

THE ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

Chapter 3:1 – 4:31 The name of Jesus

*What does it mean to do something “in the name of Jesus”?

*How did persecution against the church begin?

*Why were there no needy disciples?

Acts 3:1-10 A lame beggar is healed

One afternoon, Peter and John were going to the temple. There was a forty-year-old man who had never in his life been able to use his legs, and he used to sit at the temple gate and beg. When he saw the two apostles, he asked them for money. Peter told him that he didn't have money, but that he had something far more valuable. He said, “In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene — walk!” And the man was not only able to get up and walk, he began to leap around and praise God! Everyone around saw him and recognized him as the former beggar, and they were amazed at the miracle that had just taken place.

Note: “In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene”

Here we see Peter perform an amazing miracle: healing a lame man. It was the kind of miracle that Jesus would often do. However, there is a big difference in how they did it. Jesus Christ performed His miracles by His own power and authority. Peter could claim no power from himself; the only reason he could perform miracles was because Christ gave him the ability (see Mark 16:15-18). That's why Peter said that he healed the man in the name (by the authority) of Jesus. As we go along in this lesson, we'll see some more significance of the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene.

Acts 3:11-26 Peter's second sermon

When many people started to gather, trying to find out what had happened, Peter took the opportunity to preach another gospel sermon. Let's note some of the points he made:

- *Not “by our own power or piety” (verse 12).* The credit for the amazing healing went to Jesus, whom God Himself had glorified. The honor was not for the apostles.
- *“The One whom you delivered up” (verses 13-14).* The people were guilty before God, for they had all shouted, “Crucify Him!” when Jesus was on trial, even though He was innocent.
- *“The One whom God raised from the dead” (verse 15).* God did not abandon the crucified Christ, but resurrected Him. The apostles were eyewitnesses to this fact.
- *“On the basis of faith in His name” (verse 16).* Jesus had told the twelve disciples that if they believed in God's power, they would be able to work miracles (see Mark 11:22-24). Here, Jesus' statement is proven true. Peter and John had faith that the man would be healed, and it happened.
- *“Repent therefore and return” (verse 17-19).* In this sermon, Peter focuses on the need for the guilty people to repent. They needed to turn their lives around — to live for Jesus instead of against Him. If they did this, God would refresh and heal them spiritually in the name of Jesus, much in the same way the lame man was healed physically.
- *“All the prophets...announced these days” (verses 20-26).* It was not just the apostles who were witnesses, but all of the prophets who spoke centuries before. They predicted many things about Christ, including His suffering,

ascension, and authority as prophet. Peter's message to the Jews was: Jesus is everything that you have been waiting for, and He is God's gift to you. So obey what He has to say and turn from evil!

Acts 4:1-12 The apostles are arrested and put on trial

Before Peter had finished speaking, some of the Jewish leaders came and arrested the apostles because they were teaching about Jesus' resurrection. But even though they put the apostles in jail until the next day, many people who heard the message believed in Christ.

The next day, the Jewish rulers, including some very important officials, gathered together and put the apostles on trial. The man who had been healed was with Peter and John. The Council asked them, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" They were asking them how they were able to heal the lame man. Peter, speaking by the help of the Holy Spirit, responded boldly: "by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene." He even told the Jewish leaders that they had fulfilled a prophecy (verse 11) by rejecting the very One that God had chosen. He finished by saying that, not only was the sick man made well in Jesus' name, but that everyone is saved in His name.

Acts 4:13-22 The apostles are threatened and released

The Jewish leaders listening to the apostles were amazed, because they knew that Peter and John were not educated or trained. The only explanation was that they truly had been with Jesus and that they were completely convicted about the message they were preaching about Him.

The Council had a problem. They couldn't condemn the apostles of any crime, since the healing was clearly a genuine miracle, and yet they still did not want them free to preach about Jesus' resurrection. They decided to resolve the matter by telling them not to speak about Jesus anymore, and threatened them (with beating, probably). Peter and John, however, boldly refused to obey their orders, saying that they had a responsibility to pay attention to God's commands rather than the commands of men. The Council still released them, knowing that the people were excited over this incredible miracle.

Note: "The fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place"

There are many examples in the Bible of miracles that could not be denied — not even by the enemies of Jesus. The Council here would love to have exposed this miracle as a fraud — but they could not! They said the feat was "apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it." Another time (recorded in John 9), Jesus' opponents thoroughly investigated the healing of a blind man, and only ended up establishing its authenticity. Jesus' enemies could not deny the empty tomb after Jesus' resurrection, and had to pay the tomb guards to lie about what happened (see Matthew 28:11-15). All of these examples assure us that the miracles of the Bible are true, and because of that, we can "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" and "may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31)

Acts 4:23-31 The disciples' prayer

After the apostles were released, they went and told their friends what had happened. Together they prayed, praising God for His power and foreknowledge. They asked God for boldness in speaking His word and that He would continue to make healings and other signs possible. Even at that very moment, God answered their prayer. The place where they were shook and the Holy Spirit filled them, helping them to speak the word with confidence.

Note: Reaction to opposition

How did the disciples react when they encountered opposition? They prayed to God! We should follow their example when we find a barrier between us and God — whether it's persecution, physical suffering or loss, doubts, sin, or anything else. Like

the disciples, we need to remind ourselves that God is in control of life and that, in the end, He will bring about justice, no matter what we are going through. We should ask Him for help and continue to follow after Him.

Acts 4:32-37

“Of one heart and soul”

The thousands of people that believed were very unified. It was as if they “were of one heart and soul.” In fact, they were so concerned about each other that they decided to share their possessions with each other. If one brother owned land or a house, he would even sell it and bring the money to the apostles, who would spread the money around to those who needed it. One of the people that did this was named Joseph. The apostles called him Barnabas (which means “Son of Encouragement”) because he was so uplifting to his brethren. We’ll see more of Barnabas and his kindness later in the book of Acts. Notice, too that while the disciples were sacrificing so many material goods, God was blessing them spiritually; verse 33 says “abundant grace was upon them all.” We should value God’s grace far more than any house or land or possession.

Summary

In these two chapters, we see the miracles and testimony of the apostles causing thousands of people to believe in Christ. We also see persecution begin against the disciples. Despite this, the church grew in number and unity. The gospel took root and thrived because it did not rest on men; it rested on the name of Jesus. It was not the five letters J-e-s-u-s that held so much authority, but the power of the resurrected Lord that that name represents. In the name of Jesus, the apostles healed a lame man, preached salvation, and received the ability to perform miraculous signs.

“There is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”

Fill in the blank:

1. “_____ therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).
2. “And likewise, all the _____ who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days” (Acts 3:24).
3. “But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about _____” (Acts 4:4).
4. “And there is _____ in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be _____” (Acts 4:12).

True or false:

- ___ 1. Peter gave the lame beggar a few silver coins and afterwards healed him of his physical handicap.
- ___ 2. Peter healed the man in the name of Jesus.
- ___ 3. The council of Jewish leaders publicly denied that Peter had performed a true miracle.
- ___ 4. Peter and John stopped preaching in the name of Jesus because the council had threatened them.
- ___ 5. The apostles bought weapons with the money the believers gave them in order to make sure the council wouldn’t arrest them anymore.
- ___ 6. The members of the church would sell their property in order to share money with other needy brethren.

After you’ve filled out the answers, send this lesson back to the person who sent it to you with your name and address. They will correct your answers and discuss any questions or comments you have on the text.

Name: _____

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