

Acts 3:11-16: Do You *Believe* Jesus is a Character in the Bible or the One Who Can Heal Your Life?

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I. Introduction

Some see Jesus as simply another character in the Bible. Some say that He was a good person. Still others go as far as to say that He was a wise prophet with tremendous teachings. How do you see Him, as a character in the Bible, a wise prophet? Or do you see Him as the Promised Redeemer who can rescue us from EVERYTHING that is wrong with us and this world?

II. Acts 3:11-16: Do You Know Jesus as a Bible Character or the Person Who Can Heal Your Life?

3:11-12, not only are the people amazed as they were in 3:10, but they run to find out what just happened. They're in essence saying, "How can this be?! This guy's been lame all his life [3:2], how is he now leaping and jumping?!" Peter responds with two questions. First, "Why's this so amazing to you?" Why is it astonishing? You might say, "What do you mean why? This guy's been lame all his life and now he's jumping, isn't it obvious?!" Why shouldn't it be astonishing? What's Jesus telling you through this, you, not the crowd in Acts 3, but you? In Jesus' Kingdom, it's nothing for the lame to leap and jump.....do you hear Jesus this morning and what He's trying to say to your life?

Second, Peter asks, "Why're you looking at us as if we made this guy walk, we don't have the power to do this; it's not our holiness that made him well?" Why's ~~Peter~~ Jesus asking this of the crowd? Who sent Peter and John to this crowd? Jesus did, 1:8. And what's Jesus want this crowd to know? "I'm the source of this man's healing.....but it's not just for him, it's for you also, for anyone who comes to Me." Jesus has a message for a dead, lame, and dying world: "Your salvation is here!".....Peter had no doubt what would happen when he pulled the man up by the hand, do you? Do you doubt that Jesus can fix your problems?

3:13-15, next, Peter points to God's Covenant identity (Exodus 3:6 [2:24]): long ago, God made a promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the patriarchs of a nation called Israel. Central to that Covenant was the promise of a Savior, a Servant who would come and make everything right again. He would take away every infirmity, EVERYTHING that was wrong with mankind. He would bring life everywhere He went—true, abundant life (Genesis 12:1-3 [26:4; 28:14—Galatians 3:16]). But then Peter points out that something went wrong. When Jesus, God's Servant, began to bring life to this dying world, the rulers and the people called for His blood. In fact, when the people were given a choice between a murderer and innocent Jesus, they chose the murderer, thereby sealing Jesus' fate (Matthew 27:15-26). Thus, as incredible as it sounds they killed the Prince of Life! But this didn't stop Jesus because God raised Him from the dead. And Peter and John and the rest of the apostles are eyewitnesses to this fact and they want this crowd to understand that.

In recounting all this Peter gives Jesus four titles: Servant, Holy One, Righteous One, and Prince of Life. Holy and Righteous One and Prince of Life are all the more convicting as the crowd realizes what they have done: they have killed the most godly Man to ever walk this earth, the very One God promised Abraham He would send in order to heal the world and save the nations, the very One with the power of life because He is the Prince of Life!

The title Servant would be doubly convicting because it's a reference to the Servant spoken of by the prophet Isaiah. Among other things, God said this about His Servant Jesus through Isaiah: Jesus is God's chosen One; the One in whom God's soul delights; the One in whom God's Spirit dwells; the One who would bring justice not only to the Jewish nation of Israel but to the rest of the nations (Isaiah 42:1). Jesus would be God's Savior not only to the nation of Israel but all of humanity; He would restore fallen Israel and bring the Gentiles out of the dark (Isaiah 49:6). And what did this crowd do with God's Savior, His Servant? They crucified Him.

Why does Jesus speak this way to this crowd? Why does He have Peter speak such things to people who are there to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Does He want them to feel guilty, to show them how doomed they are for condemning an innocent man over a murderer? No! Peter's not pointing to the death of the Servant; he's pointing to His power to heal and save lives. It's interesting, Isaiah mentions something else that the Servant would do when He arrived: He would bear our sicknesses (Isaiah 53:4). Isn't that what Jesus did when He came? Everywhere He went He brought life to a dying world (Matthew 9:35-36; Mark 1:21-28, 29-31, 40-45; 2:1-12; 3:1-5; 5:1-20, 21-43). And guess what? Jesus hasn't stopped healing, in fact, He just healed another man who was born lame, the very reason why Jesus has this crowd's attention.

What's the last title Peter calls Jesus? Prince of Life! The point is not that they killed the Prince of Life, but that Jesus ***is*** the Prince of Life. Jesus is not dead and He's not there to condemn this crowd but to offer them life as He did this lame man. How can Jesus offer you, me, this crowd, the lame man, the entire world life? Hebrews 2:14-15 puts it this way, *Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that **through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*** How's your life? Do you feel like you're in bondage, like you just can't get ahead, like you have no purpose? Jesus can offer you and me and everyone in the world a new way of life because through His death on the Cross He's defeated the very thing that's holding you back and the enemy behind it: Satan.

3:16, but what is required of the one who comes to Jesus for a new life? Faith! Peter reveals that this is exactly how this lame man was healed. That is, he believed that Jesus could heal him and he was. Jesus gave this man back his legs so that they (and you) could see His power to save *them* (and *you*) not just this lame man.

Do you have faith that Jesus can heal your life or is He simply a character in the Bible? Do you believe that Jesus can do the same for you? Do you take Him at His word when He looks into your eyes and says, *The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed* (Luke 4:18).

III. Conclusion

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, 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.