

Preaching Jesus

[Acts 3:12-19](#)



In our last study we saw Peter and John in the Temple at Jerusalem. They had gone to the Temple to pray and they met a lame man on the way. Peter having the gift of healing reaches out in faith to the man and heals him in Jesus name:

And with a leap, he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. (Acts 3:8 NASB)



The Scripture tells us that this man was crippled from birth. He had never walked, he had been sitting at the gate of the Temple begging for decades, everyone knew him, and now he was leaping and praising God.

When Peter said that he didn't have silver or gold he was making a contrast between the Jewish Temple that was covered with silver and gold and the New Temple, the church of Jesus Christ that did not have silver or gold but had the power of God. The healing power of God was not in the physical Temple but was to be found in the New Israel, the church of Jesus Christ.

In this story of the lame man's healing, the Holy Spirit makes clear that in the Name of Jesus salvation is offered to "the lame" and that something better than the temple is among them. This lame man represents those of Israel who recognize their need and are open to God's call. We are also taught that the new age had arrived for it was prophesied that in the new age the lame would leap.

As you can imagine this healing miracle drew a crowd in the Temple:

And while he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement. (Acts 3:11 NASB)

Thousands of people came running in amazement. So here they are again, standing in the Temple with a large crowd of Israelites wondering about the miracle. So just like in Acts 2, Peter stands up and begins to preach the Gospel. This is the second sermon preached in the Church.

In [Peter's first sermon on Pentecost](#) he placed his hearers in the awful attitude of the murderers of the Son of God, who was now not only alive again, but seated on the throne of God, with all power in His hands, both on earth and in heaven. The belief of these facts necessarily filled them with the most intense realization of guilt, and the most fearful anticipation of punishment.

Today as we look at Peter's second sermon we are going to see that Peter again calls his audience murderers. Peter is not worried about political correctness. And again we are going to see that thousands are saved when they hear Peter's words.

Since these two messages are the first two sermons of the Church they should serve as a pattern to us for correct gospel preaching. As we go through this second sermon let's evaluate the today's preachers to Peter and see how they stack up.

Two things stand out to me in reading this sermon of Peter's.

1. Peter doesn't tell them that God loves them.

Does that surprise you? This seems to be where most modern preachers start. For example how many of you have heard of the Gospel track, "[The Four Spiritual Laws](#)"? Approximately 1.5 billion copies of the Four Spiritual Laws have been printed. The tack states: "Just as there are physical laws that govern the physical universe, so are there spiritual laws which govern your relationship with God." The use of the definite article "The" is disturbing. The implication is that the "Laws," as presented here, are exclusive, definitive and thoroughly adequate. The first law is:

*God LOVES you and offers a wonderful PLAN for your life.

Really? What "wonderful plan" does God have for the unbelieving sinner who rejects Jesus Christ? The answer is: the "lake of fire." That doesn't sound like a wonderful plan. This doesn't line up with Peter's preaching.

[Joel Osteen](#) the pastor of [Lakewood Church](#) in Houston, Texas, the largest congregation in America, doesn't line up with Peter either. Notice what Joel writes:

Listen; don't dangle people over the fires of hell. Lisa and I always kid about you know we're going to dangle them over the fires of hell. Listen, that doesn't draw people to God. They know what kind of life they live. They know how bad they've lived. What you've got to do is talk about the goodness of God. Listen, it's the goodness of God that brings people to repentance. It's the goodness of God. One thing I always appreciated about my dad is that he instilled into us a good vision of who God was. We learned about a good God. [Sermon: What the Resurrection Means to Us As Believers]

Peter and Joel don't preach the same. Peter tells his audience how bad they have lived and tell them they're "murderers".

2. Peter does tell them that they are SINNERS and under God's wrath.

Again Osteen doesn't seem to line up with Peter. Listen to what Osteen had to say about sin during the June 20, 2005 interview with Larry King.

KING: "How about issues that the church has feelings about? Abortion? Same-sex marriages?"

OSTEEN: "Yeah. You know what, Larry? I don't go there. I just ..."

KING: "You have thoughts, though."

OSTEEN: "I have thoughts. I just, you know, I don't think that a same-sex marriage is the way God intended it to be. I don't think abortion is the best. I think there are other, you know, a better way to live your life. But I'm not going to condemn those people. I tell them all the time our church is open for everybody."

At this point even Larry appears surprised at Osteen's wavering. Larry allows Osteen to clarify his confusing position.

KING: "You don't call them sinners?"

OSTEEN: "I don't."

KING: "Is that a word you don't use?"

OSTEEN: "I don't use it. I never thought about it. But I probably don't. But most people already know what they're doing wrong. When I get them to church I want to tell them that you can change. There can be a difference in your life. So I don't go down the road of condemning."

Michael Spencer, who says he has listened to over twenty five hours of Osteen says "*Osteen's messages are about "God's Favor" on marriage, finances and career. Sin is never mentioned. In well over 25 hours of preaching that I listened to this year, Jesus was almost never mentioned, and when he was mentioned, it was in a perfunctory prayer in the last minute. Sin, the Cross, the atonement? Not there.*"

People, please listen to me, if you are not a sinner you don't need a Savior. Unlike Peter, many modern preachers try to tiptoe around the matter of sin and guilt. They don't want to offend people. Besides, if someone has low self-esteem, hearing that he is guilty might drive him to despair. So they give them strokes, tell them how much God loves them, and encourage them to receive Jesus so that they can reach their full potential. But if we omit sin and guilt, there is no need for a Savior!

This is the preaching coming from the largest church in America and it is quite different from what we hear Peter preaching. Well let's look at Peter's second message, and as we do compare the difference between Peter and what you hear being preached today.

And while he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement. (Acts 3:11 NASB)

After the prayer service in the court of Israel, the apostles, with the beggar clinging to them, return through the Beautiful gate into the court of the Gentiles. All the people rush to see them, we're talking about thousands of people that came running from all over the courtyard. They gathered at Solomon's portico, a many-pillared, three-aisled portico that ran the length of the eastern boundary of the court of Gentiles. These people were astonished by this, so much so that they ran.

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?" (Acts 3:12 NASB)

"Men of Israel"—keep in mind that Peter is in the Jewish Temple and he is speaking to Jews. I do not think we will understand this passage fully unless we see that Peter has in mind the background of these people and that he assumes they know the Scriptures and ought to have anticipated something like this.

Peter says to the crowd, **"Why do you marvel at this?"** Does that sound like a strange question? It isn't everyday that you see a lame man healed. What if you came in here on Sunday morning and Laura was walking around and jumping and praising God. You would marvel wouldn't you? Yes we would marvel, but they had seen Jesus do many miracles like this:

"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- (Acts 2:22 NASB)

You know about Jesus and all He had done. Some of you may have eaten some of that which He provided in feeding the five thousand plus. Others of you may have relatives who were healed, by Jesus Himself. What is all the fuss about a miracle? Peter's point is simple: Jesus healed all sorts of people when He walked this earth, so why should it seem strange that He continues to heal from heaven?

Peter says, I did this in Jesus' name. We are simply continuing the ministry of Jesus. Peter immediately turns the people's gaze away from himself. **"Why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?"**

"The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered up, and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. (Acts 3:13 NASB)

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—This was the name under which God spoke to Moses when He called him to deliver Israel ([Exodus 3:6](#), [15, 16](#)). They would remember that when God had first revealed Himself to Moses as 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' it had been in order to establish His servant Moses—the deliverer. All in the crowd would know the words by heart. But now a greater than Moses was here and He had glorified His Servant

Jesus. In [Isaiah 41:8](#) the God of Abraham raised up seed to Abraham to be His Servant.

Peter is saying in other words YOUR God! The very God you are here in this Temple to worship. He is the God who has glorified Jesus. In other words, it's that God who put His stamp of approval on Jesus and said, "This is the Messiah. This is the Savior. This is My Son.

"Glorified His servant Jesus"– The idea comes directly from Isaiah 52:13 [LXX](#) where both verb and noun appear. Speaking to Jews and speaking about a servant, a Jew would have immediately thought of the great sweeping passage of scripture from Isaiah 40 clear through Chapter 53 in which Isaiah speaks of the servant. The claim is being made that Jesus is the Servant of the Lord described by Isaiah.

"Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. (Isaiah 42:1 NASB)

Here is a messianic passage and here Messiah's called a servant. He is portrayed as One Who acts in God's name to bring Him glory and deliver His people and to be a light to the Gentiles ([Isaiah 49:1-6](#)), One Who being taught by God takes His message to men through much suffering ([Isaiah 50:4-9](#)). He is again called a servant in:

Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up, and greatly exalted. (Isaiah 52:13 NASB)

We saw this exaltation in Peter's' first sermon. Then he goes on in chapter 53 to talk about his servant Who coming in humility is finally offered up as a kind of sacrifice for the sins of His people. As we read Isaiah 53 keep in mind that these prophecies about Jesus were made 700 years before Jesus' time:

He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. ⁴ Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. ⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. ⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living, For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due? ⁹ His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. ¹⁰ But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. ¹¹ 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, As He will bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:3-12 NASB)

This is the idea that Peter has in mind—Jesus was the suffering Servant.

"Glorified His servant Jesus"—Jesus comes from the Hebrew name, Joshua, which means, "Yahweh saves."

"And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21 NASB)

What does salvation mean? It means deliverance. Did you get it? Look back now at very 13.

"The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered up, and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. (Acts 3:13 NASB)

Jesus means deliverer God. And what happened? They delivered their own deliverer. He is the deliverer and men delivered Him, that's how twisted they were. The one God dignified as their deliverer, they denied and delivered to be killed as an imposter.

But in contrast to what God had done in "glorifying" Him and raising Him up, they had rather delivered Him up, and denied that He was their Messiah before the face of Pilate. Peter boldly lays the guilt of Jesus' death squarely where it belongs. Pilate, who was a pagan, Gentile ruler and who did not have the background of theology or of the understanding of God's activity that you have, was convinced of his innocence and tried to release him. But you—you denied him. You people, who ought to have recognized Him as One sent from God, denied him.

And there are people today who want to exonerate the Jewish people from crucifying Jesus Christ. They cannot do so.

"But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, (Acts 3:14 NASB)

The Holy One—this is another Messianic title for Jesus. This is from Psalm 16 that Peter quoted in his first sermon:

For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol; neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay. (Psalms 16:10 NASB)

Messiah was called the Holy One and as we have already seen in Isaiah He is called the Righteous One:

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, as He will bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:11 NASB)

Peter said, He is the Holy and Righteous One but you denied Him. In Jewish apocalyptic literature The Righteous One had become a Messianic title (Enoch 38.2; 53.6). "The Holy One of Israel" was also Isaiah's favorite title for God.

They had a choice between Jesus and Barabbas. And they chose an unholy and unrighteous man over Jesus who was Holy and Righteous.

but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. (Acts 3:15 NASB)

"The Prince of life"—the word "prince" means the leader or the author or originator. It is used in this sense in [Hebrews 2:10](#), where Jesus is called "***the author of [our] salvation,***" and in [Hebrews 12:2](#), where He is called "***the author and perfecter of faith.***" He originates our salvation and our faith and He brings it to completion. As the Prince or Author of life, He originates life, both physical and spiritual. Notice what Lazarus says about Jesus:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. (John 1:1-4 NASB)

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, (John 11:25 NASB)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. (John 14:6 NASB)

Peter says, "You killed the author of life." Now that is a shocking indictment. To every Jew, only God was the author of life.

For with Thee is the fountain of life; In Thy light we see light. (Psalms 36:9 NASB)

You know what Peter is claiming here for Jesus? He's claiming that Jesus is God and the Jews have in effect executed their God.

What is Peter saying here? He is in effect saying, "You are a bunch of murderers! You murdered Jesus." Who is Peter talking to? Men of Israel. You Jews killed Jesus the Christ. That is not very politically correct.

Just before the release of Mel Gibson's film, "[The Passion](#)," the [Anti-Defamation League](#) (ADL) had serious concerns regarding the film and asked, "*Will it correct the unambiguous depiction of Jews as the ones responsible for the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus?*" Unambiguous means: "clear, precise." Why would he correct the Bible? According to the Bible they were clearly responsible for Christ's suffering and death. They were Christ killers.

During the past forty years the Roman Catholic and most Protestant churches have issued pastoral and scholarly documents that repudiate the teachings that gave rise to Christian accusations that Jews were "Christ killers." They make clear that correct Christian readings and applications of the New Testament must avoid provoking or reinforcing anti-Semitic attitudes and behavior.

I guess Peter didn't understand this because he clearly said that they "the Jews" put to death the Prince of Life.

Do you remember where you were and what you were doing when John F. Kennedy was assassinated? Why do we remember that? It's because he was the president of the United States of America. He was an important man. Murder is a sin but the higher the office of the person murdered the greater the crime. Do you know who else was killed that day by Lee Harvey Oswald? It was officer Tippit. At 1.16 p.m. J. D. Tippit, a Dallas policeman, approached a man walking along East 10th Street. A witness later testified that after a short conversation the man pulled out a hand gun and fired a number of shots at Tippit. The man runs off leaving the dying Tippit on the ground. We remember all the details about Kennedy but not many people know about Tippit. Why? Kennedy was a President. Well these Jews killed the Prince of Life.

Peter goes on to say:

but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. (Acts 3:15 NASB)

Whom God raised from the dead—there's the note that just rings throughout all apostolic preaching—the clear note of the resurrection. If Jesus' body had still been in the tomb or if the Jewish leaders knew the whereabouts of Jesus' body, Peter and the rest of the apostles would have been laughed out of town for making such a claim. The fact that Peter could boldly declare this and thousands of people that day believed it proves that the resurrection was not just a figment of the apostles' imaginations.

A fact to which we are witnesses—based upon the healing of the lame man in Jesus name they are all witnesses of Jesus' resurrection.

They took the Prince of Life, killed Him and let live one who killed. You want a killer released and a life giver killed. How twisted is mankind? Listen to God's incitement:

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Genesis 6:5 NASB)

Jeremiah put it this way:

"The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9 NASB)

Do you see the dynamic of this message of Peters? This is powerful, indictment. Barabbas destroyed life and Jesus created life, but they destroyed Jesus. Sick!

"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 comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. (Acts 3:16 NASB)

Peter says, "This is a man you know. This is a man you've seen." Everybody knew his problem, so Peter says, "Look at him now. He is running. He is jumping. He is praising God." Again, they were backed into a corner. What could they say? Something happened. Peter is saying, "This was through faith in Jesus." He is not talking about the lame beggar's faith in Jesus. I don't think the lame beggar quite understood what was going on. He was talking about Peter and John and their faith in Jesus as their Savior and Messiah. You see the gift of healing never operated on the basis of the faith of the one who got healed, it operated on the basis of the faith of the healer.

And the fact that He had been raised and was truly the Prince of Life, and the Holy and Righteous One, was evidenced by the fact that it was His Name, as a result of faith in His Name, which had made this man strong. This once lame man was the evidence to all, of whom and what Jesus was, and to the power of His being.

In Semitic thought, a name does not just identify or distinguish a person; it expresses the very nature of his being. Hence the power of the person is present and available in the name of the person.

"And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. (Acts 3:17 NASB)

At this point in the discourse there is a marked change in Peter's tone and manner, which we can attribute to nothing else than some visible indication of the intense pain produced by what he had already said. He had exposed their criminality in unsparing terms; but now, induced by some perceptible change in their countenances; he softens his style, and extenuates their fault.

Peter then makes them a concession. He acknowledges that what they had done they had done in ignorance. When they had done it they had not realized what they were doing. And this was true both of them and their rulers. Jesus said this also:

But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. (Luke 23:34 NASB)

Now listen to this, beautiful thought. When Peter did that, he cracked the door open to the city of refuge. Do you remember in the First Testament, Numbers 35 talks about it, that for Israel's sake they were provided certain cities called cities of refuge?

If an individual killed somebody by accident or in ignorance or in a fit of fury, it would be classified as manslaughter, not as first degree murder in our terms. And the person who committed the manslaughter could run to the city of refuge and could be safe there and his term of safety was as long as the high priest lived.

Paul himself fell under this gracious provision:

even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; (1 Timothy 1:13 NASB)

The writer of Hebrew also talks about this gracious provision:

in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us. (Hebrews 6:18 NASB)

This also comes from [Numbers 35](#), and the city of refuge. They fled to Jesus who is the city of refuge.

"But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled. (Acts 3:18 NASB)

Peter makes it clear that they should not have been ignorant. Let them recognize that what had happened had actually fulfilled what God had shown beforehand through the mouth of His prophets, that His Messiah would suffer. This had been made apparent in the prophecies concerning the Suffering Servant and Lamb of God of [Isaiah 50:4-9](#); [52:13-53:12](#)), in the Davidic Psalms such as [22:12-18](#), which applied to all the house of David but especially to the coming greater David, and in [Zechariah 13:7](#) where God's Shepherd and the man who was God's fellow was to be smitten. Furthermore it could be discerned by the initiated in all references to the sacrifice of lambs in the First Testament, for He was the Lamb of God ([John 1.19](#)).

All the sacrifices described in the First Testament were seen as foretelling Christ's suffering. 'Behold the Lamb of God' ([John 1.29](#)) comes as early as the time of John the Baptizer emphasizing that Jesus was already seen as having come as the supreme sacrifice.

It was a great stumbling block to the Jewish people that their Messiah suffered and died, and even more offensive that He died a criminal's death on a cross. In their theology, there was no room for a Messiah who would suffer and be executed. Yet Peter goes back to the Scriptures and says, "It was right there all along, if you would have just read the prophets. The prophets said He would suffer and die as the Messiah."

First Peter condemns them as guilty of murdering their Messiah, and then he tells them that they did it in ignorance giving them some hope and now he says:

"Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; (Acts 3:19 NASB)

As we saw in our study of Acts 2 repentance is used most often in Scripture to mean: **"turn from sin to God."** Peter is calling the Jews to turn from their sin and return to God. It is my understanding that repentance is only for those who are in covenant with God, which would be true Israel. Only those in covenant with God can turn back to God.

"That your sins may be wiped away"—This is incredible! They killed the Son of God, the Holy and Righteous One, the Prince of Life and Peter offers them forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Your sins may be wiped away. Wow! That is grace. And that offer is available to everyone who realizes their sinfulness and turns to Christ and Christ alone for forgiveness. What an incredible message—we can be forgiven, we can have eternal life in Christ.

This message was preached by [David B. Curtis](#) on July 27, 2008. Media #424.



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