

Things God Has Ordained

Acts 17:30-31

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** The word “ordained” occurs 43 times in its various forms (*ordain, ordained, ordaineth*) in the KJV.

2. To ordain is to appoint, decree or to specify something:

Acts 17:30-31: “...but now commands all men everywhere to repent, *31* because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

I Cor. 2:7: “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,”

3. **3** We can learn some valuable lessons by looking at some Things God Has Ordained.

II. DISCUSSION:

I. **4** The Apostles:

A. The word “apostle” simply means one sent.

B. However, the term “apostle” is used in the New Testament to describe more than one “office”:

(1) “A special messenger of Jesus Christ; a person to whom Jesus delegated authority for certain tasks.” (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright (c) 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

(a) “These same disciples, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, were recommissioned by Jesus after His resurrection to be His witnesses throughout the world (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8). After Jesus' ascension, the apostles brought their number to twelve by choosing Matthias (Acts 1:23-26). (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright (c) 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

(b) Apostles, in this sense, had to meet very specific qualifications (**Acts 1:15-26**).

(2) However, the term “apostle” is also used in a more general way to describe a “messenger” selected and sent by someone. For example:

(a) Jesus uses the term in a general way in **John 13:16:** “Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent (*apostolos*) greater than he who sent him.”

(b) The church at Corinth selected “messengers” (Gr. *apostolos*) to deliver their contribution for the “needy saints” (2 Cor. 8:19, 23).

C. But the “apostles” we are interested in are the apostles Christ chose, appointed, and sent out to preach the gospel.

(1) Mark 3:14 records, “And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.”

(2) One of the qualifications of an apostle, as stated in **Acts 1:22:** “Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.”

(3) There are no living apostles today for there are no witnesses of the resurrection alive today!

D. Christ is also an “apostle” (**Heb. 3:1:** “...Apostle and High Priest of our confession”).

(1) Peter tells us one thing Christ serves as an “apostle” (sent for): “...it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead” (Acts 10:42).

(2) Paul confirms this apostleship of Christ when he proclaimed to the Athenians that God “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath

ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).

- (3) Thus it should be no wonder that the Scriptures talk about us appearing before “the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10).
- (4) Christ is “the righteous judge” (2 Tim. 4:8) because His “judgment is just” (**Jn. 5:30**: “I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.”).
- (5) His word will be the standard of judgment (**Jn. 12:48**: “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”).

E. Are you ready for that day to come?

2. **5** Elders:

- A. On Paul and Barnabas’ first preaching trip, churches were established and elders were appointed.
- B. Acts 14:23 reports, “And when they had ordained them elders in every church...” Paul left Titus in Crete, “...that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain (i.e., appoint in ASV, NKJV, NASV, NIV) elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5).
- C. God’s plan calls for elders in every church in every city.
 - (1) 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 reveal the qualifications by which these men are ordained.
 - (2) A church without elders is “lacking”: **Titus 1:5**: “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you”
 - (3) Too many churches are without elders today, and little to nothing is being said or done to appoint elders, this is sad and wrong!
 - (4) It should be the goal of every congregation (including this one!) to appoint qualified elders.
 - (5) It is my goal to preach/teach on this topic in the near future.

3. **6** The Powers That Be:

- A. Paul wrote the saints at Rome, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Romans 13:1).
- B. Civil government is a God-appointed arrangement:
 - (1) I imagine from the beginning of human civilization people have complained about the governments that ruled them.
 - (2) Our constitution (First Amendment) gives Americans an unparalleled right to criticize and complain about our government; this is certainly a good thing, but it also can be a bad thing.

Rom. 13:5-7: “Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.”

1 Pet. 2:13-17: “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, 14 or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men — 16 as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. 17 Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”
- C. Our political leaders are not always what we want them to be. In fact, they are rarely what we want them to be, but...

Dan. 4:17: “This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.”

Imagine what Daniel’s private thoughts might have been toward Belshazzar? Dan. 5

D. **7** Regardless of our opinion of the competency of our government officials we must remember:

- (1) “the powers that be are ordained by God” (Rom. 13:1).
- (2) God will judge these powers; it’s His “call” not ours! **Dan. 2:21:** “He removes kings and raises up kings;”; **Dan. 4:17:** “...the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.”; **Prov. 14:34:** “Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people.”; **Gen. 15:16:** “But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”
- (3) Thus “whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves” (Rom. 13:2).
- (4) Our duty is to obey civil government as long as their laws do not interfere with God’s laws (Acts 5:29).

Rom. 13:5: “Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake.”

Rom. 13:7: “Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.”

Lk. 20:25: “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

- (5) Even though we as Americans have the right to criticize our government, we need to exercise caution:

1 Pet. 2:17: “Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”

2 Pet. 2:10: “then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, 11 whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.”

Titus 3:2: “to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.”

E. Perhaps our best course is to criticize and complain less and pray more:

1 Tim. 2:1-3a: “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,”

4. **8** Support of Preachers:

- A. Paul made it clear in 1 Corinthians 9 that the church is responsible for supporting gospel preachers.
- B. The church at Corinth was informed, “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14; read **1 Cor. 9:3-14**).
- C. One of the most important things the local church can engage in is supporting gospel preachers:
Phil. 4:15-16: “Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. 16 For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.”; Matt. 16:26

- D. We need to open our vision beyond our own town/area.
 - (1) It is certainly important to support gospel preaching as it serves the local church and area.
 - (2) However, it is important to open our vision to faraway places (e.g., Philippines, India, Zimbabwe, etc.).
- E. It's "wrong" for a church not to support the preacher and for a preacher not to take support from the church (**2 Cor. 12:13**: "For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong!").
- F. I just want to emphasize one more time that the local church's support of gospel preachers is one of their most important works.
 - (1) I don't say that just because you help support me (I really appreciate it!).
 - (2) But more importantly, because gospel preaching is the most important pursuit of mankind (Mk. 16:15; 2 Pet. 1:3-11; Matt. 16:26).

5. **9** Walking in Good Works:

- A. The life of a Christian is described as a "walk": Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."; **Eph. 4:1**: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,"
 - (1) Good works are the responsibility of every Christian (**Titus 2:13-14**: "...Savior Jesus Christ, I 4 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.").
 - (2) Remember Dorcas? "...this woman was full of good works and alms deeds which she did" (Acts 9:36); can you imagine the honor of being mentioned, in a good way, in God's book?
 - 1 Pet. 1:23**: "...the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."
 - 1 Pet. 1:25**: "...the word of the Lord endureth for ever."
- B. Good works characterize the faithful Christian: "... rich in good works..." (1 Tim. 6:18), "... zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14), and "...careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:8).
- C. We (our lives, our example) are the only gospel most people in our "sphere of influence" will ever see, therefore, Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

6. **10** Preachers:

- A. Paul said, "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher..." (1 Tim. 2:7).
- B. Paul charged Timothy, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).
- C. "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2).
- D. An ordained preacher is one who accepts the responsibility to preach the word and teach others.
 - (1) Doesn't require graduation from a "seminary."
 - (2) Doesn't require the approval of men (i.e., ordained to be a "clergyman").
 - (3) Simply involves doing the work as God intended it be done:
 - 2 Tim. 4:5**: "But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

2 Tim. 4:2: *“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”*

Titus 2:1: *“But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine”).*

III. CONCLUSION: ||

- A. May we have a better appreciation and respect for the things God has ordained.
- B. Paul said, *“And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”* (Acts 13:48)
- C. You have heard the gospel; won’t you glorify God by obeying His gospel? If you do you will be *“ordained to eternal life”*!

2 Cor. 6:2: *“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”*

Adapted from an article (*Ordained Things*) by John Isaac Edwards.