

Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary

NT 627 The Book of Acts (3 units) Summer, 2007

Tim Geddert, Ph. D.
Bible Department
(559) 452-1716 (Office # 8)
tgeddert@mbseminary.edu
Office Hours: By appointment (or drop by!)

Course meets evenings, 5:30 – 9:00 pm, on the following days: May 29-31, June 5-7, June 11-14. (Note: in case you can clear your schedules for only 3 days each week (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday), we will videotape the only Monday evening class, July 11, for students who need to miss that evening.)

A. Objectives for the Course

1. To gain greater appreciation for the Book of Acts as a selective history of the early church, as a theological interpretation of what “Jesus continued to do and teach,” and as Luke’s interpretation of key themes related to the nature of the church and its mission.
2. To study key texts and themes in Acts in order to determine the particular theological concerns of the writer.
3. To gain skills in interpreting the Bible and discerning how and when the biblical record presents normative guidance for the contemporary church.
4. To gain appreciation for the church and be motivated to active participation in its mission.

Within the larger Seminary curriculum, this course aims to help Christians gain facility in interpreting Scripture, both for their own spiritual growth and so that they might be able to preach and teach the Scriptures with confidence, integrity and effectiveness. It is also designed to clarify biblical teaching on material that is central to the Book of Acts (e.g. the mission of the church, the role of the Holy Spirit, the nature of Christian community, church leadership, the church’s relation to the state, evangelism and apologetics, etc.)

B. Nature of the Course

We will be spending the first half of the course (evenings 1-5) surveying the book of Acts, highlighting key issues, but omitting some key issues that will be studied in greater depth during the last third of the class. The method will be lecture, inductive study and discussion.

The last five sessions of the class will focus on five key themes/issues, and in each case various contributing texts. These are designed to study in greater depth five important issues in interpreting Acts and applying to the church its abiding significance. The method will be lecture and discussion for the first two hours, including student presentations. The last hour of each session will be a “Workshop” designed to encourage the practical application of the material studied to key issues in the life of the contemporary church.

C. Textbooks for the Course

Required Reading:

Talbert, Charles H. 1997. *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*. New York: Crossroad. A readable commentary from a literary critical perspective.

Willimon, William H. *Acts. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988.

D. Outline of the Course

Note: this is a tentative schedule and may be modified during the teaching blocks.

Evening 1 (May 29): Introduction to course and to the book of Acts.
The birth of the Christian church (Acts 1-2)

Evening 2 (May 30): The witness in Jerusalem (Acts 3-5)
The witness of Stephen (Acts 6,7)

Evening 3 (May 31): The persecuted and scattered church (Acts 8,9)
The beginning of the Gentile mission (Acts 10-12)

Evening 4 (June 5): Mission trips to the Gentile world – Part 1 (Acts 13-15)
Mission trips to the Gentile world – Part 2 (Acts 16-20:38)

Evening 5 (June 6): Paul’s journey to and persecution in Jerusalem (Acts 21-23)
Paul in Caesarea and on to Rome (Acts 24-28)

Evening 6 (June 7): The creation of the “witnessing community” (esp. Acts 1:8, 2:42-47)
Witnessing in word and deed (selections from Acts 1-5)
Workshop: Power evangelism and the credible community

Evening 7 (June 11): The church of Jews and Gentiles (gradual steps toward the Gentile mission)
The unity of the Jew-Gentile church (a study of Acts 15)

Workshop: Homogenous unit principle and multi-cultural church

Evening 8 (June 12): Mission strategies (learning from Paul's central message and changing methods)

Evangelistic and apologetic preaching (esp. 13:16-52; 17:22-34; 26:1-32)

Workshop: "How would you have planted the church in Philippi?" (16:11-34)

Evening 9 (June 13): The developing leadership of the Christian church (the 12, the 120, the 7, Paul and his companions)

Leadership modeling and priorities (a study of Acts 20:13-38)

Workshop: Leadership and the contemporary church

Evening 10 (June 14): The Christian church and the secular and religions "powers"

- the conflicts between the church and the religious authorities in Jerusalem
- conflicts with political officials throughout the Roman empire

The church: peaceable citizens or dangerous revolutionaries?

Workshop: "We ought to obey God rather than humans" . . . implications for political issues today.

E. Assignments for the Course

Reading: (estimated time 44 hours)

Text books: students are required to read the two texts according to the following schedule:

Talbert (ca 288 pages): by June 13 (estimated time 9 hours)

Willimon (ca 190 pages): by July 6 (estimated time 7 hours)

Additional reading: A minimum of 800 pages is to be read in conjunction with the major project and/or after completing the reading of the textbooks. Please keep a list of the books/articles you read (and which pages in each) and submit the list with your paper (do not include sources briefly consulted but not read) (estimated time 28 hours). Due date for completion of all reading: Aug. 3.

Writing: (estimated time 50 hours)

1. **Major project:** A research essay on one of the five topics to be addressed in one of the last five evening sessions.

Assignment Requirements: Your paper should be approximately 20 pages in length, plus bibliography. You are encouraged to do your own inductive study of the most relevant texts, but are also required to research commentaries and articles on the texts and on the topic of the paper. Your bibliography should contain no less than 20 good sources and your writing should include about an equal number of appropriate footnoted references to the research that you have done (direct or indirect quotes, etc.).

Your paper may (but is not required to) focus the topic more narrowly or select one specific text relevant to the topic. Students who wish to write on a topic other than the five suggested must clear it first with the professor. It is recommended that all students consult with the professor during the research and writing . . . for example, proposing an approach to the paper and a tentative outline, bibliography, etc. The professor will respond with suggestions and concerns.

Topic Selection and Integration: In selecting your topic, you should keep in mind your own ministry goals and training needs. Work at areas that need to be strengthened. Work on a topic that contributes to your training for a specific ministry (e.g. Paul's preaching if you are training to preach; issues in church planting if you are expecting to plant churches or facilitate church growth, mission issues if you expect to work in cross-cultural issues, etc.)

Estimated time for this assignment: 40 hours

Due Date: The paper is to be completed by August 17. However, please observe the following due dates for different aspects of the paper.

- Topic selection to be submitted in class: May 31.
- Preliminary research of at least 4-5 good sources, plus notes taken on key biblical texts: June 6.
- Class presentation of key ideas: June 7 through 14, depending on your topic.

2. **Minor Project** (unless student proposes an alternative)

Keep a log of "important new insights" gained in this course, both through reading and through class content. This can be anywhere from 1 - 3 pages long and may be in point form. Then choose one significant new insight from your list and write up a 3 - 5 page discussion of the issue. Your write-up should explain your new insight, where you gained the insight, how you would defend it if someone challenged its correctness, and why the issue is important to you and/or important generally for a correct understanding of Acts and its message.

Estimated time for this assignment: 8 hours

Due Date: August 24.

3. Class Presentation

During the last five evenings, students will share some of their preliminary ideas and research for their topic (see “Major Project” assignment). These are to be short (perhaps 5 minute) presentations. Please prepare a one page handout for the class with key ideas on it. Schedule to be arranged, depending on topic. Estimated preparation time: 2 hours.

F. Grading for the Course

- major assignment 65 %
- minor assignment 25 %
- marks will be deducted for reading not completed or for inadequate class attendance and/or participation.
- class presentation 10%

Grading Factors:

Grading will be based on factors such as the following:

- appropriateness of topic and approach to the assignment
- comprehensiveness of relevant research
- logic and/or creativity of the presentation
- care and attention to accurate writing and typing
- form and style of the paper (title page, contents page, conformity to appropriate footnoting style, bibliography, etc.)

G. Bibliography (prepared by Ryan Schellenberg)

Commentaries:

(where there are annotations, they are by Richard Ascough, Queen’s University)

Barrett, C. K. 1994. *The Acts of the Apostles*. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark. A solid but technical (Greek) historical critical commentary. Barrett is always careful and balanced in his approach.

Bruce, F. F. 1988. *The Book of the Acts*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. A conservative, evangelical who is well-respected for his biblical exegesis. He tends to cautiously affirm the veracity of the Acts account.

Conzelmann, Hans. 1987. *Acts*. Hermeneia. 2nd edition. Philadelphia: Fortress. A somewhat technical historical critical reading of Acts.

Faw, Chalmer E. *Acts*. Believers Church Bible Commentary. Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1993.

- *Fitzmyer, Joseph A. 1998. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Anchor Bible 31. New York: Doubleday. A recent, thus, up-to-date commentary by the Catholic Jesuit Lukan scholar. Reflects the best of the historical critical approach.
- Haenchen, Ernst. 1971. *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*. Oxford: Blackwell. A technical and well-respected historical critical commentary coming out of the liberal German exegetical tradition.
- *Johnson, Luke Timothy. 1992. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Sacra Pagina 5. Collegeville: Liturgical Press. As with his commentary on Luke, Johnson's exegesis is solid and this commentary is very readable.
- Krodel, Gerhard A. *Acts*. Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament. Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1986.
- Luedemann, Gerd. 1987. *Early Christianity According to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress. By employing the historical critical methodology Luedemann attempts to identify for each passage of Acts that which is redactional (i.e., written by Luke), that which comes from tradition, and that which is historically accurate.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Tyndale NT Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.
- Talbert, Charles H. 1997. *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*. New York: Crossroad. A readable commentary from a literary critical perspective.
- Tannehill, Robert C. 1990. *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*. Vol. 2. *The Acts of the Apostle*. Minneapolis: Fortress. Not as valuable as his first volume on the gospel. Tannehill reverts to a section-by-section approach which makes the volume easier to use but loses the strength of the earlier volume's narrative emphasis.
- Willimon, William H. *Acts*. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988.
- *Witherington III, Ben. 1998. *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids and Cambridge & Carlisle: Eerdmans & Paternoster. This evangelical commentary is one of the most thorough and up-to-date. While not always (or even often) agreeing with Witherington's conclusions, I find that he lays out the problems and various solutions clearly. He makes good use of historical critical and social-cultural methods and situates the texts in their social worlds.

Monographs/Articles

For a helpful annotated bibliography, see:

*Green, Joel B. and Michael C. McKeever. *Luke-Acts and New Testament Historiography*. IBR Bibliography Series. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995.

On specific pericopes, see the relevant bibliographies in the commentaries by Conzelmann, Fitzmyer, Johnson, and Witherington.

For an introduction to uses in interpreting Acts, see:

Powell, Mark Alan. *What Are They Saying About Acts?* New York: Paulist Press, 1991.

General/Theology

Cadbury, Henry J. *The Making of Luke-Acts*. London: SPCK, 1958.

Dibelius, M. *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*. Edited by H. Greeven. Translated by M. Ling. New York: Scribners, 1956.

Flender, H. *St. Luke: Theologian of Redemptive History*. London: SPCK, 1961.

Garrett, Susan R. *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989.

*Jervell, Jacob. *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles*. New Testament Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Juel, D. *Luke-Acts: The Promise of History*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1983.

*Keck, Leander E. and J. Louis Martyn, eds. *Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays Presented in Honor of Paul Schubert*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1966.

Kee, Howard C. *Good News to the Ends of the Earth: The Theology of Acts*. Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1990.

———. *To Every Nation under Heaven*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1997.

Marguerat, Daniel. *The First Christian Historian: Writing the "Acts of the Apostles."* Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 121. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

*Marshall, I. Howard, and David Peterson, eds. *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

O'Toole, Robert F. *The Unity of Luke's Theology: An Analysis of Luke-Acts*. Good News Studies 9. Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984.

*Penner, Todd and Caroline Vander Stichele, eds. *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative in Greco-Roman Discourse*. Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 20. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

*Talbert, Charles H., ed. *Perpectives on Luke-Acts*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978.

*———, ed. *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives from the SBL Seminar*. New York: Crossroad, 1984.

Purpose/Genre

- Maddox, Robert L. *The Purpose of Luke-Acts*. Studies of the New Testament in Its World. Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1982.
- Minear, Paul S. "Dear Theo: The Kerygmatic Intention and Claim of the Book of Acts." *Interpretation* 27 (1973): 131-50.
- Penner, Todd. *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography*. Emory Studies in Early Christianity 10. New York: T&T Clark, 2004.
- Pervo, Richard I. *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987.
- Sterling, Gregory E. *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts, and Apologetic Historiography*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum 64. Leiden: Brill, 1992.
- Talbert, Charles H. *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts*. Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1974.

Historical Context/Reliability

- Barrett, C. K. *Luke the Historian in Recent Study*. London: Epworth, 1961.
- Foakes Jackson, Frederick J. and Kirsopp Lake, eds. *The Beginnings of Christianity: The Acts of the Apostles*. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979.
- Hemer, Colin J. *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 49. Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1989.
- Hengel, Martin. *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.
- *Winter, Bruce, ed. *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*. 6 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995-forthcoming.
- Witherington, Ben, ed. *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Mission/Discipleship

- Dollar, Harold. *St. Luke's Missiology: A Cross-Cultural Challenge*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1996.
- *Gallagher, Robert L. and Paul Hertig. *Mission in Acts: Ancient Narratives in Contemporary Context*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004.
- Sweetland, D. M. *Our Journey with Jesus: Discipleship According to Luke-Acts*. Good News Studies 23. Collegeville: Liturgical, 1990.

The Jews in Acts

- Brawley, Robert L. *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation*. Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 33. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987.
- Darr, John A. *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts*. Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992.

- Gowler, David B. *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend: Portraits of the Pharisees in Luke and Acts*. Emory Studies in Early Christianity 2. New York: Lang, 1991.
- Jervell, J. *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972.
- Ravens, David A. *Luke and the Restoration of Israel*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 119. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995.
- Tannehill, Robert C. "Israel in Luke-Acts: A Tragic Story." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104 (1985): 69–85.
- Tyson, Joseph B. *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars: Critical Approaches to Luke-Acts*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999.
- , ed. *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988.

Luke and the Scriptures

- Bock, Darrell L. *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 12. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987.
- Brawley, Robert L. *Text to Text Pours Forth Speech: Voices of Scripture in Luke-Acts*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.
- Evans, Craig A. and James A. Sanders. *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Septuagintal Midrash in the Speeches of Acts*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002.
- *Moessner, David P., ed. *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel: Luke's Narrative Claim upon Israel's Legacy*. Luke the Interpreter of Israel Series 1. Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 1999.
- Tiede, D. L. *Prophecy and History in Luke-Acts*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980.

Paul in Acts

- Lentz, J. C. *Luke's Portrait of Paul*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 77. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- MacDonald, Dennis R. *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983.
- Marshall, I. Howard. "Luke's View of Paul." *Southwest Journal of Theology* 33 (1990): 41-51.
- Matill, Andrew J. "A Spectrum of Opinion on the Value of Acts as a Source for the Reconstruction of the Life and Thought of Paul: Tradition and Redaction in the Pauline Portions of Acts." Pages 63-88 in vol. 2 of the *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers, 1984*. SBL Seminar Papers 13. Missoula, Mont.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1974.
- Pervo, Richard I. *Luke's Story of Paul*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990.
- Rapske, Brian. *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody*. Vol. 5 in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*. Edited by Bruce Winter. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.

Social World/Social Ethics

- Arlandson, James Malcolm. *Women, Class and Society in Early Christianity: Models from Luke-Acts*. Hendrickson, 1999.
- Bartchy, S. Scott. "Community of Goods in Acts: Idealization or Social Reality?" Pages 309–18 in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester*. Edited by Birger A. Pearson. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.
- Bergquist, J. A. " 'Good News to the Poor': Why Does This Lucan Motif Appear to Run Dry in the Book of Acts?" *Bangalore Theological Forum* 18 (1986): 1-16.
- Cassidy, Richard J. *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987.
- Cassidy, Richard J. and Phillip J. Scharper, eds. *Political Issues in Luke-Acts*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983.
- Esler, Philip F. *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 57. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 39. Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977.
- *Neyrey, Jerome H., ed. *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991.

The Story of Jesus in Acts

- O'Toole, R. F. "Activity of the Risen Jesus in Luke-Acts." *Biblica* 4 (1981): 471-98.
- . "Luke's Understanding of Jesus' Resurrection-Ascension-Exaltation." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 9 (1979): 106-14.
- Parsons, Mikhail C. *The Departure of Jesus in Luke-Acts: The Ascension Narratives in Context*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 21. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987.
- Tyson, Joseph B. *The Death of Jesus in Luke-Acts*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986.
- Ziesler, J. A. "The Name of Jesus in the Acts of the Apostles." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* no. 4 (1979): 28-41.

The Holy Spirit

- Dunn, J. D. G. *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today*. Studies in Biblical Theology. London: SCM, 1970.
- . *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experiences of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament*. London: SCM, 1975.
- Jervell, J. "Sons of the Prophets: The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles." Pages 96-121 in *The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984.

Menzies, R. P. *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology: With Special Reference to Luke-Acts*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 54. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991.

Shelton, J. B. *Mighty in Word and Deed: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991.

Speeches

Bruce, F. F. *The Speeches in the Acts of the Apostles*. London: Tyndale, 1942.

Dodd, C. H. *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980.

Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Septuagintal Midrash in the Speeches of Acts*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002.

Kilgallen, J. *The Stephen Speech: A Literary and Redactional Study of Acts 7, 2-53*. Analecta Biblica 67. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 1976.

*Soards, Marion L. *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994.

Tannehill, R. C. "The Functions of Peter's Mission Speeches in the Narrative of Acts." *New Testament Studies* 37 (1991): 400-14.