

Healing the Lame Man

“Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.”

—Acts 3:6

IN THE TIME IMMEDIATELY after Pentecost, the activities of the Early Church are described thus: “They continued stedfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”—Acts 2:42-47

The prejudice against and persecution of the Early Church made it necessary for them to pool their resources in order to survive. As indicated in

the foregoing passage, the believers sold their possessions, giving to anyone who had need, and began living in a communal arrangement. They understood the concept of divine love for one another, and demonstrated that love in very tangible ways.—I John 3:16

Eventually, the Heavenly Father brought this communal arrangement to an end, and allowed the brethren to be scattered so the Gospel message would spread to all nations. Nevertheless, the zeal and spirit of these believers are great examples for us to follow. The psalmist captures the attitude and spirit of these early Christians when he says, “O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD. Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore.”—Ps. 105:1-4

OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED

Peter and John, in their zeal for service, went up to the Temple at the hour of prayer, hoping and expecting to find some opportunity there for testifying to the Gospel message. Likewise, we should have this same zeal for the Lord to spread the Word of Truth. Our responsibility to preach the Gospel at every opportunity is brought to our attention by the Apostle Paul, who states, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season.” (II Tim. 4:2) We should always be ready to give an answer for the hope that is within us. (I Pet. 3:15) In the case of Peter and John, they went to the temple looking for an opportunity. When that privilege appeared, they took advantage of it.

We, too, should be on the lookout for situations to proclaim the message of the Gospel. In our everyday contact with people there are conversations which we can often turn into witnessing opportunities. There are enough troubles and difficulties in the world to enable us to present a gem of truth about Christ's coming kingdom.

Opportunities frequently occur "out of season" for us, at a time when we are trying to get something else accomplished. We might say to ourselves, "This is not really a good time." However, if God chooses that time, we should do our best to take advantage of it. The Heavenly Father arranges these circumstances to see how much we love his Holy Word, and to know if we are willing to put aside our plans and serve him.

THE LAME MAN

As they were about to enter the Temple, Peter and John met a man who had been crippled and unable to walk from birth. Every day he was carried to the gate called "Beautiful," where he begged from those going into the temple courts. (Acts 3:1,2) It is likely that the apostles frequently went to the Temple through the "Beautiful" gate. Since the lame man was laid at that gate every day and asked for alms, he had probably seen Peter and John before.

The Scriptures do not tell us if the lame man had heard of the Pentecostal wonders which had converted several thousand, or if he knew that Peter and John were associated with that movement. If such were the case, it might account for his readiness of faith, by which he accepted the apostle's words, and was healed. However, when they first met, the lame

man was apparently not looking to be made whole. He looked to Peter and John for a few coins to help sustain his meager existence. What he received was so much more!

SYMBOLIC OF THE HUMAN FAMILY

The lame man is a fitting picture of the human family, unable to walk in God's path due to their inheritance of sin and death. The Apostle Paul describes their inability with these words: "There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."—Rom. 3:10-12

The lame man was hoping for an improved life, as the Apostle Paul writes: "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."—Rom. 8:19-22, *New International Version*

The whole creation, the entire world of mankind, is waiting for their liberation from the effects of sin and death. Lame and blind, they are without hope and "without God in the world." (Eph. 2:12) They are unhappy and dissatisfied, searching for happiness and peace but not finding them. They are not found in their churches, in their political establishments, in their financial affairs, in their social organizations,

nor in any of the desires that they pursue. The longer such conditions continue, the more unhappy and dissatisfied people are becoming.

THE HEALING OF THE LAME MAN

When Peter and John encountered the lame man, he asked for money. Peter responded to his request in a very unusual way: “Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: 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. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.”—Acts 3:4-8

When Peter responded, “Look on us,” the lame man gave them his full and undivided attention, because he expected to receive alms. After commanding him to walk, Peter reached down, helped the lame man to his feet, and as he stood his feet and ankles began to strengthen. He jumped up and began to walk, but the formerly lame man did not stop there. He followed the apostles into the Temple, walking, jumping, and praising God. He was no longer interested in collecting alms, for he had received something of much greater value. For the first time in his life, he was able to walk!

PICTURE OF THE KINGDOM WORK

This experience points to the healing that will take place in Christ’s kingdom. The entire human family is “lame,” waiting near the courts of God, and awaiting the manifestation of the sons of God.

The Christ, as represented by Peter and John, will be made manifest, not with material wealth such as gold or silver, but with the power of God secured by the sacrifice of Jesus.

The removal of man's symbolic lameness, and the opening of a path for mankind back into harmony with God is described by the Prophet Isaiah: "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. ... A highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away."—Isa. 35:5,6,8-10, *NIV*

This prophecy tells of both the physical and spiritual healing of the human family that will take place in Christ's kingdom. Their physical disabilities of blindness, deafness, lameness and an inability to speak will be cured—just as Peter healed the lame man, and as Jesus healed the man born blind. (John 9:7) These physical afflictions are all part of the curse. When the blood of atonement is applied on behalf of the human family and mankind is awakened from the tomb, these vestiges of the curse will be lifted, demonstrating God's power, wisdom and love. It will be this demonstration that will soften man's stony heart so that God's laws can be written therein.—Ezek. 36:26,27

Mankind is also spiritually diseased with regard to the words of God. They are unable to speak of God's Truth to one another, and sin prevents them from following his instructions and walking in the paths of righteousness. In Christ's kingdom, God promises to heal these afflictions so that all may "call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent."—Zeph. 3:9

KINGDOM CONDITIONS

The kingdom arrangement and the new environment for the human family is further described by the prophet: "The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured: But they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the LORD; and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness. Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people."—Isa. 62:8-10

The oppression of the weak will come to an end in Christ's kingdom. Mankind, both individually and as nations, will no longer be trodden down by others. Instead, those who harvest grain and those who gather fruit will eat and drink of their labors and praise the LORD. This statement will have a literal fulfillment: "They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat." (Isa. 65:21-23) Selfishness will come to an end!

There is also a spiritual fulfillment to these prophetic statements. Those who harvest the Word of

the Lord will partake of it and praise their great Creator. Those who gather fruit will drink the doctrine of Truth in the courts of “the house of the LORD.” (Joel 3:18) In the kingdom, as each human being partakes of the knowledge of God, and absorbs the instructions in righteousness received from the kingdom’s divine representatives, they all will be blessed. They will pass through the gates, symbolically speaking, into the Holy City and back into harmony with God.

It will be the responsibility of Christ and the church to prepare a way for the people, or to “cast up the highway.” That way will lead out of the prison house of death and sin, and out of the degradation and darkness of this present world back to righteousness, the perfection of human life, and sonship with God. The “stones” which have stumbled mankind for so long will all be gathered out, and the valleys of despair and discouragement shall be filled up. Indeed, the King’s highway that man will travel on is to be most favorable.

HEALING—PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL

Many Scriptures describe prophetically the healing process of the kingdom, and the relationship between the glorified church and the world of mankind. One such passage states: “Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and

their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.”—Isa. 49:8-11

During the present Gospel Age God has been developing the church, the consecrated footstep followers of Jesus. These faithful ones will be associated with Christ in the heavenly phase of God’s kingdom. Together, as the glorified Christ class, they will be given, as noted in the foregoing verses, as a covenant for the people, with ruling power to restore the earth, recover man’s desolate inheritance, release the captives from the prison house of death, as well as release those formerly in the spiritual darkness of this present evil world.

The lame man healed by Peter and John responded by leaping for joy and praising God in the Temple. His response is indicative of how positively, how joyously, the human family will react to their healing in God’s kingdom, under the ministration of Christ. As it is written, “It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”—Isa. 25:9

GOD’S LAW IN THEIR HEARTS

How does God write his law in people’s hearts, and yet not violate mankind’s free will to choose between right and wrong? This heart transformation will be accomplished through the experiences he brings upon them. The great love of God for his human family, as it is finally revealed through the

establishment and functioning of Christ's kingdom, will stir within the hearts of man a reciprocal love for their Heavenly Father.

This is how it has worked in the lives of those being chosen today. They love God because he first loved them. (I John 4:19) When the world's blindness is removed and they see God's goodness and are the beneficiaries of his great love, it will stimulate their hearts to love him, and become obedient to his laws. They will freely choose to serve him and his precepts of Truth and righteousness.

PETER'S SERMON

When the people in the Temple saw the lame man walking, they were amazed as to what had happened to him. The crowd ran up to Peter and John at the place called Solomon's porch, which gave Peter the opportunity he was waiting for to testify of the Gospel message.—Acts 3:11

Peter began to speak, saying, "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."—vss.12-16

Strengthened by the Holy Spirit, Peter stood fearlessly before the men of Israel. He gave the glory to God and his Son, Jesus, for the miracle and then presented the lesson regarding the death and resurrection of Jesus. Peter reminded the Jews of their forefathers, and the promises of God they had inherited through them. He went on to mention how their nation rejected the Messiah, desiring instead that a murderer be released to them. Although the Roman soldiers crucified Jesus, the Jews were actually responsible for his death. God, however, by his mighty power, raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him above every name that is named. (Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9,10) Thus it was by faith, Peter and John's faith in Jesus' sacrifice and his resurrection, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, that the lame man had been cured.

SEASONS OF REFRESHING

Peter continued with the lesson: "Now, brethren, I know that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But the things which God foreshadowed by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and turn around, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the face of the Lord."—Acts 3:17-19, *Revised Version Improved and Corrected*

Peter explained that the death of Christ fulfilled what God had foretold through the prophets, namely that Christ would be rejected, suffer, and die, but through his death we might all gain life. He then offered them the invitation to sonship. This invitation was conditional. They must first repent and turn toward God, so that their sins might be blotted out.

Then they would have the opportunity to enjoy “seasons of refreshing” from the face, or favor, of the Lord. The same invitation has been extended to us. We have repented and turned toward God, and have had our Adamic sins covered by the blood of Jesus our Redeemer. (I Pet. 1:18,19) Moreover, we are endeavoring to walk in Jesus’ footsteps, that we might be faithful until death and receive the crown of life. (Rev. 2:10) Truly, we rejoice in this special season of spiritual refreshing from the favor of the Lord.

In a larger sense, the “seasons of refreshing” refer to the blessings that will be poured upon the human family in Christ’s kingdom. If we trace the Greek word translated “refreshing” back to its original root, it means “recovery of breath”—that is, life. This is exactly what will be accomplished by Christ’s kingdom. Mankind, if obedient, will recover their breath, both literally and symbolically, and regain perfection of human life!

RESTITUTION

Peter then pointed down the stream of time to when our Lord would return and subsequently set up his kingdom. The apostle speaks of this kingdom as a period of time dedicated to the “restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:20,21) The word “restitution” is translated from a Greek word meaning “to restore to a former state.” Indeed, the great objective of the kingdom is to wipe away every vestige of the reign of sin and death, and return the human race to its original position of perfection, dominion, communion with God, and everlasting life here upon the earth.

In that kingdom, the dwelling place of God will be with mankind. “He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”—Rev. 21:3,4

Under the kingdom rulership of Christ, “all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight.”—Ps. 72:11-14

How thankful we are that God has revealed these truths to our eyes. Indeed he has opened our hearts and minds to the beauty of his plan of salvation for the entire human family. In God’s kingdom, the Christ will call all mankind from the prison house of death, heal them of all their diseases and open their eyes to the glory of God, and to the beauty and harmony of his character. The human family will be restored to sonship and communion with God. What a great privilege will be ours, if faithful, to participate in this work of healing and restoration.

May the great promise of restitution for the world of mankind and the opportunity to help in its fulfillment stimulate our zeal and faithfulness in serving the Lord. Let us daily seek to be ever diligent, that we might make our calling and election sure.—II Pet. 1:10,11 ■