

The Teaching of Acts 3:18-26

(with primary focus on verses 19-21)

Have you ever wondered why we've heard so much about Acts chapter 2 while we've hardly ever heard anything about Acts chapter 3? That's the way it was/is with the teachers in the churches in which I was raised. If Acts 3 was ever touched on, it was when a teacher was speaking on miracles (alluding to the healed lame man by the temple) or when he was teaching on salvation and Acts 2:38 (referencing the first part of 3:19 because it sounds as though it's saying the same thing as 2:38 in slightly different words by the same apostle). So...

Let's spend a little time in the latter part of Acts 3 (the part in which we find another sermonette by Simon Peter on the same day as his more lengthy sermon in Acts 2). In verses 12-17 Jewish Peter accused his Jewish audience of murder (v. 14). Why? Because they had killed Jesus who was innocent. And why was He innocent? Because, as Peter went on to tell them after they just witnessed him heal a lame man, Jesus was their promised Messiah—God's Holy and Just Servant (v. 14) and the Prince of Life (v. 15); then he went on to tell them what they had actually accomplished by doing that. Let's start in...

Verse 18: Those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ [i.e. the Messiah] would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. I.e., "The passion of the Messiah at your hands fulfilled what Yahovah prophesied. In your ignorance [v. 17], you did exactly what the Lord said you'd do."

This statement by the inspired apostle Peter affirms the inspiration of all the Old Covenant prophets, not to mention that they all, whether directly or indirectly, whether they even knew it or not, agreed concerning what would happen to the Messiah. Of course the point is, as Peter here indicated, "God" was the ultimate / single voice of the prophets. Anyway...

Although I'm going to break it into pieces, Peter continued to build on his declaration in...

Verses 19-21 (my main focus in this study): **Repent therefore and be converted...**

To repent means to change a way of thinking, in this case of course it meant for those Jews in Peter's audience to change their thoughts concerning the identity of this Jesus whom they previously rejected as the Messiah. Now, while to repent primarily concerns *thinking*,...

To convert (which literally means "to turn toward" something) primarily concerns *acting*; I'm convinced Peter was therefore telling them to *demonstrate* that change in thinking by turning toward the blotting out of their sins by submitting to baptism, for what he said in 2:38 (viz. repent and be baptized) does parallel what he said here in 3:19. So, as he said in 2:38, by being baptized "in the name of" the very One they previously rejected and killed, they would thereby substantiate their change of mind, especially since by doing so they would put their possessions, families, health, and even their lives at risk. So WHY should they submit to this dangerous deed of baptism? Well, he provided either two or three reasons (and you'll see why I said it this way once we talk about the very next clause):

- **...that your sins may be blotted out...**

Regardless if one favors the manuscripts with the Greek preposition *eis* or the manuscripts with the Greek preposition *pros* in this text, this still isn't the best translation, because, even though the next two clauses are based on the subjunctive-resultant phrase "so that," this one really isn't; it more literally reads like the following versions:

The Kingdom Interlinear says, "turn you around toward the to be blotted out of you the sins"; or slightly more natural, "turn toward [the time of] the wiping away of your sins."

The JMNT (Jonathan Mitchell, a very detailed translation) says, "turn around toward [the situation for] your failures to be anointed out and wiped forth from your midst." And...

The JBRT (Joseph Bryant Rotherham) says, "turn unto the blotting out of your sins." I.e....

Since both *eis* and *pros* are accusative prepositions pointing toward something in a future time, Peter was telling them that the direction in which they were headed was NOT toward the cleansing of their sins, so they needed to make a 180 and head in the other direction, something initially demonstrated by submission to the public act of baptism. So...

Why did Peter say what he said the way he said it here, i.e. to turn toward the cleansing of their sins instead of saying, "Do such and such and you'll immediately have cleansing of your sins"? Because, according to Daniel, one of God's prophets...

The blotting out of sin or the "reconciliation for iniquity" or the "everlasting righteousness" that results from the blotting out and reconciliation wouldn't be a finished product until the anointing or dedication of the new/spiritual/eternal Most Holy Place (9:24) at the removal of the old/physical/temporal most holy place at Jerusalem's demise ca. AD 70 (9:26-27). Why? Because reconciliation, which is obviously equal in definition to having a mended face-to-face relationship with the Lord, can only be enjoyed in the place of His presence—the MHP. Speaking of that, Peter went on to say that they should repent and turn around...

- **...so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...**

And where's the presence of the Lord? In the MHP. Refreshment is thus found in the Lord's presence in the MHP which He would open up to all His saints when He returned, as Peter goes on to speak about and which we'll get to momentarily. But let me say the following:

The Greek word here for "refresh" is only found twice in the New Testament (the other time being by Paul in 2 Tim. 1:16), and it primarily means "to be relieved or to receive relief" (cf. Vine's), and it's translated that way in the LXX of Exodus 8:15 where Pharaoh saw relief from the curse of frogs. Although Peter didn't make it clear what they'd be relieved from, I think there are two possibilities, and even those possibilities could be combined: {1} they'd receive relief from the law of sin and death, &/or {2} they'd receive relief from persecutions by those who wanted to remain under the law of sin and death. (BTW, in the very same breath in which Peter spoke of "times of refreshing," he spoke of "times of restoration" in the last third of this sentence in v. 21, which we'll get to soon.)

Peter used both Greek terms for "time": *kairos* refers to a specific or an appropriate time for a particular event, and that's the term Peter chose for "times of refreshing"; *chronos*, however, refers to a generic interval of time with its related times of events, and that's the term Peter chose for "times of restoration" (v. 21), thereby implying that, although the *chronos* of restoration would involve numerous events, his audience could be assured that the desired *kairos* of refreshing would be the final result; i.e., the goal of all the necessary events entailed in the transitional pains involved in restoring all things related to the blessings of the dedicated new/spiritual/eternal MHP, would be the wonderful result of all the prophesied negatives of this birthing process of the new from out of the old. Peter then went on to say...

- **...and that He may send Jesus Christ...**

Peter just got through saying that the times of refreshing, i.e. the time for the blotting out of their sins, the time for their reconciliation, the time for the bringing in of everlasting righteousness—all of which necessarily had to come along with a cost, the cost of persecution—would come at the parousia, i.e. the "presence" of the Lord; and that presence would equal His opening up the way into the MHP for all His co-heirs, for at that time the saints on Earth would be incorporated into the MHP (Eph. 1:10), having no necessity for leaving the planet. So, as a people in general throughout that last generation, they needed to repent and turn from their standing in that which held them in sin and death so that the Father would send the Lord to finish the job by anointing the MHP (aka Zion per Heb. 12), thereby assimilating into its borders all saints of all time, living or dead. Thus...

In Hebrews 9:28 Paul wrote that Jesus would "appear a second time ... *eis* [FOR ... for what? for to finish or to perfect] salvation." I.e., NOT the dative WITH salvation, but the accusative FOR salvation! Catch that! Just as the process of atonement wasn't finished until the High Priest returned from out of the OC's most holy place to send off the people's sin on the scape-goat, so salvific atonement wasn't finished and thus couldn't be fully claimed by anyone until High Priest Jesus returned to fulfill all things prophesied (Luke 21:22). Likewise...

In Romans 11:26-27 Paul wrote that the Deliverer would come out of Zion to turn away ungodliness from Israel, making a covenant with them when He would take away their sins; see, without His return, their sins (and consequently our sins) would still exist. Yet there are those (and by "those" I mean most Christians) who today insist they have no sin even though the Lord has yet to return. Such blatantly contradicts the Word of God and the purpose for the return of the Lord. Remember, Jesus Himself placed the coming of the kingdom with its redemption at the time of Jerusalem's demise ca. AD 70 (Luke 21:31-32 & 28). Well...

Concerning the time between Pentecost and Jesus' return, Peter went on to say about Jesus...

...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 (*more correctly, "by the mouth of His holy prophets of old"*).

The Greek term translated as "receive" here doesn't merely mean to accept something or someone, but also to keep something or someone; this is clear in the numerous times it's found in the LXX version of the book of Proverbs when it speaks of receiving wisdom. In fact, since Jesus had already ascended into Heaven at the time Peter spoke these words, many versions read that Heaven must "retain" instead of "receive" Him, meaning that the Savior must stay in Heaven until the end of the times of restoration when His Father would commission Him to return in order to finish His High Priestly work of salvation. So...

What did Peter mean by "the times of restoration of all things"? To answer this, let's define the original term for "restoration" (*apokatastasis*).

The base term *stasis* refers to "a standing as in the state or order of things at any given time." E.g., someone may ask the very generic question, "What was the *stasis* (i.e. state) of the U.S. in the 1800s compared to the *stasis* (i.e. state) of the U.S. today?" This Greek term *stasis* was chosen by the Spirit in Hebrews 9:8 where it speaks of the "standing" or the position that the tabernacle-temple still held at the time of the writing of Hebrews ca. AD 63. Now with that established, let's consider the dual-prefix circumstances of this Greek term.

The prefix immediately preceding *stasis* is *kata* which means "down" and adds emphasis to the base term; it's the prefix used in 1 Corinthians 11:7 where Paul wrote about how men ought to avoid having hair hanging "down from" their heads since they're the image and glory of God (cf. v. 3). So in connection with *stasis* or something with standing at any given point in time, *kata* emphasizes *stasis*, indicating a good or strong hold that something has; in fact, the modern slang use of the word "down" can mean "in good standing with" as in "Tony's my main man, and I'm *down* with his boys." Movin' on now...

The initial prefix of *stasis* is *apo* which means "away from," signifying movement away from a fixed or starting point. The Greek term *apokopto* means "to amputate" as in John 18 when Peter "cut off" the ear of a servant of the high priest, and the Greek term *apokephalizo* means "to decapitate" as in Mark 6 when John the Baptist was "beheaded." So *apo* clearly indicates separation, something moving away from something else.

I went through all this because the original term for "restoration" in Acts 3:21 doesn't mean exactly what the modern English translation makes it sound like it means. Restoration sounds like taking something or someone or group of people back to a prior state, when it actually merely means to move away from a presently accepted condition; now that moving away may indeed end up back at a prior state, but such simply isn't inherent in the term itself. One more quick thing...

According to Bullinger (<http://thedifferentiator.net/grkprep2.html>), the Greek preposition for "until" means "continually until, fixing the attention on the whole duration up to a certain point..." I bring this up because, especially since he used the plural "times" here, it seems Peter was thinking along the lines of what I'll go on to say in the following summary:

When Peter spoke of High Priest Jesus as needing to remain in Heaven until the times of the restoration of all things, He was speaking about how he and those in his audience (if they lived long enough of course) would experience various events (sort of like pregnancy pains and labor pangs spoken of by Jesus and Paul) within the *chronos* time which would need to transpire here on Earth and that these events, beginning with John the Baptist and his beheading (cf. Mat. 17:11-12), were slowly moving God's true people away from the present circumstances of separation from Him to the point (i.e. the time) of reconciliation to Him—which is as refreshing as it gets! Right? Besides, as I meant to imply by the title "High Priest" Jesus, He had His own work to accomplish during this interval of time, not that I'm necessarily implying that time there was the same as here, but He went there to fulfill His part in regard to the creation or building of His bride's home—the true tabernacle—in order to receive her when the time was right.

The JMNT (Jonathan Mitchell NT) renders Peter's words something like this: "indeed it continues necessary and binding for heaven to welcome, accept, and embrace [Jesus] until times of movement away from all things that have been firmly put down, set, and established and until the periods of successive events which occur in passing moments...."

Verses 22-24: 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 come to pass 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.

In verse 24, just as he did in Acts 2:16ff, Peter (in the context of the previous speaking in tongues and the healing of a lame man) came right out and plainly told them that the days in which they—that generation—were living were the last days of prophecy, i.e. the days of turning them from their iniquity and/or the days of the blotting out of their sins, the days of refreshment, the days of the presence of the Lord, the days of the High Priestly work of the Lord in Heaven, the days of the ending of the old mode of existence under Moses and the establishment of the new mode of existence under Christ on Earth, and thus the days of the restoration of all things, i.e. the fulfillment of all prophecy ever given (cf. Luke 21:22). So...

In verse 22 Peter, via his quote of Moses, warned them that these were therefore also the days of destruction for those who continued to reject Jesus as the prophesied and promised Messiah. He then ended his speech in...

Verses 25-26: You are sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, "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 everyone of you from your iniquities.

By saying "to you first," Peter was saying that all things had to be fulfilled in/among them before they could be fulfilled in/among any other people. Thus...

Especially since verse 26 seems to be an obvious echo of Daniel 9, I personally don't understand Peter to have been referring to Jesus' birth among them and His death by them; rather I understand it to have been a generic reference to all of Christ's work from His baptism to His return.

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