

“Those Who Were *Prophetically* Appointed to Eternal Life Believed?” Rereading Acts 13:48

B. J. Oropeza\*

If the salvific plan of God is offered first to the Jews and then gravitates toward the Gentiles, Acts 1:8 is programmatic for Acts.<sup>1</sup> The disciples are to receive the Spirit’s power and be witnesses of Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the “end of the earth” (ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς). The last of these might suggest Rome as the remotest part of the earth because this is where Paul is found at the end of the book (Acts 28). But given the echo of Isaiah 49:6LXX in Acts 1:8 (both share the phrase: ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς), we can suggest a viable alternative.<sup>2</sup> In Isaiah 49:6 God through his chosen Servant will restore the remnant of Israel and include the Gentiles/nations; “light” will be given to them. The Isaianic passage appears elsewhere in Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47; and 26:18 where it refers specifically to Gentiles.<sup>3</sup> The Gentile mission does not stop at Rome but is intended to extend worldwide or wherever Gentiles and nations might exist.<sup>4</sup> Given this perspective of “the end of the earth,” we find its primary fulfillment in Acts 13, when Paul and Barnabas turn their mission to Gentiles, providing “light” to the nations as stand-ins for God’s Isaianic Servant (13:47–48).<sup>5</sup> Acts 28:28, then, is not the primary fulfillment of 1:8 in terms of Christ’s witnesses reaching the remote part of the earth; rather, the ending of Acts 28 is simply a reaffirmation of Acts 13:47–48.<sup>6</sup>

If Acts 13 marks the beginning of the “end” and references the Isaianic tradition (Acts 13:34/Isa. 55:3; Acts 13:47/Isa. 49:6), then it may be important for our study on Gentile missions

---

\*This is a more extended version of a shorter excursus from B. J. Oropeza, *In the Footsteps of Judas and Other Defectors. Apostasy in the New Testament Communities*, vol. 1 (Eugene: Cascade, 2011), 111-17.

<sup>1</sup> E.g., Witherington, *Acts*, 110–111; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 7; Haenchen, *Acts*, 143.

<sup>2</sup> Similar wording is found in Psalms 2:7–8, cited in Acts 13:33 (cf. 4:25–26). It mentions an inheritance of the Gentiles/nations; albeit, in Psalms the similar phrase reads τὰ πέρατα τῆς γῆς rather than ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς (Isa. 49:6); the latter agrees with the wording in Acts 1:8 and 13:47.

<sup>3</sup> On Luke-Acts connections with Isaiah 49:6, see further Steyn, *Septuagint Quotations*, 197; J. Dupont, “L’Utilisation Apologétique de l’Ancien Testament,” in *Études sur les Actes des Apôtres* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cert, 1967), 261–62; Pesch, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2.46; Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2.225–27; Seccombe, “Luke and Isaiah,” 258–59; Pao, *Isaianic New Exodus*, 84–101. Steyn notes Rev. 7:4 and 1 *En.* 48:4 as further messianic interpretations of Isaiah 49:6. On the Gentiles/nations in Isaiah, see also Isa. 2:2; 40:5; 42:6, 16; 46:13; 52:10; 56:7.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Witherington, *Acts*, 111. On this reading, Rome might be the center of the earth but not the “end.”

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Polhill, *Acts*, 308, who refers to Jesus, the Servant-Messiah as the “light of the nations.” See also P. Grelot, “Note sur Actes xiii, 47,” *RB* (1981), 368–72.

<sup>6</sup> If Acts 1:8 finds its fulfillment in Acts 13, why does Luke continue writing another 15 chapters up to Acts 28? Perhaps the simplest answer is that Theophilus needed further essential information about the Christian movement. Another explanation is that he demonstrates Paul’s innocence and thus validates Paul’s message as coming from God.

in the plan of God. Paul and Barnabas are called and sent out by God's Spirit to preach primarily in Asia Minor. In a synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia, Paul addresses Jews and god-fearers (Gentiles) about the good news of salvation, associating it with the tradition-history of Israel. Jesus is said to bring to fruition a promise that a descendant of David would become Israel's savior (13:15–33; esp. 23, 32).<sup>7</sup> As a result many Jews and Gentiles begin to follow Paul and Barnabas, but other Jews and some prominent Gentiles oppose them (13:43–45, 50). In this speech the Lukan Paul combines a Septuagint reading Isaiah 55:3 with Psalms 2:7 and 15[16]:10 to affirm God's choice of Jesus and his resurrection from the dead (Acts 13:32–38). At the end of his speech Paul cites Habbakuk 1:5 not as fulfilled but hypothetical; it is used as a warning against the scoffers (Acts 13:40–41).<sup>8</sup> The Isaianic phrase in Acts 13:34 “the assured holy things of David” (τὰ ὅσια Δαυὶδ τὰ πιστά: Isa. 55:3) is understood here to be confirming Christ's resurrection, and the Psalms are used as further verification of this. Several significant points relevant to Acts 13:32–48 are often missed in relation to the larger context of Isaiah 55:3 (Isa. 55:1–56:11).

First, the audience in Isaiah 55:1 are addressed as “all those” or “those” (ὅσοι: cf. Acts 13:48) in which an open invitation is given to them to eat “good things” and pay attention with their ears, following the Lord's ways in order to prosper (Isa. 55:1–3a; contrast Isa. 6:9–10). Second, the holy things of David include God establishing an “eternal” covenant (αἰώνιος cf. Acts 13:46, 48/Isa. 55:3) with those who obey him just as he did for David (Isa. 55:3b, 13; cf. 2 Sam. 23:5; Psa. 88[89]:3–4, 33–37; cf. 131[132]:11–12). Third, this invitation includes the ἔθνη or nations/Gentiles (Isa. 55:4–5LXX; cf. Acts 13:47–48a). Fourth, it includes salvation (Isa. 56:1; cf. Acts 13:26, 46–48) that involves calling on the Lord (Isa. 55:6; cf. Acts 2:21, 39; 22:16), repentance (Isa. 55:7a; Acts 13:24; 2:38), and forgiveness of sins (Isa. 55:7b; cf. Acts 13:38). Fifth, Isaiah 55:8–11 assures those invited that God fulfills what he sets out to do via the inevitable accomplishment of God's plans (βουλαί) and God's word (cf. Acts 13:26, 32f, 36, 44, 46). Perhaps it is not too much of an exaggeration to say that Isaiah 55–56 contains some major themes in Paul's speech in Acts 13 and in Luke-Acts as a whole.

---

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 355; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 516. For the speech of Paul in Acts 13 as a peshet on 2 Samuel 7, see M. Dumais, *Le Lange de l'évangélisation: L'annonce-missionnaire en milieu juif (Actes 13,16–41)*(Desclée/Montreal: Bellarmin, 1976).

<sup>8</sup> Paul's speech ends at this point, and so the next Isaianic reference in Acts 13:47 should not be included as the same speech. Cf. S. E. Porter, *Paul in Acts* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 136 who on this point intends to correct M. L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* (Louisville, Kent.: Westminster-John Knox, 1994), 80, 87–88.

In Acts 13:47 Paul quotes from Isaiah 49:6 to justify his turning away from the Jews to the Gentiles. Isaiah 49:3–8 agrees with Isaiah 55 in referring to God’s establishment of a covenant with the Gentiles, and this covenant looks forward to a set eschatological time of salvation.<sup>9</sup> Clearly Acts 13:47–48 is intended to be read in terms of a divinely appointed salvation coming to the Gentiles, who are identified in 13:48 not only as τὰ ἔθνη but also as ὄσοι. These Gentiles are appointed to “eternal life” (13:48; cf. 11:18).<sup>10</sup> Oppositely, the Jews who oppose Paul judge themselves unworthy of such life (13:46), as did presumably those Gentiles who opposed the apostles (13:50). The term “eternal life” is rare in Luke-Acts (Luke 10:25; 18:18; Acts 13:46, 48) though it is implied in other passages that mention “life” (Luke 9:24; 15:32; 17:33; Acts 5:20; 11:18).<sup>11</sup> Luke’s preferred concept is “salvation” (Luke 1:77; 2:30; 3:6; 19:9; Acts 2:21, 40, 47; 4:12; 11:19; 13:26, 47; 15:1; 16:17, 31; 28:28), and eternal life, no doubt, functions as sort of a synonym for the salvation that is mentioned in Acts 13:47b/Isaiah 49:6.<sup>12</sup>

In a nutshell we have in Paul’s speech of Acts 13 a significant turning point in the Luke-Acts narrative. *Because the Jews of Antioch Pisidia reject Paul’s message, he will now turn to the Gentiles and thus salvation will come to them in fulfillment of the Isaianic prophecies and plan of God* (13:46; cf. 18:6; 28:28). That Paul is justified by Luke for this decision is evident because of the unbelieving Jews’ rejection of salvation, not to mention, it will be discovered later on that via Paul’s Damascus experience, Jesus already called him to preach to the Gentiles (e.g. 22:21; 26:20; cf. Acts 9).<sup>13</sup> For Theophilus and the majority of Luke’s audience, Acts 13 confirms *them* as a legitimate community of God’s people. They are included in God’s salvific plan that was predicted in Israel’s scriptures and brought to pass through Paul and Barnabas’ mission. Tremors of this change may have been felt by the conversions of the Samaritans, the Ethiopian Eunuch, and

---

<sup>9</sup> In Isaiah this salvation has been set for an appointed time, intimating the age to come. The relevance of appointed eschatological times is clearly seen in Acts 1:7; 2:17; 17:26; cf. Luke 4:13; 21:24; 22:53.

<sup>10</sup> Hence, the translation “as many as” may not be appropriate here due to its lending itself to individualism.

<sup>11</sup> The idea of receiving eternal life was already being used in Jewish traditions earlier than or contemporaneous with the earliest Christian writings (4Q418 fr.69.13; CD 3.20; Dan. 12:2; 4 Macc. 15:3; 1 *En.* 40:9; *Pss. Sol.* 3:16; 14:10; *T. Job* 18). See further, Pesch, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2.46; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 106; Barrett, *Acts* 1.659; R. Bultmann, *TDNT* 2.851–60; *Str-B* 2.726–27. Examples from the early church fathers include Ignatius *Magnesian* 10[long version]; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 1.12; *Strom.* 7.2; Tertullian *De Resur.* 59; *Divine Inst.* 4.11; Ps-Clem. *Hom.* 3.12.

<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the word “eternal life” in 13:46, 48 is triggered from “the ways of life” in Psalm 15[16]:10-11, which is echoed in Acts 13:35 and more fully so in 2:28. If so, Luke understands eternal life in terms of the resurrection of Jesus, and perhaps by implication the resurrection of the righteous. So Bock, *Luke*, 2.1023, who attributes the resurrection of the righteous to the meaning of eternal life in Luke 10:25 based on Dan. 12:2; *Str-B* 1:808–9, 829.

<sup>13</sup> On the question of whether Paul’s Damascus experience was a conversion, see Galatians below.

Cornelius (Act 8, 10), but now a specific God-ordained mission to all Gentiles is established by the Christ-followers and confirmed through Israel's scriptures. Nevertheless, the audience's privileged status gives them with no ground for boasting. The warnings and stories about unbelief and apostasy in Luke-Acts would help them realize the importance of perseverance and the possibility of losing salvation. Likewise, we will see below that the apostolic message creates divisions among God's people, and sometimes even among the Christ-followers themselves.

The prophetic fulfillment in Acts 13 leads us straight to 13:48, which as C. K. Barrett states, is "as unqualified a statement of absolute predestination...as is found anywhere in the NT"<sup>14</sup> Those who "had been appointed to eternal life believed." In this verse, the Gentiles' divine appointment precedes even their belief.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, with this interpretation, ὅσοι is sometimes translated "as many as" rather than "those" and thus can refer more specifically to individual humans as predestined. If so, we may wish to ask how this plays into God's plan and in what sense Luke holds humans responsible for divine acceptance and rejection. Several interpretations of 13:48, however, are possible.

Our first option interprets those appointed to eternal life in an inclusive sense that assumes Gentiles who have already been *predisposed* to salvation. Most, if not all, of the Gentiles who receive eternal life in 13:48 are already God-fearers and proselytes to emergent Judaism before Paul preaches to them, and along with the Jews who follow Paul, they continue "in the grace of God" even prior 13:48 (Acts 13:43 cf. 16, 26).<sup>16</sup> They already know the God whom Paul proclaims. Prior to the apostle's message, however, they did not know about the forgiveness of sins made possible through Jesus and his resurrection (Acts 13:37–39). The idea behind this verse may simply

---

<sup>14</sup> C. K. Barrett, *Acts* 1.658. To this passage some might add Acts 18:10: The Lord said to Paul at Corinth, "I have many people in this city." But the concept of predestination is highly questionable here (contrast Barrett, *Acts* 2.870). The claim in 18:10 may mean nothing more than God's omniscient ability to know those who are already God-fearers or longing for God in that city. The most that can be said is that God has foreknowledge of their coming to faith (cf. Acts 15:18). Other passages such as Acts 2:39 (everyone whom God calls); 2:47 (the Lord added day by day those being saved); and 15:4, 7 (God's work among the Gentiles) are perhaps best understood in terms of God's gracious initiative in saving and wooing humans (cf. Acts 18:27). On Acts 16:14 see below.

<sup>15</sup> A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures* (§ Acts 13:48) following Hackett, *Acts*, 171, notes that in 13:48, the subject of the verb "believe" is the relative clause. Hence, "those who believe were appointed" would seem to be a misdirected translation.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Marshall, *Kept by the Power*, 93–94 who compares their disposition to that of Cornelius (Acts 10) and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8) prior to their full conversion. He qualifies that 13:44 introduces a different group than 13:43 (238). Nevertheless 13:48 would seem to include those in 13:43 if Paul is still in Antioch of Pisidia. Bock, *Acts*, 421–22 agrees with our view that God-fearers and proselytes are two distinct groups in 13:43 that are being combined. Barrett, *Acts*, 1.654 on the other hand, sees in 13:43 proselytes only.

be that they were predisposed to believe in the message about Jesus, and perhaps we are reading more into the verse than was intended if we go beyond this.

A second option can reinforce or be reinforced by other options or stand independent of them. The crux of the issue centers on how we translate the verb τάσσω. Depending on usage and context, the verb has a range of meanings including but not limited to “ordain,” “arrange,” and “determine,” depending on contexts. The deterministic aspect of this word must be tempered with contexts in which the word seems related to human freedom (Jer. 3:19; Hos. 2:3). It is sometimes related to time references, which is relevant for our text (e.g., 2 Macc. 6:21; 1 Clem. 40:1f). As a passive it can be defined as “belong to, be classed among those possessing.”<sup>17</sup> In Acts 13:48 the verb is a perfect masculine participle in either the middle or passive voice (τεταγμένοι). If the passive is preferred, the meaning would seem to be that they had been appointed or ordained by God. However, if the middle voice is accepted, then the meaning could be that these Gentiles, by believing the message, had appointed or “set themselves” for eternal life. This would make good symmetry with 13:46 where the Jews judge *themselves* unworthy of eternal life.<sup>18</sup> We noticed earlier that the Jews in Ephesus hardened *themselves* (19:9) and there ἐσκληρόνοντο is to be understood in the middle voice or at least conveying some sense of self-hardening. If nothing else, 13:46 suggests that the Gentiles who receive salvation in 13:48 should be juxtaposed with the Jews who freely reject God’s salvation in 13:46.

A third option suggests that Acts 13:48 is influenced by the Isaianic tradition cited in 13:47. As we noticed earlier through this tradition, God’s appointed time of salvation will come when the Gentiles/nations will be joined with the people of God (Israel) in an upcoming restoration. The Gentiles’ salvation in Acts 13 indicates that this anticipated era, predetermined by God and written long ago by the prophet, has finally arrived. Their salvation was inevitable because God said it would happen, and as Isaiah 55 demonstrates, God will accomplish his word (see above). Isaiah affirms God’s servant to be “given” or appointed to be a light for the Gentiles (Isa. 49:8; cf. 42:6). The “you” or servant from Isaiah 49:6 may be understood in this context as referring to Paul and Barnabas as

---

<sup>17</sup> Cf. BAGD, 991. See further, Delling, *TDNT*, 8.27–31.

<sup>18</sup> In 13:46 κρίνετε is in the active voice but is joined with the reflexive pronoun ἑαυτοῦς and thus parallel the meaning of the middle voice in 13:48. Special thanks to Bart Buhler for drawing this to my attention.

missionaries, or perhaps both Christ and his apostolic messengers are in view. The apostles are servants of the Servant, Christ (cf. Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27–30).<sup>19</sup> God’s appointment to salvation in Acts 13:48, then, is to be understood in terms of the servant’s appointment as well as a divine and prophetic purpose that finds its appointed fulfillment on the targeted people group called the Gentiles. All those ordained to eternal life are the Gentiles who rejoiced and glorified God’s word when Paul quoted Isaiah 49:6 as the ground for the Gentiles receiving salvation (Acts 13:47). Moreover, if Luke still has Isaiah 55 in mind in Acts 13:48, he may have adopted ὅσοι from Isaiah 55:1 in which an open invitation is given to “those” or “all those” who are thirsty to come and drink freely, listen, live, and participate in God’s everlasting covenant (Isa. 55:1–3).<sup>20</sup> The intertextual backdrop of 13:48 may suggest that the people are freely offered salvation through invitation; what is predetermined is *God’s appointment of his servant and the time for the Gentiles to come to salvation*. With this view in mind, there is no sense of divine coercion or arbitrary selection of individual Gentiles in Paul’s day. Now that the salvific era finally arrived through Jesus and the apostolic message, the Gentiles could choose to accept God’s invitation, and those who did, found themselves belonging to the servant’s community that had been predestined by God through the prophetic word. Hence, in 13:48 “those who had been appointed to eternal life,” are those who were predicted in the Isaianic text to freely participate in the everlasting covenant via the servant’s appointment. Moreover, if “those” who did accept assumes another group or individuals who did *not*, this, too, may be assumed in the free invitation in Isaiah 55:1. They are those who refused to come to eat and drink. The

---

<sup>19</sup> Elsewhere in Luke, God has also chosen Jesus as the Elect One: Luke 9:35 cf. 3:22; 23:35; cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 148; W. W. Klein, *The New Chosen People: A Corporate View of Election* (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1990), 117–20; and this designation seems to be derived not merely from the royal messianic motif (Psa. 2:7–8), nor only from a Mosaic-type (Deut. 18:15), but also from the Isaianic Servant (Isa. 42:1–4; 49:7–9). Jesus’ predicted role as God’s chosen one interfaces with his identity as the Isaianic Servant and his crucifixion which was to be accomplished in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31, 35; 23:35). It is possible that Luke’s assumption is that the Christ-followers, believing Gentiles included, are elect through the election of Christ (cf. Eph. 1:3–14).

<sup>20</sup> For Luke, the meaning of the correlative pronoun ὅσοι in Acts 13:48 may be rendered “all those who” or all those Gentiles/God-fearers appointed to eternal life (cf. Acts 4:6, 34; 14:27; 15:4). Cf. ὅσοι also Isa. 43:7/Acts 2:39; Isa. 56:4; 66:10. In Acts 13:48 “those”/“all those who” may be preferred over “as many as” because the former highlights the plural and corporate sense of the context. Moreover, as *BAGD* 729 affirms, πάντες/πάντα (“all”) is used with the plural ὅσοι/ὅσα to mean “all who” or “all that” (e.g., Acts 3:24; 5:36, 37), but even when it is not used, the meaning can still be translated as “all who” or “all that” (Acts 4:6, 34; 10:45; 13:48; cf. Gal. 3:26–27; Rev. 3:19; Ignatius *Phld.* 3:2; Hermas, *Vis.* 2..2.7). Consequently, this is how Acts normally uses the plural masculine ὅσοι, and this nuance appears more in this book than any other in the New Testament (7 times; see refs. above). Moulton-Milligan, 461, notice that ὅσα in papyri documents (2<sup>nd</sup> century) virtually means “all.”

predestination is not grounded on God's fiat choice of individuals, then, but on the fulfillment of the prediction related to the free invitation to the ὄσοι from the Isaianic text.

A fourth option understands τάσσω as “enrollment.”<sup>21</sup> On this interpretation the Gentiles are “enrolled” in the heavenly records (cf. Luke 10:20). In this light the passage may be referring to something similar to having one's name recorded in a book of God's people or book of life (Exod. 32:32; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 13:8).<sup>22</sup>

A final option is simply to allow for God's predetermination of individuals to salvation whether arbitrary or on the basis of foreknowledge of the individuals' character. Such a view is certainly possible given Luke's fondness for the divine necessity. Luke does not bother to sort out for us the ramifications of such wording, nor does he attempt to reconcile such a thought with the type of human freedom he assumes in other passages.<sup>23</sup>

In our view, option three above is the most plausible, though perhaps a combination of certain options might also work, but we will not explore that option here. For option three, the servant messenger and people who receive that message are thus appointed via Isaiah's prophecy. The Isaianic context clarifies that after a long time this “day of salvation” will come about for the nations/gentiles, which is now coming to pass via the servant messenger and his missionary efforts—Paul (and Barnabas) (Isa 49:1, 8). The appointment in Acts 13:48, then, has to do with the appointed time of salvation in which this prophesy would come to pass, and eternal life is understood here as synonymous with that salvation—if we may paraphrase, “those who were appointed *to live in this prophetic era of eternal life* believed.”

The appointing, then, is not God selecting individuals (as opposed to other individuals whom God condemns) for salvation to believe. Rather, it is an appointment of a people predicted in prophecy, the nations/gentiles, who hear the appointed messenger's message of salvation and come to believe at the appointed time of the prophecy's fulfillment. To be sure, they are in a sense “selected” and others not, but this does not have to do with an arbitrary predestination of individuals. Rather, they are the fortunate ones who happen to live in the fulfillment of the appointed era anticipated in this prophecy. And they are the

---

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Dan. 6:12Θ; 1 *Clem.* 58.2; F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, 283–84.

<sup>22</sup> For references of appointment to eternal life in later Jewish traditions, see *Str-B.* 2.726–27; I. H. Marshall, *DNTOT*, 588.

<sup>23</sup> Compare *m. Abot.* 3.15A: “Everything is foreseen, and free choice is given” (Neusner).

fortunate ones who are among the first to hear this message that has come to southern Galatia, as opposed to other areas of the world that had not yet heard it.

It also so happens that these two types of appointments—the messenger and the people—are confirmed to be used by the Lukan author in other instances of *τάσσω* in Acts. In Acts 22:10 Paul’s commissioning as an apostle is called an appointment; and more importantly for our argument, the term is used of an appointed *time* in Acts 28:23.<sup>24</sup> We also notice that *ὀρίζω*, the actual word for determinism and destination in Luke-Acts, is used six times by this author, and among its uses, at least three relate to the fulfillment of scripture/prophecy (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; Acts 10:42), and in one instance it is used of temporal appointing (Acts 17:26).

All the same, our interpretation of 13:48, of course, does not eliminate every tension between the divine plan and human freedom in Luke-Acts. The Gentiles who turn to God do so based on the inevitability of God’s prophetic word realized in the Acts narrative (Acts 13:47–48; 14:15; 15:17–19; 26:17f; 28:28; cf. Isa. 44:28–45:6, 45:14–26; 51:4–5; 55:10–11). Moreover, if Isaiah 52–53 predicted that the servant-messiah had to be killed, this plan is still determined by God (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:26–28). And if God’s word necessarily accomplishes God’s purposes, it is still in some sense inevitable (Isa. 55:3–11; Luke 1:1–4; Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20). Yet on the other hand, as we observed earlier, God’s word and purpose can be freely rejected by humans (e.g., Luke 7:30; 13:34; Acts 3:26; 7:51, 57; 13:46; 17:30; 19:9).<sup>25</sup> Even though the inclusion of the nations is predicted long ago through God’s inevitable plan, and God takes initiative to save humanity, Luke maintains human freedom to receive or reject the purposes of God, and he holds responsible those who refuse to believe. Both human freedom and God’s inevitable plan are affirmed.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> The other use of appointment is when Paul and Barnabas are appointed by the other apostles to come to Jerusalem for a meeting in Acts 15:2. In Luke 7:8 a centurion who claims to be set (appointed) under authority.

<sup>25</sup> Cosgrove, “Divine DEI,” 186 rightly understands “each one” in Acts 3:26 not as individual election, but rather “God’s very individualistic purpose for each Israelite is presented as frustrated by Jewish unrepentance.”

<sup>26</sup> Cosgrove, “Divine DEI,” maintains that divine coercion was used on Zechariah’s naming his son John the Baptist and Paul’s commission (187). Zechariah’s salvation, however, is not directly at stake (Luke 1:5–66). In Paul’s case, it was admittedly difficult for him to reject God’s purpose due to his encounter with Christ and initial blindness (Acts 9). Even so, in Paul’s recollection of this event, there is a strong implication that his obedience was required (Acts 26:19). In his own writings, he implies a divine calamity on himself if he does not take on the responsibility of fulfilling his calling (1 Cor. 9:16; cf. 9:24–27). On the sovereign will of God in Luke-Acts, see further I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 103–111.



Squires considers Luke to be similar to Josephus and certain Stoic writers on fate, especially Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Diodorus Siculus.<sup>27</sup> Josephus claims that the Essenes believe fate governs “all things, and that nothing befalls men [sic] but what is according to its determination,” while the Sadducees do away with fate. The Pharisees believe that fate governs some actions but not others: “and some of them are in our own power, and that they are liable to fate, but are not caused by fate” (Jos. *Ant.* 13.172–73).<sup>28</sup> Josephus tends to hold to a position similar to the Pharisees (Jos. *Ant.* 16.397–98; cf. 10:142; *Wars* 2.119–166).<sup>29</sup> Luke’s view would be similar to his.

The tensions between divine determinism and human freedom are likewise found in Israel’s scriptures, which generally affirm both freedom in human volition and God accomplishing his purposes (e.g., Prov. 16:1, 4, 9, 33; 19:21; 20:24; 21:30–31; cf. Gen. 50:20).<sup>30</sup> Humans can choose their own paths, either serving God or not (Deut. 11:26; 26:17–19; 30:11–20; Jer. 21:8; Prov. 11:19; 14:27; 18:21). A preliminary observation of such sources seems to imply that these ancient writers did not consider it necessary to resolve the tension between the two categories. Luke-Acts seems to function in a similar way. For Luke, the ultimate plan of God cannot be frustrated despite human freedom. Moreover, the wisdom of God can outsmart mere mortals, and God can always intervene in miraculous ways to ensure that God’s word is accomplished.<sup>31</sup> God in fact takes initiative in saving people or individuals, and humans cannot be saved without divine grace to assist

---

<sup>27</sup> Squires, *Plan of God*, 156–62; 177–78, 180, 184, 189.

<sup>28</sup> W. Whiston tr., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Squires, *Plan of God*, 161–66; Carson, *Divine Sovereignty*, 115–19. On Philo, see D. Winston, “Freedom and Determinism in Philo of Alexandria,” *Studia Philonica* 3 (1974–75), 47–70. For Qumran references, see A. Lange, *Weisheit und Prädestination und den Textfunden von Qumran* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); E. H. Merrill, *Qumran and Predestination* (Leiden: Brill, 1975). Other Second Temple sources reflect diversity also. In some cases, at least, it appears as though God creates both the godly and sinners (Sir. 33:7–13; cf. 1 *En.* 89.68–69; Bar. 3.26–28; *Apoc. Abr.* 22). In some sources, an evil inclination seems to refer to a disposition created in humans (4 *Ezra* 3.20–22; 4.30–31; 4 *Macc.* 1:21–35; 2 *En.* 49.2–3; 53:2; 4Q511 28+29:3–4; cf. 3 *En.* 43), and yet it is often assumed that the wicked decide against God and deserve their punishment (e.g., 4 *Ezra* 8.55–56; 9.7–12; cf. *Jub.* 5:12–19; Sir. 15:11–20). In some later Jewish traditions there is both a good and evil desire/imagination (*yezer*) that seems to be created by God. The righteous choose the good and the wicked the evil. See further e.g., S. Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, 242–92, esp. 271.

<sup>30</sup> Proverbs 16:4 probably means that the Lord will definitely punish the wicked; their appropriate end will be judgment (cf. Eccl. 3:1–11). On divine hardening in Isaiah, see especially the relevant Excursus in Mark above; on Pharaoh in Exodus, see Romans 9–11 below.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Cosgrove, “Divine DEI,” 190 regarding divine necessity: “The logic of the divine δει in Luke-Acts involves a dramatic-comedic understanding of salvation-history as a stage set time and again for divine intervention, so that the spotlight of history continuously turns on God’s saving miracle.”

them (Acts 11:23; 13:43; 14:3; 20:24; cf. 2:39, 47; 15:11; Luke 19:10).<sup>32</sup> God “opened the heart” of Lydia, for example, to understand the scriptures and believe Paul’s message (Acts 16:14). Even so, Lydia is already a believer in one true God and this verse refers to God giving her understanding in the word (cf. Luke 24:45). The choice still remains hers to accept or rejection the word—there is no indication that she cannot refuse to believe. The Lukan Peter’s invitation for the Jews to receive salvation on the Day of Pentecost mentions God’s sovereignty in selecting Jesus and calling people via apostolic proclamations (Acts 2:23, 39). Moreover, Luke claims that the Lord was adding to his church those who were being saved (Acts 2:47), but at the same time, Peter declares to his listeners their own responsibility in receiving salvation. Among other things, they must repent and call upon the name of the Lord (Acts 2:37–40; cf. v. 21).<sup>33</sup> The call to repentance went out to the crowds and sinners through John the Baptist (Luke 3:3, 7–14) and Jesus (Luke 5:32; 10:15; 11:29–32; 13:3–5) and is continued through his followers (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 20:21). With any option we take regarding divine initiative and human freedom, this paradox should not mitigate the reality of apostasy and the need for the believers to persevere.<sup>34</sup> Both the divine necessity of salvation for humankind and the apostasy of individuals are affirmed in Luke.

---

<sup>32</sup> A. Geoge, “La Conversion” in *Études sur l’Oeuvre de Luc* (Paris: Gabalda, 1978), 351–68 is helpful in seeing God’s initiative and human acts related to conversion.

<sup>33</sup> The aorist passive imperative σώθητε in 2:40 might be translated “save yourselves” (ESV, NRSV, NET) but Barrett, *Acts* 1.156 contends that here the people must “call upon him who has already called them: thus, *Accept your salvation.*” In any case, the people must *do* something (τί ποιήσωμεν: 2:37) to become a Christ-follower, and Peter’s response suggests what would later be identified by early Christians as the basics of conversion-initiation.

<sup>34</sup> The words of Manson, *Sayings of Jesus*, 130 are apropos here: “Man [*sic*] cannot save himself; but he can damn himself.”