

Acts Chapter 3

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, well today we are going to engage Chapter 3. I know some of you thought we would never get through 2, but we finally made it. So welcome to our session for the last Thursday and our last meeting in the month of May.

It's hard to imagine, but June is almost upon us already. So thank you for closing out the month of May with us, and I want to look at Chapter 3. Before we begin, however, let me just emphasize something that you are going to probably hear me say again and again and again, and I want to say it, not so you'll remember it, but I want to say it so you won't be able to forget it.

And that is this. The opportunity that God had presented and committed to Israel for the embracing of their Messiah did not end with the crucifixion of Christ.

That is a typical position that is taken by most Catholic and most Protestant teachers. And that is that when the leadership of Israel, the religious establishment, got together and connived with Judas and used Pontius Pilate more or less to do their dirty work because they didn't have the authority to execute someone.

So he involved the religious establishment, enjoyed the Roman authorities to carry out their dirty work for them and ordered the execution of Christ.

[1 : 3 7] Most are of the opinion that when that happened, that was Israel's final answer to the person of Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah.

And nowhere did the Scriptures say that. The Bible does not give that indication at all. And we are of the opinion that the opportunity that God was committing to the nation of Israel extended beyond the crucifixion.

In other words, the crucifixion of Christ was not Israel's final answer to Jesus being their Messiah. And I evidenced that by the fact that when Christ was on that cross, one of the statements that he made was, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

And I don't think he was really talking about the Roman soldiers who were driving the nails in his hands and feet, although they may have been included. But I am persuaded that principally he was talking about those who were responsible for engineering his crucifixion, his death, the trials, the whole thing, the religious establishment.

They did not know what they were doing. And Peter later makes this clear when he indicates that the nation of Israel was acting ignorantly.

[3 : 0 3] And Paul the Apostle refers to having persecuted Christians, but he did so ignorantly and in unbelief. They simply did not believe Jesus was the Messiah, but he was.

And I am persuaded that when Christ offered that prayer to his Father for their forgiveness, the Father forgave them. Can you imagine the Son of God offering a prayer to his Father that would go unanswered?

The Father forgave them. And that put Israel, or kept Israel, if you will, right in the mainstream, so that when Peter preached his message in Acts chapter 2, it was an extension of offering to Israel the Messiah whom they had earlier rejected.

And 3,000 of them at least got on board with that program. And they believed Jesus was the Messiah, and they were baptized in his name. And that is not Christian baptism.

There's nothing Christian about it. They were baptized in the name of Jesus simply because that was the *modus operandi* for John the baptizer. And it was the same baptism.

[4 : 22] It was the only baptism they knew. But for some strange reason, Christians have taken the baptism of Acts chapter 2 that the 3,000 underwent and make that converted into Christian baptism.

There's nothing Christian about it. It is as Jewish as it can be. And what it, of course, symbolized was ceremonial purification and cleansing. It symbolized the same thing that it symbolized for the priest who had been water baptizing themselves for the last 1,500 years.

And it was simply a continuation of that. Now, Peter is saying to the nation of Israel in chapter 2 that you still have an opportunity. And then in chapter 3, we are going to see the offer is repeated again.

And each time, Israel will continue in a mode of rejection. And finally, the answer that they give to Peter's second message in Acts chapter 3, the answer they give to that is persecution.

And they lay holds on the apostles. They put Peter in prison. And their answer continues to be negative insofar as receiving Jesus as the Messiah is concerned.

[5 : 44] Now, if you will look at the... I don't know that we have this here. No, it's on the next page, but it's still in Acts chapter 3. And we will get there.

So, let's get into our text. And if anywhere along the way you have a question or a thought you want to inject, I want you to feel perfectly free to do so.

And that goes for the youthful table over here, too. If you guys have a question, just get your hand up. And if I get carried away with what I'm saying and I don't see your hand, you just start talking. And I'll stop when you start.

Okay? But we want to get to the content in such a way that there is an appreciation and understanding of what is being said. So, now we are opening a new chapter.

And, again, let me emphasize this. In the original text, as the writer was inspired by the Spirit of God, Dr. Luke, to write the book of Acts, he didn't write it in chapters, and he didn't write it in verses.

[6 : 43] These were all added later, much later. It was just an original document that was one continuous writing. So, when you come to the end of one chapter, the tendency is for the continuity to be broken.

And you shouldn't allow that to happen. It just rolls right on. And sometimes it's a real disadvantage the way the chapters are divided. Sometimes it's helpful.

Sometimes it isn't. So, keep in mind, the division between the chapters is not inspired of the Lord. Now, we open in chapter 3. And it's not a bad chapter division. It is a different occasion.

Now, Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. This was probably 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

The third hour of the morning that Peter spoke of in Acts chapter 2, when he said, These men are not drunken, as you suppose. It's only the third hour of the morning.

[7 : 45] That was 9 o'clock in the morning. Noon is the sixth hour, reckoning the time beginning at 6 a.m. Then the ninth hour would be 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

And it was a typical time for Jewish prayers. And they go up to the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man, and this individual is never named.

We don't have a name to put on him. But he is 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 of them that entered into the temple.

This guy was a full-time beggar. That was his job. That was probably all he could do. And he had family and friends who respected his position, and they respected the man.

This guy had brothers and sisters and cousins and just like probably everybody else. And when he was born, he exited his mother's womb with a physical deformity.

[9 : 04] His legs were injured or unformed or in some way damaged so that he would never walk.

And this guy is in his 40s. He has never walked a day in his life, lame from his mother's womb. His family or friends, once he got to a certain age, would carry him to a place of begging.

And he would sit there all day long with a cup or bowl, and people would come by. The giving of alms is very important in the Jewish economy, and it is in the Muslim economy also, by the way.

It's considered one of the five principles of Islam is to give alms to the poor. So, the thought that they were begging, there was nothing about that that was considered demeaning or unlawful or anything of the kind.

If you were physically unable to make a living, you could always beg. And this guy had a certain place staked out that was his spot, and he was there every day.

[10 : 23] And the people were accustomed to seeing him every day. Probably, this was a prime position for beggars. If you could situate yourself right at the gate where people enter and exit for doing religious things, you are likely to catch them in a more generous frame of mind.

And that would be an ideal spot for a beggar to be situated. Probably, this would be his spot until he died. And they had a system whereby there were choice places available for beggars, and as they died off, someone would put dibs in on that place, and they would move up and get the more choice places.

If you were a beggar who came to the art of begging rather recently, recently, you might have a place that is out of the way, that didn't have much traffic, where you wouldn't receive much by way of alms or gifts.

But this guy had a choice spot, and he was located at a very strategic place. And we are told that he was there for the specific purpose of asking alms of them that entered into the temple.

You've seen pictures of this in movies and whatnot, and this guy sitting there cross-legged with his hand out, alms please, alms for the poor, and people would go by, and they would, and you know, sometimes a fairly decent living could be made, especially if you are there at a season when it is a feast time going on, there's a lot more people, a lot more traffic, and a lot better income.

[12 : 06] And some of these guys made out quite well, being there all day long. And when Peter and John go into the temple in verse 3, the man asked an alms of them.

And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

And he gave heed unto them. Now, he probably wasn't used to looking at anybody. He just held his plate out, you know. The guy wasn't blind, but he was lame.

He just held his plate out in alms, alms, you know. And he was noticing people who came by. Probably would eye somebody who was attired in very nice apparel, wearing very nice garments, and he would size this guy up as he was coming down.

This is someone you pay special attention to. You try to make eye contact with him. You want to put your heart out to him. You want to receive something from him.

[13 : 09] He is well-dressed. He's probably well-heeled. You might get a nice coin from this guy. So, you just automatically pick out these kind of people as you're moving your bowl around, looking for alms.

Peter and John didn't fit that description. They probably just looked like a couple of ordinary guys. And Peter says, Look on us. Look here. He wasn't making eye contact with them, obviously.

But now he will. Peter has drawn attention to it. And he says, Peter says, Silver and gold have I none.

And the guy's probably thinking right there, Well, then, you're not going to do me any good. If you don't have any silver, you don't have any gold. Why are you even engaging me in conversation?

But such as I have, give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.

[14 : 11] Now, this is quite striking for a couple of reasons. One of which is, he didn't ask the guy, Would you like to walk?

Would you like to stand up? He didn't even give him a voice. He just said, In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And I think, the text doesn't say this, maybe this is Wiseman reading something into it, but I think Peter reached down and took that man by the hand, and he put his hand in Peter's, and Peter yanked on him.

Nobody ever yanked on this guy with the idea that he's going to respond by coming up to his feet.

All the time, we see this scene repeated in football. All the time, you see a guy's just tackled, or a guy has taken a hit, and a buddy walks over and gives him a hand, yanks on him, and just kind of helps him, you know, it's just a courtesy of the game, and you just yank this buddy up, and up off the turf, and he's back on his feet, and then the game again.

I think that's kind of like what we've got taking place here, except when a pro football player, a college football player, reaches out his hand to a guy who's on the ground, he fully expects him to just come right on up with him, and he does.

[15 : 40] What do you think this man was thinking? Rise up and walk. Is this guy crazy or what? Doesn't he know what I am, and who I am, and what's wrong with me?

Is this an occasion of mocking and cruelty? Or you tell someone who is lame, who has never walked a day in his life, get up and walk?

We would consider that some kind of abuse, wouldn't we? mocking, making fun of the handicap, or whatever. If that thought ever existed, it was for a split second.

Because when Peter said that, and reached down, and took this man, and up he came, we cannot imagine what was happening physically in this man's body.

You know, people who have suffered from an extended illness and have been bedridden for a long time, maybe in a coma for months, and we have many, many instances of this documented.

[16 : 57] One of the things they invariably have to do when they get back on their feet is they have to learn to walk all over again because they lost that ability.

And the weakness that takes over and the atrophy in the legs, usually when somebody is undergoing that, they have to have physical therapists come in and move the person's legs for them just to keep the muscles from atrophying.

And it's a terribly debilitating case to be in. And we've got people like this right here in Springfield, right now, as I speak, at the hospital, who are immobilized this way.

This man's legs have never been really muscled like a normal person's legs.

Never had been because they've never been used. These are feet that have never been stood on, legs that have never been walked on. I cannot imagine the energy, the blood flow, the muscle tone, everything coming to life in this man's legs for the first time in their life.

[18 : 10] We don't know if they were withered, if they were, we just know they were out of commission and they had been from the time he was born. He took him by the right hand and lifted him up, raised him up.

Rhames says, and laying hold of him by the right hand, he raised him up. I can just imagine this guy saying, what are you doing? What are you doing?

I can't walk. He's just pulling on him just like he had two good legs and he's just pulling him up from a sitting position. I can't help but wonder, what was this guy feeling in his legs?

Maybe he was, maybe he was feeling in his legs for the first time and who knows what. And it was a strange thing to him. Immediately, his feet and ankle bones received strength.

Immediately, this wasn't a gradual thing. Peter isn't saying, now you just be patient and this will be a gradual healing and, no, no. It's immediate.

[19 : 24] That is a miracle in itself. Not only the fact that it was done, but it was done immediately. And we are all aware there is only one source that is capable of providing this kind of a result.

immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. I don't know how many of you here have ever tried ice skating.

I did, I think, for the first time when I was about 15 years old, something like that. And I've been playing all kinds of, all kinds of sports and I thought, you know, what's the big deal? You get on ice skates and you skate around.

I could not believe how weak and wobbly my ankles were to get on ice skates for the first time. It was almost like I had no strength at all in my ankles.

I mean, it was wobbly, you know. And here, I've been playing all kinds of sports and running track and everything and you would have thought that, but it was different. Being on ice skates with that thin blade, it put a different kind of stress on the ankles that they were not accustomed to.

[20 : 36] And man, I was falling and flopping all over the place because of these weak ankles. Well, this man had never walked with his ankles or feet in his entire life.

I think the text later will say this man is above 40 years old. Had never experienced the reality of walking. And immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength and he, leaping up, stood and walked.

Wouldn't you have loved to have seen this? Wouldn't you have loved to see this man looking down at his feet and his legs and he is looking at them from an angle he'd never seen them from before?

This is utterly new. He is in awe. He cannot believe what is happening. He's wondering, am I dreaming?

Is this real? Is this really happening? I mean, this is as bona fide a miracle as you're going to find. And he entered with them into the temple walking leaping and leaping and praising God.

[22 : 00] Well, this is not a proper setting for a man to be leaping. I mean, he is here at the entrance of a temple.

You stand, you walk, but you don't leap. I mean, that's silly. Who's going to go around like that? You know, I dropped my mic.

Who's going to go around like that, jumping up and down, just because he can do it? He's never done it in his life. And people are standing there wondering, what is, hey, isn't that, yeah, it is.

Well, how is he, I don't know. Well, that's not him, but it sure does look like, no, that's him. I've been coming up here for years. I know him when I see him.

That's old so-and-so. He's here every day. Well, what happened? What's going on? I don't know. Search me. And the crowd is building. I mean, people hear all this commotion.

[23 : 03] They see what has taken place. They are gathering around, and as they focus on this man, it becomes apparent that something really extraordinary has happened.

People are talking, yelling, they're talking to each other, the word is passing, the crowd is growing, and this guy is just beside himself with these newfound legs.

He cannot believe that he is standing on his own two feet, leaping, jumping up and down for the first time in his life. No wonder he is drawing a crowd.

All the people, verse 9, saw him walking and praising God, and they knew they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the beautiful gate of the temple.

And I gave you the picture that we passed around of the temple site for the last couple of weeks. There was one particular, there were lots of gates to the temple that surrounded it, but there was this one gate, one entrance to the temple that was absolutely stunning.

[24 : 15] It was the most beautiful of all, it was the most memorable of all, it was the favorite meeting place of people, I'll meet you at the beautiful gate. Everybody knew what gate that was, because it was the gate that was the most outstanding of all of the entries, all of the doors, and that's where this guy was situated.

And now, they knew that he was the guy who had this regular place there at the beautiful gate. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which happened unto him.

Well, I guess. Everybody is awestruck. Nobody ever seen anything like this before. And those who might have been around who had witnessed some of the miracles of Jesus probably figured whatever Jesus did, and however he did it, that's over with.

That's history, because he's gone. But now, they see the miraculous demonstrated again. And for those of you who are familiar somewhat with the scriptures, we ought not to be surprised at this, because in Matthew chapter 10, when our Lord first called the apostles, we are told that he gave them authority over unclean spirits, over sickness, he gave them the ability to heal the blind, to cure the deaf, and so on, just as he himself had done.

So for a Bible reader, this not ought to be all that amazing, but for these people, it certainly was. And the lame man, verse 11, and as the lame man, which was healed, held Peter and John, the American Standard Version says, he held fast Peter and John.

[26 : 10] William says, he was still clinging to them. Knox renders it, he would not let go of Peter and John. Well, understanding why this man was so overwhelmed with gratitude and appreciation.

These two men he regarded as his benefactors. It is because of these men that I am standing and walking and leaping.

I'm not going to let go of you guys. He is just hugging them. It doesn't say that he's crying, but I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he wasn't crying. Something to cry about. And maybe there are others standing around too that just cannot hardly believe what they are witnessing.

And the crowd continues to grow. And all the people, we are told at verse 11, and all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's.

The portico called Solomon's. You remember the long picture that we gave you and that whole stream of columns along the left side of that, that's Solomon's colonnade or Solomon's portico.

[27 : 29] And it would accommodate literally thousands and thousands of people. It would not be difficult at all for 40,000 or 50,000 people to be gathered there.

Now, we don't know how many were because we aren't told how many. We're just told it was a large crowd. I'm not suggesting that there were 40,000 or 50,000. I'm just suggesting that there were probably several hundred and the number just kept building because anytime somebody comes into an area and they see a crowd of people over there, first thing they wonder is, what's going on over there?

What's everybody over there for? So what do they do? They add themselves to the crowd and the crowd keeps building because they want to know what is going on? What's taking place? This is just human nature and they are greatly wondering.

And when Peter saw it, when Peter saw the crowd building, verse 12, he answered and said unto the people, you men of Israel, why marvel ye at this?

Now again, at the expense of being redundant, I want to emphasize the content of the audience. These are Jews.

[28 : 48] They are all Jews. This is a Jewish temple. They are there because they are Jews. You will not find any Gentiles there. There is the court of the Gentiles.

We identified that. That is outside the barrier. This is inside the barrier. This is at the temple gate beautiful. You were not allowed in here unless you were a Jew.

And when Peter addresses them, he makes it very clear as to who his audience is. You men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? Knox says, why does this astonish you?

Or, why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

This is a beautiful, beautiful expression of Peter. first thing he's doing is, he is refusing to take credit for what these people are seeing.

[29 : 51] He is offering a disclaimer. He wants everybody to know, we are not the change agents here. This man that you see leaping and walking is not because of our ability or our expertise or our power or anything else.

And what he's doing is, by disclaiming himself, he is setting the stage, he is setting up the audience to make them prepared to hear about the one who is really behind this.

So, he qualifies the situation with an opening statement saying, we had nothing to do with this. Then, of course, what will be the next question in everybody's mind?

Well, then, who did? Who is responsible for this? We know one thing for sure, and that is, the man himself is not responsible.

He didn't do this. It's not his own power that he is walking. And then, he drops this bomb. The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers has glorified his son Jesus, whom ye delivered up.

[31 : 20] That's right. We're talking about the same one that you handed over to Pilate to put on the cross. And you denied him, that is, Jesus of Nazareth.

You denied him in the presence of Pilate when he, Pilate, was determined to let him go. And you'll recall that incident when Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate, and Pilate says, well, what, what, you know, this man has only made one claim, and he claimed to be the king of the Jews, and I don't think there's any substance to that, but I can't, I can't order the execution of a man for doing something like that.

What, what, what, what do you say, we, we've got this time, you know, of the year when we will release, in the good graces of the Roman government, we'll release someone, just to show our compassion and our mercy, and you've got a prime candidate in Barabbas who's been arrested, so, what, you want Barabbas released?

No. How about, how about Jesus? Let's, let's release him, because Barabbas is a convicted, probably a convicted killer, a thief, and everything else, contrary to all the interests of Rome, they wanted Barabbas to be executed, of course, so he says, Pilate is thinking, Jesus is the perfect candidate for me to release as just an act of grace and mercy.

Okay, everybody, no, no, and they cried out to release Barabbas. Well, what, what then am I going to do with, with Jesus who is called the Christ?

[33 : 08] Crucify him. Hang him up. Crucify him. And this is that one. This is that one.

And the text goes on. You denied the Holy One and the just and desired a murderer, Barabbas, to be granted unto you.

and you killed the prince of life whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses.

witnesses. And the Jewish law, of course, required that for a thing to be established as valid, it had to be supported by a minimum of two or three witnesses.

One witness was not sufficient. And here is Peter and John, and they are both saying, we are witnesses of this one whom you delivered over to be crucified.

[34 : 21] I can just, I can almost hear the deafening silence of this crowd.

Anytime you get several hundred or several thousand Jews together or people of any nationality together and get them all to be quiet at the same time, that's quite an accomplishment.

Somebody's usually gabbing, yakking, talking to the person next to them, but all of these people are just aghast at what has happened. They are stunned. They know this man.

They see him. And this guy is still standing off to the side going like this. And I just can't believe that he's standing on his own two feet. And they are listening with bated breath to what Peter is saying.

And then he drops this bomb. And his name, through faith in his name, Jesus has made this man strong whom you see and know.

[35 : 32] You know this guy. You all know this guy. Yay! The faith which is by him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

And now brethren, I know, this is an old English word, I want not. Nobody talks that way anymore, but they did in 1611. But now he's simply saying, Now brethren, I know.

And by the way, don't read into this, Christian brethren, for crying out loud. There's nothing Christian about these people. Christians don't even surface until you get further into the book of Acts.

These are Jews. And when he calls them brethren, they are Jewish brethren. They are not brothers in Christ. They are brothers in that they are all children and descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

They are fellow Jews. They are Jewish brethren. And when he says, Now brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers.

[36 : 45] You didn't know who it was you were really crucifying. We tried to make it clear, and he tried to make it clear, by the miracles that he did, as to who he was.

And you didn't see it. Remember that verse in the Gospels that Jesus referred to, and he said, The stone which the builders have rejected, the same has become the head of the corner.

And of course he was talking about himself. And why was it that they rejected Jesus as their Messiah? And the answer is, he did not fit their template as to what a Messiah should be.

First of all, he wasn't born into a house of royal, actually he was born into a house of royal, he was born into the house of David, but he was born in a stable, he wasn't born in a palace, and he grew up in Nazareth.

Are you kidding me? Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? So Jesus did not fit their template or their qualifications for what a Messiah ought to be.

[38 : 00] And they handed him over for crucifixion. So, Peter is saying, this one whom you crucified, it is through him and his power that this man is walking before you.

And these people are hearing this message with just complete astonishment. They just are having problems processing it, and that will become apparent as we go on.

Have a question or comment, anybody? Yes, Dana? The obvious thing that jumps out at me, and everybody knows it, so I'm not sure why I'm saying it, perhaps for the benefit of the young men with us here, but back to the phrase, silver and gold, have I not?

There's a lot of things, a lot more worth than money. Oh, absolutely. Just one example. Yeah, an excellent point to make. I appreciate you making it. There are plenty of things that silver and gold will not buy, and this was one of them.

You may have silver and gold and be able to afford the finest physicians the world can offer, but physicians, as much as we are indebted to them, have very severe limitations imposed upon them.

[39 : 22] And I don't know, I've learned this over the years when it comes to visiting people in hospitals for over 50 years and talking to doctors for over 50 years. Doctors almost never, almost never talk about a cure.

They talk about treating an illness, not curing it, but treating it. Well, there's a huge difference. Jesus Christ never treated anybody.

He cured them. The disease, whatever it was, was gone. If it was blindness, he replaced it with sight, deaf with hearing, lame with walking.

He cured, and that's a huge difference. Huge difference. Thank you for making that observation today. Anybody else before we close? Thank you all for being here this morning.