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Structural Analysis of Acts via Outline

- I. INTRODUCTION: Christ's final command, a brief reminder of the last writing 1:1-2:13
A continuation from the Gospel of Luke – per the text itself, continuing after Christ had already given commandments to the apostles, He now commands them to stay in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes. When asked if the kingdom was coming, Jesus simply replied that it was not for them to know the times or seasons. Acts then, really reads as and takes on the characteristic and theme of a sequel and continuation of the works of Christ, but through His apostles and church. Jesus was still faithful even in His seeming absence.
 - A. Baptism of the Holy Spirit – the Promise of the Father 1:4-5
The coming Holy Spirit continues in the them of God not leaving His children, He is going to help them yet another way.
 - B. Shall be witnesses of Him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the end of the earth 1:8
Jesus lays out the order and sequence of the upcoming events, this lays out the overall movement as it relates to the growth and ministry of the church throughout the book of Acts.
 - C. Jesus ascends into heaven 1:9-11
 - D. Holy Spirit comes upon them 2:1-13
As promised, once Jesus leaves the scene, the Holy Spirit comes and continues the ministry.
- II. WITNESS BEGINS IN JERUSALEM 2:14-7:60
In the same way Jesus' ministry began, the Israelites and Jerusalem remain in the spotlight early on, although not completely neglecting the Gentiles, the focus seems to remain highly focuses on the Jews.
 - A. Immediately upon receiving the Holy Spirit, Peter begins witnessing to the crowd 2:14-40
 - B. The believers were of one accord and met each other's needs 2:41-47
The early believers had a support system where they seemed to embody the idea of both community and loving one's neighbor as yourself.
 - C. Teaching and signs of healing continued 3:1-26
 - D. Persecution and strengthening of the early church 4:1-7:60
The Jewish leaders continued to persecute the apostles, Peter and John were arrested and forbidden to teach about Jesus. Their reply was simply that they would continue to listen to God rather than man. This was a continuing theme throughout Acts, regardless of persecution or threats, believers chose to follow Christ rather than man.
- III. WITNESS BEGINS IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA 8:1-11:18
While continuing to minister faithfully, Peter's main area is confined within the historical nation of Israel, in Judah and then up into Samaria. He generally stays within the traditional lands given to the Israelites by God in his travels. Not every city is listed in which he ministers, but the boundaries appear to be Damascus to the north and a little south of Jerusalem.
 - A. Saul's persecution of the church in Jerusalem scatters the believers 8:1-3
 - B. This scattering caused preaching in Judea and Samaria 8:4-30
Contrary to Saul's goal of breaking up the churches through persecution, what he accomplished was more akin to breaking up the soil. Jesus' parable of the scattered seed, some falling on shallow soil without roots and others falling on good soil seems like a good comparison here. Through Saul's persecution, he prepared the ground for the early church to really take root, a choice had to be made in a very real way – belief in Jesus, and the suffering that may come, or a return to the norm of temple worship, following the leaders of the past. Having made that decision, there was now a boldness in the message wherever they went.
 - C. The churches throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria prosper 9:1-31
 - i. Saul confronted by Christ, converted, preaches Christ 9:1-30

Saul's conversion offered encouragement to the believers as they saw that the Messiah could overcome even the toughest heart. The Jewish mindset had been that the Messiah would come with a warlike entry as a conqueror. Saul's conversion helped engrain a theme that the battle was really in the heart and mind. Saul/Paul learned this lesson as those were the primary targets he went after in his coming missionary journeys.

- D. Peter heals Aeneas in Lydda and restores Dorcas to life in Joppa 9:32-43
 - i. Peter confirms miracles/signs as part of his message
 - ii. Jesus was not the only one who could do these signs, this was a clear message to the Jewish leaders and an encouragement to the believers – it was the power of God that continued in these works
- E. Peter receives confirmation from God of Gentile's place in Salvation 10:1-11:18

Continuing in the theme that Salvation is not for the Jews alone – the Old Testament having already had a place for Gentiles who would serve God, a Gentile visited by an angel in a vision was told to seek out Peter. Peter then, receiving a vision from God is told that all things God has made clean are clean, preparing a way for him to understand the coming meeting. God prepared both the Gentile Cornelius and the Apostle Peter for this interaction beforehand.

 - i. Having received a call from a Gentile 10:1-8;17-23
 - ii. Having received a vision from God 10:9-16
 - iii. Having witnessed the move of the Holy Spirit 10:44-46
 - iv. Having acted in obedience and baptized them with water 10:47-48
 - v. Having explained what he witnessed to the speculative 11:1-18

Peter took back what he had been clearly shown and expressed it to the others, who accepted it as from God.
- IV. WITNESS BEGINS IN THE REST OF THE WORLD 11:19-21:26

Luke shares that because of the persecution that occurred with Stephen, the message had spread to the Gentiles as the believers spread out. They left a trail of preaching and sharing of the Gospel on the way to every place they went. God had gone ahead of the apostles, seeding the field, they need only go and water it at this point to reap a harvest.

 - A. Additional growth due to Stephen's persecution 11:19-20
 - B. Proof that God had been working among the Gentiles 11:21-24
 - C. Ministering for a year in Antioch 11:25-26

Barnabas sought out Saul to help him teach and preach in Antioch because of the need
 - D. James killed, Peter arrested, then freed by an angel of the Lord 12:1-24
 - E. Barnabas and Saul (Paul) appointed to minister to the Gentiles 12:25-13:3

It was the Holy Spirit who made this appointment, it was their direct calling
 - F. Paul and Barnabas minister from Antioch down to Jerusalem and many ports and cities in between cycling back and forth to Antioch. 13:4-15:35
 - G. Paul and Silas return back to minister and go as far as Macedonia and Greece, and back to Caesarea, again preaching and teaching everywhere in between as well. 15:36-21:26
 - H. Barnabas and Mark went to Cyprus as Paul did not want to take Mark since he had not finished the work on a prior trip, instead leaving them. 15:39

Even though Paul and Barnabas had a division over Mark on their return journeys, they both were faithful to continue the work. This keeps with the missional theme of Acts. It is in contrast to the unity seen early on in Acts amongst the believers, however, it is continuous in its focus in sharing Christ's message. Later in Paul's epistles we see that he and Mark are reconciled as he writes affirmations of Mark to others.
- V. PAUL PERSECUTED AND TRIED FOR HIS FAITH 21:27-26:32

Continuing in the theme of persecution and a high cost for faith in Christ, Paul is arrested and tried for his faith. In his ministry thus far he has been stoned, beaten, and his life has been sought to be

taken for his faith. He remains unmoved, even having been warned by the believers through the Holy Spirit of his fate if he continues on to Jerusalem (21:11). Paul appears to make use of his circumstances to minister to new audiences. Having to be on trial means he will have an audience with the Jewish leaders – the Sanhedrin, and then on to Felix.

- A. A mob of Jews seek to kill Paul 21:27-40
 - B. Paul seeks to witness to the Jews there 22:1-22
 - C. Paul taken into custody and before the Sanhedrin 22:23-23:22
 - D. Sent before Felix and then appeals to Caesar 23:23-25:12
 - E. Witnesses to King Agrippa 25:13-26:32
- VI. PAUL MINISTERS WHILE AWAITING AN AUDIENCE WITH CAESAR 27:1-28:31
- A. Beginning with his voyage, Paul witnesses for Christ to the sailors 27:1-8
Paul always took care to make the most of every opportunity, the centurion in charge of his transport – Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty. As noted in the following sections, Paul seeks opportunity to witness to the crew through works, preparing a way to share God's message with them and whoever they may come across along the way.
 - B. Paul warns of impending shipwreck 27:9-38
 - i. Paul perceives bad weather and conditions for sailing and warns them. 27:9-12
 - ii. Paul receives a message from an angel letting him know that he will make it to Rome and that the lives of the crew would be spared as well. He shares this info and they are encouraged.
 - C. They escape to the Island of Malta where Paul ministers 27:39-28:10
 - i. Paul's prophecy is confirmed, giving him authority for his message 27:44
 - ii. Paul is bitten by a viper and does not die, proving the power of God 28:3-6
 - iii. Paul performs miracles of healing while on the island 28:7-10
This continues with the theme of works as a means of proof of the message as well as making the most of every opportunity for sharing the Gospel.
 - D. Paul arrives at Rome and ministers while waiting to meet Caesar 28:11-28:31
Luke shares that Paul was able to minister for two whole years in his own rented house, preaching and teaching with no one forbidding him.