

Matthew 11E

- Why did Jesus go to the cross? Why did Israel reject Him? Why did the religious leaders turn against Him?
 - That's what we're studying in this section of Matthew's Gospel
 - And with Easter right around the corner, there's probably no better subject for us right now
 - And as simple as that question sounds, I think many Christians would struggle to answer it from Scripture
 - Certainly, most Christians probably understand the basic reason Jesus was crucified
 - His popularity threatened Israel's religious leaders who manipulated the crowds and the Romans to put Jesus to death
 - But the true answer goes deeper
 - We need to understand why did the religious leaders see Jesus as a threat?
 - And in the end, we need to understand why those who followed Jesus turned against Him
 - That's what Matthew wants us to understand as he moves his narrative to the moment Jesus is rejected by His people
 - So in Chapters 11 and 12, Matthew walks us through two basic causes for Jesus' rejection
 - The last two weeks we studied the cause, which was the people's hard hearts
 - In Jesus' day, Jewish culture was devoted to a false religious system called Pharisaic Judaism
 - Their investment in that system of rules, rituals and Jewish identity, hardened their hearts to the truth
 - So when Jesus came preaching the Gospel, the people were unwilling to trade what they had for the Kingdom Jesus offered
 - In a word, they were unwilling to repent

- And if you don't repent of what is false, you can't receive what is true
- Which is why Jesus condemned them...notice what Matthew said last week

Matt. 11:20 Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent.

- The issue was repentance...their unwillingness to turn away from a life of rebellion and embrace the truth Jesus revealed to them
 - As I explained last week, the repentance Jesus is talking about here is not feeling sorry...it's not regret over making a mistake
 - Repentance is a change in perspective, a change of heart, a fundamental shift in thinking that begins a new spiritual course
 - Jesus condemned Israel because they would not repent in that way, despite the many miracles Jesus did in their presence
- So Jesus was rejected by Israel because Israel wouldn't repent
 - But if you think about it a little more, that doesn't really answer the question, does it?
 - We still need to ask *why* didn't Israel repent, especially in light of how much they heard and saw from Jesus
 - In fact, Jesus said less godly, less informed cultures, like Sodom, would have repented under similar circumstances
 - So why not Israel?
- In fact, what leads some to repent while others don't? Where does the desire to turn toward God come from for anyone?
 - Paul explained the source of repentance in 2 Corinthians

2Cor. 7:9 I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.

2Cor. 7:10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

- The apostle distinguished between two kinds of sorrow over our sin
- There is a worldly kind of sorrow that simply expresses regret at the consequences of sin
 - And then there is a godly form of sorrow, which is true repentance
 - That kind of sorrow leads us to the truth and brings us salvation
 - And that kind of sorrow comes to us by the will of God, Paul says
 - You'll remember last week I said that Israel's rejection of Christ was according to God's plan
 - The Bible teaches that God intended Israel's rejection of Jesus so that His Son would die for the sins of the world

Is. 53:5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
 He was crushed for our iniquities;
 The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
 And by His scourging we are healed.

Is. 53:6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
 Each of us has turned to his own way;
 But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
 To fall on Him.

- The Father would cause our iniquity to fall on Jesus, Isaiah foretold
- Because the Lord wrote this in advance, we know the Father planned for Jesus to die on a Roman cross
- And the means the Father used to place His Son on that cross was the hard hearts of the Jewish nation
- So the question of why did Israel reject Jesus, ultimately and inevitably leads us to God's sovereignty
 - Which is exactly where Jesus goes this week in Matthew

Matt. 11:25 At that time Jesus said, "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.

[Matt. 11:26](#) "Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.

[Matt. 11:27](#) "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.

- Notice at the beginning of v.25 Matthew says that "at that time" Jesus spoke these words
 - So immediately after condemning the people for their failure to repent, Jesus turns to a moment of prayer and praise
 - Consider the shift that Jesus is making here...one moment He's pronouncing judgment on a generation of Israel, condemning them for their failure to repent
 - And the very next moment, Jesus is looking heavenward and praising the Father for His sovereign will
 - Remember last week I told you we must understand the Bible from God's point of view, but we must read it from man's point of view?
 - Here you see Jesus doing just that
 - Jesus understood the need to view His circumstances from two perspectives simultaneously
 - From a human point of view, the Galileans had all the proof they needed to know that Jesus was their Messiah
 - In fact they had more than enough proof, having seen most of Jesus' miracles, yet they wouldn't repent
 - Their unwillingness to repent was the result of their pride and spiritual blindness
 - Which is why Jesus declared they would justly experience a harsher judgment in the end
 - That's what it means to read the text from a human perspective
 - It means we understand the circumstances as a basic, cause-and-effect outcome
 - Jesus did the things He did, then the Galileans responded in the way they did

- And their response can clearly be understood as a consequence of their hard hearts
- So naturally Jesus condemns them...case closed
- But at the same time we must understand what we read from God's perspective, which means appreciating the sovereignty of God
 - In this case, Jesus knew He was to go to the cross for the sins of the world
 - In fact, Paul says in Ephesians that God authored the plan of redemption before the foundations of the world
 - So the crowd's failure to repent was part of the Father's plan
 - Said another way, had the Father willed for the people to repent, they would have done so, as Paul said in 2 Corinthians
 - But as it was the crowd remained unrepentant, which Jesus recognized as a result of the sovereign will of God
 - So in effect, Jesus was praising the Father for leaving the crowd unrepentant knowing it would take Jesus to the cross
 - Notice in v.25 Jesus says, "I praise you Father for hiding these things from the wise and intelligent..."
 - First, what things were hidden?
 - They were the same things mentioned in v.14, referring to John the Baptist's call to repent
 - Jesus is referring to the knowledge of Jesus as Lord and a desire to repent and receive Him
 - The Lord revealed this truth to some hearts, but to most these things remain hidden
 - And in particular, Jesus says the Lord didn't reveal it to the wise and intelligent; referring to the religious leaders of that day
 - Those men were the best trained, the most knowledgeable of Scripture, and therefore the best qualified to spot the Messiah
 - But they missed Him, and Jesus is praising the Father for hiding the truth from these men

- Now when the Jesus says the Father hid the truth from these so-called wise men, let's make sure we understand what Jesus is saying
 - Jesus isn't saying the Father prevented religious leaders from knowing a truth they would have otherwise discovered on their own
 - Notice in the second half of the verse...Jesus says the Father did not reveal the truth to these wise men
 - So we need to turn the question around...
 - God didn't *prevent* them from knowing, He simply left them in their ignorance by not revealing the truth to them
 - That's what the Bible means when it says that a truth is hidden by God...it's saying that the Lord hasn't revealed it
 - In fact unless and until the Lord reveals spiritual truth to us, we will never find it on our own because spiritual truth lies outside our reach
 - Human beings gain knowledge by experience, gained through our five senses and by our reasoning
 - But the spiritual realm lies outside our experience...we can't detect it much less understand it
 - It's like we're fish in a fish bowl trying to understand the world that lies outside our bowl
 - We have no way to collect the necessary information...until we leave the fish bowl and die
 - So God doesn't have to hide spiritual truth by preventing us from finding it...God merely does nothing and we remain ignorant forever
 - Simply put, no human being can ever know anything about God or of the spiritual realm unless God chooses to reveal it
 - Unless God intervenes into our blissful ignorance and grants us divine insight, we will remain forever ignorant of spiritual truth
- So Jesus praises the Father for choosing to not reveal truth to the haughty
 - But since some in Israel did accept Jesus as their Messiah, particularly His disciples, we know the Lord was revealing truth to some
 - Jesus refers to those who received that revelation as "infants" in v. 25

- He's speaking of His disciples, who were not exactly an "A" list of religious scholars
- Jesus selected working class boys from poor areas of Israel to be His disciples
- He even selected a tax collector, an outcast in Jewish society
- These were "infants" in comparison to the mature religious leaders of the day
 - They were like children in that they knew little about religious matters and probably cared even less
 - But that's what made them perfect for the job...by their weakness, God invalidated the so-called wisdom of men
- Or as Paul puts it:

[1Cor. 1:21](#) For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

[1Cor. 1:22](#) For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom;

[1Cor. 1:23](#) but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,

[1Cor. 1:24](#) but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

[1Cor. 1:25](#) Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

[1Cor. 1:26](#) For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;

[1Cor. 1:27](#) but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

[1Cor. 1:28](#) and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,

[1Cor. 1:29](#) so that no man may boast before God.

- Notice Paul says that no one comes to know God by wisdom
 - So to mock the world's foolish reliance on wisdom, the Lord designed His message of salvation so that it appeared like foolishness

- Think about it...the message of the Gospel is complete foolishness
- The Gospel says, here's the secret to entering heaven...place your trust in a convicted criminal who was executed by Rome 2,000 years ago
- It's like asking someone to believe in Bigfoot or the Tooth Fairy
- Which is why Paul says that preaching Christ crucified was a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles
 - God designed His message of salvation so that it won't appeal to human intellect
 - So that as someone believes in it, that person's conversion could only be understood as a work of God; a supernatural revelation
 - Or as Paul calls it, the power of God and the wisdom of God
 - So history will testify that the foolishness of God had power to save while the wisdom of men couldn't see it
- But God's plan to shame the wise of the world goes even farther...
 - Not only did God design the message of salvation to confound the wise, He also prefers to reveal Himself to the foolish
 - Paul says God chooses weak things to shame so-called strong
 - He reveals Himself to the base things of the world (meaning insignificant), the despised, to those the world looks down upon
 - While withholding revelation from the powerful and privileged so that in eternity their power and wisdom will be nullified
- So when we answer the question, "Why did Israel reject their Messiah?" we must read the text from man's perspective and understand from God's
 - Israel had hard hearts that refused to repent and embrace Jesus in place of their established system of rules and privilege
 - And Israel's refusal to repent was the result of the Father's choice to leave Israel ignorant so they would crucify their Lord
 - Meanwhile, the Father revealed Himself to a few, to spiritual infants, so that He could build a worldwide Church of believers

- Just as Paul explained

Rom. 11:7 What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;

Rom. 11:8 just as it is written,

**“GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR,
EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT,
DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY.”**

- Quoting from Moses in Deuteronomy, Paul points out that the Lord was in charge of establishing who will have ears to hear the truth in Israel
 - But not all in Israel were going to receive the truth
 - Jesus knew that, which is why Jesus has begun declaring “he who has ears to hear, let him hear” in v.15
 - Jesus is acknowledging that His Father was not granting a knowledge of the truth to all Israel but only to some
- Now we might say, but didn’t Jesus reveal truth to Israel when He openly declared He was the Messiah and performed His miracles?
 - The crowds certainly saw Jesus’ miracles and they heard Jesus’ words
 - But again, those moments were just human experiences...sights and sounds which were understood through human reasoning
 - And experiences by themselves, even great signs and wonders, do not communicate spiritual meaning
 - Spiritual meaning – spiritual insight – comes only from a revelation from God
 - That’s true whether we’re hearing someone explain the Gospel or if we’re reading the Bible
 - Or even if we’re watching Jesus perform miracles for us...
 - Those experiences can’t by themselves impart spiritual truth unless God grants us revelation
 - They must be accompanied by the Spirit of God teaching us what they mean
 - As Paul says

[1Cor. 2:12](#) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,

[1Cor. 2:14](#) But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

- Spiritual truth must be spiritually appraised, Paul says, meaning it must be granted to us from a spiritual source
- Furthermore, Jesus and the Father are in agreement in this plan and work together to accomplish it
 - Notice in v.26 Jesus says that the plan to selectively reveal spiritual truth to infants was well-pleasing in the Father's sight
 - The Father saw the religious wise remaining ignorant while the religiously ignorant were enlightened and He was well-pleased
 - The Greek word for well-pleased simply means approval
 - God approved this plan for the sake of His Son
 - And Jesus too approves of such selectivity
 - In v.27, Jesus says only the Father knows the Son, and only the Son knows the Father
 - Jesus is speaking of the relationship between members of the Godhead, which is a profound truth
 - But as hard as it can be for us to understand the Trinity of the Godhead, Jesus' point here isn't hard to understand
 - Only a member of the Godhead can know and explain another member of the Godhead
 - Remember, the knowledge of God lies outside the reach of His Creation – apart from God revealing Himself to us
 - So naturally, we can't understand a Person of the Godhead unless a member of the Godhead explains it to us
 - And Jesus says the Father knows the Son and the Son knows the Father

- And the Father has determined that the Son would provide revelation to the Creation concerning both
- But apart from the revelation Christ gives us, no one can know of the Father
- And we have numerous other Scripture that echo this truth
 - For example, Hebrews says it this way

Heb. 1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

Heb. 1:2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Heb. 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power...

- The Father has spoken to us in His Son
- Christ is the exact representation of the Father's nature
- And Colossians 1:15 says Jesus is the image of the invisible God
- And Jesus told His disciples this:

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

John 14:7 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him."

John 14:8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."

John 14:9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

- As we just read in Matthew, the Father has positioned His Son in the foreground, so to speak
- We see Christ, not the Father, as 1 John 4:12 says: no one has seen the Father at any time
- So as we encounter Jesus, we are seeing the Father

- In v.27 Jesus says the Father has handed Him all things – meaning all spiritual knowledge – and that knowledge is Christ’s alone
 - No one else has the truth about God...not Buddha, not Mohammed, not the Dali Lama, not the pope
 - No other person or spiritual entity can explain the Father to us
 - Only the Son knows the Father, and the Father has determined that the Son would be the one to reveal the Father to the world
 - But then notice at the end of v.27 Jesus says the revelation of the Father reaches those the Son wills to reveal it to
 - So why did Israel reject their Lord?
 - Because they had hard-hearts blinded by a false religion that trapped them in works and a sense of entitlement
 - But why did Israel remain blind? Why did their hearts not soften in the face of so many miracles?
 - Because the Father and Son purposed to withhold spiritual truth from that generation
 - And why did God desire to leave Israel in their blindness? So that Israel would reject Jesus, placing Him on a cross
 - And why did God place His beloved Son on a cross?
 - For you and me
 - For the sake of all those to whom God extends His grace
- That’s the thought you should take out of this teaching and out of this room today...that God chose to reveal Himself to you. Why?
 - That’s the question we should all be asking ourselves tonight?
 - Why did the Lord reveal Himself to me?
 - Had the Lord chosen to remain hidden from you as He did from most of Israel in Jesus’ day, where would you be right now?
 - What would you know about Jesus? What would you think about the Gospel?
 - Apart from the grace of God, we would have been just like this generation of Israel...lacking true repentance and ignorant of the truth

- Yet here we are...saved by His grace
- Why are you here? Have you asked why God saved you?
- We know it's not because we deserved it...as Paul says we're not noble or mighty and we certainly weren't holy enough
- As you contemplate the answer to that answer, let it move you to rethinking how you're spending your time on earth
 - Are you living to serve Christ knowing what He has done for you
 - We can't ignore the implications of God's grace for the course of our lives
 - He didn't save you for your sake...He saved you for His glory
- So any consideration of the question of why did Israel say no to Jesus, necessarily leads us to considering why did God say yes to us?
 - And the answer to that question ought to be the pursuit of your entire earthly life
 - Because it will be the center of your eternal life