

Dr. Craig Keener, Acts, Session 8

Acts 3-4

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Keener, Acts, Session 8, Acts 3-4, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Craig Keener **explains** Acts 3-5, **focusing** on the historical and cultural context to enhance understanding. He **discusses** the healing of a lame man at the temple gate, **analyzing** Peter's sermon on Jesus' authority and the promised Messianic restoration. Keener **examines** the apostles' arrest and subsequent prayer for boldness, followed by the events surrounding Ananias and Sapphira, illustrating the importance of genuine commitment in the early church. The lecture **concludes** by exploring the rapid growth of the early church and the power of miracles.

2. 12 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Keener, Acts, Session 8 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels – Acts → Acts).



Keener_Acts_Session
n08.mp3

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture excerpts by Dr. Craig Keener on Acts chapters 3-5:

Briefing Document: Dr. Craig Keener on Acts 3-5

Introduction

Dr. Keener's lecture focuses on providing historical and cultural context to better understand the text of Acts, assuming that his audience is already familiar with the basic narrative. He emphasizes that understanding the ancient background provides insights that most readers would not discover on their own. The core of this section examines the events surrounding the healing of the lame man at the temple gate, the subsequent sermon by Peter, and the community's early practices, as well as the persecution that arose due to this growth.

Key Themes and Ideas

1. Healing in Jesus' Name (Acts 3:1-10):

- The healing of the lame man at the Temple's Gate Beautiful is presented not just as a miracle but as a catalyst for preaching.
- The Temple gate was a profitable place for beggars due to the piety of those entering and the Jewish emphasis on charity.
- Peter and John give what they have, not silver or gold, but the power of Jesus' name to heal.
- "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise and walk," is explained as acting on Jesus' authority, with the apostles as "authorized agents."
- Keener posits that Luke presents the book of Acts as "how Jesus continued to act and teach through the disciples," building on the theme of Luke's Gospel, which was about "all that Jesus began to do and teach."
- The healing is attributed to Jesus, not Peter or John, and Peter reinforces this in the subsequent sermon. "Why do you look at us as if by our own power or holiness, this man has been made whole? It's by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom you crucified, that Jesus has made this man whole."

1. Peter's Sermon and the Gospel (Acts 3:11-26):

- Peter's message emphasizes the corporate guilt of the Jerusalem crowds who called for Jesus' crucifixion.
- Peter identifies Jesus as "the holy and righteous one" and the "archegos" (pioneer, founder, leader) of life. "They accepted a murderer...and then they killed the author of life, the founder, the pioneer of life. That's the irony."
- He highlights the irony of the people choosing a murderer over the "author of life" and underscores that Jesus' death doesn't negate his power, as he rose again.
- He acknowledges that they acted in "ignorance," which while not absolving guilt, reduces it, and ties this to Jesus' prayer on the cross, "Father, forgive them."
- Peter stresses the promised Messianic restoration, tying the concept to the prophecies, repentance, and restoration of all things. "The restoration of God's people was a central message of the Israelite prophets in the Old Testament."
- He notes the Jewish understanding that repentance would precede restoration, referencing Hosea, Joel, and Deuteronomy.
- The concept of the "restoration of all things" is not presented as a cyclical event as the Stoics believed, but the restoration of creation, peace, and prosperity on earth, aligning with Jewish prophetic expectations of a new heaven and new earth with a new Jerusalem.
- He presents Jesus as the prophet like Moses, citing Deuteronomy 18:15, 18, a hope that was emphasized not only by Jewish people, but also by Samaritans and in the Dead Sea Scrolls.
- The prophets, from Samuel onward, foretold the suffering and exaltation of the Messiah.
- Peter is gracious by offering them a chance to repent, unlike Jesus who called out their lineage, making them "children of those who killed the prophets."
- The blessings of Abraham were to come to them first, but also to all peoples, setting the stage for a later Gentile mission. "The servant...was sent to be a blessing to them first."

1. **Confrontation with the Temple Authorities (Acts 4):**

- The authorities, particularly the Sadducees who rejected the resurrection, opposed the preaching of the resurrection of Jesus. They saw this as a threat to their authority.
- The Temple guard, a police force made up of Levites, detained Peter and John for their actions.
- The lecture emphasizes the power and ruthlessness of the high priestly family, highlighting Annas and Caiaphas. "They were disliked in the Dead Sea Scrolls. They were disliked by the Pharisees...Luke can use the plural for high priests because the aristocratic priesthood in this period, the high priestly families, were all called high priests."
- The core issue is that the apostles were challenging the authority of the Sadducees who controlled the Temple and were seen as illegitimate. "The apostles...were going to be the new leaders."
- The apostles are being questioned about the healing, framed as a benefaction. The Greco-Roman world stressed gratitude for acts of benefaction, which Peter turns into an opportunity to preach.
- Peter uses "made whole" (saved) as a pivot point. In response to their demand "in whose name, by whose authority have you done this?", Peter explains that the man's healing ("being made whole") came through the power of the name of Jesus Christ. He then moves immediately to salvation: "there's no other name given under heaven...by which a person may be saved."

1. **Exclusivity of Salvation through Jesus:**

- Keener stresses the exclusivity of salvation through Jesus as a core tenet of the early church's preaching. "There's no other way to the Father except through Jesus."
- This belief, which is offensive to many even today, was offensive in the Greco-Roman world, where people commonly worshiped multiple gods.
- Keener emphasizes that believers must be gracious, and remember that God reaches out to the broken and marginalized.

- He emphasizes the importance of not having an attitude of superiority toward others. "We don't reach out to people from a position of superiority like, well, we are saved and you are not, because we were saved wholly by grace."

1. **The Boldness of the Apostles:**

- Peter and John respond with boldness ("parousia"), speaking the truth even to those in power. "Many people in antiquity respected somebody who would speak with the parousia, which was a kind of boldness, forthrightness."
- The apostles are presented as people who respected authority, yet spoke against those who were usurping God's authority.
- After being threatened, the believers gather and pray for continued boldness to preach and perform miracles, rather than seeking vengeance.

1. **The Power of the Holy Spirit:**

- The Holy Spirit is associated with prophecy, speaking for God, and also, sometimes, with miracles.
- The place where the believers are gathered is shaken after their prayer, and they are filled with the Holy Spirit, resulting in continued boldness and miracles, creating a continuing revival. "The place was shaken where they were assembled. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness."
- The Spirit transforms believers internally, leading to devotion to God and one another, and motivating them to meet each other's needs, including sharing possessions to care for the poor. "The Spirit transforms us from the inside so that we serve God gladly...so we're devoted to God and to one another."
- The sharing of possessions is not seen as a forced rule, but as a voluntary expression of love.
- This is not just about getting material things but involves the kind of transformation that leads to serving God and others, and is tied to the outpouring of the Spirit.

1. **Growth of the Early Church and its Parallels:**

- The number of male believers in Jerusalem is noted at 5,000, with a probable estimate of 10,000 believers when women and children are included.

- The number is compared to the size of the Pharisees and Essenes, underscoring the sizable number of early believers.
- Keener addresses doubts about the large numbers by drawing parallels to modern revival movements which show the possibility of rapid growth in Christianity. "Revival movements often begin with a spurt of massive growth, and there's no reason, therefore, to doubt these kinds of figures that we have in the Book of Acts when you compare sociological parallels today."

1. **God's Authority and Sovereignty**

- The lecture underscores the idea of choosing to obey God rather than people, an idea expressed by philosophers and modeled by Old Testament prophets. "Philosophers often stressed obeying God rather than people."
- God's sovereignty is emphasized throughout Acts. God can even use the wicked to achieve his purposes. "God is so sovereign that he's able to accomplish his will even by allowing people a measure of free choice."

1. **Contrasting Examples of Commitment:**

- The positive example of Barnabas, who sells a field and gives the money to the apostles, demonstrates genuine commitment and generosity.
- The negative example of Ananias and Sapphira highlights the danger of pretense. Their dishonesty about the amount of money they gave was met with judgment.
- The seriousness of sin and the importance of holiness during times of revival are highlighted, drawing a parallel to Achan's sin and the judgment that followed, as well as Paul's comments about the Lord's Supper in I Corinthians.
- Judgment is not just for their failure to give, but for their hypocrisy. "God does not like hypocrites. It hurts the spreading of the Gospel."

1. **Increase of Miracles and the Impact on the Community**

- Miracles increase beyond acts of judgment, demonstrating the power of the Spirit.
- People are brought to the apostles for healing, with the belief that even Peter's shadow could heal them.

- The community experienced “fear” after the events with Ananias and Sapphira, “It doesn’t mean that people were afraid to become believers. But they were afraid to become believers and join the church...if they weren't really going to commit themselves to Christ.”
- This fear brought a seriousness to the movement.

Conclusion

Dr. Keener's lecture on Acts 3-5 provides a rich tapestry of theological insights and historical background, emphasizing the power of the name of Jesus, the centrality of the resurrection, the importance of the Holy Spirit, the need for genuine commitment, and the exclusivity of salvation through Jesus. He underscores that the book of Acts is not only a historical account but a demonstration of Jesus' continued ministry through his followers, all while emphasizing God's sovereignty in both the growth of the early church and the lives of believers.

4. Acts Study Guide: Session 8, Acts 3-4

Acts 3-5 Study Guide

Quiz

1. **What is the significance of the healing at the Gate Beautiful in Acts 3?** This healing serves as a sign and wonder, demonstrating the power of Jesus and leading to a preaching opportunity for Peter. It also highlights the theme of giving something more valuable than material goods, in this case, healing.
2. **According to Dr. Keener, what does it mean to act "in Jesus' name"?** It signifies acting as Jesus' authorized agents, carrying out his work and ministry on earth. This is connected to the idea that Jesus continues to act through his followers.
3. **What is the irony Peter highlights in Acts 3 regarding Jesus?** The irony is that the people rejected the "author of life," Jesus, while accepting a murderer, Barabbas. This highlights the contrast between their choices and the true nature of Jesus.
4. **What is the "restoration of all things" Peter speaks of and what is its connection to repentance?** The restoration refers to the promised Messianic era, involving the renewal of creation, peace, and prosperity, as well as a new heaven, new earth, and a new Jerusalem. Repentance by Israel is a necessary precursor to the fulfillment of this restoration.
5. **Why were the apostles arraigned by the temple authorities in Acts 4?** They were arraigned because they were preaching about Jesus' resurrection, which was not merely a theoretical hope, but a reality that threatened the Sadducees' power and authority. This assertion challenged the temple hierarchy.
6. **How does the concept of "benefaction" relate to the events in Acts 4?** Peter argues that the healing of the lame man was a benefaction done through Jesus' name. Peter's question to the authorities implies that they should respond with gratitude, not with the persecution of those who performed the good deed.
7. **Why does Peter assert that salvation is found only in Jesus' name?** Peter connects the physical healing to spiritual salvation, emphasizing the desperate need for reconciliation with God. He argues that Jesus is the only one who can provide this reconciliation.

8. **What does it mean for the early Christians to pray with "parousia?"** Parousia, in this context, refers to speaking with boldness and forthrightness, especially in front of those in power. It signifies speaking the truth without flattery, even in the face of opposition.
9. **How does Luke describe the early Christian community's use of possessions?** They shared their possessions voluntarily, selling property to provide for the needs of others. This was not a rule but a demonstration of their love for God and each other.
10. **What is the significance of the story of Ananias and Sapphira?** It illustrates the importance of sincerity in faith and warns against hypocrisy. It emphasizes the seriousness of sin within the community, particularly when revival is occurring. It shows that God judges sin even within the church.

Answer Key

1. The healing at the Gate Beautiful serves as a sign, demonstrates Jesus' power, and initiates a preaching opportunity. The apostles gave something more valuable than money.
2. Acting "in Jesus' name" means acting as his authorized agents, continuing his ministry and works on earth, and carrying out his authority.
3. The irony is that the people rejected Jesus, the author of life, while choosing Barabbas, a murderer.
4. The restoration of all things is the promised Messianic era, with new creation, peace, and prosperity. Repentance by Israel precedes its fulfillment.
5. The apostles were arraigned for preaching Jesus' resurrection, which challenged the Sadducees' authority and the temple hierarchy.
6. The healing is presented as a benefaction done in Jesus' name, but the authorities respond to it with persecution, not gratitude.
7. Salvation is found only in Jesus' name because He is the only means of reconciliation with God.
8. "Parousia" means speaking with boldness and forthrightness, speaking truth even to those in power.
9. The early Christian community shared possessions voluntarily to meet the needs of the poor, as an act of love.

10. The story of Ananias and Sapphira illustrates the seriousness of hypocrisy and sin within the church, especially during a time of revival, emphasizing that holiness is needed.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the significance of Peter's speeches in Acts 3-5, focusing on how he uses Old Testament prophecies to present Jesus as the Messiah.
2. Compare and contrast the responses of the early Christian community and the temple authorities to the events in Acts 3-5, considering their differing views of power and authority.
3. Discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in Acts 3-5, paying attention to the Spirit's influence on the actions and teachings of the apostles, as well as on the Christian community.
4. Explore how the concept of "restoration" is presented in Acts 3 and 4, considering its connection to the promises of the prophets and the expectations of the Jewish audience.
5. Examine the importance of community and shared resources in the early church, as presented in Acts 4, and discuss the implications of the Ananias and Sapphira incident.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Archegos:** A Greek term used to describe Jesus, meaning "pioneer," "founder," or "author" of life.
- **Benefaction (eurgetes):** A good deed or act of kindness, which often implied a social obligation of honor and gratitude in the Greco-Roman world.
- **Corporate Guilt:** The concept that a group or people can bear collective responsibility for the actions of their ancestors or members.
- **Diaspora:** Refers to the dispersion of Jewish people outside of Israel.
- **Exclusivity:** The belief that salvation is only available through a specific person, religion, or practice, in this case, Jesus.
- **Messianic Era:** The anticipated age of peace, justice, and restoration that would be ushered in by the Messiah, according to Jewish prophecy.
- **Parousia:** A Greek word meaning "boldness" or "forthrightness" in speaking, especially to those in power.
- **Restoration of all things:** The promised renewal of creation, peace, and prosperity associated with the Messianic era.
- **Remnant:** In a religious context, a small group of faithful people who remain after a period of judgment or hardship.
- **Sadducees:** A Jewish sect primarily made up of wealthy aristocrats who controlled the temple hierarchy and did not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

5. FAQs on Keener, Acts, Session 8, Acts 3-4, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Acts 3-5:

1. **What is the significance of the healing of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful?**
2. The healing of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful is more than just a miracle; it serves as a catalyst for preaching about Jesus. This event leads to Peter's powerful message, highlighting the authority of Jesus' name and demonstrating how Jesus continues to act through his disciples. The healing is evidence of God's power and a public demonstration of the new reality brought about by Jesus. The location at the Temple gates also underscores that this transformative power is breaking into the heart of the religious system.
3. **What does it mean to act "in Jesus' name"?**
4. Acting "in Jesus' name" signifies acting as Jesus' authorized agents. It's not merely a formulaic phrase, but an exercise of delegated authority. Just as Jesus' earthly ministry was God's work through him, the disciples' actions, including miracles, are Jesus continuing his work through them. They are not claiming personal power, but operating under Jesus' divine authority and giving all credit to him for the work being done.
5. **How does Peter's sermon connect the crucifixion of Jesus to Old Testament prophecy and the Messianic expectation?**
6. Peter's sermon carefully weaves the crucifixion of Jesus into the tapestry of Old Testament prophecy. He highlights that Jesus is the glorified "servant" prophesied in Isaiah, as well as the "holy and righteous one" and "archegos" (founder/pioneer) of life. He points out the irony of rejecting the "author of life" while accepting a murderer. Peter connects Jesus to the Mosaic prophet as prophesied in Deuteronomy. Peter also frames the Messianic restoration promised by the prophets, tying it directly to repentance and faith in Jesus.

7. **What is the significance of the "restoration of all things" that Peter speaks about?**
8. The "restoration of all things" refers to the fulfillment of God's promises for a renewed creation, including peace, prosperity on earth, and a new heaven and earth. While other cultures had ideas of cyclical destruction, Peter's context is Jewish and focused on the restoration of God's people, as the prophets foretold. The disciples had asked if Jesus was going to restore the Kingdom of Israel in Acts 1:6. This restoration is dependent upon Israel's repentance, as the prophets had said. However, the inclusion of the Gentiles is part of God's plan. The prophets also promised this.
9. **What were the reasons for the conflict between the apostles and the temple authorities (Sadducees)?**
10. The conflict arose because the apostles were preaching Jesus' resurrection, which challenged the Sadducees' authority and beliefs. Unlike the general Pharisaic view of resurrection, the apostles proclaimed a resurrection already breaking into history through Jesus. This was a threat to the Sadducees' power, who held the temple hierarchy and much of the priesthood. Their message undermined their legitimacy, as the apostles were in effect proclaiming the one they had executed as a king that would return and rule.
11. **What does Peter mean when he states that salvation is only through Jesus?**
12. Peter's assertion that "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" underscores the unique role of Jesus as the sole source of reconciliation with God. He is not stating that other faiths have no good, but that humanity's spiritual condition is so dire that only through Jesus can full reconciliation with God and true salvation be achieved. This exclusivity was just as offensive in the ancient world as it is in many circles today. This was the cost of following Jesus.

13. How does the Holy Spirit empower the believers in Acts 3-5 and what are some of the effects of that empowerment?

14. The Holy Spirit empowers believers in Acts 3-5, especially for speaking boldly about Jesus. The Holy Spirit leads to miraculous healings, bold witness, and a powerful prayer life. The disciples pray that God continues to work through them. There is a dramatic outpouring of the Spirit causing places to be shaken and for communities to share resources with those who have need. The Spirit transforms the believer so that they want to serve God and others, giving from a heart of love.

15. What is the significance of the stories of Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira?

16. The story of Barnabas demonstrates the genuine commitment to the community and to God's work, selling his field and giving to the poor. In contrast, Ananias and Sapphira represent the danger of hypocrisy and pretense in God's presence. Their attempt to deceive the community about their level of generosity leads to severe judgment, highlighting that God takes sin seriously, especially in times of revival. These stories emphasize that true devotion is expressed through actions and not just through words, and that the church needs to address sin in its midst.