

DOCTRINES
&
PRINCIPLES
IN ACTS

Ron Thomas

FORTHRIGHT BOOKS
PROJETO ALCANCE

DOCTRINES & PRINCIPLES IN ACTS

By Ron Thomas

Published by Forthright Books and Projeto Alcance

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FORTHRIGHT BOOKS

Midway, GA, USA

<https://forthright.net>

PROJETO ALCANCE

São José dos Campos (SP) Brazil

<https://cristaos.org>

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Preface

Ron Thomas is a friend of many years. He is a dedicated student of Scripture, careful in his treatment of the biblical text. Presently, he works with the congregation in the city of Rio Grande, in the state of Ohio. His original work here deserves careful study, especially at a time when some say that Acts is not a proper book for basing doctrine.

We have written about this false teaching¹ and will contribute more still, since it attacks directly what the Bible teaches about salvation, about God, about Christ and his church. Progressives are creative in their many attempts to undermine the truth of the gospel.

Ron has shared his document freely. I have merely reformatted it to share with English-speaking friends here in Brazil.

Ron has gathered doctrinal points in two lists. The first are express doctrinal teachings in the book of Acts; the second, principles found in things said or practice in the book that have direct application to Christians today. The compactness of his

1 <https://cristaos.org/ensine/atos-sem-doutrina/>

work recommends itself as a quick overview that impresses one with how the book of Acts has so much to teach us.

The problem of footnote arrangement, mentioned by the author in his Introduction, has been solved by removing the table and placing the two segments of Doctrine and Practice in single columns. This change is justifiable considering that the contents of the two lists do not correspond in their numbers.

Ron recently updated his work and included a lengthy citation by an American cleric who affirmed that, since Acts is a “transitional book,” one should not “build your life on a doctrine that you found in the book of Acts.”² This strange doctrine will soon be analyzed on the cristaos.org website.

Much more could be added to these lists, as Ron himself would admit. These points are more than sufficient, however, to demonstrate how much we need the book of Acts for our doctrine and how seriously it ought to be studied in order to understand the full plan of God for our eternal salvation.

Randal Matheny
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2 https://is.gd/brown_acts

Introduction

I am aware that others may not agree, in total, with all that I submit in this document. As independent thinkers and students of Scripture, this is okay and accepted. What is important is that each student of Scripture is independent, coming to conclusion based on one's understanding of Scripture.

To be an independent thinker does not mean that one has warrant to believe something the Scriptures does not teach; in this context, it is wise to allow one's thinking to be challenged by others. In the Lord's church, there are parrots like there are in denominational churches. Some assert the Scripture teaches this or that when it may not be the case. To borrow a line from a reformation preacher in the 16th century, "Here, I stand!" (or words to that effect).

By and large, what I've offered will be received with few remarks, but if there are perspectives that don't coincide with mine and there is a desire to offer counter remarks, I invite them. This makes me a better student.

Caveats: (1) There is much repeating. I'll have a particular teaching in one column, only to have the same teaching in another column. Reason: one expressly teaches, the other is written in a principle / guide sort of way. (2) As you look at the footnotes, note that I did not arrange them; it is the arrangement of the Word Document.

Doctrines

Express teachings of the Holy Spirit

1. 1:5, 8. Baptism of Holy Spirit was taught/promised to the apostles (cf. John 16:13)
2. 1:11 (3:20). As Jesus ascended on a cloud into heaven, He will return on a cloud.
3. 1:21-22. To be an apostle of the Lord, one must be a male, have walked with Jesus from the time of his baptism, and a witness of His resurrection.¹
4. 1:25, 18. Judas fell away from the faith (cf. John 6:70).²
5. 2:16. The Holy Spirit baptism of Acts 2 is a fulfillment of the prophetic word of Joel 2:28-32.
6. 2:17. The Christian era is the “last days” of Joel 2:28.
7. 2:21, 39 (10:28, 34). Salvation’s invitation is to all, both men and women.³
8. 2:23. Jesus was “nailed to the cross.”
9. 2:24, 32 (4:10; 13:30). Jesus was raised from the dead.
10. 2:25. Jesus’ resurrection is the fulfillment of Psalm 16:8-11.

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- 1 There are some who insist, at the point of disfellowship, prayer can be made only to the Father, not to Jesus.
 - 2 One can’t fall away from something not previously embraced.
 - 3 Pay special attention to the way Calvinists pervert this passage, saying (in effect) it is not so.

11. 2:30 (5:31). Jesus sits on the throne of David now.
12. 2:33. Jesus sits at the right hand of God.
13. 2:34-35 (7:55f). Jesus is the fulfillment of Psalm 110.
14. 2:36. Jesus is both Lord (lawgiver) and Christ (anointed, chosen, messiah).
15. 2:38. People must do something to have their sins forgiven; they must repent and be immersed.⁴
16. 2:38 (3:19). To be baptized in the name of Jesus is to be baptized by His authority.⁵
17. 2:38. When one repents and is baptized he (she) receives the gift of the Holy Spirit.
18. 2:38. Baptism in water is for (with a view to) the forgiveness of sins.⁶
19. 2:40. It is the responsibility of each soul to “save themselves” from this untoward generation (cf. Phil 2:12).
20. 2:41, 47. The Lord adds to the church, not man.⁷

4 The Greek word *eis* (ASV: unto) does not mean “on the basis of” (John R. Rice) or “because of” (Frank Stagg), but “with a view to” or “in the direction of.” The Expositors Greek Testament commentary said “unto” signifies the aim of repentance and baptism. Preacher’s Homiletic Commentary: “**For**, or *in order to*, εἰς, **the remission of sins** (compare Matt. 26:28, and Luke 3:3), defines the negative aspect of the blessing which ensues upon a right reception of baptism.”

5 It is not the use of words at one’s baptism that is the command, but by the authority invested in Jesus one is baptized (cf. 10:48).

6 Expositor Greek Testament Commentary: “As each individual ἕκαστος was to be baptised, so each, if truly penitent, would receive the forgiveness of his sins” (E-Sword). Additionally, in 10:43, to believe in Jesus, one receives remission of sin, indicative of a part for the whole.

21. 3:14-15 (2:36; 13:28). The Jews were instrumental in killing the Father's chosen.⁸
22. 3:16. Faith in the name of Jesus resulted in a lame man healed.
23. 3:18. The prophetic word teaches the Lord's Messiah would suffer.⁹
24. 3:22, 25. Jesus is the fulfillments of Deuteronomy 18:15 and Genesis 22:18.
25. 4:11. Jesus is the fulfillment of Psalm 118:22.
26. 4:12. There is salvation in no other name under heaven.¹⁰
27. 4:19-20 (5:29). As man forbids Gospel preaching, the preeminence of God insists on it.
28. 4:25-26 (13:33). Jesus and His message is the fulfillment of Psalm 2.
29. 7:37. Moses' life is parallel to Jesus' life; as one was rejected, so the other. As one was vindicated by God, so the other.
30. 7:59-60. Appealing to the Lord Jesus in prayer is scriptural.
31. 8:32-33. Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah 53:7-8.
32. 9:4-5. To persecute Christians is to persecute Christ.

7 The New Testament does not recognize any man-made church institutions.

8 The doctrine here is the historical fact of the matter, not that man should respond violently against the Jewish community (or any one for that matter).

9 Jewish teaching denies the Messiah will suffer; they attribute Isaiah 53 to the nation of Israel suffering for the sins of others.

10 This makes Christianity an exclusive religion, meaning all other religious ideas are not authorized by God to exist.

33. 9:6. To be saved, one must be told what to do (cf. 10:6, 22; 11:14).
34. 10:34-35. Salvation is to all who fear God and does what is right (2 Timothy 2:19).¹¹
35. 10:40. Jesus was raised from the dead on the 3rd day.¹²
36. 10:42. Jesus is judge of both the living and the dead (cf. 17:31).
37. 10:47 (2:38). Baptism in water is a command of God and for the forgiveness of sins.¹³
38. 11:18, 21. Repentance belief leads to life.
39. 11:26. Disciples were for the first time called Christians.
40. 13:2, 4. The Holy Spirit sent missionaries out to evangelize.
41. 13:34. Jesus' resurrection is the fulfillment of Isaiah 55 and Psalm 16.
42. 13:37. Jesus' body in the tomb did not decay.¹⁴

11 Doing right is not determined by man's subjective approach, but 1 John 5:1-3.

12 Only time in Acts the resurrection is mentioned as having occurred on the 3rd day.

13 There are two instances in Acts where the Holy Spirit was received before obedience to God's command in water baptism (9:17 and 10:44). These two occasions were not for the teaching that baptism in water was not essential, but that the Lord received the penitent. Both were commanded to be baptized following the receiving of the Holy Spirit's gift.

14 The notion of decay needs to be clearly understood. As soon as one dies, the body begins the decaying process. In this passage, the sense is that His body had begun the process but was not brought to completion because of the resurrection.

43. 13:39. The Law of Moses could not free anyone under its authority from sin.¹⁵
44. 13:41. With Jesus' resurrection, the words of Habakkuk 1:5 are fulfilled.
45. 13:46. Before salvation is lost, the Word must be rejected.
46. 13:47. The Gospel message preached fulfills Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6.
47. 13:48. Appointment to eternal life is not the false teaching of Calvinism.¹⁶
48. 14:22. With many tribulations one must enter the Kingdom of God.¹⁷

15 The significance of this is seen in the fact that nowhere in the Old Testament does the Scripture teach, or even hint, at perfect law keeping in order to be saved by the Law, for God did not design the Law of Moses to save anyone.

16 Calvinism's abuse of this verse knows no bounds. They pervert this Scripture by asserting, contrary to the voluminous passages in Scripture, there is no free-will in man (people). Because of inborn corruption man is unable to do anything spiritually good. "His descendants are still free to choose...but inasmuch as Adam's offspring are born with sinful natures, they do not have the *ability* to choose spiritual good over evil" (Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, Documented; p.19, italics in original). Expositor's Greek Testament commentary: "there is no countenance here for the *absolutum decretum* of the Calvinists, since Acts 13:46 had already shown that the Jews had acted through their own choice" (E-Sword).

17 The word "tribulation" is not a word that pertains to the so-called "rapture" in dispensationalism. Those living now, faithful to the Lord, experience many tribulations.

49. 14:23. Elders are to be appointed in the churches.¹⁸
50. 15:9. Justification is by faith, not circumcision of the Law of Moses.¹⁹
51. 15:16-18. Amos 9:11-12 is fulfilled in the 1st century establishment of the Lord's church.
52. 15:20. New Testament prohibitions: things strangled (contaminated by idols), fornication, blood.
53. 16:6. The Holy Spirit is God (Spirit of Jesus; 16:7, 10), and only God has the authority to forbid the preaching of His word.
54. 16:31. Belief in the Lord Jesus procures salvation.²⁰

18 The New Testament does not sanction one elder (bishop, presbyter, pastor) to each church. The rise of the monarchical bishop is after the times of the apostles and the 1st century church, thus unscriptural. The word "appointed" (NASB, ASV) is *cheirotoneō*, which means to vote by stretching out the hand, to create or appoint by vote, elect, appoint, create (Thayer's p. 668).

19 Circumcision, as a command of God, stands for the whole of the Law.

20 This verse is abused (like 13:48) to teach something the Scriptures gives no sanction to at all, that is, faith only. If one thinks about it for just a moment, the error of faith only is apparent. Look at Acts 2:37 and the answer in 2:38. If what is true there, then it is included here. John R. Rice (deceased) was a big proponent of faith only and said the question in 2:37 is not the same as in 16:30, but *it is the same!* Look at the pericope: the "believe" in v. 31 is the "believed" in v. 34, bookends (you might say). In between these bookends is the apostle teaching and those taught, followed by being immersed into the Lord. "There can be no salvation until one hears the Word. Hearing the Word brings faith" (Oliver B. Greene; Acts of the Apostles, p. 137). That Word that was heard consisted of Jesus' message of hope and man's response to that message (cf. 18:8).

55. 17:25. God is not served by human hands.²¹
56. 17:26. Paul affirms Genesis 1:26, with the teaching that people of all nations come from one.
57. 17:26. Man's geographical area of birth and time in life is determined by God.
58. 17:27. God is far enough away that He is not in the way, and not too far that He can't be found.
59. 17:28-29. Because man has his origin in the mind/will of God, to that degree, humanity is a child of God.
60. 17:30. Ignorance in man is not acceptable "escape route" to the Lord God.
61. 17:31. There is a fixed Day of Judgment.
62. 17:31. God will judge the world of man and the individual in the world through the teachings of His Son Jesus.
63. 18:8. Gospel plan of salvation: hearing, believing, baptism.
64. 19:5. Baptism must be by the authority of the Lord Jesus.²²

21 While this pertains to idolatry, it has extended application into other areas, like the superfluous nature of church buildings.

22 For baptism (immersion) to be pleasing to the Lord, it must be done in accordance with the Lord's teachings. Sadly, there are hobby-horse preachers who make it a point to "yell at the top of their lungs" that denominational baptism is not pleasing to the Lord and, thereby, accomplishing nothing but allowing those who hear this to think of the yellers as nothing more than denominational partisans. Man-made denominations have no authority from God to exist, as far as Scripture reveals. Their teachings on the denominational subject of baptism must be measured against the Lord's will.

65. 20:28. Jesus purchased the “church of God”, the “church of the Lord” with His blood.²³
66. 20:35. It is more blessed to give than receive.
67. 22:16. Baptism in water washes away sins.²⁴

23 Jesus died to save the church, but His invitation to salvation is given to any and all.

24 This is one of those “ungetoverable” verses in Scripture that throws the faith only crowd into conniptions. A.T. Robertson in his Robertson’s Word Pictures is a perfect illustration. “It is possible, as in Act 2:38, to take these words as teaching baptismal remission or salvation by means of baptism, but to do so is in my opinion a complete subversion of Paul’s vivid and picturesque language.” No New Testament Christian teaches anything like what he ascribed. Salvation (forgiveness of sin) is by and through Jesus; there is no such teaching as “baptismal remission” (straw man). On the other hand, without being identified with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection (baptism) there is no remission.

Principles

Things said and done that should be a New Testament Christian's guide

1. 1:21-22. Only males could be apostles of the Lord, and they had to meet the Holy Spirit's criteria.
2. 1:24 (6, 21). If prayer is to the Lord and Jesus is Lord, then prayer to Jesus is acceptable to the Father.¹
3. 2:1-4. The promised Holy Spirit baptism came upon the apostles.²
4. 2:42. Disciples in the Lord must continue steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine, which is teaching, fellowship (assembling), communion, prayers.³
5. 2:44-46. A charitable spirit is a hallmark of Christianity.

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- 1 It is clear this is a prayer to the Lord Jesus. The word "Lord" is applied to both the Father and Son, thus, it is imperative the context make clear who is referenced. "...in the name of Jesus" or something equivalent is not used in Acts in any prayer.
 - 2 The first of two occurrences in the New Testament. Peter seems to give clarity to this point in 11:16.
 - 3 When following the example the apostles, we are mimicking that which they did to the best of our ability. If we do what they did, we will get what they got. This is not ritual, but a devotion to be pleasing to the Lord.

6. 4:32, 34-35. There is to be a generous spirit of liberality among the saints.
7. 5:4, 9 (cf. 16:6). To lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God. God knows the hearts of all.
8. 5:12 (14:3). Through the hands of the apostles many miraculous things were done.
9. 5:14. There were no children baptized, only men and women (cf. 8:12).⁴
10. 5:38-39 (1:1-3). Gamaliel's testimony was historically verified (cf. Psalm 2).⁵
11. 5:41. Christians can rejoice, take comfort in what persecution they experience if they are carrying the Lord's cross.
12. 6:1-2. Tending to the needs of brethren in daily distribution is godly (Gal. 6:7).
13. 6:3. Godly men should be chosen to do this work of the Lord.⁶
14. 6:4. As the apostles did this, so should the elders of the church, devoting themselves to prayer and ministry of the Word within the congregation.
15. 7:49. Houses of worship are built with man in mind, not the Lord.⁷

4 "Child" is used only once, and that in reference to Abraham (7:5). Neither are the words "son" and "daughter" used in relation to children being converted.

5 Christianity is a historical and verifiable religion of God.

6 Some refuse to accept the servants in this context are deacon because the word is not used in the chapter. Call it what you will, these men serving give us the closest corresponding idea of a deacon.

7 How much money needs to be spent on building facilities? Do not want to deny their useful expediency, but how much above expediency should

16. 8:12. Men and women were baptized, not children.
17. 8:14-19. When baptized into the Lord (2:38), God's seal (Holy Spirit) is received; the gift of the Holy Spirit in this context is for confirmatory purposes.⁸
18. 8:22. After being identified with the Lord (faith / baptism), when caught in sin, repentance brings one into union with the Lord again.⁹
19. 8:35-40. Philip preached to the eunuch Jesus, and within this message of Jesus baptism was preached.¹⁰
20. 9:6. Saul (Paul) was not saved on the road to Damascus because he was told what he must do, and that was not until Ananias arrived (9:17; 22:16).
21. 10:22, 33 (11:14; 14:9; 16:14). Salvation could not be received / experienced without hearing the message of the Gospel.
22. 10:26 (14:14-18). Bowing before any man, even one who was in close proximity to the Lord Jesus, is prohibited.
23. 10:44. Baptism of the Holy Spirit, that which fell directly from heaven, was a confirmation of God's acceptance of the Gentiles.¹¹
24. 11:15-16. The baptism of Holy Spirit in C-10 was the same as that which occurred in C-2, not C-8.

we go?

- 8 The Holy Spirit in this context is not that of 2:38, but a miraculous manifestation of God's acceptance of the Samaritan community.
- 9 Some have called this God's 2nd law of pardon.
- 10 Caution: 88% of Greek MSS do not contain 8:37 (*Wilbur Pickerington*)
- 11 Of late, there is some dispute about what the baptism of Holy Spirit is. It seems to me the Scriptures teach clearly it is the miraculous manifestation of God's gift coming down from heaven on men and confirming the message preached and obeyed.

25. 11:17. The gift Peter speaks of is the baptism of Holy Spirit.
26. 11:21. Belief is a willful response to God's message, followed by turning to the Lord.
27. 11:23. Individual freedom of will is paramount in one's salvation, otherwise the exhortation is meaningless.
28. 11:26. "Christian" (a follower of Christ) is the name by which those who turned to the Lord were identified (no hyphenated-Christians).
29. 11:29-30. Sending money to help relieve the saints is scriptural, but not a prescription.¹²
30. 13:13-41. The historical reliability of the Old Testament is set forth.
31. 13:27. Hosea 4:6 illustrated.
32. 14:9. Faith comes by hearing...
33. 14:17. God has given witness of Himself via the creation of the material world.
34. 15:2-3. It is proper for the church to cover expenses for people who are sent out by them.
35. 15:6ff. A "church council" is not a directive or even a guide, just an expediency to reason with one another for clarity purposes.¹³
36. 16:6-7, 10. The Holy Spirit forbade preaching in a location, also identified as the Spirit of Jesus, and God.

12 What occurs in the verse is in no way a prescription for what needs to be done thereafter.

13 Early on in the New Testament era, a big transition was taking place between the Old and the New. This council was an expedient set forth by the apostles and elders, guided by the Holy Spirit (cf. 15:28; 16:4).

37. 16:14. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia with Paul's preaching.¹⁴
38. 16:30. One must do something to be saved.
39. 17:3 (18:4, 28). Paul's example of reasoning with those who are not of the same faith gives us an acceptable example to do the same.
40. 17:7. In leveling their false accusations, it must have been the case Paul was preaching Jesus as not only Lord / Messiah, but also King.
41. 17:11. Searching the Scriptures is a noble / honorable thing to do when anyone preaches/teaches from them.
42. 18:6. The symbolism of shaking the dirt off the hands has merit.
43. 20:7. The disciples gathered on the first day of the week.
44. 20:7. The disciples gathered on the first day of the week to break bread (Lord's Supper).¹⁵
45. 20:27. The whole counsel of God is preached (cf. 24:25; 26:6-8, 20, 22-23).

14 A most important verse to get a handle on because Calvinist love to pervert the passage to teach that the Holy Spirit must open a person's heart before he/she can hear, understand, and obey – which is not the teaching of the verse or of anything else in the New Testament. How did the Lord open her heart? He did so with the Word (cf. 15:7; Romans 10:7).

15 There are some who will say that “as often as you come together” means any time the saints meet participation in the Lord's Supper is warranted. Nope! This takes us back to 2:42, coupled with 20:7. Anything else more than this is speculation, which violates the principle of Deuteronomy 29:29.

46. 20:18, 28. The elders of the church are also bishops (overseers) and pastors.¹⁶
47. 20:29. From within the church “savage wolves” will arise to destroy.
48. 20:32. The word of God’s grace can build up and give God’s inheritance to those who love and trust Him.
49. 22:7. To persecute Christians is to persecute Christ (26:14).¹⁷
50. 23.5. Principles of righteousness / godliness in the Old Testament (that are not covenant specific) need to be adhered to in the New Testament.

16 In the New Testament, preachers are not pastors; elders, presbyters, bishops, overseers and pastors are different words for the same work.

17 This teaching, applying to non-Christian persecution of Christians, can also apply to brethren doing the same (cf. Eph. 4:1-3).