

9. Peter Responded to the Opportunities Christ Provided

In our last topic, we saw that the Lord used Peter to heal a man that had been crippled since birth. This man was more than forty years old at the time that he was healed. We also saw that a large crowd of people gathered because they saw the man that many of them had seen asking for alms for years leaping and walking and praising God. They wanted to know what had happened. We are going to see that Peter used this gathering of people as an opportunity to speak to this crowd about the death and resurrection of Christ. Here, we see that Peter gives us an example of how to help our physical and spiritual children learn to use the opportunities that the Lord opens for them to speak about Christ. We saw that Peter began to speak with two questions in verses 12.

In Acts 3:13-16, we read, “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *Him* go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which *comes* through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.” In this sermon, we see that Peter began by making it clear that he was speaking about the God of their fathers.

Peter called God the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers. This is the same title that God used of Himself when He spoke to Moses in Exodus 3:6 where we read, “Moreover He said, ‘I am the God of your father--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.” As a result, this was a very familiar title for God among the Jews. He also spoke of Jesus as the Servant of God. This was also familiar to the Jews because Isaiah used that title to introduce Christ in Isaiah 52:13-14 where we read, “Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. Just as many were astonished at you, so His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.” Then, the entire chapter of Isaiah 53 describes this Servant in detail.

Peter said that God glorified His Servant Jesus. Peter said that the Jews had delivered Jesus to Pilate and denied that Jesus was their king when Pilate was determined to set Him free. Peter said that the Jews chose to deny the Holy One and Just and asked Pilate to release the murderer named Barabbas instead. In this way, the Jews took responsibility for killing the Prince of life. In fact, Matthew 27:25 records the words of the Jewish religious leaders when they said, “And all the people answered and said, ‘His blood be on us and on our children.’” Peter also reminded the crowd there that day that God had raised Jesus from the dead. Peter said that it was through faith in the name of Jesus that this man that they had known for many years was now made strong. Peter said that faith in Jesus had given this man perfect soundness as the people had observed.

Peter went on to say in Acts 3:17-21, “Yet now, brethren, I know that you did *it* in ignorance, as *did* also your rulers. But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins

may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” Here, we see that Peter said that he recognized that both the Jews and their leaders had crucified Christ in ignorance. The word translated “ignorance” means *lack of knowledge, especially of the things of God*. Ephesians 4:18 says, “Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” Spiritual blindness is present in every person that is not a Christian. Here, we see that spiritual blindness causes ignorance.

Peter pointed out the fact that the Old Testament prophets had spoken in advance of the fact that Christ would suffer. Because of spiritual blindness, most of the Jews could not understand these prophecies. The first prophecy about the suffering of Christ was in Genesis 3:15 where we read that Satan would bruise the heel of the Seed of the woman. That verse says, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” Other prophecies throughout the Old Testament point to the fact that Christ would suffer. These prophecies were all fulfilled by Christ.

After explaining that the Old Testament predicted the death and resurrection of Christ, Peter then urged the people to repent (to turn from sin and turn to God). Peter pointed out what would happen if they were converted (turned back to God). Their sins would be blotted out. The word translated “blotted out” means *to wipe away or erase and means to wipe away the ink so that there is nothing left*. Colossians 2:14 says, “Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” Every sin that was written against us was nailed to the cross.

Since Peter was preaching to the Jews, they were looking forward to the time when the “times of refreshing” and “the times of restoration of all things” would come. That time is talking about the time when Christ will rule over the whole earth for one thousand years. What the Jews did not understand was that the Father was going to send Jesus Christ to the earth two times. He came the first time to pay the penalty for sin. He will come the second time to rule for a thousand years. During that future time the Jews will experience the full blessing promised by the prophets. Joel 2:28-29 says, ““And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”” Peter here reminded the people that they needed to repent and prepare their hearts before that time could come.

Acts 3:22-26 goes on to say, ““For Moses truly said to the fathers, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.”” Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, “And in your seed all the families of the

earth shall be blessed.” To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one *of you* from your iniquities.” Here, we see that Peter next quoted from Moses who was considered by the Jews to be their greatest prophet.

Deuteronomy 18:15 says, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.” Then, Deuteronomy 18:18-19 adds, “I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.” Here, we see that whoever would not hear the words that the Father spoke through this Prophet that God would require it of them (bring judgment on them). Peter is making it clear that Christ was the fulfillment of this prophecy by Moses.

Next, Peter pointed out the fact that all of the prophets who followed beginning with Samuel also spoke of these days when the Father would send Christ as the Prophet who would fulfill His promises. Nathan spoke to David and prophesied in 2 Samuel 7:16, “And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.” Christ is the fulfillment of this promise because He is the One who will rule forever.

Peter also gave a warning to any who chose to reject the Prophet (Christ) who fulfilled the promise given through Moses. He said that any who refused to hear that Prophet would be completely destroyed. In addition to the messages of the prophets about Christ, God had also made a covenant with Abraham that referred to Christ. Genesis 12:3 says, “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” God again confirmed this promise to Isaac after Abraham was willing to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Genesis 22:18 says, “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” That seed (descendent) that fulfilled that promise to Abraham was Christ.

Then, Peter gave a very personal invitation to the people that were gathered there in the temple and heard him that day. He told them that God had raised up His Servant Jesus. Peter said that they were the first to have the opportunity to experience the blessing that would come to many in the future through Christ. He said that God was giving them the opportunity to turn to Christ who had paid the penalty to take away their iniquities. The word translated “iniquities” means *wickedness, evil purposes and evil desires*. Here, we see that Peter gave them a choice. They could continue in their evil purposes and evil desires or they could turn to Christ and receive the blessing that Christ had provided through His death and resurrection. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to respond to opportunities to invite people to turn from their sin and receive life and blessing through Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to respond to the opportunities that Christ provides.