

BELIEVING, RECEIVING, AND LIVING THE WORD (ACTS 3-4)

Last week, we looked at **Acts 13**. The Apostles Paul and Barnabas and also John Mark sailed to the island of Cyprus, located in the Mediterranean Sea. They were encountered by Sergius Paulus, a proconsul, a high-ranking official in the Roman government. Paul also spoke of the saints in the household of Caesar, which he mentions in **Philippians 4:22**. A sorcerer though was with Sergius Paulus, named Bar-Jesus, translated as Elymas, who was also said to be a false prophet, who tried to keep the proconsul from believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. He obviously was doing and saying enough to impress the proconsul, but Paul then said to him, "O full of all **deceit** and all **fraud**, you son of the devil, you enemy of all **righteousness**, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." Ultimately, he was opposing the Lord Jesus, not Paul and Barnabas, as Jesus is our Righteousness (and Wisdom, Sanctification and Redemption (**1 Corinthians 1:30**)), and Jesus is, as He claimed to be, "THE Way, the Truth, and the Life. [And] **No one comes to the Father except through Me.**" (**John 14:6**) **Matthew 11:27** tells us in the recorded Words of Jesus, "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." If Bar-Jesus, Elymas had a heart of repentance, perhaps God would have turned him around as He did to Saul/Paul. Yet we don't read of his conversion, even though there is a similarity to Saul/Paul's experience. The narrative continues by saying, "Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord." (**Acts 13:12**)

Once again, we first put that in context to what took place prior to **Acts 13**. Before **Acts 13**, we looked at **Acts 6-7**, of the opposition that came against Stephen, who was said to be "a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit" (**Acts 6:5**). He was being opposed by the Jewish leaders of the Sanhedrin, which included the high priest. He was stoned to death for preaching that same gospel message of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus. The context for us to **Acts 6-7** and **Acts 13**, and also to **Acts 3-4** which we'll read today, is we obviously have **Acts 1-2** that came before, according to the narrative given to us by the Apostle Luke. And also we have Luke's gospel account of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus, as well as Matthew, Mark, and John's. Yet, to further expand that context we have God's redemptive plan for mankind in the whole of God's Word, beginning in the book of Genesis, all the way through to what is to come that we can read about in the last book in the Bible, Revelation, the Revelation of Jesus Christ. We are ultimately given a choice, as we are told in God's Word, and as we are being shown by the Holy Spirit, that we are to know God, put our trust in God, and honor Him as our Creator, our God, and as our Lord,

and Savior, and that He intends to be our Heavenly Father through Christ Jesus our Lord. He cannot though just be our Savior. **Romans 10:9-10** tells us, "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

The world, that is, the people of this world, will and have tried every other way possible to be enlightened with truth, to be as their own gods, and to possibly find or work their way into the realm of eternal life, or at least to live as gods on this earth, that is, compared to other people, while they co-exist with others on this planet. The context we have then in the book of Acts is that as the Apostles and others were told by Jesus to gather together and wait for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, that came on the day of Pentecost. Peter explained to those who were witnessing that event by quoting from the book of Joel, saying, "'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'" (**Acts 2:17-21**)

There's two more things that I'll mention before we go to **Acts 3**. 1. We are to trust that God is sovereign and is reigning over His creation. 2. Whether we experience signs and wonders or not, we are to trust in God also. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (**Proverbs 3:5-6**) We have examples in the Word that shows that sometimes God allows evil to reign and sometimes good. When the Israelites cried to the prophet Samuel for a king, God told Samuel, "they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them." (**1 Samuel 8:7**) Saul then reigned in Israel for forty years. (**Acts 13:21**) Forty long years for the Israelites and for David, who was chased around the country by Saul and his men. Conversely, after God had extended the life of the good King Hezekiah by 15 years, Hezekiah had foolishly showed the kingdom's riches to the king of Babylon, and was then told by Isaiah the prophet that his possessions and his sons would be carried away to Babylon. Yet God was holding off on His judgment until after King Hezekiah was gone. Sadly, Hezekiah responded to Isaiah by saying, "The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good!"... "Will there not be peace and truth at least in my days?" (**2 Kings 20:19**) While Hezekiah may have been more concerned about his own welfare than for

his people and his sons, the takeaway from that, and of the reign of King Saul, and all of the other examples of the reigning of Israel and Judah's kings as well as those of Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, etc. is that God IS in control and all things, and as the suffering man of God, Job, said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord." (**Job 1:21**) All things are weighed in accordance to who God is and His will and His ways, and according to His time, not ours.

Secondly, whether we experience signs and wonders or not, whether we go through good times or bad, we are to wholeheartedly put our trust in God. It pleases God for us to trust in Him, living by faith in His Word. When (Doubting) Thomas saw the nail holes in Jesus' hands and the wound in His side said, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;" (**John 20:28-30**) One of those are of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit that leads us to believe and receive Him, despite all of those around us who doubt and live accordingly, despite what goes on around us, good or bad. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (**John 1:12-13**)

Jesus told His disciples, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." (**John 14:15-18**) Right after that, "Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me." (**John 14:22-24**)

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[Acts 3 (A Lame Man Healed)]

Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. 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; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us." So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. 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."

And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. 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. 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. 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? 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. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the **Prince of life** [As Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." (John 11:25)], whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. 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. Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. **Repent** [metanoeo—"literally, "think differently afterwards"] **therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,** and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 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. 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. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. 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.' 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.**"

[Acts 4 (Peter and John Arrested)] Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was

already evening. However, many of those who **heard the word believed**; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

[Addressing the Sanhedrin] And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' [and the foundation (**Matthew 7:24-27**)] **Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**"

[The Name of Jesus Forbidden] Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. **But so that it spreads no further** among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name." So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

[In the following chapter, **Acts 5**, which we won't get to today, after they were on trial again for preaching Christ Jesus, it says, "But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give **repentance** to Israel and **forgiveness of sins**. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is **the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.**" We have the Word of God and His Spirit that testifies to His Word! (**Hebrews 4:12**) The Word of God, "the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (**2 Tim. 3:15-17**) Guess what Paul said just prior to that. "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ

Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them." (2 Tim. 3:12-14) The Word of God!]

So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed. And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, and the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.' "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. Now, Lord, look on their threats, [may this be our prayer as well] and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they [we] may speak **Your word**, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke **the word of God** with boldness. Now the multitude of those who believed were of **one heart and one soul**; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet."

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Sound familiar to what we read last week? The Apostle Paul said this, "Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the **knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found **in Him**, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through **faith in Christ**, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may **know Him and the power of His resurrection**, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:8-11)