



The Book of Acts - Chapter Three

II. Acts 2:14-5:42 - The Witness in Jerusalem (continues)

Summary of Chapter Three

This is a brief but highly relevant section in the work of the Apostles. Peter and John were working openly in the temple complex, just as Jesus had done a few weeks earlier. This was the domain of the Pharisees, chief priests and the Teachers of the Law. Thus they would be putting themselves in great personal danger by coming here to do their work.

On their arrival at the Beautiful Gate, Peter and John encountered a crippled man, who was begging - his only means of support. This would have been a fairly common site, not just in Jerusalem, but around the country and Jews would tend to be compassionate and fairly generous in their giving. It was their pious duty towards God.

However, on this occasion, Peter and John gave the man far more than he could ever have hoped or dreamed of. They proclaimed, quite openly and publically, that he was healed in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and so it was.

Just as with the sound of the violent wind at Pentecost, a crowd of people, who had gathered in the temple area for the afternoon prayers, were attracted to this miracle and amazed at what they saw, as this man was well known to them and had been an invalid for more than forty years.

Again, the miracle was used both to enable the Gospel to be proclaimed and to demonstrate its truth and authenticity. The first part of Peter's message opens up the wound; the second part offers a solution to heal it. Peter used this opportunity to prove, from scripture, that Jesus was the Christ, that their generation was responsible for killing him, even if it was done in ignorance, but

that they could still have repented and shared in the promise that had been handed down from Moses and all the subsequent prophets that followed him.

II.c Acts 3:1-10 - Peter heals a lame beggar

The healing of a lame man at the temple gate provided an example of an apostolic miracle: <<*Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles*>> (Acts 2:43), and attracted a crowd to hear Peter's second message in the temple area. In Acts, actions often lead to an explanation about what God is doing; word and deed go together.

¹ One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer – at three in the afternoon.

Acts 3:1

Peter and John are frequently seen together as they were part of Jesus' inner core of disciples. They also seem to have been close friends and Peter had shown particular concern for John just after Jesus had reconciled Peter back to himself, following Peter's denial of Christ (Mark 14:71). This happened by the Sea of Galilee. As Jesus and Peter walked together, <<*Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?") When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?"*>> (John 21:20-21). They had run together to the empty tomb (John 20:2), and travelled to Samaria together in support of Philip's ministry and brought the Spirit to converts there (Acts 8:14).

Going up. The temple was on the top of the mountain above the rest of the city. Therefore, people always go up or come down from the temple.

Three in the afternoon was one of three standard times for praying and offering sacrifices at the temple; the others being 09:00 and noon. This is confirmed by David: <<*Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice*>> (Psalm 55:17), and: <<*Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before*>> (Daniel 6:10).

We too should pray frequently but doing so at set times may make it more of a religious act than one of spontaneous joy, praise or need for being in communion with Jesus and with God the Father.

² Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts.



The Beautiful Gate, leading into the inner complex of Herod's temple.

Acts 3:2

Crippled from birth. The crippled man had a condition from birth that seemed to weaken his limbs and/or joints, and probably was degenerative. We could reflect that we are all similarly weakened from birth in a spiritual sense.

His friends took him to the **Gate called Beautiful,** which leads to the inner court to beg. It is right for us to support those in need by taking them to the place they need to be, at least spiritually. Once there, it is up to them to do what is right for themselves in God's eyes. None of us should expect others to do things for us if we are capable of doing them for ourselves. Although we need to reflect that it is always gracious to receive the gift of help when it is offered.

Beg. The Jewish people, especially the pious, considered it their duty before God to give alms to the poor, i.e. gifts of money or goods.

³ When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. ⁴ Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" ⁵ So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. ⁶ Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

Acts 3:3-6

Look at us! It was just a few short weeks since Jesus was working in this same area: <<*The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them*>> (Matthew 21:14). Now it is time for Peter and John to take over. Of course, it was still Jesus that was healing through the Holy Spirit: <<*He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave*>> (Psalm 107:20).

To heal in the name of **Jesus Christ of Nazareth** was to invoke his power, presence and, above all, his authority.

All disciples, including Peter and John here, do not have power in and of themselves but they have been given the authority of the Father, through Jesus, to invoke His name at times like these. Refer to the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18 and the associated comment.

⁷ Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. ⁸ He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.

Acts 3:7-8

Instantly. We have seen this before when Jesus healed the woman who had suffered with menstrual bleeding for 12 years: <<*Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed*>> (Luke 8:47).

He jumped to his feet fulfilling promises made by God in Scripture: <<*I will strengthen them in the Lord and in his name they will walk declares the Lord*>> (Zechariah 10:12), and he was walking and jumping: <<*Then will the lame leap like a deer*>> (Isaiah 35:6a).

Just as the bread multiplies with the breaking, the water turns to wine with the pouring and the leprosy is healed in the going to the priest, so the man receives strength in his limbs and joints to stand and walk in the obeying of the command to do so.

The reference to the man's jumping employs a rare Greek word *hallomai*, which is found in the Septuagint version of Isaiah 35:6 with reference to the messianic age.

⁹ When all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ they recognised him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Acts 3:9-10

On an earlier occasion, Jesus and his disciples were in Jerusalem: <<*As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life*>> (John 9:1-3). Occasions like these are to instruct the witnesses, and those of us who read of them later, that the healings are not just for the benefit of the recipient but are used to strengthen the faith of

those that witness them or believe in them when they do hear of them occurring. This reminds us of the emotional meeting between Jesus and Thomas a week after the resurrection: <<*Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed”*>> (John 20:29).

II.d Acts 3:11-26 - Peter speaks to onlookers

Although we do not know the precise location of his first message, Peter’s second took place in the temple precincts. His Pentecost discourse emphasised Jesus’ messianic status. This one was primarily a call for Jews to repent of their rejection of Jesus as Messiah and focused the argument on the Torah, the Jewish book of the law.

¹¹ While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon’s Colonnade.

Acts 3:11

Solomon’s Colonnade was a covered area along the eastern wall of the temple area, with tall columns supporting the roof structure. See also Acts 5:12. It reminds us that Jesus had said: <<*and now one greater than Solomon is here*>> (Luke 11:31b).



The colonnade at the front of the US Treasury building in Washington DC gives us an idea of the splendour of Herod’s temple complex.

¹² When Peter saw this, he said to them: “Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? ¹³ The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. ¹⁴ You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you.

Acts 3:12-14

Men of Israel. Those to whom the Law and the promises had been given, see Genesis 12:3 and Deuteronomy 18:18. Now they also have the Gospel, given to them again through the miraculous work of one who was the fulfilment of the law, the prophets and the promises of God.

Peter asked two questions of them:

1. Why were they surprised at the miracles, for Jesus had performed many such things, which they had ignored or dismissed or even forgotten about?
2. Why do you marvel at us? It was not Peter and John who performed the miracles. They were just faithful, obedient servants who had placed their trust and hope in the risen Christ and they invoked the authority Jesus had given to them as his disciples.

By proclaiming and acknowledging that Jesus is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Peter demonstrates that the Jews have nothing to fear from the Gospel message. See Acts 26:7, 26:22 and Luke 1:72-73.

The Holy and Righteous One are messianic terms and would have been recognised as such by the crowd: <<*After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities*>> (Isaiah 53:11), and: <<‘*What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God!*’>> (Mark 1:24).

Murderer be released to you. It was traditional at Passover for the Roman governor to release a prisoner that the people chose. At the previous Passover, they had the opportunity to have either the notorious insurrectionist and murderer Barabbas or Jesus released: <<“*Which of the two do you want me to release to you?*” asked the governor. “*Barabbas,*” they answered>> (Matthew 27:21).

¹⁵ You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.

Acts 3:15

You killed, God raised, we are witnesses. Peter’s emphasis on the veracity of Jesus’ death and resurrection is a recurring theme in the speeches of Acts. Refer to Chapter 2:23-24, 4:10, 5:30-32, 10:39-41 and 13:28-29. Paul writes: <<*Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried,*

that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures>> (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

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.

Acts 3:16

His name, in the biblical sense of name, means everything that is true about the person, and therefore, in a sense, the person himself. By faith in his name refers to Peter's faith rather than to any faith on the part of the lame man. Jesus healed the man, and faith or trust in Jesus also healed the man, because Jesus worked through Peter's faith. Also refer to notes made on Acts 2:38, which refer to being baptised in the name of Jesus and to the story of the man lowered down through the roof, where it was the faith of his friends that healed him (Luke 5:17-26).

The faith that comes through Jesus. Jesus himself imparts this kind of miracle-working faith into people's hearts and minds. The power and decision to heal is his; the desire and belief that he will heal are ours.

As you can all see. The miracle was performed on a man well known to those in the temple and probably not to Peter and John, who were from Galilee. Therefore, they would have known there was no collusion and that everything was done openly. As Paul would later say to King Agrippa II: *<<The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner>>* (Acts 26:26). We are called to work openly too, and not to do so behind the closed doors of a church building.

¹⁷ "Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders.

Acts 3:17

Peter called them brothers as he too shared in their iniquity through his denial of Jesus. He was also a fellow Jew and had shared in their history, hopes and promises.

You acted in ignorance, as did also your leaders. Paul concurs with Peter for he wrote: *<<None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory>>* (1 Corinthians 2:8).

In ignorance probably means that they did not fully understand that Jesus was the true Messiah and also the true Son of God. But such ignorance, in scripture, while it may diminish punishment, does not fully absolve people of responsibility for their actions.

¹⁸ But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer.

Acts 3:18

Foretold through all the prophets and fulfilled by God indicates that there is no contradiction between divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

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.

Acts 3:19-20

Peter calls them to repentance, just as John the Baptist had done: <<*In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judæa and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near”*>> (Matthew 3:1-2), followed by Jesus: <<*From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near”*>> (Matthew 4:17). Even though Jesus has paid the price for sin, we must still repent and turn to God. No repentance, no remission!

Turn back to God instead of continuing to turn away from him.

Peter promised three results of repentance:

1. The forgiveness of sins (v.19). We are justified and glorified (Romans 8:30), we become sons of God (1 John 3:2), and children of God (John 1:12).
2. Times of refreshing, i.e. a mark of the messianic age, as people are ‘refreshed’ in their spirits when the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within them. This refreshing comes also to the world in general as it is affected by the believers who are changed and energised by the power of the Spirit. Times of refreshing will come upon us that will wipe away every tear from our eyes (Isaiah 25:8, Revelation 7:17 and Revelation 21:4).
3. That he may send the Christ is a clear reference to the Second Coming of Christ, since the next verse looks forward to that time: <<*Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones”*>> (Jude 14).

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

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.’

Acts 3:21-23

Remain in heaven. The Christ had left but he had poured out his spirit: <<*For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants*>> (Isaiah 44:3). However, it is still Jesus who saves us from our sins: <<*Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst*>> (1 Timothy 1:15).

Peter quoted Deuteronomy 18:15 to establish that Jesus was the prophet like me, i.e. like Moses, a comparison that points to a leader prophet, which God had promised to send. In v.23 Peter quotes Deuteronomy 18:19 to point out the danger of rejecting the coming prophet, i.e. Jesus the Christ of God.

²⁴ “Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days.

Acts 3:24

Samuel was considered the next prophet after Moses, and Peter declared that he and the rest of the prophets consistently pointed to Christ.

All the prophets, foretold these days affirms that all of the OT prophets, including Moses, which implies all of the OT from Genesis onward, were predicting the coming of the Christ and the new covenant age, which had begun at Pentecost.

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.”

Acts 3:25-26

Peter noted that the covenant promised to Abraham applied to all peoples on earth. The servant Messiah was for all: <<*After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities*>> (Isaiah 53:11), but was sent to Israel first (v.26). This is a pattern that would continue and is particularly noted in Paul’s ministry: <<*Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles*>> (Acts 13:46). The worldwide mission was already implicit in Peter’s message; only later, however, would he fully assimilate its meaning. Refer to Acts 10:1-11:18.