

## Acts 3

The New Covenant has been put into effect (Luke 22:20, Matthew 26:28). The disciples have been gathering, fellowshiping and breaking bread in houses. The curtain has been torn giving them direct access to God. **Why are the Apostles still going to the temple (v. 1)?** Peter and John were not going to the temple at the hour of sacrifice, but at the hour of prayer that followed the afternoon sacrifice. They realized that the sacrificial system was fulfilled in the perfect sacrifice Jesus offered on the cross. They were going to pray and worship not to offer sacrifices. The Temple was their comfort zone.

The tearing of the temple veil when Jesus died (Matthew 27:51) symbolized the termination of the old Mosaic order and the beginning of a new order – a great transitional period in Jewish history. It took several decades for God's people to make the break with Judaism in their thinking and practice.

**What do we know about the crippled beggar (v. 2)?** The beggar was placed at the Temple gate every day. The lame man had been in his condition for over 40 years (4:22). Furthermore, he had to be carried by others. He was totally helpless. His was a "hopeless case." It was the custom for beggars to sit begging at the entrance to a temple or a shrine. Such a place was, and still is, considered the best of all stances because, when people are on their way to worship God, they are disposed to be generous to their fellow men.<sup>1</sup> He was in a high visibility/high traffic location. Many of the Jewish community were undoubtedly familiar with him, having seen him in the same place every day for the past 40 years.

Peter and John probably went up to the Temple every day to pray. Their paths had probably crossed the beggar's path many times before. Yet this time was different...they noticed him....they had a meaningful encounter. **Why now?** They are now being led by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Plus it was a God's timing issue – this time they noticed him!

This is the first of 14 miracles in Acts -- the very first one done by the apostles following the ascension of Jesus. The timing of the encounter was determined by God. The audience was selected by God. This was not a private miracle. The sovereignty of God is clearly in view here. **What was the impact of the miracle on the people (v. 9 – 11)?** They were amazed, astonished, filled with wonder. **Was the faith of the beggar a factor? Was it a prerequisite for healing?** Of the 35 miracles recorded in the Gospel accounts, the faith of the recipient is exercised in only 10 of the accounts. No cause and effect relationship exists between faith and miracles.

**How did the beggar respond to being healed (v. 8)?** Note that the beggar praised God not Peter. **What purposes did the healing serve (v. 8)?** The miracle created wonder and respect. Miracles are designed ultimately to glorify God.

**Why was it important for the apostles to be able to do miracles?** To validate that they are men sent from God. To authenticate them and their message. To show they are a lot more than a bunch of fisherman following the memory of a dead man around. Performing miracles links/identifies them with Jesus; they were able to do the same things Jesus did. To convince the skeptics in the crowd. To establish credibility with the Jewish audience.

**Why did the people respond as they did (v. 10)?** This was the first miracle done by the apostles. The memory of Jesus doing miracles was fresh in their minds. They now see the apostles doing the same things and they are excited.

**Does God do miracles like this today?** He does greater miracles today! The greatest miracle of all is "Christ in us" ...the regeneration of a fallen heart...the transformation of a human mind....the creation of a spiritually healed person. That is a miracle with eternal implications.

**Application: Who are the beggars in your life? Who are the needy? The people we pass by every day and don't notice?** Ask God to place some "beggars" in your path so you may give away what you have been given. If we give only money we just improve someone's circumstances. If we speak of the love of Christ, changed lives will result. Sharing the gospel is nothing more than "one beggar telling another beggar where to find food."

**How would you characterize Peter's message (vv. 12-26)?** Peter's confrontational message is the same bad news/good news message that we saw in chapter 2. The bad news is that they killed the Messiah. The good news is that there is hope for them. Hope that is offered by the very one they rejected and killed. **How do they get that hope?** By repenting so their sins may be forgiven (v. 19) and turning to God. Most noteworthy among their sins is that of rejecting and crucifying the Messiah.

**How did this miracle NOT occur according to Peter (v. 12)?** By their own power or godliness.

**What did Peter charge these Jews with (vv. 13-15)?**

- First, handing Jesus over to be killed.
- He then pointed out three inconsistencies in the Jews' treatment of Jesus.
  - They had condemned Him when Pilate was about to release Him (v. 13).
  - They rejected the Holy and Righteous One out of preference for a murderer, Barabbas (v. 14).
  - They killed the Author of Life whom God raised from the dead -- the apostles were witnesses (v. 15).

**Who gets the credit? To whom did Peter attribute the power for healing (v. 16)?** Jesus. Peter spoke to his audience as a fellow Jew. Peter denied that it was the power or good character of himself or John that was responsible for the healing (v. 12). God glorified his Son by the healing (v. 13). It was very important for the first miracle done by the Apostles that people understand that the healing was by the power of Jesus, the very one they crucified; he was not healed by the power of Peter.

**What observations do you have about Peter's comments (vv. 17-18)?** If Peter's charges against his hearers were harsh (vv. 13-15), his concession that they acted out of ignorance was tender. He meant that they did not realize the great mistake they had made. Peter undoubtedly hoped that his gentle approach would win a reversal of his hearers' attitude.<sup>2</sup>

Repentance is a repetitive theme in Peter's sermons. In both speeches thus far there has been a call for repentance for the crime of crucifying the Messiah. **What does repentance mean?** The Greek noun translated "repentance" (metanoia) literally means "after mind," as in afterthought, or change of mind. Concerning salvation it means to think differently about sin, oneself, and the Savior than one used to think. Peter's hearers had thought Jesus was not the Messiah. Now they needed to change their minds and believe He is the Messiah. In biblical usage repentance means essentially a change of mind.<sup>3</sup>

**What application can we gain from the model of Peter's sermons?** Focus on Jesus. Note that it is noteworthy that in these sermons, Peter did not discuss abstract doctrines or reason about profound theological problems. He presented the person and work of Christ in simple terms.<sup>4</sup>

**Who was Jesus sent to first when He was raised from the dead (v. 26)?** The Jews **What does that say about God?** Here we see God still chasing after the hearts of the Jews despite the way they had rejected them. He has not given up on the Jews. He sent the Messiah for them. What a relentless love! He has the same love for us.

**Why does Peter repeatedly quote from the Old Testament?** He is speaking to a Jewish audience, who would be very familiar with the Old Testament, showing them that all this was prophesied and promised (v. 24). To encourage them (v. 25). To teach them. To connect the dots between their heritage and the present day. To explain the fulfillment of God's plan for Jews and all mankind.....a plan that was unfolding before their very eyes.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Acts, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>) p.70

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 74

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 75

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 73