

ACTS 3

MORE THAN WE BARGAINED FOR

Have you ever gotten more than you bargained for? We go into circumstances, many times, with certain expectations. Sometimes we expected too much, but there are other times we go into situations not expecting very much at all. There are certain times where we just expect the status quo – the norm – the banal and the humdrum. Unfortunately, that is what many people's Christian lives have become. Growing up in Mississippi, going to church was just something I thought everyone did. I can even remember the first time I discovered someone that didn't go to church. I was flabbergasted.

But living as a subject of the king of creation should never be just humdrum. Don't get me wrong. It isn't all roses happy times. But it definitely shouldn't just be, 'blah!'

As we get into Acts chapter three, we are going to see how Peter continues proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom, but he goes beyond what he said in chapter two. He expands on what he said there in order to show the people the continuous integrated thread of the OT and how it what they had been looking for, for so long had come to pass and what that meant to them, as well as us. And guess what – it started with an encounter that would have been commonplace – the status quo. And from that single banal encounter, Jesus began to move and added 2,000 more believers. Let's look at what happened.

1 Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. 2 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. 4 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. 6 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." 7 And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. 8 So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God. 10 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.

Peter and John have gone up to the temple at one of the scheduled prayer times – 3:00 PM. And as happens where people congregate, there was a lame man, who, unable to work was taken there, every day by his friends in order to beg for whatever money he could get through begging. We have all seen this, and you can see it even more in countries where there is no social safety net. As Peter and John were about to enter the temple, this man asked them for some money. He didn't want to look them directly in the eye, there was some shame there, as we are accustomed to seeing in such situations. Peter stopped and looked directly at him. I'm sure it was a bit of an awkward moment. And Peter then tells him to look at him. This was a personal moment. Peter then tells the man that he has no money. This statement comes on the heels of the believers selling many of the things and property they had in order to help one another,

in a new sort of community. There was a new kind of power and a new kind of life to be had – and since that was all Peter had, he offered the man all he had. At first this may sound a bit ironic, but actually, money was no longer as important to them, as they were willing to part with it for the benefit of others. All the lame expects is a coin or two. But Peter tells him to rise and walk in the name of Jesus. He didn't even ask him if he wanted to be healed. He just told him to get up!

What Peter said: "Get up in the name of Jesus."

What Peter didn't say, "Rise up and walk." This was how Jesus would have done it. But Peter says it differently, and he does it for a reason. Peter makes it clear that the healing came through the power of the name of Jesus. It's the power and authority of the name of Jesus that counts.

Have you ever been guilty of name dropping? I believe we all have some time. "Just tell them that I sent you." Or, as in their day, there were other ways of dropping names.

"In the name of Caesar!" "In the name of the law!"

"The boss wants this done, now."

Conjuring spirits or summoning spirits/ gods in order to get some result. It was believed that knowing the name of someone, or using their name gave you power over a person or entity. (asking the demon their name)

But that left the person in bondage to the person using the name. Not so, when the name of Jesus was dropped.

The name and authority of Jesus carried that power – real power!

This man was now free. He was free from his ailment and he was now free to go from being outside the temple to now being able to go inside the temple to pray and worship just like everyone else.

And this leads us to another point. Until now, in the book of Acts, the whole story has taken place in Jerusalem, but not around the temple. We have seen people worshipping in the temple, but all the fellowship and teaching, as well as the miracles have taken place away from the temple, just as in Jesus' ministry, He was healing and casting out demons in Galilee. This angered the priests and scribes because all these things were supposed to be done by them in/ at the temple. Jesus was 'handing out passports without the official approval.

All these things are happening away from the temple. The power of God is no longer centralized in one geographic place and it is no longer restricted to the official clergy.

Anyone who believes can play a part and those who don't will soon be rendered obsolete. Jesus has already predicted that the temple will be destroyed. There will be no more need of it when His people, a new sort of temple is growing and taking up sacred space.

The temple had become a symbol of oppression and worldly power, resistant to His purposes. This will come to a head a few chapters from now.

11 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. 12 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? 13 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. 14 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. 16 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.

As you would expect, this whole scene drew people to Peter and John, who looked at them as the source of the miracle, but Peter quickly deflects their attention. And he doesn't do it in order to dodge the question, he does it order to give credit to the credit is due. "Why are you looking at us?" he asks. "We are just ordinary people like you! We didn't do this, but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers did this!"

If we aren't careful, we can miss something here. He refers to Jesus in a dramatic and formal way. He is quoting Exodus 3. The hearers would have instantly hyperlinked back to Exodus and known that Peter was referring to the exodus. This was where Moses met God in the burning bush and was told to go back to Egypt in order to free his people. Jesus had quoted the same passage while debating with the Sadducees in the temple. Lk 20:37.

Peter then goes on to say that Jesus was innocent in verses 13 – 15. He told them they traded the prince of life for a murderer. In Isaiah 53:12, the innocent bore the sins of the guilty.

The innocent man was Jesus and in His name through faith in His name the man was healed. He is making the case that Jesus is Messiah. But the name isn't a magic word like "abracadabra." There has to be faith in the name. There has to be faith in the hearer, the speaker or both. Peter then goes on to show how this all works. This man was given this 'perfect soundness' and they have all seen it.

17 "Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 But those things which God foretold

by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 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, 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. 22 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.’ 24 Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. 25 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.’ 26 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 has indicted them once again. His message from the day of Pentecost hasn't changed. He is just expanding on it. And once again, he gives them an out from their part in Jesus' crucifixion – they did it in ignorance. The Messiah had to suffer and that has been fulfilled in the very thing, the awful thing in which they had taken part. He then goes on to show them, by quoting from the OT, that Jesus is the Messiah. The very thing they had been looking for, has taken place, they were just looking for the wrong 'type' of Messiah.

Besides mentioning Isaiah, Peter mentions Moses, Samuel, and Abraham. The promise to Abraham, "In your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed." is one of the key themes running through the entirety of the Bible. And that is now beginning!

But Peter isn't just randomly quoting proof texts to make his case. What he is doing is portraying the OT as a single great story with a common theme that points forward to something God wanted to do through Abraham and his family. And Moses, Samuel, Isaiah and the rest were all pointing towards the same thing. And that thing has happened, and anyone can be a part of it!

Peter has expanded his message and is now funneling it down into what the kingdom is. There is a new king and a new Israel. And the NT says we are all part of that kingdom and the new Israel. Yes, there is a futuristic part of the kingdom that speaks of the restoration of all things. But there is also something here in the present. Part of that restoration has been brought forward because God wants to see it happen in every individual – every man, woman and child. And because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, anyone who turn from their own life to a new life in Jesus – even those who had just weeks ago cried out for His death, can know in advance the joy of being forgiven and refreshed by the love and mercy of God.

19 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,

Everyone can use a time of refreshing. And if you know you are in need of this, I ask you to consider, as you go through the week, what Peter has said and just how that can change your life – as you go from someone on the outside of the temple, to a worshipper. Consider how things can change if we allow God to move in and through us as we then tell others as we move out into our spheres of influence as they did – as money becomes less important and seeing after others takes precedence. Consider what really turning around and turning away from the

way we have seen our purpose and our lives and look at how God has defined our lives and the purpose He has given us.