

Acts 3:11-26

Introduction

Last week, we came to Luke's account in Acts chapter 3 of the healing of the lame beggar. We asked what this miracle means for us? and we answered this question last week by looking at five Old Testament passages (Isa. 33 & 35; Jer. 31; Mic. 4; Zeph. 3) where the blessings of Messiah's kingdom (of life in the heavenly Zion) are described in terms of God's grace and favor poured out upon the lame. This morning, we ask again: "What does this miracle mean for us?" And now we come to Peter's own answer to this question.

I. Acts 3:11–12 — And while he [the previously lame beggar] was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the portico called Solomon's, full of wonder. 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?"

Peter takes advantage of the attention that the people are giving to him to redirect their gaze to the one who is the true source of this man's healing. It's as though he would say: "Why do you gaze at us? I will tell you who is the one that you should be gazing upon. Why do you look at us? I will tell you who is the one to whom you should be looking."

II. Acts 3:13a — "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers..."

Just like that, Peter transports his listeners back in history some two thousand years. To speak of "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" is to call to mind the covenant promises that God had given to them—especially the promise of a "seed" in whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed (cf. Exod. 3:15–17; 3:4-6; 4:5; 1 Chron. 29:16-19; Acts 7:30-34). God said to Abraham:

- Genesis 12:3; 22:18 — "I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families [lxx: *phyle*] of the earth will be blessed... In your **seed** all the nations [lxx: *ethnos*] of the earth shall be blessed..."

God said to Abraham's son, Isaac:

- Genesis 26:4 — "I will multiply your **seed** as the stars of heaven, and I will give your **seed** all these lands; and by your **seed** all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."

And God said to Isaac's son, Jacob:

- Genesis 28:14 — "[Y]our **seed** will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your **seed** all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

"Seed" is singular (it's not "seeds"). The singular "seed" can refer either to an *individual* seed (one person), or it can refer to a *collective* seed that's as many as "the stars of heaven" and "the dust of the earth." Clearly, there's a collective emphasis in God's promise of a numerous "seed"

to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And yet this numerous collective “seed” (singular) was ultimately to be embodied by an individual “seed” (singular) that would be even more specifically the “seed” of David, who was, himself, from the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God said to David:

- 1 Chronicles 17:11–14 — “And it will be that when your days are fulfilled to go to be with your fathers, **I will raise up one of your seed after you**, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; and I will not remove My lovingkindness from him, as I removed it from him who was before you. But I will cause him to stand in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.”

In other words, the “seed” promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob eventually came to be “focused” in an individual, messianic “seed.” The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Galatia:

- Galatians 3:16 — Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as referring to many, but rather to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ [Messiah].

But then it was, in turn, this individual messianic seed of Abraham who would Himself bring into being the “true” collective seed of Abraham from all the nations of the earth. Later in the same chapter in Galatians, Paul said:

- Galatians 3:29 — And if you belong to Christ [Messiah], then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise.

Heirs of what? Heirs of the “blessing.” When Peter begins, “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers,” he’s transporting us back in history to God’s promise of a “seed” in whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed. But even as Peter transports us back in history, he still remains firmly planted in the present. He’s speaking not of the God who *was* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but of the God who is still today the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (cf. Mat. 22:31-32), and so he continues:

III. Acts 3:13b — “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has [*now*] glorified [*doxazo*] His Servant Jesus...”

Can you see the flow of Peter’s thought? Who is Jesus? He is the promised “seed.” He is the “true Israel” who ushers in a new age of blessing for all the nations of the earth. That’s who Jesus is. And as such, Peter says, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has now glorified His Servant Jesus. Not only does Peter take his listeners back to the “fathers” in Genesis, now he also takes them back to the prophet Isaiah, who ministered some 1300 years after Abraham, but still some 700 years before Peter. This is what God said through Isaiah:

- Isaiah 52:13 — Behold, My **Servant** will prosper; He will be high and lifted up and greatly **glorified** [*lxx: daxazo*].

Now, we know from the rest of this prophecy in Isaiah 53 that God's Servant will be greatly glorified only after He has been "taken away" "by oppression and judgment" and "cut off out of the land of the living" (Isa. 53:8-9). So we read at the end of Isaiah 53:

- Isaiah 53:10–12 — When You [Yahweh] make His soul an offering for guilt, *He* will see *His seed* [who will be the "true" *collective* seed of Abraham], He will prolong His days [being no longer subject to death], and the good pleasure of Yahweh will succeed in His hand [being *exalted* to God's throne]. As a *result* of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge **the Righteous One, My Servant**, will justify the many [His seed], as He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will divide for Him a portion with the many, and He will divide the spoil with the strong; because He poured out His soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors.

Now, some 2000 years after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and some 700 years after Isaiah's prophecy, what does Peter say to the Jews in Acts chapter three?—"The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has [now] glorified His Servant—*Jesus*..." *Jesus* is the "seed" of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And because His soul was made an offering for guilt He now looks with satisfaction upon His own "seed"—who are the "true" seed of Abraham, taken from all the nations of the earth. But what does this mean for the *physical* seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who are listening to Peter in Solomon's portico? Peter continues:

IV. Acts 3:13c–15 — "The **GOD** of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the **GOD** of our fathers, has glorified His Servant Jesus [the promised seed], **whom YOU** [*hon hymeis*] delivered over [*paradidomi*] and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. But **YOU** [*hymeis*] denied **the Holy** [Lk. 4:34; Jn. 6:69; 1 Jn. 2:20; Rev. 3:7] **and Righteous One** [Isa. 53:11; cf. Isa. 32:1; Jer. 23:5; Zech. 9:9; Acts 7:52; 22:14] and asked for a murderer to be granted to you [Lk. 23:1-25], but put to death **the Author of life, whom GOD** [*hon theos*] raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses."

Do you see the stark contrast that Peter is making? "**GOD... glorified** His Servant Jesus, **whom YOU delivered over and denied... YOU denied** the Holy and righteous One... [and] put to death the Author of life, **whom GOD raised from the dead.**" On the one hand, Peter is driving home the terrible sin and wickedness of the people that would blind them to their own Messiah and even cause them to deliver Him over to death. On the other hand, he's placing the people's wicked handing over of Jesus to death wholly within the context of God's own sovereign plan to "glorify" His Servant by raising Him from the dead. How is it possible to listen to what Peter says here ["God glorified... you delivered over and denied... you denied... God raised..."], and not see that even the death of Jesus at the hands of the Jews—even the execution of the seed of Abraham and the Servant of Yahweh—was according to God's sovereign purpose and plan? Not only was the death of Yahweh's Servant *foretold* in Isaiah 53, it was said to be according to God's good pleasure.

- Isaiah 53:10 — Yahweh was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief...

Three times in the Greek translation of Isaiah 53, we're told that Yahweh's Servant was "handed over" (cf. Rom. 4:25; 8:32).

- Isaiah 53:6, 12 (lxx) — We all have been misled like sheep; each person was misled in his own path, and **the Lord handed him over** [*paradidomi*] for our sins... Because of this [the Lord’s Servant] will cause many to inherit, and he will apportion the spoils of the mighty, because his soul was **given over** [*paradidomi*] to death, and he was reckoned among the lawless, and he himself bore the sins of many, and he was **handed over** [*paradidomi*] because of their wickedness.

In Isaiah 53, it is *the Lord* who “hands over” His Servant to death as a part of His plan to glorify and exalt His Servant over all. So when Peter says, “God... glorified His Servant Jesus, whom *you* delivered over [*paradidomi*],” he’s positioning the terrible sin and wickedness of the Jews squarely within the context of God’s sovereign plan. They wickedly “handed Jesus over”; and yet all along, it was ultimately the Lord Himself who “handed over” His Servant because of their wickedness—in order that He might bear the sin of “many” (Isa. 53:12). And now the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has glorified His Servant Jesus so that He might “see His seed” and “prolong His days,” and so that “the good pleasure of Yahweh [might] succeed in His hand” (Isa. 53:10). “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!” (Rom. 11:33). Why, then, are the people gazing at Peter and John as if by their own power and piety they had made the lame man to walk? Peter continues:

V. 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 is through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.”

What the healing of the lame man means for the people, then, is that they were wrong about Jesus. He *is* the promised seed of Abraham. He *is* Yahweh’s suffering—and now glorified—Servant. He *is* the Holy and Righteous One. He *is* the Author of life. What the healing of the lame man means for the people is that the promised blessing of Abraham is now available to all on the basis of faith in Jesus’ name—even a faith which is, itself, through Him. As the object of the faith of all God’s elect, Jesus is also the one through whom that faith is given. In other words, it is the preached name of Jesus that calls forth and produces faith in us (cf. Acts 3:6), even as it is this same wonderful name that is the object of our faith forever.

Through faith in Jesus *as* the seed of Abraham (the seed of promise), *as* Yahweh’s glorified Servant (Yahweh’s Servant raised up from the dead), *as* the Holy and Righteous One, and *as* the Author of life, we are now the Messiah’s seed—the seed that He has brought forth through the travail and labor pains of His suffering. We have been made, *in Him*, the true seed of Abraham and heirs, therefore, of the blessing promised so long ago to Abraham. Paul writes in Galatians chapter 3:

- Galatians 3:13–14 — Christ [Messiah] redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”— in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith [faith in Jesus].

But, of course, Peter isn’t speaking here to Gentiles. He’s speaking to Jews; and not just to any Jews, but to those Jews in Jerusalem who “delivered over and denied” God’s Servant Jesus—

who even denied the Holy and Righteous One and put to death the author of life. So, is the blessing of Abraham still open even to these Jews? Peter continues:

VI. Acts 3:17–18 — “And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. But the things which God announced beforehand [*prokatangelo*] by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.”

These Jews who are listening to Peter have not foiled God’s plan. Instead, it was through their acting in ignorance that God fulfilled the things which He announced beforehand. “I know that **you acted in ignorance...** **But the things which God announced beforehand** by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, **He has THUS [in this way; through your acting in ignorance] fulfilled.**” This ignorance doesn’t mean that the people are innocent, or that they aren’t deserving of judgment. Even the people’s ignorance was caused by their sin and spiritual blindness. And yet the fact remains that when Jesus came, according to Paul, they recognized neither their Messiah nor the utterances of the prophets which were read every Sabbath (Acts 13:27; cf. Lk. 23:34; 1 Cor. 2:8; 1 Tim. 1:13). And so it was in their ignorance that they became the tools God used to fulfill the very Scriptures they professed to love by condemning their own Messiah. It was in their ignorance that they became the tools God used to make His Messiah an offering for guilt—so that through the travail and labor pains of his sufferings He might see His seed, and prolong His days, and so that the good pleasure of Yahweh would succeed in His hand (Isa. 53:10). Their acting in ignorance means, therefore, that they may still believe—that they are not yet cut off from all hope of faith. Their acting in ignorance means that even they may now inherit the promised blessing of *Abraham* through faith in *Jesus*! So Peter continues:

VII. Acts 3:19 — “Therefore repent and return [your mind about Jesus and believe in His name with the faith that is, itself, *through* Him], so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

What is the promised blessing of Abraham? It’s all our sins wiped away—erased completely and forever from God’s book of remembrance (*exaleipho*; cf. Ps. 51:9; Isa. 43:25; Exod. 17:14; 32:32-33; Rev. 3:5). What is the promised blessing of Abraham? It’s “seasons of refreshing” coming to us now from the presence of the Lord. It’s the Holy Spirit who comes to us from the presence of the Lord and so it’s the Holy Spirit who brings to us these “seasons of refreshing” (compare Acts 2:38 & Acts 3:19). As Paul says in Galatians 3, “the blessing of Abraham” is that which comes to those who “receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (3:13-14). And so we read about these “seasons of refreshing” in Isaiah 44:

➤ **Isaiah 44:1–5** — “But now hear, O Jacob, My servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus says Yahweh who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you, ‘Do not fear, O Jacob My servant, and you Jeshurun whom I have chosen. For I will pour out water on the thirsty ground and streams on the dry land; *I will pour out My Spirit* on your seed and My blessing on your offspring; and they will spring up among the grass like poplars by streams of water.’ This one will say, ‘I am Yahweh’s’; and this one will call on the name of Jacob; and this one will write on his hand, ‘Belonging to Yahweh,’ and will name Israel’s name with honor.”

Because our sins have been wiped away, these “seasons of refreshing” have come to us now—and are continuously coming to us—from the presence of the Lord as we are indwelt and filled by the Spirit.

But the promised blessing of Abraham isn’t exhausted by the present. In the midst of these “seasons of refreshing” we still “groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23b). Paul says that we groan as those who have the “first fruits of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:23a). The Holy Spirit is Himself the “pledge of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:13-14; cf. 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:4-5). So the “seasons [*kairoi*] of refreshing” that we experience today are the guarantee—and in a sense, already the beginning [the “first fruits”]—of the “times [*chronon*] of the restoration of all things.” Listen to what Peter says: “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...”

VIII. Acts 3:20–21 — “...and that He may send Jesus, the Christ [Messiah] appointed beforehand [*procheirizo*] for you, whom heaven must receive [cf. Acts 1:11] until the times of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.”

What is the promised blessing of Abraham? It is ultimately that we should inherit the world (Rom. 4:13) as citizens of the heavenly Zion in a new creation where there is perfect righteousness and everlasting joy, and where sorrow and sighing flee away (see message on Acts 3:1-10). But the “times of restoration of all things” will finally be fulfilled only when Jesus can look with satisfaction on *all* His seed, whom He has brought into existence by the labor pains and travail of His sufferings. Therefore, Peter is essentially saying to all the Jews listening to him:

➤ 2 Corinthians 6:2 (Isa. 49:8) — “Behold, *now* is “the acceptable time” [this time between the resurrection and the return of Jesus], behold, *now* is “the day of salvation.”

This is the “day” when God is gathering in all the true seed of Abraham in and through the faith that Messiah gives—the faith that is in His name. “Therefore repent and return, so that [*pros*] your sins may be wiped away, in order that [*hopos*] seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and [that] He may send Jesus, the Messiah appointed beforehand for you, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.”

The fact that Peter’s hearers acted in ignorance means that even now they may still inherit the promised blessing of *Abraham* through faith in *Jesus*. But what if they should not believe? After taking us back to the “fathers” (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and then to the “holy prophets” (Isaiah), now Peter takes us back to Moses.

IX. Acts 3:22–23 — “Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers; to Him you shall listen to everything He says to you. And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’”

The passage in Deuteronomy that Peter quotes actually ends like this: “And it will be that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, *I Myself will require it of him*” (Deut. 18:15, 19). The Greek translation says: “And... whoever may not hear whatever that prophet may speak in my name, *I will exact vengeance from him.*” But Peter, instead of finishing the quotation from Deuteronomy, replaces the Deuteronomy ending with a quotation from Leviticus: “If there is any person who will not humble himself on this same day [the day of atonement], he shall be cut off from his people [lxx: he will be utterly destroyed from among his people]” (Lev. 23:29). The meaning is the same, but made more explicit. Peter wants his Jewish hearers to understand that the true seed of Abraham—the true heirs to the blessing of Abraham—are only those who believe in Jesus with the faith that is through him. If they refuse to “repent and return,” then their sins will not be wiped away and no times of refreshing will come to them from the presence of the Lord. If they refuse to repent and return to the Messiah that God has appointed for them, then they will not be counted among the seed of Abraham, but will be “utterly destroyed” from among God’s covenant people. “Behold,” then, “now is ‘the acceptable time’ [this time between the resurrection and the return of Jesus], behold, now is ‘the day of salvation.’” Indeed, Peter goes on to say in verse 24:

X. Acts 3:24 — “And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken [in addition to Moses], from Samuel and his successors onward, also proclaimed *these days.*”

What are “these days”? These are the days of the Messiah, Jesus. These are the days of the promised blessing for all the seed of Abraham. These are the days of the “times of refreshing” because God has glorified His Servant. These are the days of salvation on the basis of faith in Jesus—even the faith that comes through Him. So Peter concludes (returning now to where he began):

XI. Acts 3:25–26 — “It is you [the Jews] 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 [*patria*] of the earth shall be **blessed.**’ For you first [cf. Acts 13:46; Rom. 1:16; 2:9-10], **God raised up His Servant** and sent Him to **bless** you [to fulfill the promise made to Abraham] by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.”

Because the Jews were the “physical” sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with their fathers, therefore God sent His Servant first to them to bless them—not by welcoming them in their wickedness, but rather by turning every one of them from their wicked ways. Peter’s focus here is on the Jews, and yet already he’s saying more than he himself knows (cf. Acts 10). “In your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” The blessing of Abraham has come to us because through faith in Jesus even the Gentiles are now counted with believing Jews as the seed of Abraham. “For you *first*,” Peter says, “God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you.” But if God sent His Servant first to the Jews, He has now also sent Him to us in the proclamation of the gospel. We read in Isaiah 49:

- Isaiah 49:5–6 (cf. 42:1) — So now says Yahweh, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to return Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (for I am glorified in the sight of Yahweh, and My God is My strength), He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to cause the preserved

ones of Israel to return; I will also give You as a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

The words of Paul provide a fitting response to Peter’s sermon:

- 2 Corinthians 1:20 — [A]ll the promises of God find their Yes in [Jesus Christ]. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.