



Acts 3.¹²⁻¹⁸

¹²And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, "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? ¹³The 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. ¹⁴But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; ¹⁵and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. ¹⁶And 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. ¹⁷And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

If we return to this subject over and over again, it is because scripture itself returns to this subject over and over again. Clearly, it is of utmost importance. Clearly it is necessary. Clearing it is reflective of a common and persistent misunderstanding and problem.

This second recorded Christian sermon was delivered in the temple precincts and was occasioned by Peter and John healing a man "lame from his mother's womb."¹ We do not know how old the man was at the time, but the Greek word used to describe him, *anér*, often refers to an adult male of marriageable age. We are informed that he was "laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful." Though we are uncertain as to the exact location of this gate, it must have been a well-traveled gate and the man must have taken up his station there for quite some time for "all the people" inside the temple, when they saw him "walking, and leaping, and praising God," "knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple."

This first recorded Christian healing, then, was impressive and undeniable. Peter had chosen to heal someone conspicuous, rather than someone whose need might be questionable either in regard to severity or duration. Those who saw the man walking and came to understand who was responsible for his healing were rightly "filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him." However, they were not right in the object of their "wonder and amazement."

Peter recognized their error and responded to it right away: "Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" This immediate desire to deflect attention from themselves and toward Jesus reminds us of the writer of the Gospel of John and his determination to deflect his readers' attention from John the Baptist. "He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light² reported the Gospel writer. And then a few short verses later, the same author reported the Baptist's own deflection of attention from himself to Jesus.

¹ Acts 3.¹⁻¹¹

² John 1.⁸

“I am not the Christ... He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.”³

So, after being sure that his audience understood that the power and holiness necessary to heal the well-known man did not reside within himself, Peter, like the Baptist, pointed their minds to the One upon whom their “wonder and amazement” was warranted: “the Holy One and the Just,” the murdered One, the “Prince of life,” the One God raised from the dead, God’s Son, Jesus. It was this man’s name, and belief in this man’s power that “made this man strong” and gave him “this perfect soundness.”

It is understandable, I suppose, for the spiritually immature to become fixated on the humans that appear right before their eyes rather than “the King eternal, immortal, *invisible*, the only wise God.”⁴ But it is no less unwise and dangerous for its understandable-ness. Little wonder, then, that fully one-third of the second recorded Christian sermon was devoted to rectifying the common and dangerous misplacement of human “wonder and amazement,” diverting the human “wonder and amazement” from visible yet insufficient human beings to the infinitely sufficient invisible One. Little wonder, too, that scripture so often addressed this human tendency to misplace religious “wonder and amazement.”

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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³ John 1.^{21, 27}

⁴ Timothy 1.¹⁷