

Matthew 13:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

Analysis

Jesus explains His parabolic method: 'He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.' This verse articulates the doctrine of divine election with remarkable clarity. The verb 'is given' (δέδοται/dedotai) is passive divine—God is the giver. Spiritual understanding isn't achieved but received; not earned but granted. The 'mysteries' (μυστήρια/mystēria) aren't puzzles to solve but divine truths once hidden, now revealed to God's chosen. The stark contrast—'to you...but to them not'—offends egalitarian sensibilities but reflects biblical teaching: God sovereignly determines who receives spiritual illumination (Matthew 11:25-27, John 6:44, Ephesians 1:4-5). Reformed theology sees this as demonstrating both God's mercy (giving anyone understanding despite universal sin) and justice (withholding from those who persistently reject available light). This isn't arbitrary cruelty but righteous response to hardened rebellion. The verse also provides assurance: if you understand and believe gospel truth, it's because God graciously granted that understanding—salvation is entirely His work, guaranteeing its completion (Philippians 1:6).

Historical Context

Jesus spoke these words after His disciples asked why He taught in parables (v.10). In first-century Judaism, 'mysteries' (רָז/raz in Hebrew) referred to divine secrets revealed only to the righteous or end-times community. Qumran sectarians (Dead

Sea Scrolls community) believed God revealed mysteries to them alone. Jesus claims to reveal God's kingdom mysteries, but the recipients aren't the religiously elite—they're the disciples, simple Galileans. The religious establishment, despite their learning and spiritual privilege, remained blind (v.13-15). This pattern—God choosing unlikely recipients of grace—runs throughout Scripture: younger sons over firstborn, Gentiles included with Jews, foolish things confounding the wise (1 Corinthians 1:26-29). The early church wrestled with this reality: why do some believe while others reject the same message? Paul addresses this extensively in Romans 9-11, defending God's sovereign right to have mercy on whom He will. Augustine's debates with Pelagius centered on whether grace is universally available or sovereignly given. The Reformation recovered this biblical emphasis on grace as God's sovereign gift, not human achievement.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does understanding that spiritual insight is God's gift rather than human achievement affect your pride and gratitude?
2. What comfort does divine sovereignty in salvation provide when loved ones reject the gospel?
3. How do you respond to the reality that God doesn't give understanding to everyone—does this seem unfair, or does it highlight the wonder of grace?

Interlinear Text

ὁ	δὲ	ἀποκριθεὶς	εἶπεν	αὐτοῖς	ὅτι	ὑμῖν	δέδοται
G3588	and	He answered	said	unto them	Because	unto you	given
G1161		G611	G2036	G846	G3754	G5213	G1325
γινῶναι	τὰ	μυστήρια	τῆς	βασιλείας	τῶν	οὐρανῶν	
to know	G3588	the mysteries	G3588	of the kingdom	G3588	of heaven	
G1097		G3466		G932		G3772	
ἐκείνοις	δὲ	οὐ	δέδοται				
to them	and	not	given				
G1565	G1161	G3756	G1325				

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 19:11 (Parallel theme): But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.

1 Corinthians 2:14 (Parallel theme): But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

James 1:5 (Parallel theme): If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

1 John 2:27 (Parallel theme): But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

1 John 2:20 (Parallel theme): But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

Matthew 16:17 (Parallel theme): And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Isaiah 35:8 (Parallel theme): And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

Ephesians 1:9 (Parallel theme): Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

Romans 16:25 (Parallel theme): Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

1 Corinthians 13:2 (Parallel theme): And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

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