

Ministering in the Name of Jesus **Acts 3:1-4:31**

Introduction

The church was born with a mighty display of power. Sounds from heaven, the apostles speaking in foreign tongues, and Peter's first sermon had drawn three thousand souls to faith in Christ. From the beginning, the church was **vital**, growing, and a great witness to those in Jerusalem. Luke wrote in Acts 2:43 that people were filled with fear as they saw signs and wonders done by the apostles. Chapter three describes one of these — the healing of a forty year old man who had been lame (unable to walk) from birth. By the power in the name of Jesus, Peter and John reveal how faith changes lives!

The apostles performed many miracles, but this is the one which led to the first **persecution** of believers by the Jewish religious leaders. Chapter four describes the arrest of Peter and John. It also shows that the word of God continued to win out even though the preachers were persecuted. We will see the true character and faith of these men and how the Holy Spirit changes their lives.

Outline of Acts 3:1-4:31

- I. The Power of God - 3:1-26
- II. Persecution by the Rulers - 4:1-22
- III. Prayer of the Believers - 4:23-31

I. The Power of God - 3:1-26

Peter and John were on their way to the temple around 3:00 p.m. for the usual time of prayer when they came upon a lame man. He was over forty years old (Acts 4:22). He had been lame from birth and his condition seemed hopeless. Because he was unable to work to take care of himself, all he could do was beg. For years, he had been carried each day up to the temple and laid at the Beautiful Gate (an entrance on the east side of the temple). There,

he would beg from the people who were going to offer a sacrifice, worship, or pray. This man called out to Peter and John. Peter and John did not look away as some do when they see a beggar. They looked the man in the eyes and told him, "*Look at us.*" Expecting to receive something, the lame man gave them his full attention. How surprised he must have been when Peter told him that they had no money, but they would give him something else — a cure. Peter told him to stand up and walk, *in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*. It was the power and **authority** of Jesus which would heal, not Peter. Peter was only the 'instrument' of the healing. That means that Peter was like a violin in the hands of a musician. The violin doesn't make the music come out of itself. It is the musician that uses the instrument to make the sounds. Like Peter, you are also God's instrument. God wants to use you to display his power and authority. Are you ready and willing?

Luke tells us that immediately the man's feet and ankle bones were strengthened so that he was able to do five things he had never done before. He was able to leap up, to stand, to walk, to enter the temple, and to praise God as a healthy man. He did these things with such excitement that he drew the attention of everyone in the temple. They recognized he was the beggar from the Beautiful Gate and were amazed.

This beggar is a good example to us as believers. Shouldn't our lives and our witness amaze others? Will you stand for Him, and walk for Him, and praise His name? Will you let others know what He has done for you?

The lame man stayed with Peter and John as they entered Solomon's porch, a covered

colonnade on the east side of the temple where Jesus had taught before (John 10:23). The amazed crowd drew closer to the three men and Peter took this opportunity to preach the gospel. His sermon confirmed that the lame man was healed through faith in Jesus. Peter took no credit for the miracle.

Peter asked the crowd two questions: 1) *Why do you marvel at this?* 2) *Why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?* The lame man had been healed by the power of the *name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth* (3:6). The healed man knew whose power had healed him. After all, he did not praise Peter and John. He praised God (3:8).

Peter started by teaching that Jesus was the Messiah. He did this by calling Jesus the "Servant of God" which was what the prophet Isaiah had called the Messiah (Isaiah 42:1, 49:6-7, 53:11). Peter was compassionate calling the listeners his brothers. He knew that they had done a terrible act in ignorance. Peter knew also that the suffering and death of Christ (the Messiah) had been foretold by the prophets and had to be fulfilled (see Psalm 22; Isaiah 50:6; 53:5; Daniel 9:26; Luke 24:25-26; John 13:18).

As he did in his last sermon, he told the listeners to repent and be converted. They had the opportunity to turn from their sin and turn to God. They had the opportunity to reverse their judgment and confess Jesus as their Messiah. The result would be forgiveness of sins and great blessings from God.

II. Persecution by the Rulers - 4:1-22

The crowds around Peter and John had attracted the attention of the Jewish rulers. Chapter four reveals the first open resistance to the apostles' teaching. The Jewish leaders were upset because Peter and John were preaching that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead. The men that came to arrest Peter and John were the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Saducees. The **Saducees**, very powerful

members of the priesthood, did not believe a body could be resurrected from the dead. That is why they were 'sad, you-see.' No wonder they were upset by Peter preaching that God had raised Christ from the dead (3:15).

(NOTE: There were two main religious parties which existed in Jerusalem at this time — the Pharisees and the Saducees. In Luke's gospel, the Pharisees were the biggest opponents of Christ because He pointed out their **hypocrisies** and was a threat to their authority. In Acts, the Saducees are the biggest opponents of the apostles because the teaching of Jesus' resurrection was a threat to their beliefs and power.)

By the time Peter and John were arrested, the temple sacrifices were concluded, and the temple gates were closed. No official action could be taken that day, so the apostles were held in custody. Even so, many who had heard Peter's sermon believed, bringing the total number of converts to over 5,000. The church was growing!

The next day the apostles were taken before the Sanhedrin (the highest Jewish court). It was the same group of powerful men who had recently judged Jesus. They asked, "*By what power or by what name have you done this?*" In other words, who gave YOU the authority to do what you have done?

(NOTE: Jesus had promised His apostles that they would be arrested and questioned. He had also promised that at those times, the Holy Spirit would give them the proper words to speak (Mark 13:11). That promise was now fulfilled as the Holy Spirit filled Peter to speak with power and wisdom to his opponents.)

Peter answered the question directly. He and John had done a *good deed* (action) in healing the helpless man, and it had been done *by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*. The very same Jesus that these men had crucified and whom God had raised from the dead.

Just as the name of Jesus was the lame man's only hope for healing, the name of Jesus is the only hope for us too. None of us — not Peter's listeners, not anyone reading these lessons, nor anyone anywhere anytime can find salvation in any other. It is Jesus Christ alone who saves. Have you repented of your sin and found salvation in Him?

By the power of the Holy Spirit, the prosecutors had become the defendants. They were put on the spot! Jesus had told His apostles that they would be given words and wisdom which their opponents would not be able to deny (Luke 21:15). That is exactly what happened.

Peter and John were sent out of the council chambers, and the rulers talked among themselves. They could not deny that the lame man had been healed because he was standing right in front of them. They could not deny that it was a *good deed* as Peter had stated. They could not deny that it was a miracle because the lame man was over forty years old, and everyone had known this man for years. Everyone had witnessed the miracle.

The council resolved to do two things. They threatened Peter and John, and they ordered them not to speak to anyone about the name of Jesus. They could not punish the apostles like they wanted because the apostles were very popular with the people. What would you do if you were told by people in charge not to talk about Jesus, or else?

Typically, Jews would obey the Sanhedrin because they were the authority in charge. But there is a greater authority than the church, the police, kings, and even the President. God, the Creator of all, is the highest authority. The Sanhedrin refused to recognize the authority of God, so the apostles' duty to God was more important than obeying the commands of the Sanhedrin.

III. Prayer of the Believers - Acts 4:23-31

Peter and John returned to their friends and

told them all that had happened in the council chambers. Then, *with one accord*, they turned to God in prayer. When you're in trouble or when people are against you, who do you turn to?

They prayed for three things: boldness to speak God's word, the ability to heal, and the power to perform signs and wonders through the name of Jesus. Notice that they did not pray for their own protection or for God to remove the persecution. Instead, they prayed for strength and power to face the future.

As the prayer closed, the meeting place was shaken. All who were assembled were filled with the Holy Spirit and went out and preached the word of God with boldness. †

Prayer

Thank God for sending the Holy Spirit to give us strength and comfort in times of trouble.

Memory Verse

Acts 2:21 and Joel 2:32a — *And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

Vocabulary

vital - absolutely necessary or important

persecution - harassing or treating someone badly especially because of their religion

authority - the power to determine/control

Saducees - a religious group of Jews that practiced Judaism but did not believe resurrection was possible. They were also powerful members of the priesthood.

hypocrisies - actions done by a person who says not to do something, but he does the action himself.

QUESTIONS FOR ACTS LESSON 4

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Review last week's lesson and read notes.

1. What impressed you most about the healing of the lame man?

2. What did you learn from the notes about the name of Jesus?

DAY TWO: Read Acts 4:32-5:11.

3. What impressed you most about the believers in Acts 4:32-35?

4. a. What do you learn about a man called Barnabas?

- b. What was the importance of Barnabas being a Levite? See Numbers 1:50-53 for help.

- c. What else do you learn about Barnabas from:

Acts 9:26-27? _____

Acts 11:22-24? _____

Acts 13:1? _____

Acts 15:25-26? _____

5. a. How were the actions of Barnabas and Ananias the same?

- b. What was different about what they did? _____

- c. What was the specific sin of Ananias and Sapphira?

6. a. What happened to Ananias and Sapphira? _____

b. ? (Thought Question) Why do you think the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira was so harsh?

c. What was the reaction of the church and all those who heard about it?

DAY THREE: Read Acts 5:12-23.

7. a. How was the disciples' prayer in Acts 4:29-30 answered?

b. What did the High Priest and the Saducees think of what was happening, and what did they do?

8. What amazing thing happened after this? Give verse?

9. a. What were the apostles told to speak about?

b. What do you think this means?

10. a. While the apostles were obeying what the angel had told them to do, what was the High Priest doing?

b. What surprising report did the High Priest receive from the officers?

DAY FOUR: Read Acts 5:24-33.

11. Why did the captain and officers have to be careful when they went to bring the apostles before the council?

12. a. What did the high priest talk to the apostles about when they were brought before the council? Underline the correct statements.

They had been commanded not to teach in the name of Jesus.

They were making fools of themselves.

They had filled Jerusalem with their doctrine.

They intended to bring Jesus' blood upon the council.

They were going to be severely punished.

b. How did Peter answer the high priest in verse 29?

- c. From verses 30-32:
give reasons for obeying God.

give reasons for not obeying the council.

13. How did the High Priest and council respond to what Peter said?

DAY FIVE: Read Acts 5:34-42.

14. a. Who did not agree with the council, and what do you learn about him?

b. What was his advice?"

c. What important reason did he give for following his advice? Give verses.

15. a. Did the council agree or disagree? Circle one. YES / NO

b. What did the council do to the apostles?

c. What command did they give them?

16. a. What did the apostles do after they were released?

b. ♥ (Heart Question) What do you learn from this that can help you in your own life?
