

## Acts 3:1-4:4

### Introduction

1. I once saw an article on Acts 3 titled, “A lame excuse for preaching the Gospel”—that’s obviously a play on words because today’s passage includes the healing of a lame man which then leads to the preaching of the Gospel
2. I’m clearly not that creative because I’ve titled today’s teaching simply “Acts 3:1-4:4”
3. Aside from the miracle of Pentecost, today we see the first of some 18 miracles in the book of Acts (depending on how you count them)
4. For outline purposes today we will be looking at:
  - a. The revealing of the miraculous
  - b. The reason for the miraculous
  - c. The reaction to the miraculous

### A. The REVEALING of the miraculous (READ 3:1-10)

1. What we have here is essentially the first instance of what Luke recorded in Acts 2:43 and 5:12 (READ):
  - a. There are 14 miracles recorded in the book of Acts—four healings, two resurrections, four personal liberations (e.g. exorcisms), three judgment miracles, and one preservation (Paul survives snake bite)
  - b. Stephen, Philip and even Barnabas (apparently) also performed signs and wonders (6:8; 8:17, 13; 14:3)
  - c. I Corinthians 12 refers to gifts of miracles and gifts of healings
2. This particular miracle takes place at the Temple:
  - a. Peter and John head up to the Temple during the afternoon prayer time (1)
  - b. Along the way they encounter a man who was crippled since birth, sitting at the gate, begging for alms (2-5):
    - 1) He is without hope
    - 2) Has no way to care for himself
    - 3) And his religion is offering him little assistance, aside from the kindness of a few strangers who toss him a coin
  - c. What he receives in the name of Jesus is a miracle beyond imagination (6-8)—not only the ability to walk, but a new life and a new relationship with the Lord!
  - d. And all of this is done in plain sight, at the Temple, in front of all the people and their religious leaders—and done in such a way that it could not be denied!
3. As important as this miracle was for this individual man, there was a larger purpose and plan in the miraculous event which we are about to see

### B. The REASON for the miraculous (3:11-26)

1. In a general sense, miracles in the Bible serve as a tool to authenticate not only God’s **MESSENGER(S)** but the **MESSAGE** itself:

- a. The prophets of the Old Testament performed miracles to prove they were God’s messengers and authenticate their message:
    - 1) Moses (READ Exodus 4:1-9)
    - 2) Elijah called down fire more than once (twice to consume the Samaritan king’s captains and soldiers and another time to consume the prophets of Baal)
  - b. Jesus did miracles for the same purpose (READ Luke 7:22; John 3:2)
  - c. The same was true during the early Church—the Lord used signs and wonders to validate both the **MESSAGE** of the Gospel and the **MESSENGERS** of the Gospel
2. When it comes to individual miracles, however, there is often a more specific purpose and we see that here—in fact, we see at least three specific purposes to this miracle:
- a. One purpose was to glorify Jesus Christ and exult His name (11-13a; 16):
    - 1) Peter denies the misconception that he and John healed the man by their own power or piety (READ 11-12)
    - 2) Rather, it was God who healed the man and He did it to glorify Jesus Christ (READ 13a):
      - a) Importance of **“The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers”**: a reference to God as the God of promise, something Peter reflects on repeatedly in the verses that follow
      - b) Importance of **“His servant Jesus”**: Messianic phrase and an allusion to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53
        - At the end of Isaiah 53 (v. 12) the Lord said, **“Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong.”**
        - We see the beginning of that here where the Lord gloried Jesus Christ by revealing Him as the One behind the miraculous healing
    - 3) The Lord’s glorification of Jesus included the exultation of His name (READ 16):
      - a) When Peter healed the lame man he told him, **“in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!”** (6)
      - b) Here in vs. 16 Peter declares twice that it was faith in the name of Jesus that healed the man: **“on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthen this man...”**
      - c) That faith in Jesus name is synonymous with faith in Jesus is clear from the last phrase: **“and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.”**
      - d) So, why not just say faith in Jesus instead of faith in His name?
        - It has to do with what Jesus’ name represents—literally translated it means, “Yahweh saves”
        - When the angel of the Lord told Joseph that Mary was pregnant with a Son, he told him to name the child Jesus because He would save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21)
        - So, the name of Jesus is significant because it represents not just the man but the promise of God to save people through Him
        - It is the most significant name is all of history! (READ Philippians 2:5-11)
  - b. A second purpose of the healing of the lame man was to provide an opportunity to confront the Jews (13b-15):

- 1) In contrast to the Lord's glorification of Jesus, the Jews had rejected Jesus (READ 13b-15):
  - a) They had "**delivered [Him] up**"
  - b) They had "**disowned**" (denied, rejected) Him: Peter uses this word twice:
    - They disowned Him before Pilate, even when Pilate attempted to release Him
    - They disowned the "**Holy and Righteous One**" in exchange for a murder
  - c) They "**put to death**" the "**Prince of life**", the very one God then "**raised from the dead**" as witnessed by the Apostles:
    - There is debate whether this should be "**Prince of life**" and "**Author of life**" because the word isn't well defined
    - The latter is more likely and portrays Jesus as the originator of life
    - Look at the irony! They asked for a murderer (one who takes life) and then killed the very One in Whom life originates
  
- 2) This theme of rejecting and putting to death their Messiah is something repeated four other times in Acts (4:10; 5:30; 7:52; 13:28)
  
- c. In spite of all this, there is a third purpose in the healing of the lame man and it was to offer the Jews another opportunity for forgiveness and restoration (17-26):
  - 1) Peter (and ultimately the Lord) recognized that they acted in "**ignorance**" (READ 17-18):
    - a) This simply means they didn't fully comprehend that they were doing when they killed their Messiah—something Jesus indicated on the cross when He asked the Lord to forgive them because they didn't know what they were doing (Luke 23:34)
    - b) Their actions did not thwart God's plan—God still fulfilled what He announced beforehand (18)
    - c) Note about ignorance: ignorance may explain actions but it doesn't excuse them which is why the Lord still demands repentance for sins committed in ignorance (READ Acts 17:30)—American idiom: "Ignorance of the law is no excuse"
  
  - 2) The Lord was now given them a second chance through repentance and faith in this same Jesus who had healed lame man (READ 19-26):
    - a) Peter promised three things if they repented and returned to the Lord (READ 19-21b):
      - Their sins would be forgiven ("**wiped away**")
      - "**times of refreshing**" would come from the Lord's presence
      - God would send Jesus, the Messiah, back to earth to bring about "**the restoration of all things**" after His time in heaven is done (20-21a)
  
    - b) This was precisely what the Lord announced through His prophets (READ 21b- 24):
      - Moses promised the Messiah and warned Israel to listen to Him (21b-23)
      - Other prophets from Samuel forward prophesied the same thing (24)
  
    - c) They were the very first intended recipients of these promises (READ 25-26):

- They were the descendants of the prophets and Abraham through whom God would bless all the families of the earth (25)
- It was for them that God first raised up Jesus—to bless them and turn them away from their wicked ways (26)
- It was not too late, but if they refused to respond to the gift they were being offered they would suffer the consequences described by Moses (v. 23)

#### C. The REACTION to the miraculous (4:1-4)

1. When Jesus performed miracles during His earthly ministry, there were primarily two responses—those who accepted Him and those who rejected Him
2. The same is the case here (READ 4:1-4):
  - a. The religious leaders were “**greatly disturbed**”, rejected the call for repentance and restoration and instead arrested Peter and John (1-3)
  - b. However, many who witnessed the healing and heard Peter’s sermon “**believed**” and were added to the Church (4; the reference to 5000 men is unclear—it could mean that the entire number of men in the Church grew to 5000 or another 5000 were added to the Church)

#### Conclusion

Some takeaways:

1. In a general sense, miracles ALWAYS serve to glorify Jesus Christ and exult His name; they never serve to glorify the individual
2. Miracles generally have specific purposes—depending on how you count them, there are 18 miracles or references to miracles occurring in the book of Acts:
  - a. Often they serve as a catalyst to preaching the Gospel, validating both the messenger(s) and the message
  - b. Sometimes they are used to deliver and encourage believers (e.g. rescue from prison for Peter, John, Paul and Silas)
  - c. Sometimes they even serve as warnings, to believers (e.g. deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, the blindness of Elymas the sorcerer) and unbelievers (the death of Herod)
3. Witnessing or believing in miracles doesn’t save anyone, only faith in the name of Jesus can do that:
  - a. Thousands witnessed the healing of the lame man
  - b. They all saw the same thing
  - c. Yet, only some responded in faith