

Peter Heals a Man Born Lamé (Acts 3:1-16)^a

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Context

1. **Feast of Pentecost, Jews of the diaspora visiting Jerusalem**
2. **Hear the wonders of God proclaimed in their native languages by unlearned Galileans**
3. **Peter explains the miracle and its relationship to the identity and work of Jesus**
4. **Three thousand saved and baptized that first day, many more afterwards**
5. **The birth of the Church**
6. **Last time: priorities and practices of the early church**
7. **Today's passage in two parts:**
 - A. **God performs a dramatic miracle in the temple by the hand of Peter (Acts 3:1-10)**
 - B. **Peter explains the significance of the miracle (Acts 3:11-16)**

The Miracle

Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. 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; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us." So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. 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." And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. 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.¹

1. **The gate called Beautiful**

- A. **The beautiful gate is thought to be the *Nicanor* or *Corinthian* gate which was the largest and most imposing of the gates—so large that it required some 20 priests to open or close the doors.**

The gate itself was of unusual size and splendor. It received the name "Nicanor" from its being the work, or having been constructed at the expense, of an Alexandrian Jew of this name. . . . Its other name, "Corinthian," refers to the costly material of which it was constructed—Corinthian bronze. . . . its weight was so great that it took 20 men to move it . . .²

- B. **According to the Jewish historian Josephus:**

Now nine of these gates were on every side covered over with gold and silver, as were the jambs of their doors and their lintels; but there was one gate that was without [the inward court of] the holy house, which was of Corinthian brass, and greatly excelled those that were only covered over with silver and gold. Now the magnitudes of the other gates were equal one to another; but that over the Corinthian gate, which opened on the east over against the gate of the holy house itself, was much larger; for its height was fifty cubits [75 feet]; and its doors were forty cubits [60 feet]; and it was adorned after a most costly manner, as having much richer and thicker plates of silver and gold upon them than the other.³

- C. **Location of the gate**

- I. **Some authorities have it as the outer gate between the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of the Women. Others place have it as the inner gate between the Court of the Women and the Court of the Priests.**
- II. **Most likely leading into the Court of the Women from outside mention is made in verse 11 of Solomon's porch (outside the Court of the Women).**
- III. **Why beg there? The Court of Women also housed the temple treasury which, according to the Mishna, "housed 13 wooden boxes for collecting contributions."⁴ People would have to pass by this beggar on the way to make their contributions within the temple.**

- D. **In any event, this was a setting of grand structures and expensive decorations—especially fitting for Peter's remark, *Silver and gold I do not have* (Acts 3:6)**

2. Healing the lame

- A. Jesus pointed to the healing of the lame as one of the evidences of His Messiahship in His response to the disciples of John the Baptist: *Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them"* (Mat. 11:4-5 cf. Luke 7:22)
- B. Jesus was referring to OT passages which indicated that God's salvation would be accompanied by miraculous works of restoration.
- C. Isaiah wrote: *Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, With the recompense of God; He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert.* (Isa. 35:4-6)
- D. Jesus had previously healed the lame within the temple (Mat. 21:14), now Peter, a member of the newly-formed body of Christ, does the same.
- E. Taking the miraculous witness to "ground zero," the heart of Judaism: the temple in Jerusalem — this sparks a significant reaction by the religious authorities as we'll see in chapter 4.

3. Genuineness of Miracle

- A. Complete, instant, permanent restoration
 - I. "leaping" (Acts 3:8), perfect soundness in the presence of you all (Acts 3:16)
 - II. **ὄλοκληρίαν** [*holoklērian*] from **ὄλοκληρία** [*holoklēria*], "complete health, state of wholeness"⁵, "soundness in all parts"⁶.
 - III. Prefix is *holo*, from which we get *whole*, *holistic* — entire, complete, all parts
 - IV. Luke the *beloved physician* (Col. 4:14), emphasizes the undeniable completeness of the healing
- B. Publicly witnessed by a crowd without any such expectations
 - I. Consider the condition of the man: (1) born lame, (2) lame for more than 40 years, (3) carried daily: extremely well known by many (Acts 4:22).

II. Undeniable, *all the people saw him walking (Acts 3:9), given perfect soundness in the presence of you all (Acts 3:16)*

C. Compare with the character of the miracles frequently claimed by various healers in our day

I. Premeditated: special healing meetings - not in the course of everyday life

II. Expectations: those who come are expecting “something”

III. Unverifiable: objective verification is not possible and often actively opposed by the healer

IV. Incomplete and temporary: in cases where some improvement is claimed, a complete cure is lacking and relapse often follows.

V. Attention: notice how Peter focuses attention away from himself and John and toward what the miracle attests. The focus is not on the one the healing comes through.

4. Apostolic authority and message

A. Continuation of Apostolic signs from previous chapter, *many wonders and signs were done through the apostles (Acts 2:43)*

B. *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 (Acts 5:12)*

C. In a lengthy passage where Paul underscores his authority before the church at Corinth, he states: *Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds (2Cor. 12:12)*

D. Another apostle, Philip, will heal the lame among the Samaritans (Acts 8)

E. Later, Paul—following closely in the pattern of Peter—heals a cripple from his mother's womb (Acts 14:8-10)

F. The purpose of these miracles was: *firstly*, to establish the authority of the Apostles in order to, *secondly* witness to the divine origin of their message.

G. This was critical because the message was in its formative stages: prior to the establishment of the New Testament canon (Heb. 2:3-4).

- H. Here also we find the beginning of the Spirit-inspired comparison in the book of Acts between Peter, the Apostle to the circumcision (Jews) and Paul, the Apostle to the uncircumcision (Gentiles)
- I. (1) Both healed a lame man, Peter (Acts 3:6-7), Paul (Acts 14:8-10). (2) Both heal through indirect media, Peter via a shadow (Acts 5:15), Paul via handkerchiefs (Acts 19:11-12). (3) Both impart the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands, Peter (Acts 8:14-17), Paul (Acts 19:6). (4) Both oppose a sorcerer, Peter (Acts 8:20), Paul (Acts 13:6-12). (5) Both were worshiped, Peter (Acts 10:25), Paul (Acts 14:11-13). (6) Both miraculously released from prison, Peter (Acts 12:7-11), Paul (Acts 16:26-29). (7) Both raised the dead, Peter (Acts 9:36-42), Paul (Acts 20:9-12). (8) Both rendered swift judgment, Peter (Acts 5:4-5, Acts 5:9-10), Paul (Acts 13:11). (9) Both have one complete sermon recorded by Luke, Peter (Acts 2:14-40), Paul (Acts 13:16-41) (10) Both entrusted with gospel to people groups, Peter to Jews (Gal. 2:7-8), Paul to Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Gal. 2:7-8). What Peter did by apostolic authority so did Paul — this authenticates his apostolic authority (2Cor. 11:5, 2Cor. 11:12; 2Cor. 11:11-12).⁷

The Meaning of the Miracle

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. 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? 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. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. 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."⁸

1. As we've observed, the purpose of the miracle was not the miracle itself, but to testify to the messenger and especially his message.
2. Like pointing out something to a pet dog or cat: the pet looks at your hand and ignores what it points to.
3. Peter emphasizes the source, authority, and purpose behind the outward miracle
 - A. ***"In the name of Jesus Christ . . . rise up and walk."***: the character, authority, and power of Jesus is the source of the miracle (Acts 2:6)

- B. ***through faith in His name . . . the faith which comes through Him (Acts 3:16).***
 - C. **Mention of Jesus' *name* is not a mantra or some sort of magic formula. The name stands for the character, nature, and authority of the individual named.**
4. **The lame man understood the True Source: *And all the people saw him walking and praising God (Acts 3:9).***
 5. **Healing was secondary to the more important result: faith in the Prince of life providing *eternal life* to the lame man**
 6. **Because of the miracle, the lame man (and others) came to believe in Jesus. As John put it, *as many as received Him [Jesus], to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name (John 1:12)***
 7. **Connecting Jesus with OT foundation: *The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus (Acts 3:13).***
 - A. **Seeker unfriendly message**
 - I. **“Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go” (Acts 3:13b cf. Mat. 27:24)**
 - II. **Peter’s previous message following the events on the Day of Pentecost, *[Jesus] . . . you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death (Acts 2:23b)***
 - B. **Seeking to connect Judaism with Christianity—which is essentially “completed Judaism.”**
 8. **An example of the “free will choice” of unregenerate men**
 - A. ***you denied the Holy One and the Just and asked for a murderer . . . and killed the Prince of life***
 - I. **Referring to the trial of Jesus at the feast of Passover which resulted in the release of Barabbas**

Pilate . . . went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no fault in Him at all. But you have a custom that I should release someone to you at the Passover. Do you therefore want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" Then they all cried again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" . . . (John 18:38-40)
 - II. **denied (repudiated, disowned): Holy One, Just**

- III. asked for (demanded): a murderous man (**ἄνδρα φονέα** [*andra phonea*] cf. Mark **15:7**; Luke **23:19,25**)
- IV. forgave and preserved a murderer, condemned and killed the Prince of life

B. Two Father's Sons

- I. Barabbas - *bar* (son) *abba* (father), "son of his father," a murderer. A son of the Devil (Mat. **13:38**; John **8:44**).
- II. Jesus - "son of His Father," the Living God and therefore the Prince of Life

9. "Prince of life" = **τόν ἀρχηγόν τῆς ζωῆς** [*ton archēgon tēs zōēs*],

A. "initiator, originator, founder, author"⁹ - the originator, author of life

- I. "Author of life" (ESV, NIV), "originator of life" (NET), "source of life" (HCSB)
- II. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.* (John **1:1-4**)
- III. *He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.* (John **1:10**)
- IV. *For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.* (Col. **1:16**)
- V. *and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ* (Eph. **3:9**)
- VI. *[God] has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds* (Heb. **1:2**)
- VII. *Jesus said . . . "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* (John **14:6**)

- B. “strictly one who goes first on the path; hence leader”¹⁰ - leading the way from death to life,
- I. *“whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.” (Acts 2:24)*
 - II. *But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (1Cor. 15:20)*
 - III. *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.” (John 11:25)*
- C. *And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.”” (Ex. 3:14 cf. John 8:58)*
- I. I am who am (*Ego Sum Qui Sum*, Vulgate)
 - II. I am He Who exists
 - III. Calvin: “This is very plain, that God attributes to himself alone divine glory, because he is self-existent and therefore eternal; and thus gives being and existence to every creature.”¹¹

Application

1. **PURPOSE OF MIRACLES** - *Bona fide* miracles, as recorded in Scripture, are never for their own sake. Nor is their purpose limited to the short-term benefit of any recipient. Miracles are signs which point to God and His purposes in the world. In understanding miracles, we would do well to focus on what they point to and any response God intends from those who witness the miracle.
2. **WHAT DO WE HAVE?** - Like Peter, we may not have silver and gold. Even if we do, giving silver and gold (or any form of physical assistance) provides only a temporary measure of relief. Nor does such assistance address the real issue: the poverty of soul which plagues those separated from God. The true riches that we believers have to give is the gift of eternal life through the message of the gospel. No matter how poor we find ourselves in material wealth, out of our bellies can flow “rivers of living water” (John 7:38-39): the life-giving message of reconciliation and forgiveness with God.
3. **JESUS IS THE PRINCE OF LIFE** - To find life—both meaning in this life and eternal life to come—one must ultimately place one’s trust in the Prince of life: Jesus. In this, we must not be like the Pharisees to whom Jesus said, “. . . You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have

life. (John 5:39-40)

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Endnotes:

1. [NKJV, Acts 3:1-10](#)
2. [Ref-1353, GATE, THE BEAUTIFUL](#)
3. [Ref. 0411, Wars of the Jews 5.201-205](#)
4. [Ref-1326, 80](#)
5. [Ref-0617, #3907](#)
6. [Ref-0227, 564](#)
7. [Ref-0038, 2:349b](#)
8. [NKJV, Acts 3:11-16](#)
9. [Ref-0617, #795](#)
10. [Ref-0380, 76](#)
11. [Ref-0696, Ex. 3:14](#)

Sources:

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- Ref-0227** Arndt, William, F. Wilbur Gingrich, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature : A Translation and Adaption of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-Deutsches Worterbuch Zu Den Schrift En Des Neuen Testaments Und Der Ubrigen Urchristlichen Literatur*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, c1979. ISBN:0-226-03932-3^d.
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Links Mentioned Above

a - See http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Acts_by_Tony_Garland/13_Acts_3_1-16/index.htm.

b - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.

c - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org>.

d - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?0-226-03932-3>.

e - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?978-0-59636-468-4>.