

Acts 3 notes

Hallel Fellowship (<http://hallel.info>)

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Summary: Shimon Petra and Yochanan see a crippled man begging at the Beautiful Gate to the temple, and Petra passes along the best gift one could give, the Spirit Who had been given to him. Bystanders are amazed at the healing — and likely the Spirit power shown earlier that day — but Petra tells the throng they should be more amazed that their ignorance of God in action led them to push for the Messiah’s execution. Just as the Spirit restored function to the cripple’s legs, so too, the Author of Life couldn’t be kept in the grave. Thus on Pentecost, the people of Yerushalayim get two witnesses to the depths to which their indifference toward God has taken them. Petra again tells the people to “turn back” and be converted.

Verse 1: “Now Peter and John were going...” (NASB) “Now Peter and John went up together...” (KJV) “One day Peter and John were going...” (NIV)

- Depending on which Greek manuscript the translators used led to a slightly different rendering of the time setting of the text.
 - Textus Receptus, 1894; Byzantine, 1991:
 - Acts 2:47 — ο δε κυριος προσειττει τους σωζομενους καθ ημεραν τη εκκλησια = “and the Lord drew together those who were being saved that day in the assembly”
 - Acts 3:1 — επι το αυτο δε Πετρος και Ιωαννης ανεβαινον = “On the same [day], now, Petra and Yochanan were ascending”
 - Nestlé-Aland 26:
 - Acts 2:47 — ο δε κυριος προσειθι τους σωζομενους καθ ημεραν επι το αυτο. = “and the Lord gathered those who were being saved on the same [day]”
 - Acts 3:1 — Πετρος δε και Ιωαννης ανεβαινον = “Petra with Yochanan were ascending”
- One commentator said that the best sense of the Greek and the context puts the events of Acts 2 and 3 on the same day, i.e., on Pentecost.¹
 - Both passages contain a Torah and Israeli history–laden sermon that accuses the listeners of ignorantly or rebelliously rejecting God’s Messiah and calls for repentance and transformation.
 - In Acts 2, the Spirit came with power on the disciples in the temple, and they uttered praises to God in the myriad languages of the Pentecost pilgrims in the temple.
 - In Acts 3, the Spirit came with power on the cripple at the main gate to the temple.
 - One event happened at morning prayers, and the other event happened at evening prayers.

“at the hour of prayers, at the ninth [hour]”

- The daylight hours mentioned in the Apostolic Scriptures are based on reckoning from dawn, or 6 a.m., as is seen by the accounts of Yeshua’s crucifixion. Thus, “the ninth hour” was 3 p.m.
 - The tradition of three times a day for collective prayer to God is ancient.
 - Sages pin the start of that tradition to David: “**Evening and morning**, and at **noon**, will I pray and cry aloud” (Ps. 55:17).
 - It was seen in the life of Daniel in exile in Babylon: “Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open **toward Jerusalem**); and he continued kneeling on his knees **three times a day**, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously” (Dan. 6:10).
 - As we discussed in Acts 1², the apostles continued to follow God’s Torah on the first Pentecost after Yeshua died, rose and ascended.
 - They continued to pray to God along with the rest of Israel.
 - At the third hour (Acts 2:15) = 9 a.m.
 - At the sixth hour (Petra’s rooftop prayer and vision of the tallit in Acts 10:9) = noon
 - At the ninth hour (Acts 3:1) = 3 p.m.
 - They continued to observe the weekly Shabbat, offer sacrifices in the temple and take vows specified

1 Clarke, Adam. "Commentary on Acts 3." *The Adam Clarke Commentary*.

<www.studydrive.org/com/acc/view.cgi?book=ac&chapter=003>. 1832. “The words επι το αυτο, which we translate “together,” and which are the first words in this chapter in the Greek text, we have already seen, Acts 2:47, are added by several MSS. and versions to the last verse of the preceding chapter. But they do not make so good a sense there as they do here; and should be translated, not “together,” which really makes no sense here, but “at that time”; intimating that this transaction occurred nearly about the same time that those took place which are mentioned at the close of the former chapter.”

2 Quackenbush, Jeff. “Acts — a Greek masterpiece about the witness of Jews to the adoption of the nations as God’s people.” Hallel Fellowship discussion. <hallel.info/acts-1-overview-of-acts/>. May 24, 2008.

in the Torah.³

- Some commentators, such as Morgan and Calvin, have argued that they either went to the temple only for prayers or only for evangelism.
- Others have made the same claim about Paul's preaching in the synagogues.

Verse 2: "the gate, which is called Beautiful"

- Jewish 1st century historian Flavius Josephus described the temple in *The War of the Jews*, Book 5, Chapter 5.
 - He wrote that the temple platform area had nine gates at his time.
 - One of the gates, the one facing east opposite the gate of the temple itself, was larger and more ornate than the others. He called it "the Corinthian gate."
 - "Now nine of these gates were on every side covered over with gold and silver, as were the jambs of their doors and their lintels; but there was one gate that was without the [inward court of the] holy house, which was of Corinthian brass, and greatly excelled those that were only covered over with silver and gold. Each gate had two doors, whose height was severally 30 cubits [about 45 feet], and their breadth 15 [cubits]. However, they had large spaces within of 30 cubits, and had on each side rooms, and those, both in breadth and in length, built like towers, and their height was above 40 cubits [60 feet]. Two pillars did also support these rooms, and were in circumference 12 cubits [18 feet]. Now the magnitudes of the other gates were equal one to another; but that over the **Corinthian gate**, which opened on the east over against the gate of the holy house itself, was much larger; for its height was 50 cubits [75 feet]; and its doors were 40 cubits; and it was adorned after a most costly manner, as having much richer and thicker plates of silver and gold upon them than the other. These nine gates had that silver and gold poured upon them by Alexander, the father of Tiberius. Now there were 15 steps, which led away from the wall of the court of the women to this greater gate; whereas those that led thither from the other gates were five steps shorter."
- The prophets and leaders of Israel called it the Eastern Gate.⁴
 - "Then he brought me back the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary which looks toward the east; and it was shut" (Eze. 44:1; cf. Neh. 3:29).
 - In the second temple period, a causeway supported by arches ran from the gate across the Kidron Valley. It was known as the Causeway of the Heifer, because the high priest used this way to reach the Mount of Olives, where the ritual burning of the Red Heifer took place, to purify the pilgrims with its ashes (Parah 3:6; Shekalim 4:2).
- Today the gate is called the Golden Gate, because Jerome in his Latin translation of the Bible rendered the Greek word *ὠραῖος* ("beautiful" or "blooming," Strong's 5611) as the Latin homophone *aurea*, which means "golden."⁵
 - The Muslim name of the walled-up double gate is *Bab al-Dhahabi*. The north portal is known as *Bab al-Tawba*, or the Gate of Repentance, and the southern, *Bab al-Rahma*, or the Gate of Mercy.
 - Muslims compare the final judgment of mankind to the crossing of a narrow knife blade which stretches from a mountain (the Mount of Olives is often mentioned in Arab legend) to the "gate of heaven." This knife-edged bridge evidently spans the Kidron Valley — as did an ancient stone bridge in Roman times.
 - Some scholars have noted that the double gates of repentance and mercy contrast not only Law and Grace but are reminders of the two bronze pillars, Jachin, "in his counsel" and Boaz, "by his strength" which stood in the front of the First Temple. James 2:13 notes that God is just, but that his mercy "triumphs" over judgment. According to James, although God is just and must judge the world with equity and impartiality, the mercy of God is a greater and higher attribute of the God of the Bible. He is ready to forgive all who seek him, and his mercy abounds.
 - In 1969 an archaeologist serendipitously found remnants of a gate below the current gate that dated back to the time of King Solomon.⁶
- Not surprisingly, the gate's original name is an apt one.
 - Besides being aesthetically "beautiful," the gate also "bloomed at the right season."
 - *ὠραῖος* (*ho-rah'-yos*; Strong's 5611) from 5610; belonging to the right hour or season (timely), i.e. (by implication) flourishing (beauteous (figuratively)): — beautiful. see GREEK for 5610
 - *ὥρα* (*hora*; Strong's 5610); a certain definite time or season fixed by natural law and returning with the revolving year
 - The crippled man, older than 40 and crippled from birth, likely had been begging there for a long time. Yeshua may have seen Him at the gate as He passed through.

3 Ibid.

4 Har-El, Menashe. *This is Jerusalem*. Canaan Publishing House, Jerusalem 1977. Cited by Lambert Dolphin in "Visiting the Temple Mount." <www.templemount.org/visitemp.html> 1995–2005. Accessed June 20, 2008.

5 *Biblical Archaeology Review*. January/February 1983, p. 27. Cited by Dolphin in *ibid*.

6 Kaufman, Asher. *Biblical Archaeology Review*. March/April 1983, p. 45. Cited by Dolphin in *ibid*.

- Judgment in biblical times happened in the gates of the city.
 - Judgment will begin at the house of God:
 - With those who deny being a “Christian” (1st Pe. 4:17).
 - With those who don’t lament the evil that has taken hold of Yerushalayim (Eze. 9:1–7).
 - Messiah rode into Yerushalayim and the temple on Lamb Selection Day from the Mount of Olives and brought judgment on those who had perverted the house of the LORD (Luke 19:28–48).
 - Messiah hinted He would return from the east (Matt. 24:27).
 - Messiah will “touch down” on the Mount of Olives then enter Yerushalayim from the east, likely through the Beautiful Gate (Zech. 14:4–5).

Verse 8. “walking and leaping, and praising God”

- These fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah: “The lame man shall leap as a deer” (Isa. 35:6).

Verses 19–21. “repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come”

- Yochanan the Immerser was “the Eliyahu who was to come” (Matt. 17:1–13).
- There is a wonderful picture of chastisement then an offer of mercy for Ephraim in Jeremiah 31. Not coincidentally, that passage has one of the two mentions of the heart-Spirit “New Deal” God would cut in later times.

Verses 22–26. “Moses said, ‘The LORD God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to him you shall give heed’ to everything he says to you.”

- This was a quote from Deut. 18:15-22 about the coming of “The Prophet,” whose coming was expected in the first century along with Eliyahu.
- Moshe was a messianic figure in many ways, here are some examples⁷:
 1. Christ alone was like unto Moses as a **prophet**: “There arose not a prophet in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do” (Deut. 34:10-12; cf. Acts 2:22–26).
 2. Christ was like unto Moses as a **mediator** between God and his people (Deut. 5:5; 1st Ti. 2:5). Yet, Yeshua was “a mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Heb. 8:6).
 3. Christ was like unto Moses in **excellency**. Moses excelled all the prophets in speaking to God “mouth to mouth” (Num. 12:6–8), but Messiah excelled him and all men in that “being in the bosom of the Father, he has come down from heaven and declared God unto us” (John 1:18; 3:13).
 4. Christ was like to Moses in **faithfulness**. “Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house — whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end” (Heb. 3:5–6).
 5. Christ was like to Moses in **signs and wonders**. Moses was “a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people” (Luke 24:19) and “a man approved of God among them, by miracles, signs, and wonders, which God did by him in the midst of them” (Acts 2:22), because “he did among them the works which no other man did” (John 15:24). Unto him, that is, not unto the diviners, wizards, or any such like, but unto him, and him only; as Him thou shalt serve, Deuteronomy 6:13, is expounded, Him only, Matthew 4:10. And though this is principally meant of Christ in person, of whom God said, Hear him, Matthew 17:5; yet it implies also his ministers, as himself said, He that heareth you heareth me, Luke 10:16." To these may be added,
 6. Christ was like Moses in being a **king** among His people. Messiah is “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev. 19:16; 1st Ti. 6:15).
 7. Messiah was like Moses as a legislator. Moses gave laws to Israel by the authority and commandment of God, which the Jews have ever acknowledged as coming from the immediate inspiration of the Almighty: these are contained in the Pentateuch. Messiah came not to change the Torah but to restore and amplify its meaning and goal (Matt. 5:17–18; cf. chs. 5–7).

⁷ Clarke. "Commentary on Deuteronomy 18." <www.studylight.org/com/acc/view.cgi?book=de&chapter=018>.