



Conducted by
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What is meant by "When the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord"? Acts 3:19.

This is a statement which is included in a more comprehensive statement, and we must examine the context before we can attempt to explain the meaning.

The Context

The statement is included in a discourse which Peter had with the people after he had healed the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple. The scripture says that the people were filled with wonder and amazement at what they had seen, and Peter, never one to miss an opportunity, spoke to them. He told them that he and John had no special power of their own to make the lame man whole, but that God had glorified Jesus, the Christ, and that it was because of faith in the name of Christ that the man was healed. He reminded them that they had delivered Jesus to be crucified and had desired a murderer to be released to them, but God had raised Jesus from the dead and glorified him. Peter also said that he didn't know whether it was because of ignorance that had done what they did, but he made it plain to them that they shouldn't have been ignorant of the facts because God had spoken about Christ through the mouths of all of His prophets, and that the prophecies were now fulfilled. He then made a call to them, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord". In fact, what Peter did was to preach the gospel to the people.

The Parallel

The passage under consideration shows a marked similarity to the preaching of the gospel by Peter on the Day of Pentecost. We will note the similarities in table form.

Acts 2	Acts 3
1 O/T history and prophecies	Same
2 Jews responsible	Same
3 Jesus Lord and Christ	Same
4 Call to repentance	Same
5 Be baptised	Be converted
6 Remission of sins	Sins blotted out
7 Reception of Holy Spirit	Times of refreshing

You will notice, as I say, that there is a marked similarity between the statements made on each occasion when the gospel was preached to the people, indeed, we would expect this to be so. You see, it is inconceivable to imagine that Peter would say different things when preaching about the same Saviour; if we accept that, then the apparent difference in wording is capable of explanation. Points (5) and (7) are the ones that seem to require some explanation.

Be Converted

The Greek word STREPHO occurs eighteen times in the N/T, and is translated 'turn' in every instance. The word implies a turning from and a turning to. See 1 Thess. 1:9, "turned to God from idols". Converted to God means 'turned' to God. Divine grace expressed in Christ is the cause of our turning; human response to that grace is the effect. Repentance is not conversion; we 'turn' after we have repented. Conversion is not pardon; we are pardoned after we have turned. Response in turning to God is effected in Jesus Christ, and we are healed when our sins are forgiven. See Matt. 13:15 and Mark 4:12. It is quite evident that our sins are forgiven when we are baptised into Christ, indeed, Peter says that baptism is for the remission of sins. Therefore, when Peter says 'be converted' he means belief of and response to the gospel in baptism.

Times of Refreshing

The R.S.V. renders Acts 3:19 thus, "Repent, therefore, and turn again that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord". From this scripture we can see (a) that forgiveness of sins and the coming of times of refreshing are conditional upon repentance and conversion, and (b) that the times of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord.

Now to refresh means 'to give intermission from labour'; 'to give rest'. Jesus said to his disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" John 17:33. We participate in the overcoming of the world when we participate in Christ, and we participate in Christ when we are freed from sin and enter into the glorious rest and peace which comes with the forgiveness of sins. Paul teaches us in the Roman letter that we are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in us Rom. 8:9. He further relates this new spiritual experience to being 'in Christ', and we know we are 'in Christ' when we have surrendered to him Rom. 6. Therefore, when we are 'in Christ' we have peace through the Holy Spirit who dwells within us; who gives us rest from sin; who helps our weaknesses. This is God's presence with us through faith in Christ Jesus and obedience to his word.

In O/T days when God told Moses to lead the people toward Canaan, Moses said, "Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thy sight, show me now thy ways, that I may know thee and find favour in thy sight. Consider too that this nation is thy people". And He (God) said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest". And Moses said, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth". Exodus 33:13-16

Conclusion

From the foregoing I would say that 'the times of refreshing' coincides with with the advent of the Holy Spirit into our lives. His presence goes with us. He marks us out as a people for His own possession. The Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God. Paul said to the church at Corinth, "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts". 2Cor. 1:21,22.

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