

A Study of the Acts of the Apostles
Week Three
Acts 2:33-3:13

Day One

33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. 34 For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand 35 until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." ' 36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

v. 33 – Jesus is seated at the Father’s right hand, which I don’t think is a literal seat. This is symbolic of a place of honor and certainly the Father has bestowed that on Jesus. And when Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, it was a telegram from home to the disciples. Jesus had promised He would send the Spirit and when He did, it signaled that He was indeed in heaven, He was alive and working on their behalf:

"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:15-19).

“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:25-27).

Do you work in the realization that Jesus is alive and working on your behalf in heaven? He is your representative there, praying that you succeed in your purpose and spread the kingdom of God in your sphere. **How often do you call your heavenly home for instructions or check in for help?**

vs. 34&35 – Peter once again quoted a psalm, this time Psalm 110:1. This is also a verse that Jesus quoted (see Matthew 22:44), but in this case, Peter used it to prove that the resurrection and heavenly exaltation of Jesus was a pre-determined Old Testament event. **Isn’t it good to know that God is in charge and that He rules in the affairs of men? Do you live in this reality, with the accompanying peace and confidence that it brings?**

v. 36 – Peter went right for the jugular, saying that Jesus was both Lord and Messiah. He hit them right between the eyes, so to speak. Peter’s case for such a claim was clear:

1. The Jews killed Jesus;
2. The Father raised Him from the dead;
3. Jesus ascended into heaven;

4. He proved His heavenly residence by sending the Holy Spirit.

Case closed in Peter's mind and obviously in the minds of many others that day, for a multitude gave their lives to King Jesus that day. This is our message, too.

Day Two

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call." 40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."

v. 37 – God was with Peter as he spoke and did a work in the hearts of the listeners. God must help us to reach people or they will not be reached. Without question, the best way to win people to Jesus is to answer their questions. The problem too often is that the church is answering questions that people aren't asking! Peter later wrote concerning this issue:

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15-16).

Is your life and message one that stirs questions in the minds of listeners? If not, why not? Are you close enough to or know enough people who need what you have for them to ask you questions?

v. 38 – Peter had a ready answer to their question and commanded them to repent, be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit. Peter had heard Jesus preach and teach and now he was ready to do the same. He didn't encourage these holy, religious Jews to be better people. He knew they were lost without Jesus and they needed to turn to God and begin a new Spirit-filled life. Remember, these Jews had traveled from all over world to celebrate Pentecost in Jerusalem. They were serious Jews who were careful to fulfill the Law. Yet Peter ordered them to repent and turn from their sins to Jesus. This is the message of the Church—the world needs Jesus. There is no other answer; that is where it all begins.

v. 39 – Peter explained that the promise of the Holy Spirit wasn't just for that generation. The acts and power of the Holy Spirit are for every generation and for all the nations. **Do you have the power of the Holy Spirit in your life and work? If not, what can you do to get more in touch with the Spirit?** It isn't enough just to have the Spirit's presence; we need to be filled with the Spirit.

v. 40 – Peter was convinced that the current generation was corrupt and pleaded with his listeners to save themselves from it. Notice that Peter didn't just rail against the evil, but

a course of action for each person. The modern Church is often good at complaining, even whining about the condition of the world. Yet our message isn't always clear as to what people need to do to save themselves from it.

Day Three

41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

v. 41 – This tells me that while a large crowd repented and submitted to baptism, not everyone who listened did so. Not everyone is going to receive your message, but preach it anyway! **What was the sign that a person accepted Peter's message?** They were baptized. Baptism doesn't save you, but it is or should be the first evidence that you are saved. If someone refuses baptism, then one must question whether they have really repented. To repent means to turn around and go in another direction. **Can anyone say, "I want Jesus as Lord of my life," and then refuse the first directive of their new Lord?** I think not.

Why baptism? If for no other reason, because Jesus commanded it! Practically speaking, it is the means by which we enter into Christ's death and are raised to newness of life, as Paul taught:

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin (Romans 6:1-7).

And baptism was by immersion, not by sprinkling. I have never gotten hung up on this issue and I trust you won't either. But the Greek word "baptize" means to immerse or soak, like a ship sinking to the bottom of the ocean.

v. 42 – As soon as the hearers were baptized, they devoted themselves to a new way of life. This was no casual decision on their part, but they still considered themselves Jews. But now they had a new spiritual family with new spiritual practices. Their new priorities were: 1) teaching; 2) fellowship; 3) breaking of bread; and 4) prayer. **How do you rate in these four categories? How deeply are you committed to these four values and practices? Are you still as fervent committed to these as you were when you first turned to Jesus?**

v. 43 – Jesus worked miracles in and through the believers to attract attention to and endorse their message. Jesus always knew how to attract a crowd and still does. While the miracles weren't for show or entertainment, they played an important role in the life of the early church. Too bad they don't today. We need the supernatural not only to meet our needs, but to meet the needs of and attract unbelievers. **Why are we so afraid of the supernatural? Why do we relegate miracles to a select few? Why are we so afraid of failing in that area that we don't even try?** I doubt seriously if we will reach the Muslim world without signs and wonders. **Have you ever argued doctrine with a Muslim?** There is only one thing that a Muslim understands and that is power. So let's pray for a release of Holy Ghost miracles and power on the Islamic world. **Can you pray with me to that end?** Pray and believe for miracles to take place not only through others, but through you as well.

Day Four

44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

v. 44 – These new believers formed a new community within the Jewish community. They had a radical new identity and followed Jesus' words when He said:

“Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:33-34).

And

Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15).

Do you own your possessions or do your possessions own you? My wife and I recently cleared out our clothes closets, offices, attic and basement, giving away stuff we no longer need or use. My rule of thumb is: If I haven't used it in a year, then it's time to give it away. **What is your rule of thumb where your giving your stuff away is concerned?**

v. 45 – Notice they did not give their things away; rather they sold them and gave the money. You must be careful not just to give away what is worn out or worthless. Instead the disciples gave the proceeds of their sales. Is it time that you have a garage sale to sell some of your things and gave the money to the needy?

I was in Cuba a few years ago, and we all left our clothes and other goods behind for the church. But I had one shirt that I had bought in Asia and I really liked that shirt. I struggled for three days, trying to decide whether to give that shirt. Finally, I figured that a three-day struggle signaled that the shirt owned me and I gave it away. **What do you have of worth that you can part with?** Anyone can unload clothes that are worn out or no longer fit. If the disciples sold their possessions, then that means they had things of worth that others wanted. What do you have of worth that you can give away or sell, giving the proceeds to the poor? Are you teaching your children about the importance of giving and the need to hold possessions with an open hand?

v. 46 – It is obvious that the early disciples had a radical lifestyle shift as a result of their repentance. I wonder how many of these converts, who had come for Pentecost from all over the world, stayed in Jerusalem to learn more about Jesus and to walk out their faith. But these converts took their discipleship seriously and made a radical break with their past to live together in unity with their new brothers and sisters.

Hospitality is a sign of Jesus' followers. **How often do you have fellowship including food with those who follow Jesus?** The Bible urges you to do so:

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling (1 Peter 4:9-10).

Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it (Hebrews 13:2-3).

Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth (3 John 5-8).

v. 47 – Worship was an important value for the early church and it their lifestyle impacted others around them. The public held them in high regard and that enabled the Lord to add to their number. Notice that they did not work to add others to their ranks. Their lifestyle was so evident that it impacted others and caused those unbelievers to become believers. I don't believe this is the only means of evangelism the Church should employ, but lifestyle evangelism should be one of the means by which the Church grows. **Is your lifestyle something the Lord could use to attract the attention of a non-believer?**

Day Five

3:1 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer — at three in the afternoon. 2 Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. 3 When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. 4 Peter

looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" 5 So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

v. 1 – The apostles were suddenly full-time followers of Jesus, no longer working at their secular jobs. They were doing the work of the Lord! And they were good Jews, participating in the prayer times at the Temple. **Are you taking advantage of all the events and worship/prayer opportunities that your church offers?** I know you are busy, but do what you can to grow spiritually. Even if it's not a growth opportunity, be faithful to participate. Last night I attended a church service here in California. I wasn't speaking and we "just" worshipped. But I felt it important that I be there.

Also, how disciplined is your prayer life? Jews were required to offer prayers three times a day: at 9 am, 3 pm and sunset. I'm not advocating that schedule, but I know that we all need to discipline our prayer life to "pray without ceasing," as Paul wrote to the Thessalonians.

v. 2 – The crippled beggar was going about his business as usual, not expecting anything to be any different than any other day. It's interesting that he went to the place of worship not with any thought of healing, but simply of begging. How sad! He had no expectation that God could break into his life. You can see why Jesus got frustrated with the Temple area, for it was to be a place of the unexpected, not business as usual. **How about you? Do you go to the house of the Lord with an expectation that you will meet Him and the unexpected may happen, or do you simply go to fulfill your duty?**

The problem is that I don't often see my need as I go. I'm no different than this beggar. I limp along in my substandard spiritual state, in desperate need of God. Yet I don't expect to be changed; I only expect meager provision. *Oh Lord, help me to want and receive everything I need from you, everything You can give!*

v. 3 – The beggar asked for what he thought he needed—money! That is also my attitude at times: If only I had more money, everything would be all right. But the Lord in His mercy knew that the man needed more and he was about to receive it! **What are you asking for that is far below what you need, far below God's power to provide? Are you settling for alms when you could have a whole banquet? Why don't I pray for more?** I can think of several reasons: 1) I don't want to appear greedy; 2) I don't really believe God can provide it; 3) I don't really know what I need. **Can you think of any other reasons why you may not pray more?**

Also, the man didn't ask his fellow Jews for anything but money. There are times when I could and should ask others for help, but I don't. A few reasons come to mind of why I don't ask: pride, concern about what they will think, and fear. I need what others have. God didn't create anyone to be self-sufficient, but to cooperate and receive the gifts that everyone has. **Do you know the gifts you have? The gifts of those with whom you work and worship?** If you do, you can work together as a team, complementing one another and ministering to one another effectively.

vs. 4-5 – Peter and John seemed to be in one accord without speaking. They demanded the man’s attention, which he gave them, expecting money. **Do you know what you have to give people? Are you bold to focus their attention to you, so that you can give them what God has given you?** You have to admire the courage and boldness of Peter and John. Oh that the church would be so bold! And that we would give what we have to offer to those around us in need.

Day Six

6 Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." 7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. 8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. 9 When all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

v. 6 – Peter and John had no money. Isn’t that interesting? If the prosperity gospel is correct, then they should have had gobs of money, but they didn’t. **Do you at times think that you have nothing to give when you have no money? Do you feel like a failure if you don’t have money?** I know I sometimes do. Yet their philosophy should be ours: What I have I give you. So that leads to the question: **What do you have to give? Your time? Gifts? Expertise? Then that leads to the next question: Are you willing to give them?**

v. 7 – Peter was so confident that he got personally involved by helping the man to his feet. I’m not sure of the sequence here, but it reads to me like the man’s ankles were healed *as* he got up and not before. That’s consistent with faith, for faith requires action. I’m not sure if the man had faith here, but I suppose he could have resisted Peter’s help and stayed on the ground. But certainly Peter had faith, so sometimes it is enough for you to have faith even if the recipient of your faith does not.

v. 8 – Can you imagine how excited that man was? He now leaped to his feet and went into the Temple. Before that, he could not enter because he was crippled. Now he went straight away to worship and praise God. The beggar knew that God was his source. You would think that this reaction would be automatic, but it wasn’t. Remember that Jesus healed ten lepers but only one returned to thank Him (see Luke 17:12-17).

I trust that you recognize God as your source, even when He uses people to bless or help you. I try to end every day when I minister by thanking God for His help, because without Him I would be able to do nothing.

vs. 9&10 – All the people saw this man and knew that he was the beggar who couldn’t walk. God had set up a notable miracle that would attract the attention of many. As I stated earlier, God knows how to gather a crowd and miracles are a big part of that. Jesus said this Himself in John 9:

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life" (John 9:1-3).

God isn't afraid of drawing attention to Himself. In fact, that is what our focus needs to be:

But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die (John 12:32-33).

Are you willing to have Jesus use you to draw people to Him? That means that you will have to be noticed and do things publicly. Then when the people look your way, can you then deflect the attention to Him? But realize that it is a partnership and God wants to use you and your life's circumstances to draw people to Him.

Day Seven

11 While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. 12 When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go.

v. 11 – The beggar held onto Peter and John, perhaps because he was a bit unsteady, afraid he would fall. Or maybe they had been such a blessing that he wanted to hold them in his life a little longer. It is natural to make the servants of God the focus for what the Lord does through them in our lives. But the leaders must be careful to transfer that attention to Jesus. A crowd gathered because many knew who this man was, and here he was healed and walking around in the main connecting point for Israel—the Temple.

v. 12 – Peter seized the moment and preached a tremendous message. But the miracle set the stage and he had their undivided attention. And Peter did what he had to do—he immediately drew their attention to Jesus! It's all about Jesus and not about His servants.

v. 13 – Peter was direct and held the people responsible for what happened to Jesus, even though it was the leaders who had condemned Jesus at night, under the cover of darkness. But leaders represent the people and the people are ultimately responsible for the leaders' actions. **Is there anything you need to take responsibility for that leaders did on your behalf? Have you blamed them for your problems?** If so, it may be time to face your own role in whatever happened. A few years ago, I left a leader I had been with for quite some time. While I disagree with some of the things he has done, I cannot make him the focus. I must take responsibility for what happened, because I chose to follow him. So I must face my own brokenness in the midst of my transition and its affects.