

A Study of the Acts of the Apostles  
Week Four  
Acts 3:14

**Day One**

14 You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. 15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. 16 By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.

v. 14 – Jesus was rejected by those to whom He was sent:

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not (Isaiah 53:3).

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him (John 1:11).

**Do you struggle with rejection?** Jesus can help you if you do, because He understands rejection. He has experienced it and can heal and deliver you. Jesus had the purest of intentions, yet He and His message were ultimately rejected by many. **Can you allow Him to minister to you in this area of pain?**

v. 15 – Peter told the audience what the apostles knew for a fact: That Jesus was raised from the dead. **What do you know about Jesus?** That is what you should tell others. Don't be under pressure to share "deep" truths; simply share what you know to those who don't know, those who need to hear it or those who need to hear it again. And *please* don't talk about the antichrist more than you talk about the Christ!

v. 16 – Peter quickly capitalized on the significant miracle that had just taken place. He cut to the chase, so to speak, and connected the healing to his message about Jesus. It was Jesus' name and faith in that name that healed the well-known beggar. I know I feel pressure when praying for someone, concerned that something may not happen if I pray. But when I pray, especially face-to-face in a church, I try to put all the "pressure" on Jesus. I call on His name and try to take the focus off me and put it on Him. The people for whom I pray shouldn't put their trust in me, but in Him and His name. **Do you feel some pressure when you pray for someone?** Then you should try to do what I do.

**Day Two**

17 "Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. 18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. 19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Christ, who has

been appointed for you — even Jesus. 21 He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

v. 17 – When I saw the movie *The Passion of the Christ*, I was reminded that the leaders were the ones who plotted to kill Jesus and they carried out their plot at night, while most of the city was asleep. When the crowd called for Barabbas to be released instead of Jesus, it could not have been a large crowd, but rather a mob controlled by the leaders. When Peter laid the blame at the feet of those to whom he was preaching, he was holding them responsible for what their leaders had done.

Yet Peter knew that they didn't fully understand what had happened since they didn't understand who Jesus was. And Peter's goal wasn't to make the people feel bad or guilty, but to lead them to a saving knowledge of Jesus! Keep in mind also that these were the first messages preached after Jesus' departure. The message of the gospel was to become clearer as time went on.

v. 18 – The thought of a suffering Christ was offensive to the Jews, who expected a victorious leader like David or Solomon. Jesus was victorious, but His main victory was over sin and death, not over the Roman Empire. Rome would fall, but that was only a consequence of Jesus and His kingdom. The primary result was that man was freed from death and hell:

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:56-57).

People ask me all the time if I am afraid when I travel. I usually respond, "I gave my life to Jesus; I didn't loan it to Him. I am already dead and alive in Him, so if He chooses to claim my life on a plane or in my bed, that's His business, not mine." **Are you afraid of death?** Jesus came to give you the victory over death:

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15).

v. 19 – Peter promised times of refreshing, but only if the people repented. Much of Israel refused and eventually Jerusalem was destroyed and times of refreshing never came. Do you need refreshed? Then you must ask the Lord to show you if there is any need for repentance in your life. Repentance means to turn around and face another direction. Repentance is a decision that is always coupled with action; it is never purely a mental decision.

v. 20 – I think that Peter was referring to the presence of God in the believer's life and not the literal return of the Lord in this context. Our repentance doesn't hasten Jesus' Second Coming, but it does facilitate His coming to live in us. Do you realize that the living Christ has been sent through the Holy Spirit to live in you? As the young say, "That is awesome!" Do you agree?

v. 21 – Peter showed that his doctrine and understanding were already developing. In Acts 1, the apostles were concerned about when Jesus would take the kingdom from Romans and restore it to the Jews. Now he understood that God had a bigger plan and was restoring not just Israel but all of fallen creation. Jesus would be in heaven until all His enemies were made His footstool:

But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy (Heb 10:12-14).

**Is your understanding of Jesus and the Father’s plan growing and maturing? If not, why not? If so, can you think of something that you “believed” three years ago that you have a more complete understanding of today? Do you think there are other things that in another three years you will understand more completely?** If so, then that is why you can afford to be less legalistic, realizing that you are still growing and learning.

### Day Three

22 For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. 23 Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.' 24 "Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days. 25 And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.' 26 When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."

v. 22 – Peter now contextualized his message; that means he made it something his audience could relate to. When I speak to a younger audience, I try to say things that will help them relate the truth to their world. I don’t try to be young, but I use examples and words that put the message in a context that is easier for them to understand. Peter now mentioned Moses and explained how Jesus fulfilled what Moses had said. This would help any Jew know that what Peter was saying was indeed “kosher.” **Are you putting your message into a context that people can understand?** That’s why missionaries must work hard to understand a foreign culture, otherwise they won’t be able to take the gospel message and preach it in terms that are more easily understood by the listeners.

v. 23 – If Jesus is the One to whom Moses was referring—and we know that He was—then anyone who didn’t listen to Jesus would be cut off from his or her people. In other words, the disobedient would no longer be Jews. Peter wasn’t trying to scare the people into responding; he was simply speaking the truth that they already knew.

v. 24 – What’s more, Peter added that all the prophets from Samuel have also referred to the days that the Jews had just encountered. So the Old Testament is all about Jesus, as is

the New Testament. So all the Bible is about Jesus. I have mentioned a few studies that I preached many times and didn't do a good job of relating the topic to Jesus. In fact, there were times when I didn't mention Jesus at all! I've made a more conscious effort to do a better job of that, because if all the prophets referred to Jesus, then I would be wise to do the same.

v. 25 – The Jews inherited a rich spiritual heritage, as they were well aware and very proud. But that heritage, according to Peter, was now on the line. Everything they had inherited pointed to Jesus and His ministry. What's more, that ministry was now to be shared with the nations of the world. God promised Abraham that all people would be blessed through one of his offspring, not just Jewish people. Of course, this issue was to be the stumbling block to all Jews, even believing Jews. They had a difficult time “sharing” God with people who weren't like them.

The Jews felt that they owned God, instead of seeing that they were stewards of God. They kept the promises and prophets, preserving them for the day of Jesus. But they became owners instead of stewards, and many missed their day of salvation and godly visitation.

v. 26 – Peter said that Jesus was sent to them first. That meant that Jesus was going to be sent to others. While Peter preached this, he struggled himself (as we will see later) when it was time to go to the Jews. You can have all kinds of theological reasons to do something, but that doesn't mean you can do it. One author has said, “To know and not to do is not to know.” **Is there anything that you know but have trouble doing? Do you really know it if you aren't doing it? For example, do you know God wants you to be generous? Are you generous? If not, then do you truly understand generosity?**

#### Day Four

4:1 The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. 2 They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. 3 They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. 4 But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.

v. 1 – Security came running to see what all the commotion was about. The high priests probably hired these guards to watch over the business and keep out undesirables from God's house. The Sadducees were the party that most of the high priests belonged to. They were the religious liberals of their day. They didn't believe in angels or the resurrection and didn't study the Law as the Pharisees did.

v. 2 – Since the high priests were in charge of the Temple, they were disturbed that there was an unauthorized meeting where Peter and John were teaching. They were especially upset that the apostles talked about resurrection, something in which they

didn't believe. So the priests were doubly uncomfortable, since the apostles preached Jesus, whom they had condemned to death, and talked about resurrection, in which they didn't believe. That's why they brought security. They had no intention of listening and learning, only controlling what happened in their sacred place.

v. 3 – Peter and John spent the night in jail because of what they had done. Who is mad at you for what you are doing for God? If no one, then what are you doing? I'm not talking about breaking laws or doing dumb things. I'm talking about obeying God and getting someone upset. If you are going to serve God effectively, you're going to upset some people. Jesus predicted this when He said:

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies will be the members of his own household" (Matthew 10:34-36).

Don't go looking for trouble, but don't run from it either. And it seems like family can be those who are most upset when you begin to live a godly life or follow through on God's commands and direction for your life. **Is someone upset with you now? Why?** If you did something wrong, then go and ask for forgiveness. If not, then that's their problem, not yours.

v. 4 – The leaders could put the apostles in jail, but they couldn't put their message in jail. Peter and John weren't even around to finish the altar call. God finished it for them and many more people believed in Jesus. Jesus knows how to build His church. He is its founder and Messiah. You aren't. So work hard, but trust God for the results.

Jesus had told His followers that things like this imprisonment would happen to them:

"But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. This will result in your being witnesses to them. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish. By standing firm you will gain life" (Luke 21:12-19).

How far are you willing to go to take a stand for Jesus? You may never face this kind of opposition, but you can make up your mind now that you will if that is what God wants you to do. But look at the bright side of this passage. God promises to be with you, so that no one can resist your words or harm your being. So if you are afraid of having to take a tough stand against opposition one day, you can relax. Jesus will be with you!

### **Day Five**

5 The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. 6 Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family. 7 They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people!"

v. 5 – The priests didn't waste any time in convening to investigate what had happened. Someone said, "Justice delayed is justice denied." There would be no justice denied in this case! But this shows how serious the issue of Temple peace and compliance with their customs was to the priests. These men made their living from the Law and Temple and they weren't about to let anything affect that.

v. 6 – The high priests came from one family and were appointed with the approval of Rome. They served on the governing council called the Sanhedrin. They also regulated the Temple businesses, which was their means of income and wealth. This family was committed to maintain the status quo, since it was their religious conviction and livelihood. Jesus and His followers weren't good for business, so the priests were determined to control this teaching as much as possible.

v. 7 - This was an informal meeting of the priests and not the entire council. They now wanted to know how the apostles performed this miracle. What a testimony to God's grace! These priests had condemned Jesus, and Jesus was now sending His followers to witness to them. God had not turned His back on these leaders, even though they had turned their backs on Him.

When the Temple was destroyed decades later, no one could say that God didn't try to reach as many as possible with His message through His followers. Does God have the right to send you to anyone He chooses to bring His message? When you get there, can He ask you to put aside your personal preference or prejudice to speak His words and do His will? Is He asking you to do that now? Are you willing to go?

v. 8 – Remember the promise we saw yesterday from Luke? Jesus promised to be with anyone who is arrested for His sake and give them words that could not be refuted. Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit! That's the desire of every man or woman who speaks for God. If you speak for God from time to time, **can you pray this prayer?** *Oh Lord, don't allow me to speak in the wisdom of my own words or ways. Give me the power of Spirit when I speak or write, whether to one or hundreds! Don't let me put my confidence in my speaking abilities or eloquence. Help me put my trust in You to communicate. Help me to reach my audience in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

### **Day Six**

9 "If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, 10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. 11 He is "the stone you builders rejected,

which has become the capstone.' 12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

v. 9 – They were held accountable for their act of kindness to a cripple! The priests weren't happy that this happened and wanted to investigate how it took place. Not everyone is happy when someone else is blessed. Some are more concerned for the methods or theology than the results. Oh Lord, keep from being legalistic. God, I don't want to be Your protector, but Your worshipper. I don't want to demand that You explain things to me or get my permission to do something. I want to be Your servant, not Your keeper.

v. 10 – Peter gave them the truth in a direct, straightforward manner. He pointed directly to Jesus.

v. 11 – Jesus Himself had quoted this verse from Psalm 118:22 in Matthew 21:42. Undoubtedly Peter had heard Jesus apply this verse so now He applied it—perhaps some of the priests had heard Jesus use it as well. There is something to be said for listening and studying, for it gives you more that the Spirit can anoint and use. What are you reading and who are you listening to? Can they help you get where you want to go, to accomplish God's will in your life?

v. 12 – So much for the notion that there are other ways to God besides Jesus! He is the only way to God and the only means of salvation. Period. **But what does that mean for us and for the Church?** We are the caretaker of the only name by which men can be saved, so we must be out preaching and making that name accessible. **How committed are you to missions work? What are you doing to spread the Name at home and abroad? How much do you pray toward that end? How much money do you give for missions work?**

### Day Seven

13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. 14 But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. 15 So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. 16 "What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it. 17 But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name."

v. 13 – When it says that they were unschooled men, it doesn't mean that Peter and John were ignorant. On the contrary, they knew multiple languages, could read and write and ran successful businesses. But Peter and John had attended no rabbinical school to obtain Biblical training, yet here they were quoting Scripture and preaching powerful messages. Plus they were courageous, addressing the leaders of their people with boldness. That is what the power of the Holy Spirit can do to ordinary people. But don't for a minute think

that these men were “ignorant.” They were not. The leaders recognized that they had been with Jesus. Spending time with Jesus is the key to any successful work or ministry effort. **How much time are you spending with Jesus? What are you learning that He can use and anoint? Where does He want to send you so you can speak on His behalf?**

v. 14 – Now we learn that the man who was healed was standing with Peter and John. I wonder if he too had been imprisoned? He was begging one minute, healed the next and ended up in jail. He had quite a day! But the evidence of a fantastic miracle was standing before the leaders and there was nothing they could do to punish the apostles. **What evidence is there in your life that Jesus is working in and through you? What are you producing that could only be produced with God’s help?**

v. 15 – The leaders needed to confer on this issue, for they were in a tough place. What could they do since the apostles had performed an obvious miracle and were attributing it to Jesus? They recognized the power insight in a group. As I’ve always taught, all of us are smarter than one of us. All of us are also more spiritual than one of us. **What group are you a part of and are you drawing all the wisdom and spiritual insight that you can from them? What do you contribute to the group?**

vs. 16&17 – These leaders came up with the wrong answer to their dilemma, because they all thought the same. No one challenged their conclusion because they were guilty of what is called “group think.” They were under strong pressure not to find the truth but to “explain away” what had obviously happened. All of us are only smarter than all of us when all of us can be honest and challenge the group’s wisdom. This group actually “dumbed down” their potential because they refused to be objective—they all thought and saw reality alike. Thus they were useless together as a means of seeing the truth. They had no dialogue, but rather a monologue one with another.

What plan of action did they arrive at? They decided to try and suppress the truth by controlling what people said. This is always the tactic of authoritarian leaders and it never works. You can limit where people say things but you can’t control what they say. And you can never control what they think—although that doesn’t stop leaders from trying.

These leaders were interested in preserving the status quo. They weren’t interested in truth, nor did they have the best interests of their people in mind. If they had, they would have spread the word that the apostles could heal in Jesus’ name and set a place in the Temple where the people could come for healing. But these leaders were serving their own interests and not those of the people.

**Are you a leader? If so, whose interests are you serving? What are you doing to make people’s lives better? How are you using your power? To build your own kingdom or God’s?**