

**DIVINE ELECTION in the GOSPELS & ACTS**

**DEFINITION:**

Election is that act of God whereby He foreordains to eternal life those who, because of sin, cannot respond in faith to the gospel (see last week's notes).

**TEXTS IN THE GOSPELS AND ACTS** (the following notes are intended to be read with your Bible)

***Matthew 11:25-27 NOTES***

***"I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. 27 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.***

1. God is the one who hides and reveals truth to people, yet both the giving and hiding of revelation does not eliminate or undermine the moral responsibility of people. Indeed, the people here are held to a higher standard of accountability precisely because they had been given so much but had responded so little (Matt 11:20-24).
2. "Jesus claims that he alone can reveal the Father to others (v. 27c). "Just as the Son praises the Father for revealing and concealing according to his good pleasure (v. 26), so the Father has authorized the Son to reveal or not, according to his will" (Carson, 277). When the Father finally makes sense to us, when we come to know him truly, to the degree that we grasp something of his nature and will and ways, it is because the Son has graciously stooped to reveal him to us. (Sam Storms)
3. The saving knowledge of the Son and Father is dependent on *their* will. If the knowledge of Jesus is hidden from some, but revealed to others, it is because God found it pleasing to himself. "Those from whom the truth was hidden cannot object, for God owes them nothing but judgment. Those to whom the truth was made known cannot boast of their knowledge, for they no more deserved to receive this gift than those from whom it was withheld. Furthermore, if it is the Father's sovereign right to reveal or conceal as he pleases, so also is the Son authorized to reveal or conceal according to his will. God is indebted to none. He bestows knowledge to whomever he pleases, while others are left to that spiritual ignorance which they deserve and in which they delight (2 Cor. 4:3-4; Eph. 4:17-19)." (Sam Storms)

***Matthew 13:10-17 NOTES***

When his disciples asked why Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables, He answered in terms of divine election: "To you *it has been granted* to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them *it has not been granted*" (Mt. 13:11).

Some people think it is intolerable to believe that Jesus hid truth. They envision people convicted of sin, repentant, and wanting to believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, but Jesus hardening their hearts and refusing to receive them. But this is not the picture at all! It is *because* of the blindness of their hearts that Jesus refuses to give more information to them (Matt. 13:14). "If the multitudes disbelieved, it is because they had spiritually anesthetized their hearts and minds, muffled their ears, and shut their eyes to the person and ministry of Jesus. Thus, by

teaching in parables, Jesus gives them over to a still deeper cultivation of their blind and stupid rebellion (see Rom. 1:18ff.)." (Sam Storms)

**John 6:37-40, 44, 65 NOTES (see also 17:1-2, 6, 9, 24)**

On several occasions in John's Gospel, divine election is described in terms of God the Father giving certain persons to the Son (6:37, 39; 10:29; 17:1-2,6,9,24). In each of these cases the giving of men to Christ PRECEDES and IS THE CAUSE of their receiving eternal life.

There are a number of lessons to be gleaned:

1. John 6:44 says, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him"). We see from this that it is impossible for a person to come to Christ *apart* from the "drawing" of that person by the Father (6:44, 65).
2. It is impossible for someone whom the Father "draws" *not to come to Him*. He says in verse 37, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me."

Two elements are involved in salvation. If a man is to be saved *he* must come to Christ. That is, an active, willing embrace of Jesus Christ in faith is essential. However, this can only happen if the Father draws him. John Murray summarizes, "Jesus does not say: all that the Father gives me *are brought* to me. He uses the term that denotes motion on the part of the person - 'will come to me.' Coming to Christ is the movement of commitment to Christ, coming that engages the whole-souled activity of the person coming. It is not that he *may* come, not that he has the opportunity to come, not that he will in all probability come, and not simply that he is empowered to come, but that he will come. There is absolute certainty; There is a divine necessity; the order of heaven insures the sequence" (John Murray, "Irresistible Grace," in *Soli Deo Gloria: Essays in Reformed Theology*, p. 59).

3. When a man does come through the drawing of the Father, it is impossible for him to be cast out. Verse 37 says, "The one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out." The point is that those whom the Father gives to the Son, who therefore come to the Son, will be received by the Son and shall never perish.

**John 10:14-16, 24-30 NOTES**

1. The distinction between those who are His sheep and those who are not is more than a distinction between believers and non-believers. A person does *not* become one of His sheep by believing in Jesus. Quite the opposite is true. One believes in Jesus *because* they are already His sheep. Jesus himself asserts this in verse 16: "And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd." Clearly Jesus reckons as His sheep many who have not yet come to faith, for hearing Jesus' voice is yet future. Their identity as sheep is not dependent on their faith. Rather, their faith is the result of having been made Christ's sheep by divine election. (Sam Storms)
2. The same holds true in the reverse sense for those unbelievers who are not Christ's sheep. In verse 26 Jesus says, "But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep." If belief made people Jesus' sheep, Jesus should have said the opposite; namely, "You are not of My sheep because you do not believe."

***Acts 13:44-48 NOTES***

Luke tells us in no uncertain terms that “as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.” Neither more, nor less believed than the number of those whom God had appointed to life. Notice, he does not say, “And as many as believed, God appointed to eternal life,” as if to suggest that their belief led to, or was the cause of their appointment to life. Rather, he says, “As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.” Faith, it would seem, is the fruit of God’s gracious appointment. If I may be permitted to use the imagery of John 10, we hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and follow him, because by grace we are already his sheep. (Sam Storms)