

Acts 3:1-26 Teacher's Lesson Miracle Evangelism

Introduction: I was in a meeting of 15 Asian church planters. Each one had already started over 40 churches! They did so through miracle evangelism. Entering a village, they would seek out someone chronically ill and pray for his healing. Often, God would answer their prayer. Now having the family's attention, the Gospel was presented. The family often became believers. These new, *very* excited believers would then tell the rest of the village about what had happened and soon a church would be planted. Now, in Acts 3, we will read about miracle evangelism that resulted in 5,000 men coming to faith, not counting the women who responded. As we study this, ask yourself, *Why don't we see more of this today, right here where we live?*

******1. What did God do that caused wonder and amazement (3:1-10)?** Through Peter, God healed a man lame from birth.¹

— 3:1-3 —

Why is it significant that this man had been lame from birth (3:2)? There was no doubt that a genuine miracle had occurred. There is a lame man in our neighborhood that I have known since he was a small child. If he were suddenly healed and made to walk, I'd know for a fact he was not faking it. Similarly, the people at the temple knew this man had been lame since birth.

How did this lame man make his living (3:2-3)? His friends carried him daily to the Beautiful gate² in the temple so he could ask for alms.³ He was genuinely deserving of charity.

Application: A church should have benevolence fund to help those within the church who have needs.

— 3:5-6 —

According to 3:5, how did the lame man respond when Peter said, "Look at us"? The lame man fixed his attention on Peter and John.

2. Why did Peter even bother to tell the man that he had no silver and gold (3:6)? It might have been for dramatic effect. In addition to being a fact, it doubtless created disappointed in the lame man. But then, Peter gave him something far more valuable. It was the let-down before the build-up!

¹ This happened at the Temple in the 9th hour. The Jewish clock started ticking at 6 a.m., so it was 3 p.m. Evidently Peter and John were there to take part in the temple prayers per Acts 2:42.

² Which gate this was is unknown today. The Temple, and along with it the Beautiful Gate (3:2), was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70 and has not existed since. The Jews wanted to rebuild it but were prohibited by the Romans, who controlled the area until A.D. 631, from so doing. The Romans were forced out by the Muslims, who then built an Islamic shrine on the spot in A.D. 691 (the Dome of the Rock). It still stands there today, God's way of insuring that the Jews never rebuild the Temple.

³ The root word for alms is the Greek word for mercy. Its form here means "pity, charity, a donation to the poor" (Thayer, #1654).

Prosperity Preachers: Unlike the prosperity preachers of today, Peter did not get rich from being in the ministry. Paul warned Timothy about men who are:

ESV 1 Timothy 6:3-5 . . . depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

Aquinas: A Catholic theologian of the 1500s wrote of a conversation between Thomas Aquinas and Pope Innocent II (A.D. 11000s). Aquinas entered the presence of Pope, before whom a large sum of money was spread out. The Pope said, "You see, the Church is no longer in that age in which she said, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" "True, holy father," replied Aquinas; "neither can she any longer say to the lame, 'Rise up and walk.'"⁴

3. How did Peter know God would heal this man (3:6)? See 2:43. Ever since Pentecost, many miracles were being done through the apostles, 2:43. Peter evidently was very much in tune with God's will concerning things like this. These were very unique times, to say the least!

— 3:7-8 —

******What seven verbs did Luke use to describe the lame man's reaction to being healed (3:7-8)?** (*List them*). He leaps up, stands, walks, enters, walks, leaps and praises.⁵ As the old children's song goes, "he went walking and leaping and praising God"!

More than a wonderful miracle, this was a sign that the Messianic age had come.⁶ Isaiah described it thus:

NAS **Isaiah 35:6** . . . the lame will leap like a deer . . .

4. What role did the lame man play in being healed (3:7-8)? See *John 9:1-3, Luke 7:1ff*. He evidently played no role whatsoever, aside from being lame. It looks as if not even faith was required on his part. Peter simply looked at him, seized him, and pulled him up. Similarly, Jesus saw a funeral procession, went to the casket, and resurrected the corpse (Luke 7:11ff).

Salvation Parallel: There is a parallel between this man's healing and our own salvation. Romans 5:6 states that we are powerless (helpless) to save ourselves. Salvation is when God reaches down and pulls us up out of our hopeless condition. Then, once God pulls us up and heals us, just as the lame man responded by praising God, we respond in faith. Regeneration precedes faith.

⁴ Bruce, 84.

⁵ Johnson, 66.

⁶ This happened in Solomon's portico (3:11). The NIV has "colonnade". According to the *New Bible Dictionary*, it was a covered porch or walkway along the eastern side of the Court of Gentiles in Herod's temple. It was on these porches that surrounded the temple that the scribes held their schools and the money changers had their stalls, 951. Josephus wrote that it had three isles with columns 27' high, 30' apart at the side isles and 45' apart in the center. In all there were 162 columns. It was covered with a cedar roof. It afforded ample room for countless people (Kistemaker, 127).

— 3:9-10 —

What was the crowd's reaction to all this (3:9-10)? They were filled with wonder and amazement. Many who claim to be faith healers today are fakes. However, this is no sleight of hand or trickery. They knew this man had been lame from birth, and now here he was, walking around!

This healing was remarkable precisely because it does not happen all the time. It was exceptional then, and it is exceptional now. This was a Messianic miracle!

History: Early Christian writings from the Patristic age indicate a decrease in miracles (but not their cessation). Then, in the second century, Augustine commented, "These miracles were not allowed to last until our times lest the soul ever seek visible things and the human race grow cold because of familiarity with those things whose novelty enkindled it."⁷

Why don't we see more miracle evangelism today where we live? God certainly can and does heal people today, and always has since the first century. He evidently is growing the Asian church through miracle evangelism. Perhaps the lack of it today in the West is due to lack of faith on our part. Perhaps it is simply due to God's purposes for the different people in different times (Behold the kindness and the severity of God).

Why are so many of God's people sick, when clearly God has the ability to heal? See *Philippians 2:27*, *2 Corinthians 12:7-9*, *1 Timothy 5:23*, *2 Timothy 4:20*. The apostles could heal, but not whenever they pleased or wherever they were. For example, Paul was unable to heal Epaphroditus, and was greatly relieved when he finally got better. The Lord was unwilling to heal Paul's thorn on the flesh. Timothy found it necessary to take wine for his frequent stomach ailments. Paul gave up on Trophemus and left him sick at Miletus. The Lord has His own purposes for who He heals and when He heals.

****** The people were astonished and ran toward Peter. Now that Peter had their attention, what did he do with it (3:11-16)?** Peter presented the Gospel to them.

Application: *ESV Colossians 4:5-6* Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders . . . Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

— 3:12 —

5. What did Peter clarify straight away in 3:12? See *Acts 12:21ff*. He wanted to be sure they knew God had healed lame man, not Peter himself.

ESV Isaiah 42:8 I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other . . .

⁷ William Young, "Miracles In Church History", ChurchSociety.org, accessed July 7, 2017.

6. How did Peter describe Jesus in 3:12? See *Isaiah 42:1, 52:13-53:6*. He called Jesus God's servant, a Messianic title coined by Isaiah:

ESV **Isaiah 42:1** Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him . . .

ESV **Isaiah 52:13-53:6** Behold, my servant . . . shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted . . . He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

— 3:13-15 —

******What awful application did Peter press home in 3:13-15? (Reread).** Whereas God glorified Jesus, they had denied Jesus. Worse yet, they handed him over to Pilate after Pilate had decided to release him.⁸ To quote the grail knight in "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade", they had chosen ". . . poorly".

7. Why had Pilate decided to release Jesus (3:13)? See *Luke 23:13-16*. Pilate examined Jesus and judged him to be innocent.

8. What three charges did Peter make in 3:13-15 ("you . . .")? Peter charged: "you delivered over and denied" (3:13), "you denied the Holy and Righteous One" (3:14), and "you killed the Author of Life" (3:14).

Application: *Think back to when you were saved. How were you made aware of your own sinfulness? In dealing with unbelievers, at what stage is it appropriate to come on strong against their own, personal sins?*

What fact about Jesus did Peter point out in 3:15? Peter pointed out that God raised Him from the dead. This is part of the Gospel message. Believing this is essential to be saved. The Jehovah's Witnesses deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus, saying he rose as a spirit creature and that his physical body was taken away by Jehovah.

— 3:16 —

⁸ Pilate was the Roman governor who played a key role in Jesus' mock "trial". Unbelievers used to scoff that Pilate was a made-up Bible character who never existed. However, in 1961, archaeologists discovered a plaque imbedded in a section of steps leading to an Amphitheatre in Caesarea, an ancient Roman city along the Mediterranean coast of Judea. The inscription includes the following: "Pontius Pilatus, Prefect of Judea, has dedicated to the people of Caesarea a temple in honor of Tiberius". "Pontius Pilate", AllAboutArchaeology.org, accessed June 23, 2017.

What truth did Peter repeat in 3:16? See 3:12. Peter repeated the truth that God had healed the lame man. This supernatural healing was proof that Jesus was legitimate.

9. Peter said the lame man was healed by Jesus' name (3:16). What did he mean by "name"? As Peter used it here, "name" represents everything that is true about the person.⁹ In this case, it means Jesus was truly from God and was the prophesied Hebrew Messiah.

10. Peter said the lame man was healed through faith in Jesus (3:16); whose faith healed him? It evidently was not that the lame man had faith, but rather it was Peter's faith.

*****What did Peter promise if they repented (3:17-26)?** Peter promised three things: sins blotted out (3:19), times of refreshing (3:20), and Christ would come (3:21).

— 3:17 —

What concession did Peter make in 3:17? Peter conceded that they had acted in ignorance.¹⁰ So too Jesus prayed concerning the Roman soldiers who crucified Him:

ESV **Luke 23:34** "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Application: In retrospect, those who have come to faith in Jesus often feel they too paid a personal role in killing Jesus. This sentiment is reflected in John Newton's lyrics from "In Evil Long I Took Delight". It reads in part:

Alas! I know not what I did, But now my tears are vain:
Where shall my trembling soul be hid? For I the Lord have slain.
A second look He gave, which said, "I freely all forgive:
This blood is for thy ransom paid, I die that thou may'st live."
Thus, while his death my sin displays In all its blackest hue,
(Such is the mystery of grace) It seals my pardon too.
With pleasing grief and mournful joy, My spirit now is filled,
That I should such a life destroy, Yet live by him I killed.¹¹

— 3:18 —

11. According to 3:18, how did God use their ignorant actions (3:17)? God used their ignorant actions to fulfill Old Testament prophecies that His Christ would suffer.

⁹ *ESV Study Bible*, 2086.

¹⁰ This does not mean that all Jewish leaders acted in ignorance. Some were guilty of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

¹¹ Bruce, 91.

R.C. Sproul: ““What kind of a concept of God do we have that we would say that God is paralyzed by human choices? If His freedom is limited by our freedom, we are sovereign, not God. No, we are free, but God is even more free. This means that our freedom can never limit God’s sovereignty.”¹²

Apologetics: Part of Peter’s Gospel presentation involved showing how Jesus’ death fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.¹³ God prepared the people by previously convincing them the Old Testament was true.

— 3:19 —

According to 3:19, what did they need to do to have their sins blotted out? They needed to repent.

12. Why didn’t Peter mention the need for faith in 3:19? *Compare 2:38.* None of them would have repented unless they also believed Peter’s message. It is interesting that Peter not only said to repent, but also to turn again. There is obviously some difference in meaning between the two here. “Repent” can be a synonym for “believe”.

What does repent mean (3:19)? It is from *metanoeo*; *meta* means change and *noeo* means thinking. It is a change of thinking that leads to a change of action. Peter’s audience needed to change their thinking about Jesus and turn back toward God instead of continuing on away from Him.

13. You’ve heard of an ink blot. What imagery was Peter using when he said their sins would be blotted out (3:19)? A blot is a stain. If you want to make an existing writing illegible, you stain over it with ink and in that sense blot it out.¹⁴ Thus, it means to make something obscure, insignificant, or inconsequential. The actual Greek says their sins will be “wiped out”, as in erasing a smudge.

Application: *Want to have your sins blotted out?* Change your thinking about Jesus and turn away from sin. It is not that you are saved by turning from sin. It is that if you truly believe in Jesus, you will turn from sin.

— 3:20 —

14. In 3:20, what did Peter mean by times of refreshing? *See back to 2:1-21.* This likely is a reference to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, a mark of the Messianic age. Peter was offering them the same Holy Spirit that the church just received.

¹² “Does God Control Everything? Quotes”, GoodReads.com, accessed July 6, 2017.

¹³ Peter’s reference to “all” the prophets was hyperbolic.

¹⁴ “Blot out”, Dictionary.com, accessed July 6, 2017.

15. What did Peter mean in 3:20-21 when he said God would send Christ? See 1:9-11. This is evidently a reference to what we call the Second Coming, the time for restoring all things. Peter seemed to offer the possibility that He might come within their lifetimes.

ESV **Hebrews 2:8** . . . we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

— 3:21 —

16. What things will be restored when Jesus comes (3:21)? See 1:6, Isaiah 11:6-9, Romans 8:19-23. Peter did not explain what he meant, but he did refer to prophecies made “long ago” (3:21b).

Paradise Restored: Later New Testament writings reveal that the whole earth will be released from the curse of creation and restored to its Edenic glory.

ESV **Romans 8:19-22** . . . the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay . . . For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

Bodies Restored: Also, believers will be given resurrection bodies:

ESV **Romans 8:23** And not only the creation, but we ourselves . . . groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Israel Restored Too? The disciples initially expected the kingdom to be restored to Israel (**Acts 1:6**)—the geo-political supremacy of the nation of Israel as it cast off her enemies (such as the Romans). In response, Jesus neither affirmed nor denied their expectations (1:7-8). Whether these expectations were correct must be determined from a study of the Epistles. Christians today who believe in the restoration of physical Israel are called Dispensationalists.

— 3:22-25 —

17. In 3:22-24, what prophecy did Peter declare fulfilled right there, right then? Compare Deuteronomy 18:15-19, John 5:45-47. Peter quoted Moses’ prediction that God would raise up another prophet like Moses (De 18:15-19), and said it was fulfilled in “these days” (3:25), as were the prophecies of all the prophets concerning the coming of the Messiah.

ESV **John 5:45-47** . . . If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.

18. In 3:23, what danger did Moses warn of (3:23)? Every soul who does not listen to the prophet will be destroyed. To reject Jesus is to court destruction.

ESV **John 3:36** . . . whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

In his presentation, why did Peter jump from Moses to Samuel rather than some other prophet (3:24)? The Jewish people considered Samuel to be the next prophet after Moses.¹⁵ Peter's point was that Moses, then Samuel, and all the prophets after them wrote about "these days" (3:24), the days of the coming of the Messiah.¹⁶

— 3:25-26 —

19. What worldwide scope for the Gospel did Peter hint at in 3:25-26? Peter quoted God's promise that all the families of the earth would be blessed in Abraham's descendants.

20. According to 3:25-26, what privileged position did the Jews enjoy? *See Romans 1:16, 3:1-2.* As descendants of the prophets and heirs of the covenant made with Abraham, the Jews were the first in line to receive the blessing of salvation.

ESV Romans 3:1-2 . . . what advantage has the Jew? . . . Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

ESV Romans 1:16 . . . the gospel . . . is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

21. What three big promises did God make to Abraham and then confirm by covenant (3:25)? *See Genesis 12:1-3, 15:1ff.* God promised Abraham land, offspring, and blessing.

22. Which of Abraham's offspring brought blessing to all the families of the earth (3:25)? *See Galatians 3:16.* Jesus is the ultimate offspring of Abraham.

ESV Galatians 3:16 . . . promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.

23. What is the blessing that comes through Abraham's offspring (3:25)? *See Galatians 3:6-9.*

ESV Galatians 3:6-9 . . . Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" . . . And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

24. In 3:26, how did Peter define the blessing of God? God sent Jesus to the Jews to bless them by turning them from their wickedness.

¹⁵ *ESV Study Bible*, 2087. Peter might also have meant all the prophets who lived during time covered in the Old Testament historical books that bear Samuel's name (Kistemaker, 139).

¹⁶ "All" is hyperbolic. Not literally everyone of the prophets wrote about it.

In context, what wickedness were these Jews guilty of (3:26)? They were guilty of the wickedness of denying that Jesus was the Messiah. They were guilty of turning Jesus over to Pilate for crucifixion.

25. Based on 3:26, when a person turns away from wickedness and turns to Jesus, who is responsible for that U-turn? See *Acts 5:31, 2 Timothy 2:25-26*. It is the result of God's blessing.

Jump ahead to 4:4. How many people heard Peter and responded in faith? About 5,000 men believed, not counting the women!

So What?

What various ways did Peter describe Jesus in this chapter? Peter called Jesus God's servant, the Holy and Righteous One, and Author of Life and a prophet like Moses.

26. From a literary perspective, why did Luke tell Theophilus about the miracle of the lame man's healing (3:1-8)? See *3:9-26*. It shows the continuing power of Jesus' name to perform miracles just as had been done throughout the Gospel of Luke.¹⁷ It also sets the stage for Peter's arrest in the next chapter.

27. What factors combined to make Peter's Gospel presentation so powerful? Power factors include the miraculous healing of the lame man and Peter demonstrating that Jesus' death was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (3:18, 22-25).

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

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¹⁷ Marshall, 93.