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NT 620 The Book of Acts

David R. Bauer

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This course involves a careful examination of the Book of Acts according to the inductive method of Bible study. The emphasis is upon the structure and major themes found in the Book of Acts, with the Gospel of Luke employed for background purposes. This course seeks intentionally to incorporate the grammatical analysis of the Greek language into the overall inductive process.

I. Course Objectives.

A. Content. The student should be able to:
   1. Think through the (general) contents of the book without recourse to the printed text.
   2. Describe thoroughly the meaning and development of major themes in the Book of Acts, citing individual passages and other specific data to support conclusions;
   3. Identify significant passages in the Book of Acts and interpret them contextually;
   4. Demonstrate an acquaintance with some of the major commentaries on the Book of Acts;
   5. Demonstrate a general knowledge of the critical problems surrounding the Book of Acts, including the relationship between this book and the history of the early church as well as its relationship to other New Testament writings.

B. Methodology. The student should be able to:
   1. Employ structural observations for the interpretation of individual passages within the book, as well as for the interpretation of the book as a whole.
   2. Raise various kinds of interpretive questions, and answer these questions, based on the use of exegetical determinants;
   3. Employ various kinds of relevant evidence, including that which involves exegetical use of the Greek text, in a process of inferential reasoning for the interpretation of individual passages within the book, as well as for the book as a whole.
   4. Synthesize the interpretation of units of various lengths, such as the paragraph, the segment, the section (division), and the book as a whole;
   5. Use aspects of methodology that are especially relevant for the narrative material;
   6. Evaluate and apply truths that emerge from the interpretation of the material.

C. Attitude. The student should:
   1. Appreciate the value of the Book of Acts for faith, experience, understanding and ministry;
   2. Desire to make the Book of Acts the object of continued serious study throughout life;
   3. Intend to employ seriously the Book of Acts in preaching and teaching within the context of the church.

II. Course Texts.

A. Required.
   2. Biblical Resources for Ministry, by David Bauer

III. Course Requirements.

A. The completion of the following lessons in writing, unless otherwise indicated by the instructor. All lessons are to be handed in at the end of the class period on the day designated. No late papers will be accepted save in cases in which permission is granted by the instructor based on emergency.

B. Punctual attendance at all class sessions. Because of the importance of class attendance and because of government regulations regarding student loans, a record of attendance will be taken each class session.
Absence at more than two class sessions will result in grade penalty, and absence at more than four will result in a loss of credit for the course. Exceptions may be granted based on emergency consultation with the instructor.

C. A careful reading of the assigned portions of the required and collateral texts.

D. A final examination based on the objectives of the course.

IV. Course Evaluation.

A. Assignments - 75%

B. Final Exam - 25%

V. Lessons.

Read the entire book through at one sitting several times.

1. Identify the general and specific materials of the book, giving a brief title to each chapter.
2. Locate the main units and sub-units in the book, and identify the major structural relationships operative in the book as a whole.
3. Ask a few interpretive questions regarding each major structural relationship observed.
4. Identify the key verses and strategic areas which provide insight into the book as a whole. Give reasons for each selection in terms of structural significance.
5. Note data bearing on such higher critical questions as the author, place and date of writing, recipients, unity of the book, etc.
6. Note other major impressions relating to the book as a whole.

Survey the Book of Acts, following the suggestions listed under Lesson 1.


1. Survey. Survey the segment, employing the following suggestions:
   a. Give a brief title to each paragraph.
   b. Identify the main units and sub-units in the segment, and the major structural relationships operative in the segment as a whole.
   c. Ask a few interpretive questions regarding each major structural relationship observed.
   d. Locate the key verses in the segment.
   e. Identify the literary form(s) employed.
   f. Note other major impressions.

2. Interpretation. Interpret this segment (or a portion of it) on the basis of one or more structural relationships, interpretive questions, major issues, or strategic areas identified in your survey. Or answer one or more of the following interpretive questions:
   a. Trace the thought in vv. 1-5. What is said here regarding "the first book?" What does this description of the first book suggest about the Book of Acts?
   b. How does the writer describe Jesus' activity in vv. 2-5? What are the major elements here, and what is the meaning of each? How do these verses prepare for the remainder of chap.1?
   c. What is the meaning of the disciples' question in v. 6? How is this question answered? What are the implications of this interrogation?
   d. What are the main elements in Jesus' ascension, and what is the meaning of each? What is the function of Jesus' ascension in this context?
   e. How are the disciples described in vv. 12-26? What is the meaning of this description? Analyze the contrast between Judas and the disciples. According to vv. 15-26, what is involved in apostleship?
   a. How does this chapter prepare for the remainder of the book? How does it prepare for chap. 2?
   b. Explore some of the ways in which this chapter can be applied to modern Christians?


1. Survey the segment, following the suggestions under Lesson 3.

2. Interpretation. Interpret this segment (or a portion of it) on the basis of one or more structural relationships, interpretive questions, major issues, or strategic areas identified in your survey. Or answer one or more of the following interpretive questions:
   a. Note the phenomena described in vv. 1-13. What is the meaning of each? What does each imply? What is the meaning of the phrase, "all filled with the Holy Spirit?"
   b. Trace the thought of Peter's speech. What are the major elements, and what is the meaning of each?

   a. List the main affirmations found in Peter's speech.
   b. Explore the ways in which the events recorded in chap. 2 cause/produce that which is found in the remainder of the book.
   c. How should this chapter inform our proclamation and witnessing?


1. Survey. Survey this material, following the suggestions under Lesson 3.

2. Interpretation. Interpret this segment (or a portion of it) on the basis of one or more structural relationships, interpretive questions, major issues, or strategic areas identified in your survey. Or answer one or more of the following interpretive questions:
   a. Analyze the structure of the healing story found in 3:1-10. Use this structural analysis to determine the main components of the story. What is the meaning of each of these components? What is the meaning and function of the story within its context?
   b. Trace the thought of Peter's speech in 3:11-26. Identify the major issues Peter raises here. How does he deal with each of these major issues? Examine the ways in which this speech relates to the narratives that precede and follow it.

   a. Summarize what is herein said or implied regarding the Holy Spirit, witnessing, and the church.
   b. Consider ways in which you could apply this section to your own situation and the situation of those to whom you will minister.


1. Survey. Survey this segment, following the suggestions under Lesson 3.

2. Interpretation. Interpret this segment (or a portion of it) on the basis of one or more structural relationships, interpretive questions, major issues, or strategic areas identified in your survey. Or answer one or more of the following interpretive questions:
   a. What is the meaning of 4:32-35 (in the process, note the relation of v. 33 to the surrounding paragraph context)? Why does the writer include this description (paragraph) here? What are its implications?
   b. What are the major contrasts in this segment? Examine each of these in terms of its (full) meaning and function. Why is each contrast included? What are the implications of each?
   c. What is the meaning of Gamaliel's speech? How does it function in this segment?

a. Summarize what is said or implied in this segment regarding the Holy Spirit, power, witnessing, and persecution.
b. Evaluate and apply this segment in terms of the joys, privileges, and responsibilities of Christian discipleship.


1. Survey. Survey this material, following the suggestions under Lesson 3.

2. Interpretation. Interpret this segment (or a portion of it) on the basis of one or more structural relationships, interpretive questions, major issues, or strategic areas identified in your survey. Or answer one or more of the following interpretive questions:
   a. Examine the nature and meaning of the problem and solution in 6:1-6. Why does the writer include this episode here? What does it imply about life in the Christian community?
   b. Explore the contrast between Stephen and his opponents. How does this contrast illumine the character of Stephen, and the character of his opponents? What are the differences between them, and what is the meaning of each of these differences?
   c. Carefully trace the argument of Stephen's speech. What main issues does he raise, and how does he deal with each? How does Stephen's speech relate to its immediate context (note especially how Stephen's speech answers the charges against him)? Be analytical.

   a. Summarize what is herein said or implied regarding witnessing, persecution, and salvation history.
   b. Evaluate and apply the portrait of Stephen, and the portrait of the people of Israel.


1. Survey. Survey this material, following the suggestions under Lesson 3.

2. Interpretation. Interpret this segment (or a portion of it) on the basis of one or more structural relationships, interpretive questions, major issues, or strategic areas identified in your survey. Or answer one or more of the following interpretive questions:
   a. What are the chief characteristics of Philip's work, and what is the meaning of each? Explore the contrast between the apostles and Simon Magus. What is the meaning of this contrast, and how does it illumine the theme of power and the theme of conversion in this section?
   b. Note the stages in Paul's conversion. What is involved in each? How does the story of Saul's conversion relate to this section as a whole? What does this story imply regarding Christian conversion?
   c. What major issues are raised in chaps. 10-11? What is the meaning of each, and how is each handled? Why is each handled in this fashion? What are the implications?

   a. Summarize what is herein said or implied regarding the church, witnessing, power, and conversion.
   b. Explore the ways in which the presentation of power and of conversion in this section can be applied to you and others today.


1. Survey. Survey this material, following the suggestions under Lesson 3.

2. Interpretation. Interpret this segment (or a portion of it) on the basis of one or more structural relationships, interpretive questions, major issues, or strategic areas identified in your survey. Or answer one or more of the following interpretive questions:
a. Trace this missionary journey on a map. Analyze Paul's method. What does he do in each town, and why? What are the implications?
b. What main points does Paul address in his speech found at 13:16b-41? How does he deal with each? How does this speech relate to its context?
c. What is the meaning of the contrast between Paul and his Jewish opponents, and between the people (including the Gentiles) and these Jewish adversaries? Why these differences? Implications?
d. What issue is raised at the council in Jerusalem? How is it handled? Why is it handled in this fashion? Implications?

   a. Summarize what is herein said or implied regarding the church, witnessing, and salvation history.
   b. Choose a major theme or concern in this section, and explore ways in which you can apply it to yourself or to others.


1. Survey. Survey this material, following the suggestions under Lesson 3.

2. Interpretation. Interpret this segment (or a portion of it) on the basis of one or more structural relationships, interpretive questions, major issues, or strategic areas identified in your survey. Or answer one or more of the following interpretive questions:
   a. Analyze the way in which 15:36–41 functions in this section. Why has the writer included it here?
   b. Trace Paul's travels in this section on a map. What does Paul do in each town? What is the meaning of each of these activities? Why does Paul do each of these things?
   c. Trace the thought of Paul's speech at Athens in 17:22-31. What main points does he make, and what is the meaning of each? How does this speech relate to its context?

   a. Summarize what is herein said or implied regarding witnessing, salvation, and the Holy Spirit.
   b. Explore ways in which Paul's character and activities in this section can be applied to your life.


1. Survey. Survey this material, following the suggestions under Lesson 3.

2. Interpretation. Interpret this segment (or a portion of it) on the basis of one or more structural relationships, interpretive questions, major issues, or strategic areas identified in your survey. Or answer one or more of the following interpretive questions:
   a. Analyze the Ephesian riot in terms of the following questions: What motives are here at work? What principles and ideologies are present here? How is the riot finally ended? Why has the writer included this story here?
   b. Trace the journeying of Paul in this section on a map. What does Paul do in each city, and why? Be analytical. How do these activities give us insight into Paul's ministry, person, and a character?
   c. Trace the thought of Paul's speech to the Ephesians in 20:18-35. How does he describe himself, and what is the meaning of this description? Explore the meaning of the exhortations he gives to the church leaders. What is the relationship between the self-description and exhortations?

   a. Summarize what is herein said or implied regarding ministry.
   b. Evaluate and apply Paul's exhortations in 20:18-35.

1. Survey.  Survey this material, following the suggestions under Lesson 3.

2. Using your skills in inductive Bible study, analyze, synthesize, and apply this section.  (Suggestion: Use your survey of this material as a basis for this further work.)


1. Survey.  Survey this material, following the suggestions under Lesson 3.

2. Interpret 28:23-31 by answering the following questions:  What is the meaning of this passage?  Did the book originally end here?  If so, why has the writer chosen thus to end his book?  Implications?


Synthesize the Book of Acts by answering the questions raised under one of the major structural relationships you identify in your survey of the book as a whole.
Select Bibliography

Bibliographies:


Commentaries:


Monographs:


