.

Verse 15

And killed the Prince of life - Τον ἀρχηγον της ζωης, The author of this life: not only implying that all life proceeds from Jesus Christ as its source, but that the life-giving influence of that religion which they were now proclaiming came all through him. Αρχηγος signifies a prime leader or author, a captain, from αρχη, the beginning, head, or chief; and αγω, I lead. In Heb 2:10, Christ is called Αρχηγος της σωτηριας, the Captain of salvation. He teaches the doctrine of life and salvation, leads the way in which men should walk, and has purchased the eternal life and glory which are to be enjoyed at the end of the way. So the Jews preferred a son of death, a destroyer of life, to the Author and Procurer of life and immortality!

Whereof we are witnesses - They had now wrought a most striking miracle in the name of Christ, and immediately proposed themselves as witnesses of his resurrection from the dead; the miracle which they had thus wrought being an unimpeachable proof of this resurrection.

ACTS 3: 16 By faith in his name, his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which is through him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Verse 16

And his name - Jesus, the Savior: through faith in his name, as the Savior, and author of life, and all its concomitant blessings, such as health, etc. It is not quite clear whether the apostles refer to their own faith in Jesus, or to the faith of the lame man. It is true Christ had promised that they should perform miracles in his name, Mar 16:17, Mar 16:18. And that whatsoever they asked of the Father in his name, he would grant it, Joh 16:23. And they might have been led at this time to make request unto God to be enabled to work this miracle; and the faith they had in his unlimited power and unchangeable truth might have induced them to make this request. Or, the faith might have been that of the lame man; the apostles, in the time they desired him to look on them, might have taught him the necessity of believing in Christ in order to his healing; and the man's mind might have been prepared for this by the miracle of the gift of tongues, of which he must have heard; and heard that this mighty effusion of the Spirit had come in the name and through the power of Christ. However the faith may be understood, it was only the means to receive the blessing, which the apostles most positively attribute, not to their power or holiness, but to Jesus Christ alone. Faith always receives; never gives.

ACTS 3: 17 "Now, brothers, I know that you did this in ignorance, as did also your rulers.

Verse 17

I wot - Οἶδα, I know. Wot is from the Anglo-Saxon, to know; and hence wit, science or understanding.

Through ignorance ye did it - This is a very tender excuse for them; and one which seems to be necessary, in order to show them that their state was not utterly desperate; for if all that they did to Christ had been through absolute malice, (they well knowing who he was), if any sin could be supposed to be unpardonable, it must have been theirs. Peter, foreseeing that they might be tempted thus to think, and consequently to despair of salvation, tells them that their offense was extenuated by their ignorance of the person they had tormented and crucified. And one must suppose that, had they been fully convinced that this Jesus was the only Messiah, they never would have crucified him; but they did not permit themselves to receive conviction on the subject.

ACTS 3: 18 But the things which God announced by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled.

Verse 18

But those things - he hath so fulfilled - Your ignorance and malice have been overruled by the sovereign wisdom and power of God, and have become the instruments of fulfilling the Divine purpose, that Christ must suffer, in order to make an atonement for the sin of the world. All the prophets had declared this; some of them in express terms, others indirectly and by symbols; but, as the whole Mosaic dispensation referred to Christ, all that prophesied or ministered under it must have referred to him also.

ACTS 3: 19 "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, so that there may come times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord,

Verse 19

Repent ye therefore - Now that ye are convinced that this was the Messiah, let your minds be changed, and your hearts become contrite for the sins you have committed.

And be converted - Επιζηψατε, Turn to God through this Christ, deeply deploring your transgressions, and believing on his name; that your sins may be blotted out, which are not only recorded against you, but for which you are condemned by the justice of God; and the punishment due to them must be executed upon you, unless prevented by your repentance, and turning to him whom ye have pierced. The blotting out of sins may refer to the ceremony of the waters of jealousy, where the curse that was written in the book was to be blotted out with the bitter water. See the note on Num 5:23. Their sins were written down against them, and cried aloud for punishment; for they themselves had said, His blood be upon us, and upon our children, Mat 27:25; and unless they took refuge in this sacrificial blood, and got their sins blotted out by it, they could not be saved.

When the times of refreshing shall come - Dr. Lightfoot contends, and so ought all, that ὅπως ἀνελθῶσι καιροὶ ἀναψυξεως, should be translated, That the times of refreshing May come. Ἀναψυξις, signifies a breathing time, or respite, and may be here applied to the space that elapsed from this time till the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. This was a time of respite, which God gave them to repent of their sins, and be converted to himself. Taking the word in the sense of refreshment in general, it may mean the whole reign of the kingdom of grace, and the blessings which God gives here below to all genuine believers, peace, love, joy, and communion with himself. See on Act 3:21 (note).

ACTS 3: 20 and that he may send Christ Jesus, who was ordained for you before,

Verse 20

Which before was preached unto you - Instead of προκεκηρυγμενον, before preached, ABCDE, fifty-three others, both the Syriac, all the Arabic, the Armenian, Chrysostom, and others, have προκεχειρισμενον, who was before designed, or appointed; and this is without doubt the true reading. Christ crucified was the person whom God had from the beginning appointed or designed for the Jewish people. It was not a triumphant Messiah which they were to expect; but one who was

to suffer and die. Jesus was this person; and by believing in him, as thus suffering and dying for their sins, he should be again sent, in the power of his Spirit, to justify and save them.

ACTS 3: 21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God spoke long ago by the mouth of his holy prophets.

Verse 21

Whom the heaven must receive - He has already appeared upon earth, and accomplished the end of his appearing; he has ascended unto heaven, to administer the concerns of his kingdom, and there he shall continue till he comes again to judge the quick and the dead.

The times of restitution of all things - The word αποκαταστασις, from απο which signifies from, and καθιστανειν, to establish or settle any thing, viz. in a good state; and, when απο is added to it, then this preposition implies that this good state, in which it is settled, was preceded by a bad one, from which the change is made to a good one. So in Act 1:6, when the disciples said to Christ, Wilt thou at this time restore again (αποκαθιστανεις) the kingdom to Israel? they meant, as the Greek word implies, Wilt thou take the kingdom from the Romans, and give it back to the Jews? Now, as the word is here connected with, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, it must mean the accomplishment of all the prophecies and promises contained in the Old Testament relative to the kingdom of Christ upon earth; the whole reign of grace, from the ascension of our Lord till his coming again, for of all these things have the holy prophets spoken; and, as the grace of the Gospel was intended to destroy the reign of sin, its energetic influence is represented as restoring all things, destroying the bad state, and establishing the good - taking the kingdom out of the hands of sin and Satan, and putting it into those of righteousness and truth. This is done in every believing soul; all things are restored to their primitive order; and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keeps the heart and mind in the knowledge and love of God. The man loves God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, and his neighbor as himself; and thus all the things of which the holy prophets have spoken since the world began, relative to the salvation of any soul, are accomplished in this case; and when such a work becomes universal, as the Scriptures seem to intimate that it will, then all things will be restored in the fullest sense of the term. As therefore the subject here referred to is that of which all the prophets from the beginning have spoken, (and the grand subject of all their declarations was Christ and his work among men), therefore the words are to be applied to this, and no other meaning. Jesus Christ comes to raise up man from a state of ruin, and restore to him the image of God, as he possessed it at the beginning.

All his holy prophets - Παντων, all, is omitted by ABCD, some others, one Syriac, the Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, and Vulgate. Griesbach leaves it out of the text, and inserts the article των, which the Greek MSS. have, in the place of παντων. The text reads thus: Which he hath spoken by his holy prophets, etc.

Since the world began - Απ' αιωνος; as αιων signifies complete and ever-during existence or eternity, it is sometimes applied, by way of accommodation, to denote the whole course of any one period, such as the Mosaic dispensation. See the note on Gen 21:33. It may therefore here refer to that state of things from the giving of the law; and as Moses is mentioned in the next verse, and none before him, it is probable that the phrase should be so understood here. But, if we apply it to the commencement of time, the sense is still good: Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of

these things; and indeed the birth, life, miracles, preaching sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and reign of Jesus Christ, have been the only theme of all prophets and inspired men from the foundation of the world.

ACTS 3: 22 For Moses indeed said to the fathers, 'The Lord God will raise up a prophet for you from among your brothers, like me. You shall listen to him in all things whatever he says to you.'

Verse 22

Moses truly said unto the fathers - On this subject the reader is requested to refer to the note at Deu 18:22. From this appeal to Moses it is evident that Peter wished them to understand that Jesus Christ was come, not as an ordinary prophet, to exhort to repentance and amendment, But as a legislator, who was to give them a new law, and whose commands and precepts they were to obey, on pain of endless destruction. Therefore they were to understand that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was that new law which should supersede the old.

ACTS 3: 23 It will be, that every soul that will not listen to that prophet will be utterly destroyed from among the people.'

ACTS 3: 24 Yes, and all the prophets from Samuel and those who followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days.

Verse 24

All the prophets from Samuel - Dr. Lightfoot observes: "We have Moses and Samuel mentioned together in this place, as also Psa 99:6, because there were few or no prophets between these two, 1Sam 3:1, and the apparition of angels having been more frequent; but, after the decease of Phineas, it is a question whether there was any oracle by Urim and Thummim, through the defect of prophecy in the high priests, till the times of Samuel. But then it revived in Abimelec, Abiather, etc." The Jews have a saying, Hieros. Chagigah, fol. 77. גִּיּוֹרִים שְׁמוּאֵל דָּבַן שָׁל Samuel was the chief of the prophets. Perhaps it was in reference to this that Peter said, All the prophets from Samuel, etc.

ACTS 3: 25 You are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'In your seed will all the families of the earth be blessed.'

Verse 25

Ye are the children of the prophets - This is the argumentum ad hominem: as ye are the children or disciples of the prophets, ye are bound to believe their predictions, and obey their precepts; and not only so, but ye are entitled to their promises. Your duty and your interest go hand in hand; and there is not a blessing contained in the covenant which was made with your fathers but belongs to you. Now, as this covenant respected the blessings of the Gospel, you must believe in Jesus Christ, in order to be put in possession of all those blessings.

ACTS 3: 26 God, having raised up his servant, Jesus, sent him to you first, to bless you, in turning away everyone of you from your wickedness.”

Verse 26

Unto you first, God, having raised up - As you are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant, the first offers of salvation belong to you, and God thus makes them to you. The great mission of Jesus Christ is directed first to you, that you may be saved from your sins. God designs to bless you, but it is by turning each of you away from his iniquities. The salvation promised in the covenant is a salvation from Sin, not from the Romans; and no man can have his sin blotted out who does not turn away from it.

1. We may learn from this that neither political nor ecclesiastical privileges can benefit the soul, merely considered in themselves: a man may have Abraham for his father, according to the flesh; and have Satan for his father, according to the spirit. A man may be a member of the visible Church of Christ, without any title to the Church triumphant. In short, if a man be not turned away from his iniquities, even the death of Christ profits him nothing. His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall Save his people From their Sins.

2. If Christ be the substance and sum of all that the prophets have written, is it not the duty and interest of every Christian, in reading the Scriptures, to search for the testimony they bear to this Christ, and the salvation procured by his death?