

The Wonder and The Word
Read Acts 3.1-26

INTRODUCTION / CONTEXT / CONNECTIONS

1/ Our lesson passage will cover **ch 3 of Acts**. The narrative of this story is continued on into **ch 4**, but we will take that up in our next lesson. I'm calling this lesson *'The Wonder and The Word'* because those two subjects and themes will summarize and encapsulate the contents of this part of the narrative of **chs 3-4**. **Ch 3** neatly divides into two sections: **vv 1-10 'The Wonder'** and **vv 11-26 'The Word.'** The **'wonder'** is the healing of this 40-year-old lame man at the gate of the temple. The **'word'** is the Gospel message Peter preached to explain the meaning of the miracle he had just performed: Who it came from, how it came, and, most importantly, what the significance of the wonder was to their ministry of the Gospel of the resurrected, ascended, and enthroned Jesus Christ.

2/ **Ch 3** is a follow-up to **ch 2.43**: **"And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles."** **Ch 3** will tell the narrative of one of those **many wonders and signs that were being done through the apostles**. There will be more to come [**chs 2.22, 43; 4.30; 5.12; 6.8; 14.3; 15.12**]. These references to 'wonders' are intentional to bear evidence and demonstrate the validity of the apostles to be speaking and acting by the immediate power of the Holy Spirit and **in the Name of Jesus Christ**. In fact, these **'wonders'** that the apostles perform in the Book of Acts are actually being performed by Jesus Himself from Heaven through them. That is what a **'wonder'** is – it is a supernatural act or phenomena from God Himself in Heaven. And it is a **'sign'** [that is why **'signs'** and **'wonders'** are often coupled together] that God Himself is present doing the miracle to point attention to Himself. These **'signs and wonders'** were begun by Jesus Himself during the days of His flesh as Peter proclaimed in his Pentecost message in **ch 2.22**: **"Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know..."** Now, Jesus is continuing to perform more **'signs and wonders'** through His apostles to evidence and demonstrate that it is, indeed, He Himself who is giving and performing these miraculous works through them. And for the purpose of, not only validating them as His apostles, but also to give them opportunities to proclaim His Name and preach His Gospel with His authority.

I / vv 1-10 | The Wonder [Miracle of the healing of the lame man]

1/ Peter and John were faithfully serving the Lord in partnership with one another on this occasion. They were going to the temple at the set time of the evening prayers – 3:00 in the afternoon. The devout Jews faithfully kept and observed at least three of these set times during the day: early morning, around noon, and 'evening' at 3:00. When the text says they **were going up to the temple**, we need to understand that they were no longer observing their traditional Old Covenant Jewish sacrifices and services. All of those had ceased just a few weeks ago with the death of Christ as the fulfillment of the Passover Lamb. Remember also that the observance of the temple services had been terminated and discontinued when the veil [curtain] to the Holy of Holies was torn apart as Christ died – at least as far as these New Covenant believers were concerned. They were now worshipping the risen and reigning Christ as the New Covenant church. But there were so many of them, especially after Pentecost, that their customary 'upper room' could not contain them. ALSO, we have to know that during those forty days of intense instruction from Christ between His resurrection and ascension, He reminded them that now He is the true Temple of God [see again **John 2.18-22 & 4.19-26**]. When it says they were **going up to the temple**, what they were actually going to was the open courtyards and gathering places in the temple compound [see **ch 2.46**].

2/ It was here at one of the prominent entry gates into the temple compound that they met this poor, crippled, lame man who was begging for alms. The giving of alms, gifts, and good deeds to the poor and needy was another one of the faithful practices of devout Jews. They devoted themselves to three indispensable practices: Torah [the Law or Scriptures], worship, and showing kindness [alms, giving to

the needy [see **Matthew 6.1-4**]. There were many of these helpless, needy, indigent people among them. Their only source of income and sustenance was the mercy, hospitality, and gifts they received from their fellow neighbors. And what more promising place to expect to **receive alms** than **of those entering the temple**? **Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms.** He made eye contact with them and begged them to give him some money.

3/ We have no idea whether he and Peter and John had ever seen each other before this day – most probably they had. He had **laid daily at the gate of the temple** – for how long or at this particular gate we don't know. BUT, on this particular day, the Holy Spirit of Christ moved Peter to engage him: **And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, “Look at us!”** He did so, expecting them to give them some coins. **But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!”** And with that command, the Holy Spirit from the risen, ascended, and enthroned Jesus of Nazareth restored and energized his withered and atrophied legs – **and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God!** This man was **more than forty years old [ch 4.22]**, and he had been **lame from birth [ch 3.2]**. He had never taken a step in his life. He not only instantly ‘learned’ to walk, but here he was – leaping and dancing around, and **praising God!** We have every reason to believe that, not only did he recognize that this was a ‘God-thing,’ but he also recognized that this ‘wonder’ of his instantaneous healing was from **Jesus of Nazareth!** He immediately believed the Gospel of Christ!

4/ As you would expect, this ‘wonder’ got everyone’s attention. **And all the people saw him walking and praising God, and recognized him as the one who sat the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.** He was doing his own ‘preaching and witnessing.’ The ‘wonder and sign’ had had its God-purposed effect. Everyone began to question like they did at Pentecost: **“What does this mean?”** *For what purpose had God chosen this man on this occasion for this amazing and ‘wonder’ful act of grace and power?* That was Peter’s cue...and he began to explain the meaning and significance of this ‘wonder’ with the ‘word’...

II / vv 11-26 | The Word [Peter’s Message re: the meaning of the miracle]

1/ v 11a / **The healed man is ‘clinging’ to Peter and John – won’t let them go in his joy and gratitude – and serves as a living illustration of Peter’s word.** Peter’s Gospel message here re: Christ is not just hearsay or 2nd-handed ‘word on the street.’ [Even the next day, when the chief priests, elders, and scribes called them in for interrogation, they couldn’t deny this living evidence (see **ch 4.14-16**).] Kinda makes you have to wonder if this newly-healed brother was interrupting or interjecting with excited “Amen, brother!” or “That’s right!” or “Right on!” as Peter preached this explanatory word.

2/ v 11b / **Everyone is excitedly pressing and pushing to get closer to get a better view, chattering and buzzing with questions [“What’s going on here? What just happened? Yeah, that’s him!”]** Luke emphasizes their utter astonishment in three consecutive sentences, **vv 10-12.**

3/ v 12 / **Peter makes it plain that this ‘wonder’ didn’t come from him or John – “...why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety [personal holiness or godliness] we have made him walk?”** They were not working through any kind of mystic or occultic power of their own.

4/ v 13a / **This ‘wonder’ had come from “The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers”** – meaning that this was the very same covenant God of their very faith. Peter draws their attention to the **“I AM WHO I AM”** self-announcement that Yahweh made to Moses at the burning bush when He was sending him to Egypt to redeem and release His people from Egyptian bondage [see **Exodus 3.6, 13-17**]. Don’t miss this! When Yahweh sent Moses back to Egypt, the Israelites would demand to know that Moses was acting, in truth, with the authority of their covenant God. **This ‘word’ is from their historical covenant God,** and Peter is standing in a role like Moses did – to announce the New Exodus into the New Promised Land of the New Covenant to be fully enjoyed in the New Creation that Christ has promised and will bring with Him when He comes again!

5/ v 13b / **Their covenant God has ‘glorified His servant Jesus.’** God ‘glorified’ Jesus when He resurrected Him from the dead and received Him back to ‘Glory’ and seated Christ as His right hand – where Christ was at that moment, sending this ‘wonder’ and working it among them! This is the same message he delivered on Pentecost [see ch 2.22-36].

6/ vv 13b-15 / **This is the same Jesus of Nazareth whom they had rejected, delivered over to Pilate, and refused to obey and serve – even when Pilate was willing to release Him back to them [Luke 23.13-17].** Refusing to receive and believe in God’s Christ, their own Promised Redeemer and Messiah, they chose instead to have a ‘murderer’ released back to them [Luke 23.18-25], and adamantly insisted that Pilate crucify Jesus – **“But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a *murderer* to be granted to you, and you killed the *Author of Life*, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.”** The accusations, indictments of guilt, and egregious sins of the Jewish leadership and people are woven, heaped, compounded, and layered against them! They are undeniably and inescapably guilty! But, as if to say: “He’s back!”

7/ v 16 / **BUT, this same Jesus, whom you killed, whom God raised from the dead, is now here working this ‘wonder’ among you through us!** He has come back to you – but He is here giving this life and perfect health to this poor lame man! After acknowledging at the beginning of his ‘word’ to the people that this ‘wonder’ had not been worked through their own power or godliness, Peter then proclaims whose power of Life IS at work: **“And His Name – by faith in His Name – has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all!”** NOTE two ways Peter explicitly credits Jesus with this ‘wonder’: [1] **‘His Name.’** The Name of Jesus is not just His moniker – what He is called – but His Name is WHO HE IS. His Name is HIM. His Name encompasses His identity, character, authority, and power. It is not just calling or repeating ‘in the Name of Jesus’ as a magical mantra or incantation [as so many do], just it is acting by His immediate authority to do here in the moment what He Himself is doing from Heaven. [2] **‘by faith in His Name ... the faith that is through Jesus.’** This was the faith of Peter and John to believe and act upon the faith and trust in the purpose and power of Jesus to work His sovereign purpose and power through them in that moment. Their faith was not only squarely and solely **in His Name**, but their faith had even come **through Jesus – as in ‘from’ Jesus**. Even their faith to believe and trust Him to do this work through them had come from Jesus, **‘through Jesus.’** This was truly a sovereign work of Jesus Christ Himself in that very moment and act being performed through them as His apostles.

8/ v 17 / **Peter acknowledges “I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers.”** How can he say they acted ‘in ignorance’? Didn’t they deliberately and intentionally do everything they did? Didn’t their rulers turn on Jesus from the beginning of His ministry among them? Didn’t they attempt in every way they could think of to discredit Him, undermine Him, contradict and refute Him, conspire and plot against Him to kill Him – until they ‘succeeded’? Yes, they did all that. But their ‘ignorance’ was one of unbelief and the blindness of their own hearts of sin. Yet, even Jesus Himself prayed from the Cross: **“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”** How deep is the Father’s love for us! And now, Christ is back among them, working from the right hand of God in Heaven, giving life and perfect health to this lame man, to demonstrate His forbearance and longsuffering toward sinners.

9/ v 18 / **But even their rejection of Christ – and even in all His sufferings and death for sinner – God fulfilled what He had been promising from the beginning.** Peter will often refer to the sovereign purposes of God in predestination and the foreknowledge of His redemptive purposes in Christ. **See ch 2.23; 4.27-28.** This is a truth we cannot deny, nor should we want to. God has been revealing His sovereign purposes to save His people from their sins in all of the Scriptures – His purposes He has planned in Himself from before the creation of the world. He has been revealing His *historical-redemptive progression* purposes in all of the Scriptures as Peter will repeat throughout this ‘word.’

10/ v 19 / **God calls them – and us – to repent of our sins. He extends mercy to the guilty in spite of our unbelief and rejection of Christ.** In truth, God calls us to repentance *because of our unbelief and rejection of Christ!* Remember how Jesus told us **“I didn’t come to call the righteous, but the**

unrighteous to repentance.” This call to repentance is for everyone – all of us, both religious and pagan [see chs 2.38 & 17.30].

11/ vv 19-21 / **When we repent of our sins and turn back to God with faith in Christ, He promises His Grace both for here and now ... and also for the Kingdom to come in its eternal fullness.** Your sins will be ‘blotted out’ in full forgiveness. AND “**that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom Heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets long ago.**” These are references to the New Creation Kingdom that will be brought to us in its fullness at Christ’s Second Coming. Jesus came the first time to announce and inaugurate His eternal Kingdom. He is now mediating, interceding, and executing the growth and progress of His Kingdom through the New Covenant ministry of His Spirit-empowered churches as we proclaim His Gospel, and He will bring it in its eternal fullness when He comes back – and all of this is in fulfillment of every word He’s been foretelling all along in the Scriptures. **See again Ephesians 1.3-10; Colossians 1.15-20.**

12/ vv 22-24 / **Jesus Christ is the long-ago promised and long-awaited-for Prophet whom Yahweh said He would send to us.** Peter quotes from **Deuteronomy 18.15-19.** The Old Covenant Israelites had anchored their hopes for their Messiah who would come to teach, lead, and redeem them into their Rest on this promise [see **John 4.19-26**]. *The promised Prophet would be sent from Yahweh; He would be like Moses and from among them [the human race]; He would speak to them for God and from God, and they must receive Him and respond to Him in obedience; everyone who rejected and disobeyed Him would be guilty of rejecting and disobeying God ... and God would destroy them.* Christ was this Prophet. And what had they done? They had rejected and disobeyed this Prophet as Peter had just indicted and condemned [vv 13-15]. **THIS** is what they must ‘**Repent, therefore, and turn back**’ from ‘**that your sins may be blotted out [v 19].**’

13/ vv 25-26 / **And then ... Peter concludes this ‘word’ to explain the ‘wonder’ with the keynote / keystone promise upon which all the Old Testament covenants are grounded – and which the New Covenant now enacts and fulfills.** [NOTE: as I told you [in our last lesson](#), we’re witnessing three grand moments in historical-redemptive history here in Christ and in the Book of Acts: *Conversion (transition, changing over) of the Covenants; Convergence of the Ages; and Confluence of Scripture.*] And, since we have just completed our last study course, CHRIST IN GENESIS, this is still fresh in our minds. Peter quotes from **Genesis 12.2 & 22.18:** “**You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’**” The singular and summary purpose for which ALL the Old Covenant covenants were made was to create and preserve a nation from the descendants of Abraham from whom the Messiah would come to fulfill the initial promise of a Redeemer from sin in **Genesis 3.15.** This Redeemer would **save His people from their sins** and redeem and return them to the Father. These redeemed people would be saved from all the families, peoples, and nations of the world. What Peter is declaring here is: [1] ALL those promises were made, not only about Christ, but to Christ; [2] Christ has come and fulfilled them all; [3] And that, what has happened here is not only the fulfillment of all the Old Covenant promises in Christ, but also an initial demonstration of what they have been called, sent, and empowered to do by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. “**And you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, to the end of the earth**” [ch 1.8]. They were beginning their world-wide mission where Jesus had told them to begin – here in Jerusalem: “**Men of Israel [v 12]...God, having raised up His servant, sent Him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness [v 26].**” Then, as Paul will later write, “**For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek [Romans 1.16] – ‘ALL the families of the earth.’**”

“...Repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His Name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” [Luke 24.47]