

Leaping like a deer!

(Acts 3:1 NKJV) Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth *hour*.

at the hour of prayer; being the ninth hour, or three o'clock in the afternoon.

It was the custom of the times to pray 3 times a day. We see this in Daniel 6 where the King signed a decree stating that no one could pray to any other god than the King!

(Daniel 6:10 NKJV) Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

David spoke of this in Psalm 55:

Psalms 55:16-17 NKJV As for me, I will call upon God, And the LORD shall save me. (17)
Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice.

This practice continued into the 1st Century (and beyond) as recorded by Luke:

Act 2:15 For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is *only* the third hour of the day.
(9am)

Acts 10:9 NKJV The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. (noon)

And, of course, in this verse, at 3pm.

These times were not “appointed by the LORD”. One Rabbi wrote:

"there is no number of prayers from the law, and there is no repetition of this or that prayer from the law, and there is no, "fixed time" for prayer from the law."

NOTE: it's important to see that they were going up to the TEMPLE to pray. Believers were not restricted from entering the Temple grounds; There was no real talk of them being traitors to the faith or for converting to another 'religion' – at least not yet! Also note that they weren't going up at the time of sacrifice, but afterwards.

(Acts 3:2 NKJV) 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; (3) who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms.

THE BEAUTIFUL GATE

This gate of Herod's temple is also known as the "gate of Nicanor" or the Corinthian Gate. Authorities are divided as to whether this gate was situated at the entrance to the women's court on the East, or was the gate reached by 15 steps, dividing that court from the court of the men. The gate itself was of unusual size and splendor (taller than any of the other Gates; its weight was so great that it took 20 men to move it). It received the name "Nicanor" from its being the work, or having been constructed at the expense, of an Alexandrian Jew of this

name. Recently an ossuary was discovered on Mt. Olivet bearing the Greek inscription: "The bones of Nicanor the Alexandrian, who made the doors."

http://bibleatlas.org/beautiful_gate.htm

I like to give some of these details to help us picture the scenes about which we read.

But, what struck me as curious was that this man was lame since birth and carried to the gate every day. I didn't have time to dig into the customs of the day but someone carried him to the gate to ask for money – not stay at home and be supported by his family. "Son, we know your lame, but you're a man now and you still have to earn your way in the world. We'll give you a ride to and from work so that you can support yourself financially".

But, then I wondered if Jesus walked by this man on His way into and out of the Temple – and if He did, why hadn't He healed him?

(Acts 3:4 NKJV) And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us." **(5)** So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.

He was expecting money, but in a million years he would not have guessed what was about to happen!

(Acts 3:6 NKJV) 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."

"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth". How much has that phrase been abused over the years. It's not magic; it's not even a 'guarantee' or a 'formula' for success. It's not **just** claiming authority that Jesus gives us. When we say "in the name of Jesus", we are saying that we are identified completely with Jesus and we believe that what we say or do is perfectly aligned with His purposes. The Name expresses the very nature of his being. In Judaism, God is often referred to as HaShem "The Name"; The "name" is Yahweh and is so revered that they just say 'the Name' when speaking of God in a public manner outside the synagogue or Temple. Even in scriptural translation, YHVH is written as LORD and pronounced 'Adonai'. No one is to pronounce His Name!

People have arrogantly claimed that if a person was not healed, it was their own fault because they lacked faith. Healers can sometimes be very cruel. Even this man was expecting money not healing. Peter and John, in obedience to the urging of the Holy Spirit, and by their faith that it was Jesus healing this man, acted.

(Acts 3:7 NKJV) And he took him by the right hand and lifted *him* up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

Perhaps aware of the man's unbelief, but sure that this man was restored, Peter lifted him up and he was healed at that very moment.

(Acts 3:8 NKJV) So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God.

Praising God! Not Peter, not John. And, not just walking but leaping about in the utter joy at what God had done.

(Acts 3:9 NKJV) And all the people saw him walking and praising God. (Acts 3:10 NKJV) 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.

Another strange thing to me since many had to have known about Jesus' healings...but then again, 'He was dead' so how could the healings of that 'man' continue?

(Acts 3:11 NKJV) 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.

This important element of Herod's temple, preserving in its name a traditional connection with Solomon. It is mentioned 3 times in the New Testament. The portico bearing Solomon's name was built along the eastern wall in the Court of the Gentiles of Herod's temple. The portico was the scene of Christ's teaching at the Feast of the Dedication (John 10:23), and was flocked to by the multitude after the healing of the lame man (Acts 3:11). There the apostles preached and wrought other miracles (Acts 5:12).

http://bibleatlas.org/solomon's_portico.htm

The man grabbed onto Peter and John either out of fear that somehow the cure would not last OR perhaps because he just wanted to stay close to them out of gratitude and to make sure people knew who healed him.

(Acts 3:12 NKJV) 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?"

Peter takes advantage of the large crowd that was gathering. Not to exploit the healing for his own glory, but to make sure that they knew Who wrought this miracle.

(Acts 3:13 NKJV) 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.

Peter wants them to know that it was their God, the God of their fathers **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** – and not some other 'god'. Some had become to believe that because they were preaching Christ, they rejected the God of their Fathers and were calling on the Name of another God.

When God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush, He says to him

(Exodus 3:6 NKJV) Moreover He said, "**I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.**" And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

This assured Moses that this was the True and Living God, not some strange apparition

And once again, perhaps wanting to beat a dead horse, Peter reminds them of their culpability in the matter of the crucifixion of Jesus.

(Acts 3:14 NKJV) But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, (15) and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

Pressing on, he also reminds them that the Holy Innocent one, the Righteous One was killed while a murderer was granted grace to go free.

(Acts 3:16 NKJV) 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.

Again, it's not just the name "Jesus" that healed; it involves faith in the Person and Character of Jesus.

And through the faith they had in His name, that is, in the Person and His ability and willingness to heal this man, Jesus granted this man "perfect soundness" – right in front of your very eyes!

All credit, all Glory goes to Jesus! Peter and John accept their roles as Jesus' bond-servants, imperfect vessels thru whom He healed this man.

(Acts 3:17 NKJV) "Yet now, brethren, I know that you did *it* in ignorance, as *did* also your rulers.

Peter calls them "brothers", perhaps in an affectionate way and grants that perhaps they did what they did out of complete ignorance of who Jesus really was: LORD and Messiah. He was offering hope.

Paul wrote of himself:

1 Timothy 1:12-14 NKJV And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry, (13) although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; **but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. (14) And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.**

(Acts 3:18 NKJV) But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

This was God's plan from the beginning.

The most vivid and powerful of these is Isaiah 53. So much so that the passage was taken out of the list of weekly readings required by all orthodox Jews. But, there are so many others like Psalm 16, Psalm 22, Psalm 40 and of course the Major and Minor prophets! And not just in specific references, but in "pictures" and "types", like some believe of Joseph, Moses, Jeremiah etc.

(Acts 3:19 NKJV) Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

Commentator Albert Barnes writes:

Sin cannot be pardoned before man repents of it. In the order of the work of grace, repentance must always precede pardon. Of course, no man can have evidence that his sin is pardoned until he repents.

Compare [Isa 1:16-20](#); [Joe 2:13](#).

[Act 5:31](#) Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, **to give repentance** to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

[Act 11:18](#) When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also **granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.**"

[Ephesians 2:8-9 NKJV](#) For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, (9) not of works, lest anyone should boast.

This isn't Calvinism. This is man exercising his God-given free-will with the faith that he is given and the Grace of God. Many people refuse the gift of faith and in their rebellion, reject the Grace that is in front of them.

Barnes goes on to say:

The Holy Spirit does not "repent" for us. It is our "own mind" that repents; our own heart that feels; our own eyes that weep - and without this there can be no true repentance. So of faith. God cannot believe for us. "We" must believe, or "we" shall be damned. Still this does not conflict at all with the opinion, that if we exercise faith, the inclination to do it is to be traced to the agency of God on the heart.

[\(Acts 3:20\)](#) and **that He may send Jesus Christ**, who was preached to you before, (21) whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

The basic meaning of this is that Jesus, the Messiah had already come. They rejected him; But all is not lost! If they repent and turn from their evil ways, Jesus would come again, in the form of the Holy Spirit, also referred to as the Spirit of Christ; The Jews believed that Messiah would come only 1 time and not return to heaven but set up His Earthly Kingdom. But Jesus did return to heaven and will not again return until the "times of restoration of all things". The Jews knew, from the Scriptures, of the last days, the Day of the Lord, and the time of Jacob's trouble.

The phrase "whom heaven must receive" means it was "fit" or "proper" that heaven, the is, the Father would receive Him – who was the only worthy One.

And again, it wasn't like they were never taught of His coming! Prophecy after Prophecy spoke of the Coming One who would set things right.

[\(Acts 3:22 NKJV\)](#) For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN. HIM YOU SHALL HEAR IN ALL THINGS, WHATEVER HE SAYS TO YOU. (23) AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERY SOUL WHO WILL NOT HEAR THAT PROPHET SHALL BE UTTERLY DESTROYED FROM AMONG THE PEOPLE.'

From Deuteronomy 18:18-19; the Promise of a Prophet like Moses, of Jewish descent; He would be one of them! Moses tells them to listen carefully to this Prophet! And then the warning: If you do not listen and obey the words that He will speak in God's Name, God will require severe punishment of them, that Justice is required.

The Jews understood this:

Mark 6:14-15 NKJV Now King Herod heard *of Him*, for His name had become well known. And he said, "John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him." (15) Others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is **the Prophet**, or like one of the prophets."

And asking John the Baptizer about his authority:

John 1:21 NKJV And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you **the Prophet**?" And he answered, "No."

And after feeding the 5000:

John 6:14-15 NKJV Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "**This is truly the Prophet** who is to come into the world." (15) Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.

This Prophet, who 'came into the world', was equated with King Messiah whom they all eagerly expected.

(Acts 3:24 NKJV) Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days.

Samuel,.... The Jewish sages called him, "the master of the prophets"; in his days, the schools of the prophets were set up.

Weren't these days also prophesied by Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel?

Isaiah 52:7 NLT How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!

Isaiah 53

Jeremiah 31:31-34 NKJV "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— (32) not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a **husband** to them, says the LORD. (33) But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Ezekiel 36:24-27 NKJV For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. (25) Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. (26) I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. (27) I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*.

(Acts 3:25 NKJV) You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.'

And like Paul after him, Peter takes them back to the covenant with Abraham: that Messiah, his seed, would come and bless ALL the families of the earth!

Not the Mosaic Covenant that contained curses for disobedience, which, are still in effect for those who remain under this covenant, that is, under the LAW.

(Acts 3:26 NKJV) To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one *of you* from your iniquities."

Peter makes it personal: It was to you and for you that Jesus was raised up from the dead. It was the risen Messiah that blesses you and turns you all from your iniquities.

And is perfectly aligned with Paul who wrote to Titus concerning Jesus:

Titus 2:14 NKJV who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.

Unfortunately, there's another chapter break. Maybe those who added the chapter and verse numbers wanted to build up the tension:

What happened next? Did thousands more come to Jesus for the remission of their sins and the promise of eternal life with Him? Will the Pastor say "Tune in next week for another exciting chapter in the lives of "THE NEW MESSIANIC JEWS"?"

(Acts 4:1 NKJV) Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them,

From this, it appears that John also preached to the crowds. Whether they tag-teamed or John and Peter were apart with smaller groups, it was not known.

The "captain of the temple" was essentially the head of the temple police force. These and others are the guys that arrested Jesus.

(Acts 4:2 NKJV) being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

Sadducees were a sect among the Jews, that among other beliefs, denied the resurrection of the dead and even an afterlife. John Lennon would have been a Sadducee.

(Acts 4:3 NKJV) And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

It was illegal, under Jewish Law to have a trial after sun-down. However, for Jesus, they ignored their own laws!

And so, it begins again: Jewish authorities restart their efforts to squash this new “sect” of Judaism. They couldn’t keep Jesus dead and buried; they were losing their hold on people and were threatened by this small group of people. Was their opposition born of selfishness, greed, loss of control? Was it because they were afraid that the people would abandon Judaism for another “religion”?

(Matthew 3:7 NKJV) But when he [John the Baptizer] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

And, who can forget Jesus’s 7 woes spoken to the Scribes and Pharisees recorded in Matthew 23? Words of condemnation and of Hell!

(Acts 4:4 NKJV) **However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.**

Despite all of this growing persecution, the “church” grew to 5000. Some believe that this is in addition to the 3000; others, that 2000 more were added.

But, stopping here, am I not setting up even more tension in the story? Yes. So, tune in next week as we continue the saga of “The Man who changed the world”.

Church, what can we draw from all of this?

We are, perhaps, using a familiar picture: seeing a woman who is just beginning labor pains. And it will get more painful as her labor continues, until the time of the birth.

We continue to read about the apostles but we are really reading about the Holy Spirit’s work through them. We see the start of the great commission: making Jewish disciples in Jerusalem. This would change because that’s what Jesus wanted: **But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."** Acts 1:8 NKJV.

Peter boldly proclaims the Good News: Christ died at the hands of men; death and hell could not hold him and after 3 days, He was raised from the dead; this was God restoring the relationship that was broken in the Garden;

This Jesus, whom we crucified, was the One foretold in all our Scriptures. He is The Prophet; He is the Holy and Just One, He is the kinsmen-redeemer, He is the Messiah, He is the Anointed One; He is one of us and yet, He is the Son of God; He is called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. He is Emanuel – God with us; He is the Great I AM; He is Adonai Tzekanu, the LORD our righteousness.

I could go on for hours but I can also sum it up in two words: HE IS!

This is Jesus we read about; We were all like this man who was healed: we were lame but didn’t know there was a cure! We were like the Jews: they had the very Words of God and yet were too blind to see the TRUTH.

We were like the thousands who came into the Light of Jesus when someone shared the “Good News” with us in such a way as to impress upon our hearts our need for forgiveness, our need for a Savior; for the one who would remove the sin that had separated us from our God.

It’s a joy to read about the growth of the Body of Christ. It’s encouraging to see thousands upon thousands come to their Messiah. It’s also sad to see many thousands who refused the Gift. What the Apostles experienced then, is what we experience today. You can lead people to the Truth, but you can’t force them to drink Living Water. That will always be up to God the Holy Spirit.