



The Voice of Truth

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WHAT IS THE MEANING OF ACTS 13:48?

By Jimmy Pettigrew

“And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (**Acts 13:38**).

The response of the Gentiles who heard the message was immediate and whole-hearted; they rejoiced at the good news and praised the word of the Lord. This verse means that glory is given to the Lord when people accept His word and believe it. Those who believed were described as those who were ordained to eternal life.

Calvinists will use this passage to teach their false doctrine of “unconditional election.” From this passage they perceive that some are ordained or appointed to eternal life. We would simply ask the question, “who is ordained to eternal life?” Notice **Acts 13:46**: “And Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” The ones God ordains or appoints to eternal life are those who do not thrust the word of God from them, who do not determine themselves to be unworthy of eternal life. Man plays a part in accepting or rejecting salvation. God ordained that people who would hear his word and submit their will to His would receive eternal life, and that those who would not do this could not receive eternal life. Let’s notice the words of Jesus. He said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven” (**Matthew 7:21**). Notice what John the Baptist said, “He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him” (**John 3:36**). Jesus said, “Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment” (**John 5:28-29**). Paul wrote, “For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things (done) in the body, according to what he hath done, whether (it be) good or bad” (**2 Corinthians 5:10**). John wrote, “And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is (the book) of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works” (**Revelation 20:12**). See, it is according to what we have done, not according to unconditional election. Those who put their trust in God in accordance with His will, believed in virtue of the fact that God’s plan of salvation includes them!

The word ordained means election. Election is simply based upon man’s willingness to be chosen. All who of their own decision believe and obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ are elected of God simply because they have complied with the terms He instituted in His own mind before the world began. We are chosen by being obedient to the word. He ordains those who do not “thrust” His word away, who do not judge themselves unworthy of eternal life. It does not say they were ordained unconditionally. The reason people are lost is they

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have free will to choose their destiny and they make the wrong choice. Jesus said to the Jews, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, **and ye would not!** Man decides his own destiny by his own free will.

THE BIBLE IS THE ONLY AUTHORITY

By David J. Riggs

In this age, God speaks to us through His Son, Jesus Christ (**Heb. 1:1-2**). Christ spoke the words and commandments given to Him from the Father (**John 12:49-50**). We are to hear Jesus—not Moses or Elijah (**Mark 9:2-8**). Christ is the mediator of the New Testament (**Heb. 9:15-17**). Christ is that great prophet who was to come (**Deut. 18:15,19; Acts 3:22-23**). The name of Jesus is the only name by which we can be saved (**Acts 4:12**). We cannot reject His Word and be guiltless (**John 12:48**). God, therefore, makes known His will to us today through His Son.

Jesus makes known God's will through His apostles and prophets. Christ gave the same words and commandments that he received from the Father to His twelve apostles (**John 17:6-8, 17-20**). He promised His apostles the Holy Spirit (**John 14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:13-15**). Please notice that the promise was to the apostles only. They were the ones to whom Jesus was speaking; they were the ones who had been with Him from the beginning. The Holy Spirit would be in them and would enable them to teach all the truth concerning the will of God.

The apostles were to wait in Jerusalem to receive the promise (**Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8**). This was in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies (**Isaiah 2:2-3; Micah 4:2**). The apostles received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost as recorded in **Acts 2:1-4**. Thus, they began to proclaim by inspiration the will or law of God in accord with the words of Jesus, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (**Matt. 18:18**). The meaning is not that the binding and loosing would come from their own devising—God alone is the lawgiver (**James 4:12**)—but with the Holy Spirit guiding them they would proclaim the things which God wanted bound and loosed; e.g., **Acts 2:38; Rom. 8:2**.

Up to the point as recorded in **Acts 2**, only the twelve had obtained the ability to speak by the inspiration of God. Verse 14 of **Acts 2** shows that Peter, standing up with the eleven, declared that the gift which they had received was in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Verse 43 says, "And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles." Consequently, the apostles up to this point were the only ones who had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. God worked with them by giving them miraculous powers (**Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4**). The purpose and design of those powers was to "confirm the word," that is, to truly demonstrate they were speaking the Word of God.

As we read a little farther in the book of **Acts** we see how New Testament prophets were made. The first account of someone besides an apostle working a miracle is that of Stephen (**Acts 6:8**). Stephen, as well as Philip, was of the seven on whom the apostles had laid their hands (**Acts 6:6**). As we read still farther, we see that Philip is the next person who was able to work miracles (**Acts 8:6**). Although Philip was a New Testament prophet and could work miracles, he was unable to give the Holy Spirit to others. Only the apostles were empowered with that ability.

In **Acts 8:14-19** we notice that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands. This is the only way New Testament prophets were made and the prophets themselves were unable to give the Spirit to others. Philip could not give the Holy Spirit to the people of Samaria. Some apostles, Peter and John, had to be sent from Jerusalem before

that could be done. When an apostle laid his hands on someone, he received miraculous powers. (See **Acts 19:6**). Cornelius and his household received the "like gift" as the apostles for the specific purpose of showing God's acceptance of the Gentiles into the New Covenant (**Acts 11:14-18**).

The apostles and prophets made known God's will through their inspired writings. There was a time when all of the Word of God was given orally--by word of mouth of the inspired apostles and prophets. Christians were at first guided solely by the inspired teachers who were present with them (**1 Cor. 2:3-13; Acts 20:18-27**). There was a period when Christians were guided both by having inspired men in their presence and by epistles written by inspired men. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." (**2 Thess. 2:15**).

When the apostles and prophets passed from the earth, their inspired writings became the only means by which we receive God's will. When the apostles and prophets approached their deaths, they did not leave us other men who would take their places. They did not direct us to other men who would have miraculous powers and revelations. Instead, they left their inspired writings and pointed us to them (**2 Tim. 3:15-17**). Thus, today we obtain a knowledge of God's will, not through living spiritual men or prophets, but through the written inspired Word (**1 Cor. 14:37; Eph. 3:2-5**). God's will was delivered at first in oral form only, then both orally and written, and now in written form only.

It is important for us to understand how the apostles witness to us today. It is not through other men; it is impossible for a man in our time to be a witness in the sense the apostles were. Instead, it is through their writings--the Holy Scriptures. The apostle John in his introduction to his first epistle declared that he was bearing witness to those things which they had heard, which they had seen with their eyes, which they had touched with their hands, concerning the Word of life. He bore witness to those things by writing them for us. "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." (See **1 John 1:1-4**).

The apostles' testimony given in their writings was to "...All that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (**1 Cor. 1:2**) and "...To the faithful in Christ Jesus" (**Eph. 1:1**). Thus, the apostles witness to us today through their writings and this is the only way their unerring guidance is transmitted to the present age. It is the only way God's Word is delivered to us today.

There are no persons with miraculous powers today. The miraculous powers such as working miracles, speaking in tongues and prophesying were given only through the laying on of the apostles' hands (**Acts 8:14-19**). The apostles passed from this life many years ago and, thus, there is no way for men to have those powers today. No one in this age has received the powers to demonstrate God's acceptance of the Gentiles. God accomplished that when he poured out the Holy Spirit upon the household of Cornelius (**Acts 11:15-18**).

The apostle Paul very plainly revealed that miraculous powers were to be done away. He said, "...Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (**1 Cor. 13:8-10**). Notice that Paul did not say, "when he which is perfect is come" but "when that which is perfect is come." The "perfect" to which he referred can only be the perfect law of liberty. (See **James 1:25; 2:12**).

Men do not have miraculous powers and revelations today because there is no need or purpose for them. They do not answer any purpose in the divine arrangement. There is no incompleteness or vacuum that needs to be filled by their appearance. Is there anything today's so-called "tongue speakers" or "miracle workers" can provide which is not already furnished by the Scriptures?

THE SCRIPTURES FURNISH

All necessary things which Jesus did - Acts 1:1-2
 Certainty of His action and teaching - Luke 1:3-4
 Life in the name of Jesus - John 20:30-31
 Instructions to salvation - 2 Tim. 3:15
 Commands of the Lord - 1 Cor. 14:37
 The proper conduct - 1 Tim. 3:14-15
 Every good work - 2 Tim. 3:16-17
 Protection against sin - 1 John 2:1
 An assurance of eternal life - 1 John 5:13
 Standard by which teachers are tested - Acts 17:11
 Standard which we cannot go beyond - 1 Cor. 4:6
 Blessings from God - Rev. 1:3
 Joy that is complete - 1 John 1:3-4
 Standard of judgment - Rev. 20:12

There are no miraculous powers and revelations today because God's Word has already been delivered. There is nothing other men can supply which the apostles and prophets have not already delivered. **Jude** said, "...Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (**Jude 3**). There is nothing modern day "revealers" or "tongue speakers" can provide which is not already provided in Christ. God's will reached its perfection in Christ. The whole plan of God was "...According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (**Eph. 3:11**). The complete revelation of God's will comes through Christ and is recorded in the Scriptures. Paul warned: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (**Gal. 1:8**). The Bible alone is the standard of authority in all matters of faith and practice.

Me First!

By Jonathan L. Perz

As a child, I remember how important I thought it was to be the first in line. I hated waiting and I wanted first dibs at whatever was being offered (unless of course, it was something unpleasant). It is not uncommon to hear a child say, "Me first!" when they are being offered something. There might even be a tussle to be the first in line.

Unfortunately, this same basic spirit is prevalent in many adult Christians. Our thinking might be a bit more sophisticated, but it still boils down to the same basic premise—I am going to look out for my interests first and foremost, even if it is at the expense of everyone else! Is this the spirit a Christian should have?

The apostle Paul admonishes, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (**Philippians 2:3-4**). With the right spirit, a Christian must see to his own affairs (cf. **Matthew 7:3-5; 1 Thessalonians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 11:31, et al**). Yet, a close look at Paul's words, in light of many other passages, reminds us that the right spirit involves putting the interests of others before our own interests. For many this is the hard part!

A selfless spirit is necessary to be able to truly deny ourselves (**Luke 9:23-26**), to sacrifice (**Philippians 2:17**), to not exercise our liberties to the detriment of others (**1 Corinthians 10:32-33**), to serve and minister (**Galatians 5:13**) and to love (**1 Corinthians 13:5**). Selflessness must be a foundational quality in any Christian. Are we selfless in spirit or selfish in spirit? Are we only selfless when we have to be or all of the time? Are we selfless in the little things, as well as the big things? Please think on these things...