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Holy Archangels Orthodox Church  
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## **Exploratory Bible Study on the Acts of the Apostles: “The Book of Acts through the Eyes of the Early Christians”**

### **Bible Study #5**

#### **Review from Acts 3**

#### **The Hour of Prayer**

V. 1 Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

*Vocabulary:* “Ninth Hour”, i.e., nine hours past sunrise, 3 p.m.

The three psalms read at the Ninth Hour--Psalms **83, 84 and 85**—foretell of God’s Incarnation and Messiah’s salvation for all mankind

Prayer of St. Basil (4<sup>th</sup> r the Ninth Hour

*“O Master, Lord Jesus Christ... Who hast brought us even unto this present hour, wherein Thou didst hang upon the life-giving Tree... cleanse us, spare us O Lord .... deliver us from the hand of the Adversary, and forgive us our sins, and mortify our carnal mind... that putting aside the old man, we may be clothed in the new one, and live for Thee, our Master and Benefactor; and that thus by following Thy commandments, we may attain to rest eternal, wherein is the abode of all them that rejoice...”*



Q: How did the Ninth Hour Prayers take on a deeper and fulfilled meaning through Christ’s incarnation, salvific death and promise of paradise to the thief? How is this reflected in the Psalms and in the Ninth Hour Prayer of St. Basil? Why is this so significant?

#### **The Healing of the Lame Man**

Q: What is so significant about the healing of the lame man? From the people’s reaction and the Apostles’ response, what does it teach us about the Apostles’ ministry and the ministry of Christ’s Church?

#### **St. Peter’s Sermon**

V. 15 *Vocabulary:* “*ton de arkhêgon tês Zoês*” (v. 15) = “Founder, Originator, Ruler of Life.”]

V. 19 *Vocabulary:* “Repent and be converted...” (Gk. = μετανοήσατε/ from “*metanoia*”=change of heart, change of way, conversion).”

Q: Why does St. Peter call on his fellow Jews to practice “*metanoia*”? Why is this understanding of repentance what is truly needed?

Q: How does St. Peter’s sermon truly reflect the Orthodox call to repentance?

“Some fear turning away from sin makes life hard to bear. Instead, through repentance, life that was merely existence is transformed into real living—that is, living in faith, love, joy and confident hope.”—*Orthodox Study Bible*

## Read Chapter 4:1-22

V.1 *Vocabulary:* “Sanhedrin”—the *Sanhedrin* was the highest Jewish governing body. The Sadducees, as opposed to the Pharisees, do not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

- Q: Why are the Apostles (Saints Peter and John) being brought before the Sanhedrin?
- Q: What in St. Peter’s defense is reminiscent of Christ’s own words in the Gospel of St. John, particularly verses 11-12?
- Q: What is redemptive about the Apostles, particularly St. Peter’s witness here?
- Q: How would you describe the trial before the Sanhedrin? How do we see the presence of the Holy Spirit here?
- Q: What would have been particularly infuriating to the Sadducees in the Apostles’ witness?
- Q: What is indicative here in the response of the Jewish leaders of a lack of “*metanoia*”? What is the conundrum that they find themselves in?

“Being grieved that they taught the people. (v.2) Not merely because they taught, but because they declared, not alone that Christ Himself was risen from the dead, but moreover, that we through Him do rise again.”—St. John Chrysostom, Homily X on Acts 4.1, Eerdmans, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*.

## Read Verses 23-31

- Q: How would you characterize the Apostles’ prayer before God following the threats they received from the leaders of the Sanhedrin?
- Q: What is characteristic here of the power of the Holy Spirit?

## Read Verses 32-37

- Q: What is the fruit of repentance and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the believers?
- Q: What does Barnabas’ act reveal and teach?

Application:

- ❖ How can each of us hope to attain to such faith as demonstrated by the Apostles before the Sanhedrin and the generosity of spirit exemplified by Barnabas to the glory of God?
- ❖ How do our individual actions (or inactions) impact the witness of not only the Church, our own churches, but also how Christians are viewed as a whole?

