

KINGDOM AND CULTURE (1): ACTS 3



T. M. MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Kingdom and Culture (1): Acts 3
Copyright 2016 T. M. Moore
Susie Moore, Editing and Finishing
The Fellowship of Ailbe
www.ailbe.org

Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Introduction to Acts 3

The book of Acts is an excellent place to begin the study of historical theology, which focuses on the ongoing work of Christ as He builds His Church and advances His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

We have looked at the coming of the Kingdom and the beginning of its expansion on earth. In Acts 3 a second theme of historical theology emerges, the impact of Christianity on its culture. As we shall see, God intends that impact to be one of healing, restoration, and reconciliation.

The story of Peter and John and the healing of the lame man is a microcosm of the power of the Kingdom as it impacts a world wracked with sin and pervaded by unbelief. In this story we will see how the risen Christ brings healing to the world through the proclamation of His Kingdom and the loving work of His servants.

We're happy to offer a series of brief videos to introduce each portion of this study. You can view each one *by [clicking here](#)*.

We're pleased to provide *Scriptorium* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity with the Lord.

Please visit our website, www.ailbe.org, to discover the many other resources available to serve your needs. The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Visit our website also to subscribe to our daily worldview study, *ReVision*, our thrice-weekly devotional newsletter, *Crosfigell*, or our daily worldview newsletter, *The Week*.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

We hope you find this study of Acts instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

1 Kingdom Bridge

Be sure to view the video introducing our study of Acts 3 (Lesson 3) by [clicking here](#).

Read and meditate on Acts 3.1

I know this seems like a very slight portion of Scripture for an entire day's meditation. But there's much here to ponder, especially when it comes to understanding the ongoing work of Christ as He is supplanting the kingdom of darkness with the Kingdom of Light. What Luke describes in chapter 3 is a single event, one of many he might have chosen, but one that gives us insight to the impact of the Kingdom on its culture.

For reflection

1. We might translate the verb here something like “would go up” or “used to go up.” Luke’s choice of the imperfect verb form, *anabainon*, to describe Peter’s and John’s *going up* to the temple, suggests this was a *habitual* practice on their parts. They weren’t just going up to the temple at this particular moment. They were *in the habit* or *had embraced the discipline* of going up to the temple like this. What does this suggest about the kind of discipline life in the Kingdom requires?
2. But why were they going up to the temple? Luke explains that it was “the hour of prayer.” As I have suggested, the Apostles followed the Old Testament practice of praying the psalms. Apparently they also followed the Old Testament practice of observing *set hours of prayer* during the day. How does this compare with your own practice of prayer? Explain.
3. Whether the *hours of prayer* were three set times or seven is not clear, here or elsewhere. But this much is clear: The Apostles drew aside at certain hours of the day to join with other believers – or to retreat by themselves (Acts 10.9) – for prayer. The Kingdom of God comes not only by proclamation, but across the bridge of prayer. How much does the Kingdom feature in your prayers?
4. Probably few of us can imagine retreating for prayer three or five or seven times a day. Is this because we are busier than the Apostles were? Or because what we’re busy *with* is more important to us than what *they* were busy with? Jesus taught us to pray for the coming of the Kingdom (Matt. 6.10). How might you incorporate such prayers into your prayers? What would you pray?
5. What could prevent you from establishing set times during the day to retire from your activities for a brief season of prayer? What might you expect if you began praying more often and more consistently for the coming of the Kingdom?

Summary

Seeking the Kingdom should find us often in prayer for its coming. Remember: The disciples “waited” for the coming of the Kingdom for ten straight days, praying without ceasing. Without more deliberate and consistent prayer for the coming of the Kingdom, we’re not likely to see much progress here. Make a list of things you might actually pray for concerning the coming of the Kingdom in and through you.

Closing Prayer.

I rejoice at Your word
As one who finds great treasure.
I hate and abhor lying,
But I love Your law.
Seven times a day I praise You,

Because of Your righteous judgments.

Psalm 119.162-164

2 Upright!

Be sure to view the video introducing our study of Acts 3 (Lesson 3) by [clicking here](#).

Read and meditate on Acts 3.2-8

This is truly a “beautiful” story, and not just because of where it takes place. Luke uses that location to highlight the beauty of the story and make a point about the Kingdom and its impact.

For reflection

1. This man was going about his usual business, seeking alms from passersby, hoping merely for enough to survive. He had no prospects of anything more, having been lame from birth. He was without hope or prospects, in a body that was crippled and dying. In what ways is this lame man an apt metaphor for the unbelieving world?
2. We note the power of grace here: Even when this man looked at Peter, he was expecting nothing more than a coin or two. He wasn't looking to be healed. But Peter was on a mission that was more than material in nature, and he gave this man something far more valuable than what any amount of money could buy. Should the Kingdom, as it comes in a community, *merely* minister to the material needs of that community? Or should it bring something more? Explain.
3. We note the combination of the *command* to rise, the *invocation of the name* of Jesus, and the *helpful gesture*. Faith acts through works of various kinds to bring the blessings of God to men. Mediate on Psalm 48.1, 2. What kinds of actions might make a church the “beauty” and “joy” of its community?
4. Luke's emphasis that the man stood *upright* (was “lifted up”), became strengthened in his feet and ankles, and began leaping and walking about is a true picture of the healing, restoring, and reconciling power of the Kingdom of God. Human beings were made “upright” in every way (Eccl. 7.29). But sin has enfeebled us, and brings corruption into culture and society. Only words and works of grace and faith can restore us to our upright place before God – a place defined by wholeness and worship. In what ways have you experienced this healing, restoring, and reconciling Kingdom power?
5. In Luke's day it would have been pretty easy to validate Peter's claim to poverty. Everyone would have known that the Apostles were not in the business of supplanting one kingdom with another for the money – unlike Achan, after the battle of Jericho (Josh. 7.1-26). What are some areas in your community where your church might *speak* a Kingdom word and *give* a helping hand to heal, restore, and reconcile?

Summary

The power of the Kingdom flows to other people and into cultural arenas like the temple, through the faith and work of Kingdom citizens, bringing healing and restoration in many ways. How do you expect the power of the Kingdom to flow through you today? Through your church?

Closing Prayer

Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised
In the city of our God,
In His holy mountain.
Beautiful in elevation,
The joy of the whole earth,
Is Mount Zion *on* the sides of the north,
The city of the great King.

God *is* in her palaces;
He is known as her refuge...
We have thought, O God, on Your lovingkindness,
In the midst of Your temple.
According to Your name, O God,
So *is* Your praise to the ends of the earth;
Your right hand is full of righteousness.
Let Mount Zion rejoice,
Let the daughters of Judah be glad,
Because of Your judgments.

Psalm 48.1-3, 9-11

3 Wonder and Amazement

Be sure to view the video introducing our study of Acts 3 (Lesson 3) by [clicking here](#).

Read and meditate on Acts 3.9, 10.

Well I guess! Wouldn't you be filled with "wonder and amazement" at such a thing? We note that the people "saw him walking and praising God." The life of faith is meant to be flaunted, displayed, proclaimed, and celebrated. It is not merely a *private affair*, as some of Christianity's detractors might like.

For reflection

1. The healing power of the Gospel releases energies of joy and worship that come to the attention of the watching world when they are put on display *in the everyday settings* of the world. In what everyday settings of your life should the people who know you observe your joy and worship in knowing the Lord?
2. Most folks in this situation had come to the temple to praise God. They were doubtless planning to do so formally, as a group, following a prescribed liturgy or program. Then leave. This man's praise was so genuine, earnest, and constant that people flocked to see the fuss. Meditate on Micah 4.1-8. This *last days* text could be seen as looking forward to just such a situation as we see in Acts 3. Micah foresees people from the world flocking to see the fuss as well. Why? What was leading them to seek the Lord?
3. When they recognized the man lame from birth, and saw what he was doing, please remember: these folks had passed by this fellow every day *for years*, so they were "filled with wonder and amazement." What's the difference between wonder and amazement? How should the coming of the Kingdom in your community cause people to wonder? To be amazed? Does the Christianity your church shows to its community cause people to wonder and be amazed? Should it?
4. The Lord continued to use signs and wonders like this in carrying out His ongoing work of advancing the Kingdom of God. There is no reason to think He has stopped doing this today. We might, however, expect the signs and wonders in our day to be of a sort more characteristic of what is likely to cause our own generation to experience wonder and amazement. Such as? How might local churches, working together, *sign* the reality of the Kingdom in their community?
5. Who are the people most likely to observe such "signs and wonders" in your walk with the Lord? Have you asked the Lord to let you show Him to them? What about your lifestyle would *sign* the Kingdom to the people around you, and cause them to *wonder* about the hope they see in you?

Summary

The Kingdom comes with distinguishing signs, signs so wonderful, so out of the ordinary, that people who observe them cannot help but question and be amazed. Do you think Christians today expect the Kingdom to come in and through them in this way? Why or why not?

Closing Prayer

In my distress I called upon the LORD,
And cried out to my God;
He heard my voice from His temple,
And my cry came before Him, *even* to His ears.
Then the earth shook and trembled;
The foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken,
Because He was angry.

Smoke went up from His nostrils,
And devouring fire from His mouth;
Coals were kindled by it.
He bowed the heavens also, and came down
With darkness under His feet.
And He rode upon a cherub, and flew;
He flew upon the wings of the wind.
He made darkness His secret place;
His canopy around Him *was* dark waters
And thick clouds of the skies.
From the brightness before Him,
His thick clouds passed with hailstones and coals of fire.
The LORD thundered from heaven,
And the Most High uttered His voice,
Hailstones and coals of fire.
He sent out His arrows and scattered the foe,
Lightnings in abundance, and He vanquished them.
Then the channels of the sea were seen,
The foundations of the world were uncovered
At Your rebuke, O LORD,
At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.
He sent from above, He took me;
He drew me out of many waters.
He delivered me from my strong enemy,
From those who hated me,
For they were too strong for me.
They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
But the LORD was my support.
He also brought me out into a broad place;
He delivered me because He delighted in me.

Psalm 18.6-19

4 What's the Big Deal?

Be sure to view the video introducing our study of Acts 3 (Lesson 3) by [clicking here](#).

Read and meditate on Acts 3.11-15.

Almost everything about Peter's sermon on this occasion would come under the condemnation of contemporary church consultants. Too much Old Testament. Too hard on the listeners, too condemning. Not enough humor. No stories or jokes or even a poem. Not long enough. Too much implied theology.

For reflection

1. Peter is almost too cool here as he seems to be saying to the astonished people, "What's the big deal? What'd you expect, what with Jesus rising from the dead? Isn't this just the same thing *He* did, and which He now *continues* to do?" From what we've seen of the ongoing work of Christ thus far in the book of Acts, do you see any areas in which your church needs to improve? Explain.
2. A new reality has broken into human experience, and the Apostles get it, while the crowds can only look on in amazement. The Good News is about God and what He is doing, not about men and anything they might accomplish. Given the opportunity to share the Good News of the Kingdom with a friend or co-worker, what would you say? What makes the Kingdom of God, and Jesus as its King, *Good News*?
3. Peter comforts his hearers: You sinners! You murderers! You who prefer the scum of the earth to the Messiah of God! That ought to get their attention. Then look at the lovely, powerful way Peter connects Jesus with God's covenant, and the Holy and Righteous One glimpsed and anticipated throughout the Old Testament. He was here, Peter says. You killed Him. God raised Him up. This man walks by the power of His Name. What's the big deal? Peter made room for the Spirit to *convict* his hearers, but also to *instruct* and *convert* them. What is *conviction*? Why is conviction important to instruction and conversion (cf. Jn. 16.8-11)? Should we expect people to come under conviction when we share the Good News? Explain.
4. Of course, the Kingdom of God *is* a big deal – *the* big deal, we should say. But it's the "new normal" in the world, even though most of the world remains out of sync with the ongoing work of Christ. It's just a matter of time, though – time and faithfulness on our parts. Meditate on 1 John 2.8. How does the story in Acts 3 illustrate John's claim in this verse?
5. What is your church's vision for the coming of the Kingdom in your community? What is your vision for the coming of the Kingdom in your life? In your sphere of influence?

Summary

The Kingdom of God comes with power to make all things new. Christians must neither fear nor neglect that power. Rather, we should *seek* it like the Apostles did in Acts 1, *proclaim* it like Peter did in Acts 2, and *wield* it like Peter and John in Acts 3. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 = "Very Well" assess your Kingdom citizenship using those three verbs: seek, proclaim, wield. Why did you choose the number you did?

Closing Prayer

Examine me, O LORD, and prove me;
Try my mind and my heart.
For Your lovingkindness *is* before my eyes,
And I have walked in Your truth.
I have not sat with idolatrous mortals,
Nor will I go in with hypocrites.

I have hated the assembly of evildoers,
And will not sit with the wicked.
I will wash my hands in innocence;
So I will go about Your altar, O LORD,
That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving,
And tell of all Your wondrous works.

Psalm 26.2-7

5 Infectious

Be sure to view the video introducing our study of Acts 3 (Lesson 3) by [clicking here](#).

Read and meditate on Acts 3.16.

Here we receive a lesson on the infectious nature of faith. Faith *displayed* often *generates* faith in those who have no faith.

For reflection

1. Remember, the man who was healed was not expecting to be healed, not even after Peter had begun speaking to him. It was *Peter's* faith which emboldened this man to make the effort to stand. It was *Peter's* invocation of the Name of Jesus Christ, echoing in this man's ear, that led him to give his hand to Peter and undertake something *he had never been able to do before*. What are some ways you might expect your faith in Jesus to encourage others to believe in Him?
2. Peter's faith sparked the lame man's faith, just as the faith of a bold, unflinching, and loving witness can frequently melt the hard heart of a resolute unbeliever. If our faith were more visible, confident, celebratory, and, well, "wonder-full", would that help our skeptical and scornful generation to believe in the Good News of the Kingdom?
3. The *ongoing* work of Christ looks a lot like the *original* work of Christ, doesn't it? That's as it should be. Jesus came to bring the Kingdom near; the Apostles, having entered the Kingdom, began offering it to others. Now it falls to us to extend the reach of this faith-full enterprise to our skeptical and unbelieving age. Why do you suppose we aren't being as faithful in this work as the Apostles were?
4. Meditate on 1 Corinthians 4.20 and Romans 14.17, 18. How can you see the Kingdom coming through Peter and John in Acts 3? How should Christians today expect to see the Kingdom coming in and through them?
5. During the week gone by, what opportunities did you have to offer the Kingdom to someone else? In what ways were you able to see the Kingdom of God extended to others through your faith?

Summary

Obviously, Christianity is not a merely personal or private matter. That day in the temple, no one who was present doubted that something new, wonderful, and amazing had happened. And it was neither magic nor the result of some cleverly-organized, big-skill-set effort on the part of some local church. Just two guys being Jesus to their world (Acts 1.8). Write a prayer expressing what you'd like God to do in your life as a result of what you see in Peter and John in Acts 3.

Closing Prayer

Praise the LORD!

Sing to the LORD a new song,

And His praise in the assembly of saints.

Let Israel rejoice in their Maker;

Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

Let them praise His name with the dance;

Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp.

For the LORD takes pleasure in His people;

He will beautify the humble with salvation.

Psalm 149.1-4

6 Who's the Ignoramus?

Be sure to view the video introducing our study of Acts 3 (Lesson 3) by [clicking here](#).

Read and meditate on Acts 3.17-21.

Peter actually says that his hearers “practiced ignorance,” not only in killing the Lord, but in everything else they did as well. They were living in darkness and unbelief, under the canopy of the Lie, and not in the Light of God. So Peter, and the Lord, are willing to cut them some slack. Their rulers, too. That “ignorance” though, must have grated on any rulers in the audience, I suspect. Truth hurts.

For reflection

1. The coming of Christ brings light and truth and understanding into the way of things (Eph. 4.17-24). But to enter that experience one must repent and turn away from every sinful practice, giving evidence of forgiveness in their hearts, and opening their souls and every aspect of their lives to the refreshing blessings of the Lord. Can a person become a Christian just a little? Or is Jesus commanding more? Explain.
2. The blessings of salvation are all to be enjoyed in Jesus, Whom we may know, enjoy, and follow now, and Who is one day coming to take us unto Himself forever. This, Peter explained, is all in line with the prophets; he's not making this up. We can turn to those same prophets to help skeptics and scorners today to see that God has truly appointed Jesus for the salvation of lost sinners. If, that is, they are willing to repent and believe the Good News. Suppose you were asked to show how Jesus is revealed in the prophets of the Old Testament. What are some passages you might point to?
3. It's refreshing to see the Good News of Jesus grounded so firmly in the teachings of the Old Testament. Covenant, law, prophets, promises, great men, familiar stories – the Apostles saw Jesus in all these, and so should we (Jn. 5.39). How would you counsel a new believer to look for Jesus as he reads his Bible each day?
4. In ignorance the religious people of Peter and John's day acted contrary to the will of God. These people went up to the temple to pray and worship *daily*. But they were ignorant of the truth of God and guilty of sinning against Him. Is it possible this situation might hold a warning for those who profess faith in Jesus today?
5. Do you think about ways of beginning a conversation about the Gospel with the people you see each week? What might be some interesting ways of doing that?

Summary

The Gospel offers the hope of life and refreshment in the Lord, but people need to admit their sins and turn from them before they can receive the ongoing work of Christ in their lives. Is this true for Christians as well as for unbelievers? Explain.

Closing Prayer

LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle?
Who may dwell in Your holy hill?
He who walks uprightly,
 And works righteousness,
 And speaks the truth in his heart;
He *who* does not backbite with his tongue,
 Nor does evil to his neighbor,
 Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;

In whose eyes a vile person is despised,
But he honors those who fear the LORD;
He *who* swears to his own hurt and does not change;
He *who* does not put out his money at usury,
Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.
He who does these *things* shall never be moved.

Psalm 15

7 Things to Come

Be sure to view the video introducing our study of Acts 3 (Lesson 3) by [clicking here](#).

Read and meditate on Acts 2.22-26.

Peter assumes an authority for his words which is the same as that of the Old Testament. He explains that Jesus is the promised Prophet Who has life in Himself and Whom to disobey is to perish. Again we see Peter inserting this warning of judgment: You've heard the Good News; reject it to your peril. We have to include the *bad* news along with the *Good*, if only to keep the *whole truth* in a proper perspective.

For reflection

1. Moses was speaking about Jesus, just as Jesus was being promised in the covenant with Abraham and proclaimed in the prophets throughout the Old Testament. The Scriptures everywhere testify to Jesus and the Kingdom God is bringing through Him. How can we improve our reading of Scripture to see this as clearly as Peter did?
2. The mention here of “all the families of the earth” being blessed not only ties into the covenant with Abraham but serves to foreshadow events to come in the book of Acts. Jesus must first bring the blessings of salvation to the people of Israel. From there, it's to the ends of the earth (Acts 1.8)! Does your church have a vision for bringing the blessings of Christ to its community? Do the members of your church go out into your community like Peter did into his, ready to proclaim and show the Kingdom of God? Explain.
3. But again, just to be clear: There will be no blessing, no forgiveness, and no hope of promise without repentance, without turning from “wickedness” to the holiness and righteousness of God. Why do we seem to have such a hard time talking about things like this in our day?
4. So Peter's first sermon wasn't a fluke, a momentary burst of courage perhaps sustained as much by adrenalin as by a real and transforming spiritual experience. No, he's a changed man, a bold man, a caring and urgent man – a man on a mission. Peter is like that generation who invaded the land of promise in the book of Joshua. Whereas previously the people of Israel (and Peter) demurred and denied the Lord and His promised land, now this new generation was full-steam ahead, all faith and fearlessness, taking on giants and laying the foundations of the Kingdom of God. Just like Peter. Just like you? Explain.
5. Do you lack boldness in the Lord in any area of your life? Are you willing to seek the Lord for boldness to be His witness? Seek, proclaim, and wield the power of the Kingdom: How can this become more a way of life for you?

Summary

Peter and John were obviously very serious about the Gospel. They made the most of the opportunity that infectious faith had created, and, as we shall see, their Kingdom effort made a tremendous impact on the people and culture of their day. Why do we not tend to think or live or work this way in churches today?

Closing Prayer

Those who trust in the LORD

Are like Mount Zion,

Which cannot be moved, *but* abides forever.

As the mountains surround Jerusalem,

So the LORD surrounds His people

From this time forth and forever.

For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest
On the land allotted to the righteous,
Lest the righteous reach out their hands to iniquity.
Do good, O LORD, to *those who are* good,
And to *those who are* upright in their hearts.
As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways,
The LORD shall lead them away
With the workers of iniquity.
Peace *be* upon Israel!

Psalm 125

For reflection or discussion

1. Based on what we've seen in Acts 3, summarize the kind of impact we should expect the Good News of the Kingdom to have in our community.
2. What makes the Kingdom such Good News?
3. Why must we keep Jesus at the center of our preaching and living? Are the blessings of Jesus more important than Jesus? Explain.
4. Do you think Christians today expect their churches to be sources of beauty, joy, healing, restoration, and reconciliation in their communities? Why or why not?
5. What's the most important insight or lesson you've learned from Acts 3?

We are transformed into the image of Jesus Christ *from* the glory we encounter in God's Word to the ways we *live for His glory* in the world (2 Cor. 3.12-18; 1 Cor. 10.31). What have you encountered of God's glory in our reading and meditations in Acts 3? How has He shown Himself to you more clearly? How can this help you to live more consistently for His glory in the daily details of your life? What have you learned about yourself from Acts 3 to help you in being a witness for the Lord?

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.