

ACTS 3.1-4.4 To the Jew First

1. FOR MISSION

Clements rightly notes that “The first thing the Holy Spirit did when he fell upon the apostles was to set their tongues wagging. Every opportunity they got, Peter and others were standing up and speaking out in the name of Jesus.”

Important to keep focus:

- the Apostles were “sent” by Jesus to continue his mission, to establish his kingdom.
- The Holy Spirit was sent to empower them for that task.

So it’s all about mission – evangelism and discipleship.

The coming of the HS all about

1. Empowerment of Apostles

- Emboldened to preach
- Inspired in preaching– authority and truth (attesting to Jesus)
- Signs and wonders:
 - Attest to their authority from Jesus
 - Continuing Jesus’ mission, signs of God’s presence and growing kingdom.

2. Convicts (many) hearers;

3. Gets up the noses of others, drawing opposition. Spiritual battle

See all this in 3.1-4.4

Mission was always to the Jews first:

- In Jesus’ teaching and ministry (e.g. Jn 4.22;
- In apostolic mission = from Jerusalem -> Judea -> Samaria->NZ - affirmed in 3.26.

And note Paul went to synagogue first. See too Rom 9-11.

=> No surprise that second sermon = in Temple portico. And that sparked by a miracle (as was the first: rushing wind, tongues like fire, languages)

V’s antisemitism. Refer *The Devil That Never Dies* by Daniel Goldhagen

3.1-11 Lame Beggar Healed

- P & J = remain observant Jews
- Man = genuine lame beggar
 - from birth (40+ years according to 4.22)
 - entirely dependent on friends
- P & J
 - Directed their gaze at him
 - Said “Look at us”
- Man lame
 - Fixed his attention on them
 - expecting to receive something from them
- Peter
 - I have no silver or gold
 - But what I do have I give to you
 - In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!
[Lame man to look at P & J, but to look to Jesus.](#)
 - Took him by the r.h., raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong
- Man lame
 - Leaping up, he stood and began to walk
[The healing of lame beggar = fulfilment of Isa 35.6](#)
 - Entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God
- Crowd
 - All saw him walking and praising God
 - Recognised him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, asking for alms
 - Were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him
 - While he clung to Peter and John, they ran – utterly astounded – to them in Solomon’s portico

3.11-26 Peter preaches in Solomon's Portico

- Men of Israel, why do you do you wonder at this... or stare at us
 - as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?
The power was Christ's but the hand was Peter's – Thomas Walker
- The God of Abraham... Isaac... Jacob... our fathers (*wording of Exod 3.6, 15*), glorified his servant Jesus (*the language of Isa 52.13-53.2*) whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate (*irony of Peter saying this!*), when he had decided to release him
- But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked a murderer to be granted to you
- And you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead *what you did v's what God did* . To this we are witnesses.
- And his name – by faith in his name – has made this man strong... and the faith that is through Jesus Christ has given the man his perfect health...
 - Healing/perfect health for the lame beggar, whose plight was clear: afflicted from birth (i.e. no fraud), unable to walk at all, helpless to the extent he needed to be carried. He who could not fully participate in temple worship because of his physical imperfections (Lev 21.17-20; 2 Sam 5.8) now, like King David dancing before the Ark of the Covenant being taken to the tent, goes up walking and leaping and praising God (cf. Isa 35.6). Dunn suggests that the Gk "perfect health" has cultic overtones, as in an animal fit for sacrifice, used only here in the NT (cf. its use in LXX - Isa 1.6; Zech 11.16).
Witherington points out that the clear allusion to Isa 35 (the same rare use of the verb for jumping in the LXX) means, "This miracle, then, is not seen as an isolated incident but as part of the grand scheme of God to bring to fulfilment the promises of the Hebrew scriptures in and through Jesus and his followers."
- I know you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers
 - Ignorance has been an excuse up until now, but can be no longer - for either Jew or Gentile – see 13.27-28; 17.30. The other mitigating factor, esp. for the Jewish leaders, is that "God's divine plan was at work in Jesus' death." (Dunn)
- But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.
- Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, (*it's not too late, even for the Jewish leaders, but after this there can be no excusing them*)

- that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord (i.e. [God the Father](#))
- and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus (= [the Parousia](#)), whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things ([Parousia and end of age](#)) which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago
 - Prophets not only spoke of Jesus' coming as Messiah, and Son of David, but of his return to "restore all things", i.e. Parousia. E.g. Dan 7, Isaianic peace.
- Moses said, The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me ([Dunn argues that Peter uses 'raise' in the sense of one resurrected, rather than one simply sent, as in v.26, cf. 4.3. This makes Jesus a different category of prophet](#))... and every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people. ([Deut 18](#))
- And all the prophets have spoken, from Samuel ([who anointed David as king and prophesied re his descendant and house](#))... also proclaimed these days
- You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers... ([reference to Gen 22.18](#))
 - Jews needed to understand scriptures and covenant => accept Jesus as the Messiah. The one they denied and murdered, and considered rejected by God (i.e. as one crucified, cf. Isa 53.4) God raised and exalted.
while to the Jew first, Abrahamic covenant always looked forward to the Gentile mission.
- God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness
 - Note the blessings given and spoken of:
 - Sins erased/blotted out/obliterated... turning every one of you from your wickedness (v.26)
 - Times of refreshing (cf. Exod 8.15; Mark 13.20 - rest, relief, respite, refreshment) from the presence of the LORD
 - The promise of the Lord's return and the "restoring of all things" (cf. Acts 1.6; 2.20), i.e. the relationship between Israel and her God.

4.1-4 Peter and John arrested

- As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them,
 - greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.
 - Arrested them and put them in custody...
 - But many of those who had heard the word believed... bringing believing men to c. 5,000 men
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1. Ordinary people, and esp. lame beggar v's priests, captain of temple and Sadducees. NB. Chief Priests and temple authorities = Sadducees, the aristocratic lay landowners and power-holders (see 5.17). The chief and leading priestly families were related to them, hence the power bloc.
 2. Jesus as the hope/source of resurrection. What consternation for the Sadducees: not a theological debate/reasoning about whether there is a resurrection, but the bald and bold claim that Jesus had risen, bodily. End of speculation: it's a reality, "an established truth" (Clements).
 3. First outbreak of persecution! After seemingly idyllic start, and only awe, with nothing to offend (healing), suddenly opposition rears ugly head. This is surely because Peter, in his preaching, has exalted Christ by speaking of his mighty deeds and fulfilment of OT promises, and exaltation by God. Satan cannot endure this and must respond.

What of signs and wonders today?

Dunn: “wonders and signs’ were a foundational feature of both Jesus’ ministry and of the Pentecostal Spirit’s empowering (2.19, 22, 43). So it is not surprising that the first episode of the new movement he chooses to relate is a miraculous healing. Indeed, it is the miracles of the next four chapters which provide the momentum for the story... The question cannot be easily kept down: are miracles of that character (5.1-11 as well as 3.10) an inevitable consequence of the outpouring of the Spirit (cf. Rom 15.19; 1 Cor 12.9-10; Gal 3.5; Heb 2.4)? And if so, what does that say about churches of later days where such miracles are lacking?”

Trad.

“Thomas Aquinas once called upon Pope Innocent II when the latter was counting on a large sum of money. “You see, Thomas,” said the Pope, “the church can no longer say, ‘Silver and gold have I none.’ “True, holy father,” was the reply; “neither can she now say, ‘Rise up and walk.’”

Jesus had given the disciples authority over sickness and demons – Lk 9.16; 10.1-16. See too Luke 4.18 and 7.22 and “The message of Jesus is inextricably related to its power to heal... Either the community is able to point to signs of healing power at work in the world because of what has happened in Christ or the community is without evidence for its claims. The healing power is unleashed “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth” (3.6)”

1. Theological – clear that Spirit gives healing “as God chooses” (Heb 2.4 etc.)
2. Pastoral/practical:
 - a. not all healed (even Jesus’ ministry in Nazareth); divine will; still live with sickness, old age and death – and poverty - until consummation of God’s kingdom
 - b. we continue to ask in the name of Jesus of Nazareth – in faith in him – both out of compassion for God’s children and as signs of God’s presence and power

Suggested Discussion Questions

1. What can we learn from the fact that the first Christians continued to worship at the Temple, and - until they were kicked out of the synagogues - continued to attend them on the Sabbath too (as had Jesus)?
2. What truths might Thomas Aquinas' conversation with Pope Innocent II convey to the church today?
3. Why do you think it is that not everyone is healed when prayed for in Jesus' name?
4. Do you agree that we should keep praying in faith regardless?
5. If so, how do we do so in a way that is both faith-filled and pastorally sensitive (i.e. not setting people up for hurt, disillusionment or even condemnation if they're not healed)?
6. How do we explain to others (who aren't healed) why God hasn't healed them?
7. Why do so few Christians seem to come forward to testify to their healing? How can we encourage one another to do so?