**WHY ACTS?**

1. Acts stands unique among the books of the New Testament and other historical narratives because in many ways, we are trying to imitate its \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ today.
2. Many distinctions among \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and even between local \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ within the same denomination can be traced back to how Acts is interpreted.
3. It will be helpful for us to step back and give some serious consideration to how we are interpreting this book, to make sure that it is reasonable, and that we are applying these principles \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**THE EXEGESIS OF ACTS**

1. Our main interest in studying Acts should be what \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ interest was in writing it.
2. Luke, as a Gentile, was inspired by the Hellenistic \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of his day.
   1. This history was not written simply to keep \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or chronicle the past.
   2. It was written both to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and to inform, moralize, or offer an apologetic.
3. For Luke, the divine activity that began with Jesus and continues through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the church is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of God’s story that began in the OT.
4. So, noting Luke’s own \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ interests is of special importance as your read or study Acts.
5. Because of all of the above, our study of Acts shouldn’t be purely historical, asking “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?” but also theological, asking “what was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in selecting and shaping the material this way?”
6. Why is this so important??
   1. If Luke’s intent was to lay down a pattern for the church at all times, that pattern becomes \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, required by God for all Christians.
   2. BUT, if that wasn’t his intent, we need to ask the hermeneutical questions in a different way.
7. Exegetical first steps:
   1. Read Acts all the way through in 1-2 sittings.
   2. As you read make mental notes of things such as key places and people, recurring motifs, and natural divisions.
   3. Go back and skim read, jotting down references for your initial observations.
   4. Ask yourself, “Why did Luke write this book?”
8. Acts is often split into divisions either by:
   1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (chps. 1-12) and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (chps. 13-28)
   2. Or by the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ expansion of the gospel from 1:8
      1. Chps. 1-7, Jerusalem;
      2. 8-10, Samaria and Judea;
      3. 11-28, to the ends of the earth
9. There is another way to divide Acts that meshes these two ideas together well.
   1. There are brief summary statements in 6:7, 9:31, 12:24, 16:4, and 19:20.
   2. Each case shows a pause before a new \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is taken.
   3. There is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ beginning with Peter in Jerusalem toward Paul and the Gentile church.
10. When you read Acts with this outline, you will notice the sense of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
11. One crucial aspect is that at each juncture, you will see that the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_plays the leading role. What does this show us?
12. A few observations on what Luke did \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ intend:
13. 1) The key to understanding Acts seems to be in Luke’s interest in this \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the gospel, orchestrated by the Holy Spirit, from its Jerusalem based, Judaism-oriented beginnings to its becoming a worldwide, Gentile-predominate phenomenon.
14. 2) This interest in “movement” is substantiated by what Luke does \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ tell us:
    1. He has no interest in the “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” (i.e., biographies) of the apostles.
    2. He has little or no interest in church \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
    3. There is no word about other geographical expansion except in one \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ from Jerusalem to Rome.
    4. All of this together says that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ per se was simply not Luke’s reason for writing.
15. 3) Luke’s interest does not seem to be in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ things, bringing everything into \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
    1. The diversity in the description of church life and order probably means that no specific example is being set for as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Christian experience or church life.
16. 4) Much of Acts still probably serves as a model, just not so much in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ picture.
    1. By the way God led Luke to structure Acts, it seems probable that we are to view this triumphant, joyful, forward-moving expansion of the gospel into the Gentile world, empowered by the Holy Spirit and resulting in changed lives and local communities, as God’s intent for the continuing church.
    2. This means Luke probably intended that the ongoing church should be “like them,” but in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ sense, not by modeling itself on any \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ example.

**THE HERMENEUTICS OF ACTS**

1. The crucial hermeneutical question is whether biblical narratives that describe \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the early church also function as norms intended to tell us \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the ongoing church.
2. **Unless Scripture** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **tells us we must do something, what is only narrated or described does not function in a** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **(i.e. obligatory) way – unless it can be demonstrated on other grounds that the author intended it to function in this way.**
3. Doctrinal statements derived from Scripture fall into 3 categories at 2 levels.
4. Categories:
   1. Christian theology (what Christians \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)
   2. Christian ethics (how Christians ought to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)
   3. Christian experience & practice (what Christians \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as spiritual/religious people)
5. These can be at two levels:
   1. Primary: from explicit \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of Scripture
   2. Secondary: derived \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by implication or precedent
6. Almost everything Christians derive from Scripture by way of precedent is in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ category and always at the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ level.
   1. For example, we derive the necessity of observing the Lord’s Supper as a continuing practice falls into the 3rd category at the primary level.
   2. But, when we begin talking about the frequency of its observance and how it is to be administered, we move into the secondary category.
   3. The Bible simply doesn’t explicitly speak to this secondary question.
7. A general maxim of hermeneutics is that God’s Word is to be found in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the Scripture, which is especially crucial in regard to historical narratives.
8. It is one thing for the historian to include an event because it serves the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of his work.
9. It is another thing for the interpreter to take that incident as having teaching value apart from the historian’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
10. Again, Luke’s intent was to show how the church emerged as a chiefly Gentile worldwide phenomenon from its origins as a Jerusalem-based, Judaism-oriented sect of Jewish believers, and how the Holy Spirit was directly responsible for this phenomenon of universal salvation by grace alone.
11. The recurring motif that nothing can hinder this forward movement of the church empowered by the Holy Spirit shows that Luke intended his readers to see this as a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for their existence.
12. But what of the specific details in these narratives? Do they serve as specific normative models or do they primarily function altogether to promote Luke’s larger intent?
    1. The latter makes most sense because most such details are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to the main point of the narrative and because of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of details from narrative to narrative.
13. The main point of this is that whatever extra one may glean from these narratives is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to Luke’s intent.
    1. This doesn’t mean that what is incidental is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or that it has no \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ value.
    2. It does mean that God’s Word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in that narrative is primarily related to what it was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to teach.
14. The following three principles help with the hermeneutics of historical narrative that we have just discussed.
    1. The Word of God in Acts that may be regarded as normative for Christians is related primarily to what any given narrative was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to teach.
    2. What is incidental to the primary intent of the narrative may indeed reflect an inspired author’s understanding of things, but it does not have the same teaching value as what the narrative was intended to teach.
       1. This means simply that what is incidental must not be allowed to become \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
    3. Historical precedent, to have normative value, must be related to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
15. The problem is that we are left with little that is normative for areas of broad concern.
    1. For example, there is no express teaching on such matters as the *mode* of baptism, the *age* of those who are to be baptized, which charismatic phenomenon is to be in evidence when one receives the Spirit, or the frequency of the Lord’s Supper.
    2. Yet, these are exactly the areas where there is so much \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ among Christians.
    3. Invariably, however, in such cases people argue that this is what \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ did, based off narratives in Acts or by implication of what is said in the Epistles.
16. So, what do we do?
    1. We must be very careful in how we \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ historical narrative of the early church to how we practice \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
    2. This does not mean it isn’t important how we do things, simply that we need to be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ not to make the secondary things \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
17. We can now examine a few suggestions for the hermeneutics of biblical precedents.
18. 1) It is probably never valid to use an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ based on biblical precedent as giving biblical \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for present-day actions.
    1. For example: Jesus’ reception of the Spirit at his baptism.
       1. Two different analogies have been drawn that move in very different directions.
       2. Some see this as support by way of analogy for baptismal regeneration (the necessity of baptism to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit)
       3. Others see it as evidence for baptism of the Holy Spirit subsequent to salvation (since he was already born of the Spirit)
       4. However, it is doubtful whether the narrative functions well as an analogy for either of the later theological positions, especially when taken beyond mere analogy to become biblical support for either doctrine.
19. 2) Although it may not have been the author’s primary purpose, biblical narratives do have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and (sometimes) “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” value.
    1. For example, NT people (like Jesus and Paul) occasionally used certain historical precedents from the OT
20. It should be noted, especially where the precedent justifies a present action, that *the precedent does not establish a norm for* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *action*.
21. Rather, the precedent illustrates a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with regard to the action.
22. If one wishes to use a biblical precedent to justify some present action, one is on safer ground if the principle of the action is taught \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, where it is the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ intent so to teach.
23. 3) In matters of Christian experience, and even more so of Christian practice, biblical precedents may sometimes be regarded as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – even if they are not understood to be normative.
    1. For many practices there seems to be full justification for the later church’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of biblical patterns.
    2. But you shouldn’t argue that all Christians in every place and at every time \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ repeat the pattern or they are disobedient to God’s Word.
       1. (Especially when the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is mandatory but its \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is not.)
24. The following considerations help with deciding whether certain patterns or practices are repeatable.
    1. First, the strongest possible case can be made when only \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ pattern is found, and when this pattern is repeated within the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ itself.
       1. One must be careful not to make to much of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
    2. Second, when there is an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of patterns or when a pattern occurs only once, it is repeatable for later Christians only if it appears to have divine \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or is in harmony with what is taught \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in Scripture.
    3. Third, what is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ conditioned is either not repeatable at all or must be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ into the new or differing culture.
25. These principles obviously do not solve everything about how the church is to function and act today.
26. But, they give a good \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for us to move forward and study Acts with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
27. Don’t forget, Luke shows us that nothing can stop the movement of the church empowered by the Holy Spirit. We are a part of this unstoppable movement even today.