

Matthew 13:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

Analysis

'And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive.' Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9 directly, showing His generation fulfills this prophecy. The repetition emphasizes paradox: they hear but don't understand; they see but don't perceive. Physical senses function; spiritual perception is absent. Reformed theology sees this describing natural human condition apart from regeneration: all possess external capacity (ears, eyes) but lack internal capacity (spiritual understanding) until God grants it. The prophecy's fulfillment demonstrates God's sovereign control over who perceives truth. This isn't failure of revelation—Jesus taught clearly, performed undeniable miracles—but judicial response to hardened hearts. The verse connects Jesus's ministry to Israel's larger pattern of prophetic rejection. Just as Isaiah's generation heard without heeding, Jesus's generation witnessed without believing. The problem wasn't insufficient evidence but resistant hearts. This challenges seeker-sensitive assumption that clear presentation guarantees positive response. Truth requires not just external clarity but internal illumination (2 Corinthians 4:4-6).

Historical Context

Isaiah 6:9 occurred in context of Uzziah's death (740 BC) and Syro-Ephraimite crisis. Despite Isaiah's faithful prophetic ministry, Judah persisted in idolatry and covenant unfaithfulness. God predicted their hearing without heeding would

continue until judgment fell (Isaiah 6:11-13)—fulfilled in Babylonian exile. Jesus applies this pattern to His generation: like Isaiah's audience, they witnessed clear revelation yet rejected it. The prophetic pattern repeats: faithful proclamation, general rejection, judgment. The quotation demonstrates how Old Testament prophecies had immediate historical fulfillment yet also found eschatological fulfillment in Jesus's ministry. Isaiah didn't know his words applied specifically to first-century rejection of Messiah, yet they did. This is pattern prophecy: repeated fulfillment across redemptive history. Early church extensively used this text explaining Jewish rejection of gospel. Paul quotes it at Romans 11:8 and Acts 28:26-27. The principle remains: wherever gospel is clearly preached, some will respond, many will harden. The fault lies not in message but in hearers' hardened hearts—confirmed by divine judgment.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does this repeated pattern of prophetic rejection across redemptive history teach about human nature and need for divine grace?
2. How does understanding that even perfect revelation doesn't guarantee positive response affect evangelistic expectations?
3. What comfort comes from knowing that rejection of gospel message fulfills prophecy rather than indicating failure?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἀναπληροῦται ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ἡ προφητεία Ἡσαίου
And is fulfilled in them which the prophecy of Esaias
G2532 G378 G1909 G846 G3588 G4394 G2268

ἡ λέγουσα Ἀκοῆ ἀκούσετε καὶ οὐ μὴ συνῆτε καὶ
which saith By hearing ye shall hear And G3756 G3361 shall And
G3588 G3004 G189 G191 G2532 G4920 G2532

βλέψετε βλέψετε καὶ οὐ μὴ ἴδητε
seeing seeing And G3756 G3361 perceive
G991 G991 G2532 G1492

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 12:2 (Parallel theme): Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house.

Luke 8:10 (Parallel theme): And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

2 Corinthians 3:14 (Parallel theme): But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.

Mark 4:12 (Parallel theme): That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.