

Turning the World Right-side Up: Study 3, Acts 3-4



Acts Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA

Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: Imagine having an obese doctor who was getting on your case for your unhealthy lifestyle. How would you feel? The best witness to the Kingdom of God is a healed life. As we walk in wholeness and peace, as we display the presence of God in our lives and the fruit of the Spirit, then, perhaps, people will hear us.

1. The New Kingdom Pattern- God Works, We Explain, Reactions Chapter 3:1-10

God Works:

Read Acts 3:1-10

¹One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. ²Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to

beg from those going into the temple courts. ³When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. ⁴Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” ⁵So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

⁶Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” ⁷Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. ⁸He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. ⁹When all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

We must remember, this is not a story. It is not a fiction or a tale. This is a historical account that Luke was writing, probably for a trial. Any of these events would have been checked and verified, and there were plenty of people around who would have seen these events. Can you imagine what it would have been like to see this man walking and jumping by the power of God?

Peter Explains:

Read Acts 3:11-26

¹¹ While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. ¹² When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if 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, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. ¹⁴ You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. ¹⁵ You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. ¹⁶ By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

¹⁷ "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. ¹⁸ But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, ²⁰ and that he

may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. ²¹ Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. ²² For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. ²³ Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.'^[a]

²⁴ "Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. ²⁵ And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.'^[b] ²⁶ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."

Let's piece together what Peter is saying:

What it says	What it means
Why do you stare at us?	We had nothing to do with this.
Our God did this	The true cause is God
He did it to glorify Jesus	This is why God does things
You delivered Him up and disowned Him	Given the chance, you rejected Jesus
God raised Jesus	He is alive and active
Faith in Christ has caused this	Faith is powerful and they are witnesses
Repent	Turn around and embrace Christ

Section 2: The Reactions: From the Crowd and From the Enemies of the Way

Read Acts 4:1-4

4 The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. ²They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. ³They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day.⁴ But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.

The People React: After Peter speaks to the crowd another two thousand people accept the gift of Jesus. Notice the pattern here: God acts, believers explain, and people come to faith. This is a very special way of evangelism. What will our response be to this? We must pray for healing and for God to act, to show His power. Next we must be ready to explain what God has done and why—to glorify Christ. Lastly, we must extend the A,B,Cs (Accept, Believe, and Confess that Jesus is Lord).

⁵The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. ⁷They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, ¹⁰then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹Jesus is

"the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.'

¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

¹³ When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. ¹⁴ But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. ¹⁵ So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. ¹⁶ “What are we going to do with these men?” they asked. “Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷ But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name.”

¹⁸ Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! ²⁰ As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

²¹ After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had

happened. ²² For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

The Authorities React: How did the authorities react?

1. Interrogation
2. Punishment
3. Threats

Why this reaction? It is not a surprise. These are the same people who had killed Jesus just over a month before. And here He is being invoked again, and as a resurrected Lord. Can you imagine the horror they must have felt?

Digging Deeper: Look at verse 19

¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges!

“right” Righteous before God. This is a religious word. Which do you think God would think more to His liking?

“in God’s eyes” In his sight. You see, it doesn’t matter what we think. What matters is what God thinks. If God raised Jesus and healed the lame man, would he now want them to not proclaim this? It doesn’t make sense from His point of view.

“listen” To adhere to.

“judges” In the Greek it is one word—you-judge! Because this is a trial of sorts, we can assume that they were being asked to make an official judgment.

Section 3: Back at the Church

Read Acts 4:23-37

²³ On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵ You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

"Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
²⁶ The kings of the earth rise up
and the rulers band together
against the Lord
and against his anointed one.

²⁷ Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹ Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

The Believers Share Their Possessions

Read Acts 4:32-37

³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

³⁶ Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

The response to Attack:

1. Prayer for Boldness
2. Prayer for Miracles
3. God fills them with the Spirit and Boldness
4. The Church becomes a Family
 - a. Oneness
 - b. Sharing all, even selling properties to help others
 - c. Testifying to Jesus

What have we learned?

The church was not born quietly. It wasn't formed in board meetings or on someone's draft board. The church was born with power from the Holy Spirit, with a miraculous healing. The event was irrefutable. God Acted. Then the Apostles explained what had happened. There was a reaction: 2000 came to faith while those whose power and position was threatened persecuted the believers. The church turned to God and became a unified family sharing all.

The Book of Acts is not only history. It does show us what happened, but it is more. The Book of Acts is a manual for church planting and growth. Like those early believers, we need to devote ourselves to worship and prayer and the Apostle's teachings (the Bible). We need to ask God to reveal Himself and to Glorify His Son. We need to be ready to explain what God has done and why. Lastly, we need to be ready to see people come to faith and to receive a backlash from those who are opposed to God.

What this Means for Us

God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His plan for the church is likewise. The realities that came into being when the Holy Spirit was poured into the believers has not changed. We will see throughout the Book of Acts that the Spirit often expresses the Kingdom in power in order to get people's attention. They are then ready to hear the Gospel.

What are the reasons we do not see this pattern very often in the church today? Here are some possibilities: 1) We do not expect God to act in the same way today. There are many who treat the New Testament as an unusual time in history. But nowadays God is very quiet and inactive. 2) We have become overly dependent on technology. Although medicine is important and has its place, we must always put God before science. We must understand that the Almighty God can circumvent nature whenever He wants. 3) We have compartmentalized our lives. During the day-to-day we act as if God does not exist. We go to work/school, we relate to family and friends, we eat and sleep, creating a life that we believe will make us happy. One of the compartments is our religious life. When we are at church we worship and pray.

God is not in any of these. God has not become weak. He is not uninterested in bringing people into Christ. What is lacking is our faith. We need to reclaim our birthright—New Testament Christianity, the Christianity that our brothers and sisters experienced in the Book of Acts. This was the Christianity that turned the world right-side up. This was Christianity with power. May we see this Christianity again as we live daily by the Spirit.

Acts 3-4 Questions Section 1: Read Acts 3:1-10

Jesus told the disciples that they would do greater works than He did while on earth (John 14:12). This is the start of these works. Notice the sequence: the Holy Spirit came first and filled the church as He had filled Christ, then the signs and wonders happened in the church in the same way they happened with Jesus. The key was the Spirit.

1. How did Peter know what to say to the man? How can we know when God wants to heal someone?
2. Do you think that God still heals people today to bring attention to His Kingdom? Have you ever heard of someone who was healed by God? How did this happen?

Section 2: Read Acts 3:11-26

When the lame man is healed, Peter explains the event. He tells the crowd that they had nothing to do with it, but that the man was healed by God's power. He then shows the connection between God's promises in the Old Testament and the event before their eyes. It is because God has raised Jesus and set Him on high and by faith that this man is healed.

Lastly, Peter makes the event personal for his listeners. He calls them to repentance. Notice the sequence of the events in this chapter: 1) The power of God is displayed, 2) Peter gives the event context showing that it was done by God through Christ, 3) Peter calls the crowd to turn to Christ. We are going to see this pattern again and again throughout the Book of Acts.

1. Peter explains the event. Last week we talked about our plans to prepare ourselves to share the gospel. How is this going for you? What would you tell someone if God healed them? What can you recommend that will help others?

Section 3: Read Acts 4:1-22

There are two reactions to this event and the explanation Peter gives: Firstly, many of the people come to faith. Secondly, the religious leaders (the same who had killed Jesus) arrest the Apostles. Peter stands in their midst and powerfully explains that the man was healed by Jesus and that they must obey God not men.

1. What kinds of hostility could we experience for openly sharing our faith? How would we stand up under such persecution?

Section 4: Read Acts 4:23-36

The result of these events is prayer for boldness and miracles and a closeness of the church. The members give up all rights to their possessions and share everything they have with everyone.

1. When was the last time you prayed for God to give you boldness? When was the last time you prayed for miracles?
2. The first believers shared everything. They even sold their possessions and gave the money to the poor. How is this different than the view of possessions in our world? What would happen if we operated in this same way?