

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE LESSON

Brian L. Harbour

March 6, 2016

## ENTRUSTED

Acts 1:1-11

### EXPOSITION

#### I. BACKGROUND TO THE BOOK

1. This book of Acts is about the acts of whom?
  - 1) The Acts of the Apostles
  - 2) The Acts of the Holy Spirit
  - 3) The Acts of the Resurrected Christ
2. The resurrected Christ needed to prepare the disciples for what was ahead.

#### II. THE RESURRECTED CHRIST ASSURES THE DISCIPLES, Acts 1:1-3a

1. The apostles needed assurance that Jesus was the Son of God.
2. Jesus appeared to them and gave them “many convincing proofs that he was alive.”
3. We too can conclude that since Jesus did indeed arise from the dead, he is therefore the Son of God.

#### III. THE RESURRECTED CHRIST ILLUMINATES THE DISCIPLES, Acts 1:3b

1. The disciples needed more than evidence. They also needed illumination. During those forty days Jesus taught them.
2. What did Jesus teach them? Luke explains that during these forty days Jesus “spoke about the kingdom of God,” 1:3.

- 1) The Kingdom of God is not political but spiritual, Jn 18:36.
- 2) It is not national but universal, Jn 3:16.
- 3) It is not earned but received, Mk 10:15.
- 4) It is not temporal but eternal, Lk 1:32-33.
- 5) It is not future but present, Mt 12:28.
- 6) It is not secondary but primary, Mt 6:33.

#### IV. THE RESURRECTED CHRIST EMPOWERS THE DISCIPLES, Acts 1:4-11

1. Jesus told the apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit, 1:4-5.
2. Notice three great lessons about the Holy Spirit.
  - 1) The primary manifestation of the Holy Spirit is power.
  - 2) This power of the Holy Spirit is available to every believer.
  - 3) The Holy Spirit empowers us to witness.

### APPLICATION

- ❖ To carry out our mission in the world we need a foundation, facts, and a force.
- ❖ We should carry out our mission because of who Jesus is and what he did.
- ❖ We can carry out this mission through the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE LESSON

Brian L. Harbour

March 13, 2016

## EMPOWERED

Acts 2:1-15

### EXPOSITION

#### I. THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES, Acts 2:1-4

1. Evidence of the work of the Spirit permeates the Gospels: Luke 1:35; Luke 1:41; Luke 2:25-26; Luke 3:22; Luke 4:1; Luke 4:18, 21; Luke 10:21.
2. The disciples are a part of this crowd gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost.
3. Jesus' promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit becomes a reality.
4. A sound reverberates from every direction with a stereophonic effect, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind, 2:2.
5. As the wind of God bombards the disciples' ears, flashes of light form around the heads of the disciples, 2:3.
6. What is the result of this unique manifestation of the presence and power of God? "All of them . . . began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them," 2:4. The tongues in Acts 2 is apparently known languages, not in some strange, unknown tongues.

#### II. THE HOLY SPIRIT COMMUNICATES, Acts 2:5-13

1. The disciples do not speak some heavenly language. They speak in such a way that everyone hears the message in their own "language."
2. Luke provides a roll-call of the nations represented in Jerusalem, 2:9-11.

3. Luke's list is probably not exhaustive but suggestive of the variety of people in the crowd that day.
4. Not surprisingly, the people respond in different ways.
  - 1) Some respond with expectant amazement.
  - 2) Others respond with hesitant skepticism.

#### III. PETER EXPLAINS THE PHENOMENON, Acts 2:14-41

1. Peter explains what is happening, 2:14-36.
  - 1) They are not drunk.
  - 2) They are filled with God's power and are carrying out God's work.
2. Some accept the message and become a part of the first century church. Others do not.

### APPLICATION

- ❖ Pentecost does not mark the beginning of the Spirit's work.
- ❖ Pentecost signals a new dimension and a new direction of the Spirit's work.
- ❖ At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to dwell in all believers.
- ❖ At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was given never to be withdrawn.
- ❖ At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was given to bear testimony to Christ.

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE LESSON

Brian L. Harbour

March 20, 2016

## UNIFIED

Acts 2:41-47

### EXPOSITION

#### I. THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CHURCH, Acts 2:42

1. A church of excellence is first of all a learning church, 2:42.
  - 1) Sometimes in the church we fall asleep too close to where we got in and become “fixated children of God.”
  - 2) The truth is, “To study infinity requires infinity.”
2. It is also a fellowshiping church. These first Christians devoted themselves “to fellowship.”
  - 1) The Greek word here is koinonia.
  - 2) Fellowship is “two fellows in a ship.”
3. A church of excellence is also a praying church. These first Christians also devoted themselves “to prayer.”
  - 1) These early Christians discovered they could face life in God’s strength and not their own.
  - 2) Jesus put it like this: “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations,” Mk 11:17.

#### II. THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH, Acts 2:43-46

1. Luke also describes the church’s attitude.
2. Toward God, they displayed an attitude of reverence, 2:43.
  - 1) Reverence is the recognition that all we are and have comes from God.

- 2) Because of this sense of reverence, the first Christians were able to do great wonders, 2:43.
3. Toward others, they displayed an attitude of love, 2:44-46.
  - 1) They enjoyed each other’s company.
  - 2) They were willing to take care of each other.

#### III. THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE CHURCH, Acts 2:47

1. As these first Christians reflected genuine commitment to God and to each other, people were drawn to them, 2:47.
2. As a result, the church grew in number. Luke tells us that “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

### APPLICATION

- ❖ Each of our churches today can be this kind of church.
- ❖ I believe God wants our churches to be this kind of church.
- ❖ To be this kind of church is going to cost something.
  - 1) It will take unwavering commitment.
  - 2) It will take the courage to face the challenges before us.
  - 3) It will take a willingness to love each other, unconditionally.

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE LESSON

Brian L. Harbour

March 27, 2016

## RESURRECTED

Luke 24:1-12

### EXPOSITION

#### I. WHO ARE THESE WOMEN? Luke 24:1

1. They are not identified until verse 10.
2. Joanna is the wife of Herod's servant Chuza, Lk 8:3.
3. Mary, the mother of James and Joses is also there.
4. And Mary, who comes from the town of Magdala is there. Jesus also healed her on an earlier occasion, Lk 8:2.

#### II. WHAT DO THESE WOMEN SEE? Luke 24:2-5a

1. What they expect to see is a dead body placed in a tomb that they can anoint.
2. Instead, these women see an empty tomb, 24:2-3. The question is: "Where did Jesus go?"
  - 1) Some critics of the resurrection say the women went to the wrong tomb.
  - 2) Others suggest that the disciples stole Jesus' body and hid it.
  - 3) Still others believe Jesus was not dead but unconscious and revived in the tomb.
3. Each of these explanations is fraught with difficulties.
4. The women also saw two men in shining clothes, 24:4.
5. Notice the response of these women to what they see.

- 1) In response to the empty tomb, Luke tells us the women "were wondering about this," 24:4.
- 2) In response to the two men whose clothes gleamed like lightning, the women are frightened, 24:5.

#### III. WHAT DO THESE WOMEN HEAR? Luke 24:5b-8

1. They heard the angels say that Jesus is alive, 24:6.
2. Jesus had earlier predicted his resurrection but the words had not sunk in at that time. Now, the women remember Jesus' prediction, 24:8.

#### IV. WHAT DO THESE WOMEN SAY? Luke 24:9-12

1. What the women witness with their eyes they now share with their word of testimony to the other disciples.
2. The rest of the group is understandably skeptical about such a preposterous claim.
3. Peter goes to the tomb and there sees evidence that convinces him that Jesus is alive.

### APPLICATION

- ❖ The resurrection is not just an event to remember but is also an event to experience.
- ❖ Because of the resurrection, we can first of all affirm that Jesus is alive.
- ❖ Because of the resurrection, we can also declare that Jesus is Lord.

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE LESSON

Brian L. Harbour

April 3, 2016

## COURAGEOUS

Acts 4:1-13

### EXPOSITION

#### I. THE CAST OF CHARACTERS, Acts 4:1

1. The priests: They are the religious custodians of the temple.
2. The captain of the temple guard: He is responsible for maintaining order in the temple courts.
3. The Sadducees: The Sadducees are a conservative religious sect.
4. Peter and John: These are two of Jesus' disciples
5. The crippled man who has been healed: read about his healing in Acts 3:1-10.

#### II. THE ARREST, Acts 4:2-5

1. When Peter saw the crowd, he turned from healing to heralding, 4:2.
2. In his message, he identified Jesus as the name in which the healing had been done.
3. At that point, a delegation of officials interrupted Peter's sermon, 4:3.
4. They reacted quickly to quell the activities of these followers of Jesus.
5. The Sadducees did not believe in resurrection after death.
6. The religious leaders planned to bring Peter and John before the Sanhedrin.
7. Note the different punishment given to Peter and John here and the punishment given in Acts 5:17.
8. Many accepted the gospel and turned to Jesus, 4:5.

#### III. THE INTERROGATION, Acts 4:6-12

1. The next day Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin, 4:5.
2. The high priest and his family were there, 4:6.
3. They confronted Peter and John with this question: "By what power or what name did you do this?" Acts 4:7.
4. What stands out in this incident is the courage of Peter and John.
5. We also note that they were empowered by the Holy Spirit, 4:8.
6. They attributed the healing to Jesus, 4:9.
7. They charged the Sanhedrin with the death of Jesus, 4:10.
8. They accused the Sanhedrin of going against God's will, 4:10.
9. Acts 4:12 declares that salvation comes only through Jesus.

#### IV. THE DILEMMA, Acts 4:13-14

1. The Sanhedrin was in a bind.
2. They could not explain away what they witnessed.

### APPLICATION

- ❖ When we know Jesus, this should make a difference in our lives.
- ❖ Because of the difference Jesus makes in our lives, we should be eager to share him with others.
- ❖ When we share him with others, there will be opposition.
- ❖ When the opposition comes, we should not be intimidated by anyone.

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE LESSON

Brian L. Harbour

April 10, 2016

## INTEGRITY

Acts 4:36-37, 5:1-11

### EXPOSITION

#### I. SCENE ONE: THE CHURCH AT WORK, Acts 4:34-35

1. For a second time, Luke interrupts his narrative to give a profile of the early church. The first is in Acts 2:42-47.
2. Luke identifies a combination of spiritual commitment and practical concern in the first century church.
3. The success of the church presents the church with a dilemma.
  - 1) Who will provide for the needs of these new Christians?
  - 2) How will these needs be met?
  - 3) Who will administer the distribution of these goods?
4. The apostles are responsible to declare the word and distribute the supplies, 4:33-34.

#### II. SCENE TWO: THE GOOD EXAMPLE OF BARNABAS, Acts 4:36-37

1. In Barnabas, Luke provides an example of a selfless Christian willing to share his possessions.
2. Barnabas sells some land and gives the money to the church to meet these needs.
3. In Acts 9, Barnabas convinces the Christians in Damascus to accept Paul as a Christian.
4. In Acts 11, he stands up for the new believers in Antioch and encourages them to remain faithful to the Lord.
5. In Acts 15, he gives Mark a second chance when Paul is unwilling to do so.

#### III. SCENE THREE: THE BAD EXAMPLE OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA, Acts 5:1-10

1. Ananias and Sapphira make a false claim about their gift to gain the praise of the church.
2. They are prosperous enough to own a piece of land.
3. Barnabas is driven by selfless love, but Ananias and Sapphira are driven by a selfish desire for recognition.
4. Two questions emerge from the text at this point.
  - 1) How does Peter know what Ananias has done?
  - 2) Why does Ananias come alone to make the gift?
5. Peter does not condemn Ananias for not giving the entire money from the sale of the land to the church but for lying about it, 5:4.
6. Ananias is overwhelmed by being caught and he dies, 5:5-6.
7. Sapphira suffers the same fate, 5:7-10.

### APPLICATION

- ❖ From the early church, we learn that God's people are called to be compassionate.
- ❖ From Barnabas, we learn that God's people are called to be encouragers..
- ❖ From Ananias and Sapphira, we learn that God's people are called to holiness and that we are accountable to God for our actions.

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE LESSON

Brian L. Harbour

April 17, 2016

## FAITHFUL

Acts 5:25-35, 38-42

### EXPOSITION

#### I. THE INTERROGATION, Acts 5:25-32

1. The Sanhedrin sent the guards to the jail to bring the disciples before them but the prisoners were gone, 5:23.
2. They were back in the temple preaching about Jesus, 5:25.
3. The temple guards bring them in and Peter responds with a message about Jesus.
  - 1) We see the allusion to the Old Testament background in the phrase "The God of our fathers," 5:30.
  - 2) We see the brief analysis of Jesus' life in the phrase "whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree," 5:30.
  - 3) We see the affirmation of who Jesus is in the phrase, "God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior," 5:31.
  - 4) Peter then promises forgiveness and the Holy Spirit to those who believed, 5:32.

#### II. THE INTERVENTION, Acts 5:33-40

1. The members of the Sanhedrin were enraged by Peter's response to the interrogation and want to put them to death, 5:33.
2. At that point, Gamaliel intervenes, 5:34.
3. Gamaliel suggests caution for this might be the hand of God at work.

4. How would they know if this was indeed the work of God?

- 1) Time will reveal the truth, Gamaliel concludes. They should wait and see if this movement around Jesus continues.
- 2) In addition to appealing to time, Gamaliel focuses on the central issue with which the Sanhedrin should be concerned: truth. If it is the truth from God, they should not fight against it.

5. Gamaliel's advice prevails. Instead of killing the disciples, the Sanhedrin merely flog them and send them away with the command not to speak any more about Jesus, a command they immediately disobey, 5:40.

#### III. THE RESPONSE, Acts 5:41-42

1. They preach Jesus as the Lamb.
2. They also preach Jesus as the Life.
3. They preach Jesus as the Lord.

### APPLICATION

What does this incident in our text reveal about the first century Christians?

- ❖ This incident reminds us of the fearlessness of these first Christians.
- ❖ This incident also reminds us of the focus of these first Christians.
- ❖ This incident further reminds us of the force of these first Christians.

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE LESSON

Brian L. Harbour

April 24, 2016

## SELFLESS

Acts 6:1-10

### EXPOSITION

#### I. THE PROBLEM, Acts 6:1

1. Evidently a considerable time lapses between chapter 5 and chapter 6 in the book of Acts. This is a time of rapid growth in the church.
2. Among those who join the church are the "Grecian Jews," 6:1.
3. Among those who join the church are also the "Hebraic Jews," 6:1.
4. The problem that erupts in the Jerusalem church revolves around these two groups.
5. What is the conflict about?
  - 1) The problem pits quantity against quality.
  - 2) The problem also sets my group against your group.
  - 3) The problem places evangelism over against edification.
6. Even in the first century church, problems nevertheless appear.

#### II. THE RESPONSE, Acts 6:2-5

1. So how do the church leaders respond to the crisis? Note, first of all, what they do not do.
  - 1) They do not ignore the problem.
  - 2) Neither do they resent the problem.
  - 3) Nor do they overact to the problem.
2. What then do they do? Simply put, the disciples organize to meet the crisis.

#### III. THE SERENDIPITY, Acts 6:8-15

1. So what is the result? To begin with, the problem is solved. No other mention is made of this particular problem in the New Testament.
2. But something even more important happens, and this is what I call the serendipity. The gifts of the Christians are activated and utilized. When these seven activate and utilize these gifts, their service goes well beyond just serving tables. Stephen is a case in point.
3. What does Stephen do?
  - 1) Stephen performs miracles among the people, 6:8.
  - 2) Stephen speaks persuasively to the people, 7:2ff.
4. His opponents accuse Stephen of attacking two objects sacred to every Jew: the law and the temple, 6:13.
5. But even as they testify against Stephen, God testifies on behalf of Stephen by providing a holy glow to come from his face, 6:15.

### APPLICATION

This experience demonstrates two principles for effective Christian work.

- ❖ The first principle is ORGANIZATION. Organization provides a framework for effectiveness.
- ❖ The other principle is COOPERATION. Organization only provides the opportunity for effectiveness. Cooperation actualizes that effectiveness.



# EXPLORE THE BIBLE LESSON

Brian L. Harbour

May 1, 2016

## OBEDIENT

Acts 8:26-31, 35, 38-39

### EXPOSITION

#### I. THE ASSIGNMENT, Acts 8:26-29

1. An “angel of the Lord” instructs Philip to go to the Gaza road, a main road between Egypt and Jerusalem, 8:26.
2. Here on the Gaza road Philip meets an “Ethiopian eunuch,” 8:27.
3. Luke clearly depicts this man as an “outsider” in terms of the Jewish faith, 8:27.
  - 1) He is a foreigner.
  - 2) He is a “eunuch.”
4. This court official from Africa is a God-fearer, attracted to the monotheistic focus and the ethical standards of the Jewish faith.
5. This Ethiopian reflects a deep interest in what he has learned about God in his time of worship in Jerusalem. He reads aloud from the Jewish Scripture as he rides along in his chariot.

#### II. THE CONVERSATION, Acts 8:30-38

1. Philip captures the man’s attention with an open ended question: “Do you understand what you are reading?” 8:30.
2. The Ethiopian admits that he does not understand the passage.
3. The passage the Ethiopian official is reading is from Isaiah 53. We identify Jesus as the Suffering Servant, but Judaism in that day did not make this connection.

4. The Ethiopian official, does not know about that connection between Jesus and the Suffering Servant prophecies.
5. Beginning with that passage, Philip guides the Ethiopian through Scripture on a road that leads to Christ, 8:35.
6. Philip leads the Ethiopian to the point of a decision and baptizes him, 8:38.

#### III. THE AFTERMATH, Acts 8:39

1. At that point, Philip completes his assignment and the Holy Spirit immediately transports him to another place, 8:40.
2. What happens to the Ethiopian official baptized by Philip? Luke does not tell us. He does, however, describe the joy that invades the new convert’s life as a result of his conversion and baptism.

### APPLICATION

- ❖ The story in our text reminds us that the gospel message has the power to change people’s lives. Romans 1:16 boldly declares this truth.
- ❖ The story in our text also reminds us that we have the responsibility to share the gospel message with others. Matthew 28:19-20 clearly presents that challenge to us.
- ❖ The story in our text reveals that we should be prepared for the opportunities that might arise to share the gospel with others. First Peter 3:15 boldly declares this truth.

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE LESSON

Brian L. Harbour

May 8, 2016

## CONVERTED

Acts 9:3-9, 15-20

### EXPOSITION

#### I. SAUL OPPOSES CHRISTIANITY, Acts 9:1-2

1. Saul is a Jew who aggressively persecutes Christians, 9:1.
2. Saul journeyed to Damascus to carry out his intentions, 9:2.
3. The profile of Saul.
  - 1) He was born in Tarsus, Acts 9:11.
  - 2) He was educated at Jerusalem in the school of Gamaliel, Acts 22:3.
  - 3) He was also a Roman citizen, Acts 16:37.
  - 4) He was a zealous Pharisee, Philippians 3:5-6.

#### II. SAUL MEETS CHRIST, Acts 9:3-9

1. He was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians.
2. God intervenes to reveal to Saul that he has other plans for him.
3. This divine encounter occurs as Saul nears Damascus, 9:3.
4. He hears the voice of God, 9:4.
5. God perplexes Saul with his question: "Why do you persecute me?" 9:4.
6. When Saul recognizes this as the voice of Jesus, he realizes that the resurrection of Jesus happened and that to oppose Jesus is to oppose God.
7. Understandably, this experience had a traumatic effect on everyone involved.

#### III. SAUL MEETS ANANIAS, Acts 9:10-20

1. At this point, the spotlight turns from Saul to Ananias who is identified as a disciple of Jesus, 9:10.
2. God instructs him to meet with Saul and reveal God's plans to him, 9:15-16.
3. To Ananias' credit, he overcomes his fear and goes to see Saul, just as God instructs him to do, 9:17.
4. After Ananias' encounter with Saul, several things happen.
  - 1) To begin with, Saul is "filled with the Holy Spirit," 9:17.
  - 2) And then, Saul identifies with God's people in the church. Luke tells us, "He got up and was baptized," 9:18.
  - 3) Saul discovers what Jesus wants him to do, 9:15.
  - 4) He then immediately begins to carry out the purpose for which God had saved him. 9:20.

### APPLICATION

- ❖ Saul's dramatic conversion experience should, first of all, encourage us in our witness.
- ❖ God's purpose for Saul is also God's purpose for us. He not only wants to save us from something; he also wants to save us for something.
- ❖ From Saul we can also learn the in our lives as Christians is not to know what God's will is. The key is to actually do it.

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE LESSON

Brian L. Harbour

May 15, 2016

## BOLD

Acts 9:36-43

### EXPOSITION

#### I. THE STORY OF HER LIFE, Acts 9:36-43

1. This event takes place in Joppa, a city with a natural harbor on the Mediterranean Sea.
2. The story focuses on a woman. Dorcas is her Greek name and her Aramaic name is Tabitha.
  - 1) Luke calls her a “disciple”, one who believes in Jesus, 9:36.
  - 2) Luke also tells us that she “was always doing good and helping the poor,” 9:36.
3. But then this compassionate Christian woman dies and the women have already begun to prepare her body for burial, 9:37.
4. When Peter arrives, he finds a group of women mourning Dorcas’ death.
5. Peter sends all of the mourners out of the room and prays for her healing.
6. Using her Aramaic name, Peter orders her to “get up,” 9:40.
7. Dorcas immediately responds to Peter’s command and stands up.
8. The story of Dorcas’ miraculous healing spreads “all over Joppa” and a large number of people “believed in the Lord,” 9:42.
9. Luke ends the story by saying that Peter stayed in the home of Simon the tanner, 9:43. Peter’s willingness to stay with Simon reveals a loosening of his strict Jewish mentality.

#### II. THE LESSONS OF HER LIFE

1. Dorcas shows us what it means to live as a Christian
  - 1) Dorcas believed something. She believed that Jesus is who he claims to be.
  - 2) Dorcas also felt something. She matched her committed with a compassionate heart.
  - 3) Dorcas also did something. The mourning widows had in their hands the very coats and tunics she had made for them.
2. Dorcas also shows us why it is important to live as a Christian. Each of us must leave a legacy. What did she do to leave a legacy? She took her needle and dedicated it to the Lord. She found her gift and was faithful in using that gift to meet the needs of others.

### APPLICATION

- ❖ What do we learn from Dorcas? Dorcas demonstrates what it means to live as a Christian.
- ❖ What do we learn from the women? They demonstrate the kind of gratitude we should reflect toward those who daily enrich our lives.
- ❖ What do we learn from Peter? Peter demonstrates an unswerving confidence in the transforming power of God’s love.

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE LESSON

Brian L. Harbour

May 22, 2016

## ACCEPTING

Acts 10:9-15, 43-48

### EXPOSITION

#### I. CORNELIUS, A MAN OF CHARACTER, Acts 10:1-2

1. Caesarea is located on the Plain of Sharon in Northwest Palestine, on the Mediterranean coast.
2. An Italian cohort of 600 seasoned soldiers was stationed there.
3. An officer, known as a centurion, ruled over one hundred soldiers.
4. Luke identifies Cornelius as being "devout and God-fearing," 10:2.
5. Cornelius wants to know more about the God of Israel.
6. Something is missing in Cornelius' life.

#### II. CORNELIUS AND HIS VISION, Acts 10:3-8

1. In his time of prayer, Cornelius has a vision from God, 10:3.
2. The angel presents to Cornelius both a commendation and a challenge from the Lord.
3. Immediately, Cornelius sends some messengers to Joppa to find Simon Peter, 10:6-8.

#### III. PETER AND HIS VISION, Acts 10:9-16

1. God has to prepare Peter, a Jew, to take the gospel to a Gentile, Cornelius.
2. Like for Cornelius, Peter has a vision. 10:11-13.
3. Peter protests that he cannot eat these animals in the sheet.
4. God tells him not to call anything impure that God had made, 10:15.

5. Then, Luke explains, this vision is repeated two more times.
6. At that moment, three messengers from Cornelius arrive and ask Peter to come to see Cornelius.

#### IV. THE CONVERSION OF CORNELIUS, Acts 10: 24-48

1. Peter enters the house full of Gentiles without objection.
2. Cornelius asks Peter to tell him more about God, 10:33.
3. Peter acknowledges that God is no respecter of persons, 10:34-35.
4. Peter emphasizes Jesus' peace, his preeminence, and his power.
5. Peter affirms that Jesus is God in human flesh, 10:38.
6. By his death and resurrection, Jesus makes forgiveness available to all, 10:39-43.
7. Before Peter concludes his sermon, the Holy Spirit descends on all the Gentiles and they speak in tongues, 10:44-45.
8. Peter baptizes Cornelius and his family, 10:48.

### APPLICATION

- ❖ The first lesson is obvious: the good news of Jesus Christ is for everyone.
- ❖ The experience in our text also highlights Jesus' identity.
- ❖ Peter also provides some insight into the proper approach for preaching the gospel.

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE LESSON

Brian L. Harbour

May 29, 2016

## EXTRAORDINARY

Acts 12:7-12, 16-19

### EXPOSITION

#### I. THE MARTYRDOM OF JAMES, Acts 12:1-2

1. King Herod initiates a new wave of persecution against the Christians, 12:1.
2. Why does he initiate this new wave of persecution against the Christians?
  - 1) He wants to preserve the peace.
  - 2) He wants to appease the local Jewish leaders.
3. His first target, Luke tells us, is James, the brother of John, 12:2.
4. He warns James earlier about what they might have to face (Mk 10:35-41). Now that prophecy comes true.
5. He gives little details about James' martyrdom because his focus is on the work of the kingdom, not individual Christians.

#### II. THE ARREST OF PETER, Acts 12:3-5

1. After James is executed, Agrippa recognizes this is a popular decision.
2. Hoping to solicit even more favor, he arrests Peter.
3. He plans to wait until after Passover week to execute Peter.
4. Agrippa secures Peter in prison lest any of his supporters attempt to liberate him from his confinement.
5. However, Agrippa's precautions are no match for the angel of deliverance.
6. The other Christians seek the guidance and intervention of God through prayer.

7. For Luke, prayer is always the natural atmosphere in which God carries out his work among the first Christians.

#### III. THE DELIVERANCE OF PETER, Acts 12:6-16

1. Luke turns his attention to Peter in his prison cell. Even though he will probably be executed the next day, Peter sleeps soundly.
2. Even though God does not intervene in James' situation, God chooses to intervene in Peter's situation.
3. Humanly speaking, Peter is secure.
4. He is not secure, however, from the power of God, 12:7.
5. Peter confronts absolutely no resistance as he escapes from the prison.
6. The most amazing part of the story is the response to what God did, 12:11-16.
7. Peter "left for another place," 12:17.
8. Herod executes the guards, 12:18-19

### APPLICATION

- ❖ As Christians, we will always face opposition as we do the work of the kingdom.
- ❖ Sometimes the opposition comes from outside the church.
- ❖ Sometimes the greatest barrier to the work of the kingdom is our own lack of faith.
- ❖ God can, and does, provide miraculous deliverances.