

Acts Chapter 3

Acts doesn't wait to tell us the first story of signs and wonders, miracles and the power of the Spirit poured out to the people through the apostles.

Peter and John are doing faithful things – going to temple to pray.

A beggar asks for money. Pretty typical all in all. Of course they have no money – property is shared in community and they don't carry anything in the way of cash. So instead of cash they give healing in the name of Jesus.

The beggar dances for joy – lots of folk now wonder what does this mean. The healing in Jesus' name is evidence of prophecy fulfilled. It is the apparent inevitable response to faithfulness and the Spirit. Of course we have to wait to chapter 4 to find the result of their action and faithful witness. The response is a night in jail, but by the first verses of Chapter 4 - thousands come to believe.

Vs 1-8

John and Peter go to the Temple (mid-day) and make daily sacrifice. Thus Peter and John are lifted as leaders, pious Jews doing faithful things. Remember in Jewish law – it takes two witnesses to speak the truth. \

The beggar is a man in need of a savior. He is daily placed to encounter the faithful, for Jewish piety required prayer and alms-giving. It is also an acknowledgement that Jesus produced similar miraculous cures.

Several other things make this situation unique. A beggar outside the gate would have been a true outsider. Healing in front of witnesses – especially done by others – not the high priest, would have been controversial. The act is also symbolic of the dawning of the messianic age, when conditions of the downtrodden are reversed.

It is also very symbolic of the current state of affairs within the Temple hierarchy. The poor and outsiders are not allowed in, except by God's action.

The "look at us" is emphasizing the need for personal connection. Of course this is an action the beggar would want. To make eye contact begins the course of relationship.

Vs 9-11

The beggar clings to the disciples. The report of the incident acknowledges that the event was witnessed and attested to by many and so was truth.

The people of Israel see the power of God given to the disciples. The people are filled with wonder and amazement. The people don't understand and are

amazed. They are not spiritually aware. We are left to wonder how Israel will respond to the inbreaking of God.

Vvs 12-26

God is sending Peter to “all the people” to give them a second chance to repent and turn to God in faith.

They rebuff Peter a second time. Peter’s speech is more charged and includes the testimony of the healed man. They had witnessed God’s mighty work, it has been attested and now they are asked how they will respond.

Peter speaks the truth of Israel’s guilt at the execution of Jesus. Peter says this is your second chance to turn to God.

How do we respond when confronted with the miraculous? Or are we confronted with the miraculous?

Jesus is called the Holy and Righteous One and The Author of Life in vvs 14 and 15.

These are important OT and Gospel themes.

Jesus has been acknowledged as the Author of Life since the creation story.

This begins Acts tale of a house divided. Israel. A people not ready to accept Messiah and Peter much like John the Baptist before him is calling a people to repent and accept Jesus as Messiah.

The healing is a sign of what God foretold in the prophets coming to fruition.

Reflection:

Peter proclaims to the beggar – in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk. This is not a magic spell. Peter is proclaiming the living authority of a living Jesus. These are confident words – harking back to those with a little faith which is enough to move mountains. There is confidence in the authority of Jesus to heal and save all the lost.

In Jesus’ farewell speech, he commissions his apostles to a Spirit empowered witness – the result will be a restoration of God’s reign over a repentant Israel.

Restoration is more than the ability to walk it restores the beggar to a proper place with his people and into proper membership within a restored Israel.

Healing becomes the principle sign and wonder performed by God’s Spirit after Pentecost. It is power bestowed on the apostles by Jesus. The healing miracles are enacted parables – stories that show saving grace. Thus we will

see to heal is to save and to save is said in place of to heal in many places in Acts. It is acts of grace.

God – glorified his servant Jesus, the one handed over to Pilate by you (vs 13)
The execution of Jesus is the primary symbol of an unrepentant Israel. Israel chose death over life.

Vs 21 Jesus must remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration.

Yet the truth is Salvation is today only universal judgment is delayed until the end of history.

Peter is sure that the mission of the church is to coordinate salvation's future. The mission is first to the Jews as Peter understands it (so their sins will be wiped out – vs 19) Once the Jews have repented they can be the example for a Gentile mission. Peter expects the completion of that mission will trigger the return of Jesus.

Beginning of Chapter 4:

Vvs 1-4

So they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day.

Institutional authority is always concerned with deviant voices and movements. Those in elected and established positions of power act in self-interest to protect the interests of those they represent. The Sadducees are the antagonists of Luke's narrative world whose exercise of authoritarian leadership is repressive and sometimes even murderous. However they are not examples to blame all of Judaism. This is probably the beginning of anit-semitic thought.