

2. As he had done with the tongues phenomenon at Pentecost, Peter used the Spirit's manifestation of healing power as his "text" for addressing the gathered crowd who stood marveling at what they were witnessing. So also his response followed the pattern of his Pentecost sermon; what had transpired that day was a matter of scriptural fulfillment in relation to Jesus of Nazareth, His messianic triumph and the kingdom He'd inaugurated.

No one among the onlookers doubted the miraculous healing of the lame man, for they all were well familiar with him and his crippled condition. What made his healing all the more amazing was that he was a relatively old man whose feet and ankles had been deformed from birth. This healing didn't correct the crippling effects of some recent accident; it restored lifelong, congenital defects that had been exacerbated by the normal physical decline associated with advancing age (ref. again 4:22).

- a. The miracle was undeniable; what was unclear was the source of the healing power, and many in the crowd concluded that that power resided with Peter and John. Hearing all the discussion around him, Peter used it as his opportunity to proclaim the true source of this healing. This miracle was neither human nor demonic, but the work of Israel's God – *the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob* (3:12-13a). Peter could have referred to God in any number of ways, but this particular ascription was especially appropriate because it highlights His relationship with the salvation history recounted in the Scriptures.

- The title, *God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, invokes everything pertaining to Israel's identity, history, and prophetic destiny. The nation had its origin as "son of God" in Abraham and the Abrahamic Covenant; El Shaddai had become *Yahweh* – Israel's covenant Father/Lord – on the basis of His covenant with the patriarchs (cf. Exodus 3:1-15, 4:22, 6:2-8).
- The nation of Israel had its origin in God's covenant with Abraham, but this covenant had its own origin in His initial promise to Eve that a son of hers would crush the serpent and restore all things. The Restorer was to arise from one of Eve's lines of descent, and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were in that chosen line.

Peter knew that this particular title would provoke his Jewish audience to recall the entire salvation history in which Israel was a central player – the history that looks backward from the patriarchs to the protoevangelium in Eden and forward to the final kingdom promised to Abraham; the history recorded in the breadth of Israel's Scriptures. This was precisely what he wanted since he was about to explain the healing of the lame man in terms of scriptural fulfillment, specifically in relation to Yahweh's Messiah, the One of whom all the Scriptures testify.

- b. Thus Peter's response to the crowd's fixation on him and John was to ascribe this miraculous healing to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, *but for the purpose of testifying that He has glorified His Servant Jesus*. This is the first of four titles Peter ascribed to Jesus, each of which has profound scriptural implications.

- 1) Some commentators understand Peter to be saying that God publicly exalted (“glorified”) Jesus by the healing of the lame man. However, the larger context and his use of the title, *Servant*, point in another direction. Certainly the Spirit intended to bear witness to Jesus by this miracle, but the biblical concept of Yahweh’s Servant, together with Peter’s concern to affirm scriptural fulfillment in Jesus the Nazarene, suggest that this glorification speaks of Jesus’ ascension and enthronement at God’s right hand. It wasn’t that this miraculous healing exalted Him in the eyes of these witnesses, but that it demonstrated His power in the light of His exaltation to the place of sovereign authority and rule. Having been raised by the God of the patriarchs and glorified at His right hand, there is power in His name (3:14-16; cf. also 2:32-36).

Moreover, this power is power to restore. The Spirit could have done any number of supernatural works, but He chose this work of healing because of the way it highlighted the issue of renewal and restoration. The enthroned King has all authority and power over the created order, but the goal of this power is renewal and transformation; the triumph of Eve’s Seed means conquest of the curse and the final perfection of the creation.

This restorative, reconciling work is at the heart of the Servant’s calling and accomplishment. By His self-offering He would “sprinkle many nations,” making atonement for the corrupted creation unto the end that Adam’s race, and ultimately the whole created order, should be reconciled and consummately and everlastingly restored to His Creator-Father (cf. Isaiah 42:1-13, 49:1-55:13 with 9:1-7 and 11:1-12:6).

- 2) Expanding on the Servant concept, Peter referred to Jesus as the *Holy and Righteous One*. “Holy One” is a common Old Testament title for Yahweh, the God of Israel (most often in the form, the *Holy One of Israel*), and is prevalent in Isaiah’s prophecy, notably in the latter third of the book where the Servant motif comes to the forefront (cf. 42:1-43:21, 45:1-25, 48:16-49:13, 54:1-55:5, 59:1-60:14, etc.).

- The Holy One chose and appointed His Servant to restore all things to Himself. By His self-sacrifice (and through their intimate knowledge of Him) Yahweh’s Servant, the “Righteous One” has justified the many (53:11), ultimately realizing the full fruit of His work in the new heavens and earth.

- By ascribing both of these titles to Jesus, Peter not only directly emphasized His identity as the messianic Servant, but also indirectly connected Him with the Immanuel motif associated with the Davidic Branch (Isaiah 7-11, esp. 11:1-12:6).

- 3) Third, Peter referred to Him as the *Prince of Life*. Like his Pentecost sermon, this one emphasized the willful, culpable murder of Jesus on the one hand and the sovereign purpose and accomplishment of God on the other. In a stinging rebuke, Peter reminded his Jewish audience that the pagan Gentile Pontus Pilate had sought to release Jesus, finding no offense in Him, but the “sons of God” wouldn’t have it (ref. John 18:37-19:16).

Fueled by the hatred that flows from self-righteous unbelief, those who had the first rights to Messiah and His ministry disowned Him and gave Him over in the place of a murderer; in an act of profound irony, they thought they could snuff out the life of the “prince of life” – the One who is Himself the source and substance of life. But being endowed with His Father’s own life, death could not hold Him and He came forth from the grave in the power of an indestructible life (cf. Hebrews 7:15-16; Revelation 1:10-18). He who is the source of all animate life in the first creation (Colossians 1:15-16) has become the fountainhead of the life of the new creation (John 1:4, 5:19ff, 6:26-54).

- 4) What the sons of Israel had done in ignorance, God had purposed as a matter of eternal determination. And because that decree, its accomplishment, outcome and import are all openly declared in His Scripture, everything pertaining to Jesus of Nazareth and the “Christ event” constitutes scriptural fulfillment (3:18-20); this man who is the Davidic Servant and Righteous One is the *Christ* (Messiah) of God (2:36).

- c. As noted above, Peter’s sermon followed the pattern of the previous one at Pentecost, employing the physical “text” of a supernatural work of the Spirit to testify of Jesus as the promised Christ, with that testimony obligating the hearers to the appropriate response of repentance. The sons of Israel may have acted in ignorance in crucifying their Messiah, but that excuse had now been stripped from them; those standing in the hearing of Yahweh’s gospel no longer had any justification for their unbelief.

Peter’s demanded response was essentially the same as before, but the differing circumstances and emphases of his two sermons led him to frame his corresponding exhortations in a slightly different way.

- At Pentecost, Peter called for repentance followed by *baptism*, the reason being that baptism signifies union with Christ as effected by personal receipt of the Holy Spirit, which theme was the central emphasis of Peter’s instruction and exhortation that day (ref. 2:38-39).
- In the present proclamation, his call to repentance was paired with the obligation of *faith* in Christ (3:19-26). Peter declared that faith in Jesus’ name had made the lame man well (3:16), and this same faith is the sole means for restoring the entire person, spirit and body (3:19-21).

Faith had brought physical healing, which Peter pointed to as the means for healing the whole man. The former provides the paradigm for the latter, and this correspondence raises an interpretive issue. The heart of the problem is that Luke gives no indication that the lame man had any faith in Christ; to the contrary, he emphasized that he was expecting monetary aid from Peter and John (3:5). The account indicates that Peter simply proclaimed healing in Jesus' name and lifted the man to his feet, implying that the faith involved in this miracle belonged to Peter, not the one healed. This "vicarious" faith seems to be out of place inasmuch as the healing was intended to communicate the gospel truth of renewal and restoration through *personal* faith in Jesus Christ. But regardless of whether the faith belonged to Peter alone or to both men, it remains that faith in Jesus' name – that is, assured, submissive trust in Him and all that He has done and is doing – brought healing and wholeness to an individual decimated by the curse.

Peter had employed four scriptural titles in referring to Jesus, and subsequently he turned to those same Scriptures to make his case for faith in Him. Specifically, he drew upon three distinct messianic themes:

- 1) The first of those is the broadest and most comprehensive, which is the general prophetic promise of creational restoration in the messianic age (3:19-21, 24). Every person present had witnessed a miraculous physical healing, and Peter wanted them to associate it with the prophets' uniform witness to a future time of renewal and restoration. These inspired spokesmen linked that day with the coming of the Creator-Spirit, but also revealed that His epiphany and work of re-creation attended the coming of Messiah and the inauguration of His new creational kingdom (cf. Isaiah 42:1-8 and 61:1-11 with 48:16-55:13).

The prophets declared that this work of restoration would begin with Messiah's advent and exaltation, but, having once begun, it would continue unabated and unhindered until attaining its consummate, all-encompassing fullness in the new heavens and new earth (Isaiah 65-66). So Peter exhorted his Jewish hearers to repentance and faith with the promise of *purging* (the "wiping away" of sin and its guilt) and *renewal* (personal participation in the ordained "seasons of refreshment" coming from the presence of the Lord) – present refreshment that would culminate with Christ's return and His restoration of all things (ref. again 3:20-21; cf. Romans 8:18-25; also 1 Corinthians 15:1-28; Philippians 3:20-21; etc.).

- 2) Faith in Christ has the benefit of restoration and refreshment, but this doesn't mean it's an option to be considered; God has made faith in His Son obligatory for all men, Jew as well as Gentile (Acts 17:24-31). In order to make this point, Peter reminded his Jewish audience of Moses' warning centuries earlier concerning a future Hebrew prophet to whom every Israelite would owe full allegiance and fidelity (3:22-23; ref. Deuteronomy 18:15-19 along with Exodus 20:18-21).

- This prophet would fulfill Moses' role as divine mouthpiece and covenant mediator ("a prophet *like me*"), and all who refused to bind themselves to Him and His word – the word of Yahweh Himself – were to be cut off from the covenant household.
- That One like Moses had now emerged in Israel and Yahweh had begun His work of casting out the unbelieving "sons of the kingdom" who would not listen to Him (cf. Luke 13:23-30 with Matthew 7:21-27, 21:23-44; ref. also Acts 4:1-12, 13:1-47, 18:1ff).

3) In this sermon as well, Peter's call to his Israelite brethren to repentance and faith was a heartfelt plea to be saved from their perverse, unbelieving generation (ref. again 2:40). All the prophets – including Moses Himself – had announced these days (ref. John 1:45, 5:45-47); they were prophets *of* Israel speaking *to* Israel, and the Israelites standing before Peter were as obligated to listen to them as their forefathers had been (3:24-26).

These sons of Israel were heirs of the prophetic word ("sons of the prophets") precisely because they were sons of the covenant God made with Abraham (3:25). He had chosen Abraham and his seed – first Isaac and Jacob and then the twelve tribes descended from Jacob – to be His covenant people and heirs of the blessings conveyed in the covenant, but unto the end that Israel, the covenant seed, should become a blessing in all the earth. Israel's unique privilege under the covenant was to bring the blessing of the knowledge of the Living God to all men. The scope of the Abrahamic Covenant was first individual and then national, but ultimately it was to be universal; Abram's true identity and destiny lay in being *Abraham*: the father of a multitude of peoples (cf. Genesis 12:1-3, 17:1-7).

For this reason Israel was to find its own destiny in a covenant household composed of individuals taken from every tribe, tongue and nation (ref. Ephesians 2:11-3:12; cf. also Romans 9-11; Galatians 3:1-29, 6:12-16; Revelation 5:1-10, 7:1-10; etc.). But this ultimate destiny had an intermediate step: Israel first needed to fulfill its own calling as Yahweh's son, servant, disciple and witness, and this was accomplished in the True Israel who is Jesus the Messiah (Isaiah 49:1ff; Galatians 3:16).

These matters were the preoccupation of Israel's prophetic voice – from Moses, through Samuel, and then all the writing prophets, and this is why Abraham's descendents are the heirs of the prophets. Thus Peter's Hebrew audience (as every son of Israel) had a two-fold obligation: They were obligated to authenticate their Abrahamic identity, and this meant heeding the words of the prophets and turning in faith to the Messiah sent to them (3:26; cf. John 8:31-59). But heeding the prophets also meant fulfilling their calling to mediate the knowledge of God to all the families of the earth, that their patriarchal father should become "*Abraham*" *indeed*.