

Matthew 11:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

Analysis

'But wisdom is justified of her children.' Jesus concludes His comparison of John and Himself by appealing to results: divine wisdom is vindicated by its outcomes. The word 'wisdom' (*σοφία*/sophia) represents God's wise plan—sending John as austere prophet and Jesus as accessible Savior. 'Children' (*τέκνων*/teknon) are the fruits or results: lives transformed, sinners saved, God glorified. The critics rejected both messengers, producing no fruit. But those who received John and Jesus produced abundant fruit—repentance, faith, transformed lives. Reformed theology applies this to apologetics: Christianity's truth is demonstrated not merely by arguments but by transformed lives. The gospel produces what nothing else can: genuine holiness, sacrificial love, joyful worship, enduring hope. This doesn't mean pragmatism (whatever works is true) but rather that truth produces characteristic fruit. False religion either crushes people (legalism) or excuses sin (antinomianism). Gospel truth liberates, transforms, and produces Christ-likeness.

Historical Context

Greco-Roman culture highly valued *σοφία* (wisdom)—philosophical schools claimed to teach it. Jewish wisdom literature (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job) established wisdom as understanding God's ways. By Jesus's time, competing wisdom systems existed: Pharisaic tradition, Greek philosophy, Essene mysticism, apocalyptic speculation. Jesus claimed that God's wisdom—His redemptive plan—was validated by its results. John's and His ministries produced genuine repentance, faith, and transformation. The religious establishment's approach produced hypocrisy and

oppression (Matthew 23). Early church apologists (Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen) used this argument: Christianity transformed lives in ways philosophy couldn't. Paganism didn't cure greed, lust, or cruelty; Christianity did. This apologetic continues: while critics dismiss Christianity, it continues producing transformed lives, sacrificial service, and enduring hope. The 'children' of divine wisdom vindicate its truth across centuries and cultures.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What fruit (wisdom's children) has the gospel produced in your life that validates its truth?
2. How do you respond to critics who dismiss Christianity—do you rely solely on arguments, or also point to transformed lives?
3. In what ways has God's wisdom confounded what you initially thought was foolishness?

Interlinear Text

Tότε	ἥρξατο	όνειδίζειν	τὰς	πόλεις	ἐν	αῖς	ἐγένοντο
Then	began	he to upbraid	G3588	the cities	wherein	G3739	were done
G5119	G756	G3679		G4172	G1722		G1096
αἱ	πλεῖσται	δυνάμεις	αὐτοῦ	ὅτι	οὐ	μετενόησαν·	
G3588	most	mighty works	of his	because	not	they repented	
G4118		G1411	G846	G3754	G3756		G3340

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 8:6 (Repentance): I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

Revelation 2:21 (Repentance): And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

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