

A Preview of Faith's Final Blossom

Text: Acts 3:1-10

Introduction:

The risen and reigning Christ has poured out His Holy Spirit on His church. This glorious fulfillment of Joel 2, has been attested to by signs and wonders, and the Apostle Peter, in his sermon, has affirmed this, connecting it all to the resurrection of the crucified Christ. And so, the building of the New Covenant church begins, such that all who call on the Name of the Lord, Jew and Gentile, will be saved.

Three thousand are immediately baptized and added to the church, and as the church continues in one accord, steadfastly continuing in the Apostle's doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of the bread and prayers, God adds to their number daily, those who are being saved. And the people manifest a glorious refocus and change of life, selling their properties, having all things in common, partnering in the work of the Gospel, eating together from house to house with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. Indeed, a thriving church is born, and the mission of storming the gates of hell, to rescue the lost is begun!

This morning, we will continue to see the Holy Spirit's work through the Apostles, particularly Peter and John, as the building of the church continues. A very significant sign will be performed on a lame man, giving further attestation to the the great anticipated end of that which will commence, when the risen and exalted Christ is finished building His glorious church. Having read Acts 2, we might ask, "Where will this all lead? What is the end of these things? Where will this glorious Gospel of the risen Messiah, borne by the church, carry history, and the world as we know it?" A foretaste; a preview of faith's final blossom is given us, right here, at the laying of the foundation of the New Covenant church!

I. A Preview of Faith's Final Blossom

Peter and John go up to the temple together at a time when many Jews would have been there, at the ninth hour (3 pm), the "hour of prayer." And there was a particular man, who was lame from birth, who was daily laid down at a main gate of the temple, begging for alms from those who entered the temple. This was an ideal place and time for a man in such a condition, to be placed there, since the temple

itself, was a reminder of God's mercy toward the needy. And so, the man begged for financial assistance, continuously, as people passed through that gate, and into the outer courts of the temple. Being lame, he would not have been permitted to go in with them.

And so, as Peter and John approach this gate, in order to enter the temple, the man cries out, begging alms from them. And Peter, certainly moved by the Spirit, looks at this man with an eye of compassion, and with the divinely inspired understanding of God's will, to use this man, as a means of testifying to the glorious Gospel of God's redeeming grace in Christ! And he calls out to the man, "Look at us." Obviously, the man was stuck in his rote routine of begging shamefully, with hardly the desire to lift his head, as if he could never presume that somehow he were on an equal plane with all of mankind. He was lame from birth; cursed in the sight of some, pitied by all; never fit to be classified as normal among the Jewish community. But Peter, calls for his attention. "Look up at us, friend. We wish to address you at the level of integrity and respect that belongs to all who are created in the very image of God." You see, Peter, a man as equally dependent upon the grace of God as any man; the man who denied his Lord three times, and yet found grace, could speak to this man, not as above him, but only by coming alongside of him. Not so consistent with the luxurious, wicked Popes of the future, who receive worship, and have their golden rings kissed by all. Indeed, the first so-called "Pontiff," hardly saw a place for bellowing in his own glory! [We ought to consider the lost in such a way as this: "Look at us. We are you by nature, and saved, only by grace, my brother/sister in Adam!"]

And so, the helpless beggar looks up, anticipating that he might receive something from them. And then Peter responds with those precious words, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give to you; In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." "I've got no money to give you sir, but by the grace of God, I am able to give you what God has entrusted to me. In the Name of Jesus Christ; in the Name of Jesus the Messiah; indeed, so that there is no confusion concerning the specific Jesus of whom I am speaking here, in the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth; by His power and authority, in accordance with His present reign, you, who have been lame from birth, rise up and walk."

And Peter then takes hold of the man's right hand and lifts him up, and immediately the beggar's once useless and flimsy feet and ankle bones, receive

strength, and the man is able to leap up on his feet, for the first time ever. And being healed of his disfigurement, he walks in the temple with Peter and John, and begins walking around, leaping up and down for joy, and praising God!

And the people in the temple witness this manifestation of God's divine power, having been exerted; for, they recognized the man all too well, knowing that he was the lame beggar, who was daily laid at the Beautiful gate of the temple, begging alms. And we are told that they were "filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to [the man]." The stage was set for a Gospel proclamation, as God had grabbed hold of the attention of the people, in a most powerful way. A man, lame from birth has just been healed, what ever could this mean? Peter will answer this question in the verses that follow.

But before we come to those verses (next time, Lord willing), let's spend the remainder of our time this morning, focusing on the significance of this event. As in the case of our Lord's miracles, this miracle, while eternally beneficial to the recipient being healed, is a "sign," meant to attest to the authenticity of the Gospel, preached by the Apostles. And furthermore, it fulfills OT prophecy, while providing us with a foretaste of the final outcome of God's glorious plan of salvation in Christ.

1) It fulfills OT prophecy. [Read Isaiah 35]

2) It is a foretaste of the final restoration of all things. The healing of this lame man gives us a picture of the ultimate end of our redemption. The curse will be lifted; all disease and illness and suffering and pain, will be reversed. In the Gospel, we have the immediate hope of reconciliation with God, and salvation from sin, and also the anticipated hope of a resurrected, perfect, incorruptible, glorious body. In the name of Christ, the lame will not merely walk, but rather leap for joy! The cancer ridden will meet total remission, and a full regeneration of those parts that have rotted away by the illness. The blind will see---God; the deaf will hear angels singing; the depressed and downcast will be filled with everlasting joy; the Lazarus' who have suffered greatly in this life, will have their incomprehensible fill, in the next.

And so, this miracle bids all to come to Christ, and to witness the glorious budding of His purchased redemption. It invites us to see where our faith will bring us; a picture of the final blossom, as it were...the restoration of all things! The risen, victorious Christ, will consummate His Kingdom in this way of perfection and completion.

We are spiritually crippled and lame, but the Name of Jesus, brings us to our feet; enabling us to walk in the temple, and to leap and dance in the presence of God, with great joy! And we are given a glorious hope of the comprehensive restoration of all things, which is to come! [Rom. 8:18-25; Acts 3:21; Heb. 2:3-4]

Dennis Johnson states: "Now 'things fall apart,' and suffering and death dog our steps, but the reversal of cosmic entropy has begun in the resurrection of Jesus. Faith in the name of Jesus, germinating from the Spirit's witness, is the seed from which will grow the restoration of all things" (*The Message of Acts*, Pg. 66).

AMEN!!!