

The Healing of the Lame Man and Peter's Second Sermon

Acts 3

Acts 3:1-16: *"Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. ² And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; ³ who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. ⁴ And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us."⁵ So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."⁷ And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. ⁸ So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. ⁹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God. ¹⁰ Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.*

¹¹ Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed. ¹² So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though 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, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.¹⁴ But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. ¹⁶ And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."

Background Notes

Acts 2 records the birth of the Church at Pentecost, and from day one the Church began to grow. Three thousand souls were saved and added to the Church on the Day of Pentecost alone! The early Church was growing by leaps and bounds.

Notice that while the believers met together in house churches, they continued to go to the Temple (2:46). Their primary purpose for going to the Temple was not to sacrifice, but to share the gospel with their fellow Jews. Remember that Jesus also taught in the courts of the Temple, because there was always an audience in the Temple courts.

If we had visited the Temple complex in those days, we would first have entered the Court of the Gentiles, and seen the colonnaded porches or porticos that surrounded the Temple complex. The porch on the east side of the Court of the Gentiles was called the “Portico of Solomon” (Acts 3:11). Moving from the outer Court of the Gentiles to the inner Temple courts, if we were Jewish we could have passed into the Court of Women. Then, if we were Jewish men, we could have entered the Court of Israel. Finally we would have come to the Court of the Priests, where only the priests could enter and pass through it to the magnificent Temple. The gate between the outer Court of the Gentiles and the Court of Women was called the “Beautiful Gate,” and that was where the miracle of the healing of the lame man took place (v2).

Doctrinal Points

1. A period of miracles for Israel was included in the early days of Christianity.

The healing of the lame man was quite a miracle. This was no healing of a sprained ankle, or some kind of “leg-lengthening” healing illusion - no! This man had been lame from birth. He was more than forty years old (v22), and he had never walked.

It’s great to see a baby learn to walk – but this man had never learned to walk. However, when the Lord healed him, he not only walked – he leaped! How long did it take you to learn to walk – and then to jump and leap? This man’s “walking and leaping” was immediate - there was no learning process. What a miracle! He received legs instead of money (alms), and that was something the man could not have bought even if all the world’s silver and gold had been given to him.

Why did the miracle take place in the Temple area? It was done there specifically as a witness to the nation of Israel that Jesus, the One they had rejected, was indeed the Messiah. Look again at what Peter said in verses 14-16. His message was specifically aimed at the nation of Israel. So this miracle was a testimony to Israel, and it confirmed the message of the apostles – the message that Jesus indeed was Israel’s Messiah.

The miracles in the first days of the newly formed Church were primarily for the Jewish people. Look also at Acts 5:12: *“And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch...Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed. Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation.”*

When we get to the ministry of the apostle Paul later in the book of Acts, we’ll see that the ministry of miracles was extended also to the Gentiles. Miracles confirmed that the message of the apostle Paul in his missionary travels was from God. But at first the miracles were focused within the Jewish community in and around Jerusalem, as proof that Jesus was definitely Israel’s Messiah. A period of miracles for Israel was included in the early days of Christianity.

2. An extension of grace for Israel was included in the early days of Christianity.

Verses 17-26: *“Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸ But those things that God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, ²⁰ and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. ²² For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. ²³ And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ ²⁴ Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. ²⁵ You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ ²⁶ To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”*

Notice the change in the tone of Peter’s sermon in verse 17. Up to that point, Peter’s sermon to the Jewish nation was scathing. They had delivered up God’s Servant, Jesus Christ, to be crucified (v13). They had disowned Him in the presence of Pilate who wanted to release Him (v13). They had favored the release of Barabbas, who was a murderer, rather than Jesus, who was innocent (v14). And they had taken the life of the Prince of Life (v15). But God raised Jesus from the dead, and that fact was proof that the Jews had been dead wrong, and that they were guilty and worthy of judgment.

But in verse 17 a gracious turn came in Peter’s sermon. The essence of the rest of his sermon is as follows: God was willing to forgive Israel for its blind sin of ignorance concerning Jesus, and there was good news in the days ahead. Moses and the rest of the prophets, from Samuel on down, all spoke of a time in the future when the Messiah would be received by Israel, and then a time of resting and refreshing would come about.

When will this time be? It’s interesting to note that Peter told his Jewish audience that if Israel would even then repent, God would send Christ back right then and the times of refreshing would come (v19). So an extension of grace was offered to Israel.

This extension of grace to Israel is also seen in the parable of the fig tree in Luke 13:6-9: *“He also spoke this parable: ‘A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷ Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’ ⁸ But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹ And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.’”*

In this parable, the fig tree represents Israel. The three years that the owner looked for fruit represent the three years of our Lord's public ministry. But there was no spiritual fruit in the nation, and therefore the owner ordered fig tree to be cut down and removed. But an extension of grace was given to the fig tree, and in the same way, an extension of grace was given to Israel during the early days of Christianity. Unfortunately, the nation did not repent. It was finally "cut down" in 70AD, when the Romans destroyed the Temple and scattered the Jewish people.

But God made these **covenant promises** of refreshing and restoration to the Jewish people (v25), and these promises **will be fulfilled**. Jesus was raised from the dead first of all for the Jews (v26), and there will be ultimate blessing for Israel. So Peter was looking beyond the time of the early Church here. The time of rest and restitution for Israel will come in the kingdom age, when Christ will return and set up His glorious earthly kingdom. At that time, Israel will be restored, and the Jewish people will receive the Messiah that the nation once rejected.

So the time of refreshing and restoration of which Peter spoke is still future and it awaits the time of Israel's national repentance. That time will come in association with our Lord's return to this earth. But an extension of grace for Israel was included in the early days of Christianity.

Practical Application

Let's do what we can, and let God do the rest!

Go back to the miracle of the healing of the lame man and notice the sequence of steps in verses 6-8.

- a. Peter said to the lame man, *"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."*
- b. Then, as the man responded in faith, Peter helped him up.
- c. Then he man's feet and ankles were strengthened to stand and walk and leap.

Do you see the application here? Peter and the man both had faith that God would heal - but in faith they also did what they could do. Peter witnessed to the man (and the onlookers) about the power of Jesus Christ to heal. Then he helped the man as he tried to get up. And then God did the healing – God did the rest!

Maybe you're praying about a need right now – maybe it's about starting or helping with a new ministry, or finding a different job, or working out a problem in your life. Do you have faith that God can help with your need? Then don't just sit back and do nothing. Let's do what we can - and let God do the rest!