

Matthew 13:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Analysis

'For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.' Jesus continues quoting Isaiah 6:10, explaining why seeing/hearing don't produce understanding: the 'heart is waxed gross' (ἐπαχύνθη γὰρ ἡ καρδία/epachynthē gar hē kardia)—literally 'has become fat, thick, insensitive.' Their ears are 'dull' (βαρέως ἤκουσαν/bareōs ēkousan, heavy, sluggish); their eyes 'they have closed' (ἐκάμυσαν/ekammysan)—active voice indicating deliberate choice. This grammatical detail is crucial: they closed their own eyes. The result: they won't see, hear, understand, be converted, or be healed. Reformed theology sees both human responsibility (they closed their eyes) and divine judgment (God confirms their hardness). The verse describes willful blindness becoming judicial blindness: persistent rejection leads to inability to respond. The tragedy: they avoid conversion and healing—missing salvation through stubborn resistance.

Historical Context

Isaiah's original context: eighth-century BC Judah under Ahaz and Hezekiah, facing Assyrian threat while trusting Egypt rather than God, maintaining temple worship while oppressing poor, performing sacrifices while violating covenant. Their hearts had 'grown fat'—self-satisfied, comfortable in sin, resistant to correction. The metaphor: overfed animals become sluggish, insensitive. Similarly, Judah's spiritual obesity (prosperity, self-righteousness, religious routine) deadened spiritual perception. By Jesus's time, pattern repeated: religious establishment was self-satisfied, comfortable, resistant to prophetic challenge. They had everything—Scripture, temple, tradition—yet missed Messiah standing before them. They'd closed their eyes deliberately, refusing evidence that threatened comfortable assumptions. Church history shows this pattern continuing: Christendom's prosperity often produces spiritual obesity—comfortable religion losing vital connection to truth. Reformation was partly reaction against this. Modern Western church faces similar danger: material comfort, cultural Christianity, self-satisfied moralism blinding eyes to genuine gospel. Fat hearts can't perceive truth requiring repentance and transformation.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. In what ways have you deliberately 'closed your eyes' to truth because responding would require uncomfortable change?
2. How does prosperity and comfortable religion often produce 'fat hearts' insensitive to God's voice?
3. What practices cultivate spiritual sensitivity versus the callousness Jesus describes?

Interlinear Text

ἐπαχύνθη	γὰρ	ἡ	καρδίᾳ	τοῦ	λαοῦ	τούτου	καὶ	τοῖς
is waxed gross	For	G3588	heart	G3588	people's	this	and	G3588
G3975	G1063		G2588		G2992	G5127	G2532	
ὥσιν	βαρέως	ἀκούσωσιν	καὶ	τοὺς	ὀφθαλμοῖς	αὐτοῦς		
their ears	are dull	hear	and	G3588	eyes	them		
G3775	G917	G191	G2532		G3788	G846		
ἐκάμυσαν	μήποτε	ἴδωσιν	τοῖς	ὀφθαλμοῖς	καὶ			
they have closed	lest at any time	they should see	G3588	eyes	and			
G2576	G3379	G1492		G3788	G2532			
τοῖς	ὥσιν	ἀκούσωσιν	καὶ	τῇ	καρδίᾳ	συνῶσιν		
G3588	their ears	hear	and	G3588	heart	should understand		
	G3775	G191	G2532		G2588	G4920		
καὶ	ἐπιστρέψωσιν	καὶ	ιάσωμαι	αὐτοῦς				
and	should be converted	and	I should heal	them				
G2532	G1994	G2532	G2390	G846				

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 6:10 (Parallel theme): Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

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.

Zechariah 7:11 (Parallel theme): But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

Hebrews 5:11 (Parallel theme): Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

Psalms 119:70 (Parallel theme): Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law.

Malachi 4:2 (Parallel theme): But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

2 Timothy 4:4 (Parallel theme): And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Acts 7:57 (Parallel theme): Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

Jeremiah 17:14 (Parallel theme): Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.

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