

# Purpose Restored

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## **THE POINT**

Through Jesus, we can be forgiven and restored to the purpose for which He created us.

## **THE PASSAGE**

Acts 3:14-26

## **THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE**

A sense of purpose alludes so many in society, but even when people tie their purpose to faith, religion, or God, they still fall short. Sin remains a barrier to fulfilling God's purpose, but we are not able to correct the problem on our own. Thankfully, God addressed the problem for us through Jesus. We regain our purpose when we respond with repentance and faith.

## NOTES

**THE SETTING**

The verses for this session are the aftermath of a miraculous healing of a forty-year-old man lame from birth who lay at one of the temple gates begging for alms (Acts 3:1-10). Peter and John went up to the temple for three o'clock afternoon prayers when they encountered him. As usual, he asked for something, hoping for a generous gift. When they acknowledged him, his expectations soared that they had something for him. They did, but far more than he expected! Invoking the name (meaning power and authority) of Jesus, they commanded the man to rise and walk. He, with their help, got up and began walking and jumping with excitement as they entered the temple complex. His presence drew immediate attention from others who had assembled there for worship and prayer.

Peter seized the opportunity, the wonder and interest of the people, to explain what had just occurred. He turned the focus from John and himself, denying their ability to heal, and turned their attention toward Jesus. Peter, just as at Pentecost (chap. 2) preached boldly the gospel of Jesus as Christ. His sermon in both places became a model for the kerygmatic (gospel) preaching of the New Testament. The focus was on Jesus, His incarnation, mission, teaching, death, burial, resurrection, and exaltation. It included a call to acknowledge Him as Christ, repent of sin, and make an intentional decision. Such still is the essence of gospel preaching today.

The lame man becomes a model of what Jesus does in our lives. He restores us to wholeness and enables us to become all He created us to be. By faith we can be forgiven, refreshed, restored, and redeemed from our evil ways.

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**Acts 3:14-18**

*What indictment did Peter bring against the people? What proves that what they did, heinous as it was, was not the end? To what and whom did Peter attribute the healing of the lame beggar? According to Peter, why did the people act as they did? Why was ignorance not an excuse?*

**<sup>14</sup> You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer released to you.**

**<sup>15</sup> You killed the source of life, whom God raised from the dead; we are witnesses of this.**

**<sup>16</sup> By faith in his name, his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know. So the faith that comes through Jesus has given him this perfect health in front of all of you.**

**<sup>17</sup> “And now, brothers and sisters, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your leaders also did.**

**<sup>18</sup> In this way God fulfilled what he had predicted through all the prophets—that his Messiah would suffer.**

***Restoration comes through Jesus.*** The central element of Peter’s preaching following the healing of the lame man was not the man but the means of the miracle. He focused on Jesus whom God glorified even though the people had delivered Him up for death (v. 13). By doing so they had **denied** (“disowned,” NIV; see John 1:10-11) **the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer** instead **released** to them. This statement alludes to the events that took place during Jesus’s appearance before Pilate at the time of Jesus’s arrest. Pilate found no fault in Jesus and would have released Him, apparently in compliance with some custom to release a prisoner at the celebration of Passover. Pilate thought they would choose Jesus; instead, they cried out for Barabbas, a known insurrectionist and murderer, to be freed instead (Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39).

Notice the stark contrast. Peter described Jesus as *the Holy and Righteous One*. The *Righteous One* not only referred to His

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character but the phrase was used by Luke as a messianic title in Acts 7:52; 22:14, as well as by the Old Testament prophets (for example, Isa. 53:11; Jer. 23:5; Zech. 9:9). So, we may read it as such here. *Holy* comes from a word that means “to set apart.” Thus, to say He is *Holy* is to allude to His having been sent and set aside by God for His special purpose. Jesus was the Messiah who came to accomplish the work of the Father to liberate the people from their sin. How heinous the crime then that the people *asked* (“begged,” “called for,” “craved”) *a murderer!* By doing so, they **killed the source of life**, denoting that *life* (perhaps here to be understood as a synonym for *salvation*) had its origination in Jesus. How unreasonable and despicable that the One who gave life and salvation was killed in favor of one who took life and wrought destruction.

But, as Peter was quick to say, that was not the end. God had the last word—as He always does. **God raised Him from the dead.** That which was the greatest evil of human history became the greatest and best news of eternity. Death, no matter how feared, was not His master. The tomb, no matter how well sealed or guarded, could not contain Him. The power of God, the love of God, and the purpose of God was stronger, deeper, and invincible. And if the people needed proof, Peter had it. **We are witnesses of this.** *Witnesses* (*martyrs*; from which the English word *martyr* is derived) denotes “one who is a spectator of something.” Peter and his partners in the gospel saw the living Jesus Christ. They were so certain, they would literally stake their lives on it.

Next Peter addressed the relevance of what he was saying about Jesus to the current event, the healing of the lame man. **By faith in his name, his name has made this man strong.** *Name* represents everything about the person to whom it refers, including rank, authority, excellence, ability. Use of a name was not a magical incantation. There is nothing magic in saying the name of Jesus. But when we pray in His name we are coming before God in the authority and strength of who Jesus is and at His invitation. *Faith in his name* is the same. It is an expression of strong conviction or belief that Jesus is Messiah, the Son of God, God Incarnate, the One through whom we obtain eternal life and access the blessing of God.

The lame man was *made . . . strong*, restored to wholeness, by *faith*—his, and Peter and John’s—in the person of Jesus, *faith* in who Jesus is. That the man was whole and *strong* could not be denied, because the people could see it and knew for themselves (**whom you see and know**); the man stood there before them. **So the faith that comes through Jesus has given him** (the man) **this perfect health** (“completely healed,” NIV) **in front of all of you**. William Larken comments, “And today the economy is the same. There is no room for relying on manipulative, magical techniques. All Jesus asks us to bring is humble dependence lived out in prayer and faith (Jas. 5:14).”<sup>1</sup>

With verse 17 Peter picks up the message of verses 14-15 about the people being complicit in the crucifixion of Jesus. **And now, brothers and sisters, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your leaders also did**. Wait! Is Peter now mitigating the severity of their actions? Is he giving them an out by saying, “You didn’t know what you were doing.” Not at all. You may recall Jesus prayed for His executioners while He was on the cross, saying, “Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34).

As far as the act was concerned—killing Jesus—they knew what they had demanded and had agreed to in taking His life. What they didn’t know in the sense of understanding was *whose* life they were taking. They did not recognize the true identity of Jesus, even though they should have based on His word and works—things that had taken place in their presence, right before their eyes.

Verse 18 captures something else of which they were ignorant. **In this way God fulfilled what he had predicted through all the prophets—that his Messiah would suffer**. Albeit a paradox with which people still struggle—that God used a crime to achieve His saving purpose—the people showed their ignorance of the message of the prophets. They showed their ignorance of the idea of a suffering Messiah. They showed their ignorance of the work of God to bring to pass the plan He had in place. They were accountable, not excused, for their acting in ignorance. They should have known better. Was there any escape from the consequences of

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their action? Was there a remedy for the condemnation they were due? The sermon was not over.

### What are a few lasting lessons that come from Acts 3:14-18?

- People still deny and reject Jesus as the Holy One, Righteous One, the Christ, the Source of eternal life, and they choose the way of evil over Him.
- Fullness of life, defeat of death comes through faith in Jesus.
- Strength for living can be found in the strong name—denoting His full personhood and divine authority—of Jesus Christ.
- God was at work in the death of Jesus to fulfill His divine purpose and eternal plan of redemption.

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### Acts 3:19-21

*What do we do so that our **sins may be wiped out**? What is the immediate benefit of being forgiven? What will God do to bring fulfillment to our salvation for eternity? Who is Jesus declared to be? What statement declares that God's message has been the same through the ages? What is one way He has communicated it?*

<sup>19</sup> **Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out,**

<sup>20</sup> **that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, who has been appointed for you as the Messiah.**

<sup>21</sup> **Heaven must receive him until the time of the restoration of all things, which God spoke about through his holy prophets from the beginning.**

**Repentance leads to forgiveness.** As to the questions just raised, there is an escape; yes, there is a remedy. It requires an action on the part of the offender to potentially receive forgiveness and restoration made possible by God the Father through His Son Jesus

Christ. **Therefore repent.** The *therefore* refers to the death and resurrection of Jesus. *Repent* (*metanoeo*) is the familiar biblical word denoting the act of changing one's mind, thinking differently, especially with abhorrence about one's sin. **Turn back** is still an action of the sinner. The words may be understood as an explanation or expansion of repentance. Of course, in this context about the work of God through Jesus Christ, the direction the sinner is to turn is toward God.

Repentance and conversion, which are two elements of a singular process (you can't have one without the other), lead to this purpose: **that your sins may be wiped out.** *Wiped out* comes from a word meaning "rub off," "erase," or "cancel." The passive form indicates this is something accomplished outside of one's own self; it is the act of another.

**That seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.** *May come* seems to suggest the blotting out of sin is a future or pending event of spiritual refreshment by being able to be in *the presence of the Lord*. "That" suggests that having one's sin *wiped out* is the *seasons of refreshing* that a person experiences by being in *the presence of the Lord*. "What Peter conceives is that if Israel turns to God at once in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, then there will come at once those times of refreshing, those blessed days of righteousness, peace, and rest, and universal joy, which are the characteristics of Christ's kingdom as foretold by the prophets. Those days are delayed by the unbelief of Israel."<sup>2</sup>

Repentance brings forgiveness and the immediate relief of salvation in these last days, but more is to come. **He may send Jesus,** which read with verse 21, refers to the second coming of Christ. **Who has been appointed for you as the Messiah** may be rendered as "the Christ appointed for you" (ESV). Jesus was declared to be the Messiah, an announcement that was given not only to Israel through the prophets but to the world at His birth. He came and He will come again.

**Heaven must receive him.** Peter was alluding to the ascension, another Christ-event he witnessed (Acts 1:9-11). *Heaven* would denote the abode of God and the place prepared for all who believe

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and will be taken up with Jesus at His return. There He awaits **until the time of the restoration of all things**. *Restoration* implies the reconstitution, re-creation, and restitution of the perfect state that existed before all the created order was stained, tainted, or corrupted by the rebellious choices of humankind. The restoration of the lame man to health and wholeness is a microcosm of what will be accomplished by the activity of God in the return of Jesus, who is the Christ. We see this restoration described on a larger scale by the record of John's vision in Revelation 21–22.

None of this should be considered new or a surprise. God's plan and promise to bring restoration has been His message through the ages. **Which God spoke about through his holy prophets from the beginning**. God called out, set aside, and empowered men and women of His choosing to deliver words of challenge, issue a call to repentance, and announce a declaration of hope. That message reached its fullest expression in and through Jesus, the living Word.

**What are a few lasting lessons that come from Acts 3:19-21?**

- Repentance and conversion effect forgiveness from the Lord.
- Forgiveness allows us to enjoy immediate spiritual refreshment and restoration.
- We live with the benefit of forgiveness now in anticipation of the Lord's return when all things will be restored as God intended.
- God continues to affirm Jesus is the Christ, that He is willing to forgive sin, and the consummation of salvation at the Lord's return by using individuals—even like us—to declare His Word.



## Acts 3:22-26

*In what ways was Jesus a prophet like Moses? What should be the response of those who hear the word from the Christ? What is the consequence of refusing to be attentive to the message of the Christ? What suggests that the word from God is constant and consistent? What does God desire His people to be and do? What are two ways the word **raised** in verses 22 and 26 can be understood? Why are both crucial to the redemptive plan of God to restore sinners to wholeness?*

**<sup>22</sup> Moses said: The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers. You must listen to everything he tells you.**

**<sup>23</sup> And everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be completely cut off from the people.**

**<sup>24</sup> “In addition, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, have also foretold these days.**

**<sup>25</sup> You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your ancestors, saying to Abraham, And all the families of the earth will be blessed through your offspring.**

**<sup>26</sup> God raised up his servant and sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your evil ways.”**

***Through Jesus we find victory over evil.*** In these verses Peter, as part of his argument and appeal for why they should respond to Jesus as Savior and Lord, placed Jesus in the context of the people's religious heritage. He began with the declaration of Moses that God had raised him up as a prophet, but even so, another, even one greater, was to come.

**The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers** (see Deut. 18:15-18). Moses may have been speaking about an order of prophetic voices that would come in Israel's history, but taken to the highest level of understanding, his words have messianic overtones. *Raise up* renders the usual word used in reference to Christ's resurrection. However, Larkin comments, “We should understand the verb in verses 22 and 26 as

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pointing to his incarnation. That was when God fulfilled his promise by bringing the Messiah into the stage of human history. A play on the two uses of the word may be present, especially in verse 26.”<sup>3</sup> Whether incarnation or resurrection, both find their ultimate fulfillment in the coming of Jesus to earth as the Christ, and His glorious victory over death and the grave by His resurrection.

In what ways would this future prophet be like Moses? Consider these examples: 1) He would be appointed by God; 2) He would come from among His own people; 3) He would speak a message from God with authority; 4) He would commune with God face to face; 5) He would be a servant of God; 6) He would set people free.

Moreover, Moses declared, **You must listen to everything he tells you.** The people of Moses’s day did not listen to everything he had to say, though they should have. So, it was with Christ. He came to His own people, but they refused to listen to Him. The people to whom Peter spoke were a case in point.

Such rejection was not to be trifled with. It would have its consequences. Continuing to quote Moses, Peter said, **And everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be completely cut off from the people.** *Completely cut off* or “destroyed” (ESV, KJV) denotes “utter destruction,” emphasizing that refusing the Word of *that prophet* was serious business. The consequence was more than a spiritual slap on the wrist or a mild rebuke. Rejecting His message would be devastating! It would mean to forfeit one’s right to be part of the people of God.

This message had been consistently delivered through the ages. **All the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, have also foretold these days** of decision and fulfillment. The people to whom Peter spoke now stood in that line of those to whom the message had been delivered: **You are the sons of the prophets**, not literally of course but spiritually. Would they harken to the message of their spiritual forefathers? Moreover, in their current days, would they heed the preaching of the apostles who were declaring Jesus as the almighty prophet of whom Moses spoke and the Messiah foretold by the line of God’s prophetic messengers? Their fate stood in the balance.

Peter also reminded them of another privilege they had. **You are the sons . . . of the covenant that God made with your ancestors, saying to Abraham, And all the families** (“peoples,” NIV) **of the earth will be blessed through your offspring.** The covenant with Abraham was initially stated in Genesis 12:1-3 but was confirmed at various times. The people to whom Peter spoke stood in that covenant line as well. They were called on to be the people of God who were blessed so they could be a blessing.

The privilege of the Jews was in the fact that the Messiah came **first to you**, meaning from among them. Jesus the Christ was a Jew too. They had the initial privilege of knowing Him. **God raised up his servant and sent him first to you to bless you.** The great blessing was **turning each of you from your evil ways.** As noted in the discussion of verse 22, *raised up* may speak of incarnation and resurrection. I am more inclined to read it as incarnation since God would not likely be said to send Him to bring them blessing after the resurrection. However you choose to read it, His coming and His resurrection were a blessing of God to all peoples (*each of you*). In both events God was working through *his servant* (“his Son,” KJV) to bring about redemption, reconciliation, and restoration from their *evil ways*, denoting wickedness, depravity, malice, and evil purposes and desires.

Thus, Peter’s great sermon is over. Now is the time for response. Even for you and me.

### **What are a few lasting lessons that come from Acts 3:22-26?**

- Jesus is the Christ from God and worthy to be heard and heeded.
- Refusal to hear the word from the Lord has devastating effects.
- The message of the Lord has been constant and consistent throughout all human history. It does not change with the times.
- God calls out His children to be a blessing to the world.
- God acted in the incarnation and resurrection to accomplish His plan of forgiveness and restoration from sin.

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## LIVE IT OUT

I want to be all I can be in Christ, don't you? I want to live life to the fullest; make a difference somewhere along the way; be faithful to the purpose for which God created me. I don't think I stand alone in that respect, do I? You have the same thoughts even if you word it in a different way.

What is the path to fulfillment? It is in Jesus. As He said about Himself, He is "the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). He also said, "I have come so that they (*you and I and everyone else*) may have life and have it in abundance" (10:10). And as Peter would declare, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). So, purpose, fullness of life, and release from sin comes from being in right relationship with Jesus. Even when we breach that relationship, restoration is possible in Jesus. So, it all comes down to Jesus. Where do you stand with Him?

***What is an experience in your life where you have been restored—physically, emotionally, spiritually—through faith in Jesus?***

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***Is there some sin for which you need to repent today to be restored to wholeness and usefulness to the Lord and His purpose for your life?***

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1. William J. Larkin, Jr., Acts, in The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 68.  
2. A. C. Hervey, "Exposition and Homiletics," in "The Acts of the Apostles," in Acts & Romans, vol. 18, in The Pulpit Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), 95.  
3. Larkin, text note on 3:22-23, 69.