

Introduction

- Storytellers often structure their tales with **multiple plot lines**, coming together to produce the final conclusion
 - for instance, in "The Lord of the Rings", we start with the tale of the journey of the Fellowship of the Ring, but they then split up and go their different ways; each group has its own plot-line, and one of the marks of Tolkein's skill was how he wove the different stories into one story!
 - or, if you read many Tom Clancy thrillers you'll find the same technique - in some of the stories, the different sections are headed with the date, time and location of the incident to be narrated, so you can keep track of multiple story-lines at the same time!

That's what's happening in Acts!

- The "Big Story" is the explosion of the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth:
 - (1:8) *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*
 - we started in Jerusalem with the apostles, Pentecost, the challenge to the religious leaders;
 - now, as the church has begun to be dispersed, the plot-lines have split, and we have at least two stories being interwoven...
 - we met Peter right at the beginning, saw the thread main story developing through his ministry;
 - then we broke off to hear about Stephen and Philip, how the news about Jesus first inched towards the Gentiles
 - then, following on from the results of Stephen's ministry, we are introduced to Saul/Paul; we hear of his conversion, his status as an apostle, his commission to preach to the Gentiles - rather like someone being told "you will stand on the moon!" before it was even possible to fly in space!
 - now we switch back to Peter, and the incidents before us prepare the way for the momentous events of Acts 10 & 11, when the gospel comes to Cornelius, the Gentile
- It will be Paul who "stands on the moon", who is an apostle to the Gentiles, but it will be Peter who is the first astronaut, who sees the first widely recognised Gentile convert.
- Luke interweaves these incidents and characters so that we learn the nature of the salvation offered in Christ:
 - a salvation that is for **all**: Jew, Gentile, male, female
 - a salvation that is offered **in Christ**: all who are saved in Luke's accounts are saved by Christ
 - and a salvation that is to **shared**: you are my witnesses, they spoke with boldness, many came to faith...
- Here, in this passage, Luke shows us that **Peter is a genuine apostle of Jesus**:
 - as a result, his testimony and example concerning Cornelius in chp.10 is valid!
- **Four factors support this:**

(1) Following the Example of Jesus

- First, Peter is shown as following the **example of Jesus**:
- Healing of **paralytic in Capernaum** (vs.32-35, Mark 2:1-12):
 - clearly a paralytic - 8 years in this case (v.33), carried on a mat in Capernaum (Mark 2:3)
 - command to get up and tidy his mat (v.34, Mark 2:11)
 - immediacy of the resultant healing (v.34, Mark 2:12)

- Raising of **Jairus' daughter** (vs.36-41, Luke 8:41-56):
 - the arrival of the healer on the scene after the person has died (v.37,39, Luke 8:51)
 - people weeping noisily in mourning (v.39, Luke 8:52)
 - Peter sent people out of the room (v.40, Luke 8:51)
 - words spoken to the dead person are almost identical: "Tabitha koum!" / "Talitha koum" (v.40, Luke 8:54)
- Peter was following the example of his Lord

(2) Through the Power of Jesus

- Secondly, both miracles were performed by the **power of Jesus**:
 - (v.34) "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat." Immediately Aeneas got up.
 - (v.40) Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and **prayed**. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up.
- Peter knew he could not overcome disease or death by his own authority or power!
 - rather, Peter was dependent on the power of Jesus

(3) Signs of the Salvation of Jesus

- Thirdly, both these miracles were signs of the **salvation of Jesus**:
 - because of his confidence in the power of Christ, Peter dared to address both Aeneas and Tabitha with the same word of command:
 - **anastethi**, (get up!)
- This is the same word that is used of God raising Jesus to life, of God "getting Jesus up" out of the grave!
 - in other words, it resonates with the promise of new life that comes through faith in Christ;
 - it doesn't pretend that Aeneas and Tabitha both subsequently died in the normal way
- Rather, it **points out** that recovery from paralysis and resuscitation from death were both **visible signs** of that new life into which - by the power of the resurrection - we sinners are raised

(4) To the Glory of Jesus

- Finally, these two miracles result in the **glorification of Jesus**:
 - in both cases what had happened became widely known, and many people became followers of Jesus
 - many people came to acknowledge his Lordship and praise his name
 - to his name glory was brought!
- These signs, these miracles, were given by God to **authenticate** and to **illustrate** the salvation message that Peter brought:
 - **authenticate**: is this real? Yes, see, it brings healing and new life!
 - **illustrate**: what is this salvation? It is one that brings healing and new life!

Conclusion

- I guess all of that invites us to ask questions of ourselves:
 - how is my individual story part of the big story of God's work in the world?
 - how is our story as a congregation part of the big story of God's work in the world?
 - does what I do and the way I do it follow in the example of Jesus?
 - do I work through the power of Jesus, or by my own power? (Prayer meeting, personal prayer?)
 - do our lives resonate with the new life of Christ? As people look at our lives, do they detect healing (of difficult relationships, of past emotional trauma, ...), do they detect signs new life (people coming to faith, growing in their humanity as images of the living God, ...)
 - and do our lives bring glory to Jesus?
- May God take our lives and weave them into the story of his work in the world, and may we be given the grace to follow his example, to work by his power, to demonstrate his salvation, and so to bring glory to his name!