

Sermon Notes on Acts 3:12-20, Easter I

1. The Acts of the Apostles divides itself roughly into the ministry of Peter, chapters 1-12, and that of Paul, chapters 13-28. Peter was the Apostle to the Jews (Gal. 2:7) and Paul to the Gentiles, though Peter preached also to Gentiles (cf. Acts 10) and Paul to the Jews.
2. Jesus told the disciples (Acts 1:8) that they would be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. He commanded them to teach all nations (Mt. 28:20).
3. At Acts 3:26 Peter mentions that the Jews were the first to have the opportunity to repent. But soon he also preached to Cornelius (Acts 10). Acts 15 was the first great Synod of the church. There it was clearly stated that Christ had died and risen for Jew and Gentile alike. Gentiles did not have to become Jews first before becoming Christians.
4. In his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:22) Peter had mentioned that God had approved of His Son by the miracles which He performed. And at Acts 2:43 we read: "Fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles." Jn. 21:25 says that the world would not be able to contain the books if all of Jesus' doings were recorded. Likewise, the book of Acts would be much larger if all of the miracles of the Apostles were recorded. Our text for today is preceded by just one of these miracles, the healing of the lame man at the Temple. Read Hebr. 2:1-4. The miracles of the Apostles bore witness to the truth of their message. Jesus' miracles certified His person and mission. The Apostles' miracles certified their message and mission. In vs. 12-16 of our chapter Peter makes clear that this was not a permanent gift to him. At I Cor. 12:11 we read: "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." Peter and John did not heal people all the time but only the Spirit willed it.
5. There was no recognized NT Scripture for another seventy years after Peter and John. Once the Scriptures had been recorded, miracles ceased to happen. Jesus said: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," and "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me." Stick to that. If God wills, of course, He can again cause his witnesses to perform wonders. But, let's stick to His Word.
6. Cf. Peter's sermons in Acts 2:14-36 and Acts 3:12-26. In both cases he addresses Jews. He says "You men of Israel." In both sermons he quotes the Messianic promises of the OT. In both sermons first he preaches Law, he shows them their sins. And then, in both sermons, he preaches beautiful Gospel, the forgiveness of sins. These two sermons are our models. First we show people their sins. Then we show them their Savior. In this way we give all glory to God alone.
7. In vs. 13 Peter speaks of "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob," just as Jesus did at Lk. 20:37. There Jesus said: "He is not the God of the dead but of the living." Thus the Angel of the Lord identified Himself to Moses at the bush at Ex. 3:6. He is the God Who promised the Messiah to the patriarchs beginning at Gen. 12:2-3. In vs. 13-15 Peter forthrightly tells his fellow-Jews that they betrayed, denied and killed this Author of life but that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob raised Him from the dead. He told them the truth about themselves.
8. But though he preaches Law, Peter holds out hope. He said they destroyed Jesus in ignorance. Nonetheless, they are guilty. But now they must repent, confess their sins, and God will wipe their sins out. Peter tells them the truth about themselves, and also about God.
9. Vs. 20 describes the condition of the person who repents of his sin and believes the promises of God. God gives him the faith just as He gave the lame man faith to believe. Times of refreshing come to such a person. The whole life of the Christian is a time of refreshing which comes right from the presence of God. He is a new creation. He is in Christ. All things are new to him. The old has passed away.

Sermon Outline on Acts 3:12-20, Easter I

Theme: PETER, OUR MODEL WITNESS

Introduction: At Acts 1:8 Jesus said before ascending into heaven: "You will be My witnesses beginning in Jerusalem," that is, to the Jews. In the first twelve chapters of Acts Peter is the main witness. He witnessed on Pentecost by preaching the sermon found at 2:14-36. About 3000 people were baptized that day because of Peter's witness. Our text is his second sermon which was preached most fittingly at the Temple. To this day true preachers of God's Word preach as did Peter in Acts 2&3.

I-He Tells the People the Truth about Themselves

- A-He is tactful. Both at Acts 2:22 and at 3:12 Peter begins his sermons with "You men of Israel." He could have begun with "You murderers of Israel" because they had killed the Son of God. But he wants them to pay attention to what he is going to say. He immediately mentions "The God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob" thus identifying himself with them. Furthermore, Peter disclaims any power of himself to heal the lame man who stood before him. God had caused the miracle whereby He certified that the Apostles' message was true. Hebr. 2:4. We should do as did Peter. First we must win peoples' confidence.
- B-He tells them that they are ignorant. Vs. 17. Cf. Acts 13:27; 17:30; I Tim. 1:13. Peter said that the people and their rulers had killed Christ in ignorance. He is speaking of the ignorance of unbelief just as Jesus when He prayed on the cross: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Lk. 23:34. The worst ignorance is unbelief and impenitence. Peter is not excusing the people. He is merely explaining how it could have happened that God's own Son was killed by God's very own people.
- C-He tells them that they are guilty. Read vs. 13-15. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had glorified God's Son, Jesus, but His people betrayed Him, denied Him, asked for Barabbas rather than Jesus and they killed the very Author of Life Whom God raised from the dead. God's own people had turned into a bunch of criminals. Jesus walked about among them for three years, teaching them. But the more He preached the angrier they became. Peter fearlessly showed the Jews their awful sin. We must do as Peter. We must confront people with their sins.

II-He Tells the People that God is a God of Love

- A-He directs their attention to what the prophets had said. Vs. 18.
- 1-They said that Christ would suffer. Vs. 18. Here the preacher ought Read Pss. 22 and 69 and Is. 53. In those chapters he will find that long ago God had said that the Messiah would be despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, a man who would be numbered among the transgressors, who would be abandoned by God, but, above all who suffered and died for the sins of men.
 - 2-They said He would be like Moses. See vs. 22 of this chapter. Moses was an OT type of Jesus, a prophet, whom the people were to listen to.
 - 3-They said that in Him all the nations of the world would be blessed. See vs. 25. Paul quotes this passage from Gen. 12:3 in Gal. 3 where he shows that Abraham believed in the Christ Who was to come. All blessings of God come to man only through Jesus Christ.
- B-He tells them to repent of their sins. See vs. 19, 20 and 26. To repent of one's sins means to confess them. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I Jn. 1:9. Peter promises the people that now times of refreshing would come from the gracious throne of God and that Christ would be in and with them.
- Conclusion: Like Peter, God makes us witnesses of His Son and His Gospel. It is our duty and privilege to carry this message to the ends of the earth.