

Matthew 13:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

Analysis

Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see (ἐπεθύμησαν ἰδεῖν ἃ βλέπετε)—*epithumeō* expresses intense longing, earnest desire. The Old Testament saints yearned to witness the Messiah's coming (1 Peter 1:10-12; Hebrews 11:13), but died in faith without seeing fulfillment. The disciples, however, see the incarnate Word, hear His parables, witness miracles—experiencing what patriarchs and prophets only glimpsed in shadows and types.

This beatitude (unique to Matthew) heightens the privilege and responsibility of those who receive Jesus's teaching. To whom much revelation is given, much understanding is required (Luke 12:48). The disciples' 'seeing' and 'hearing' isn't merely physical but spiritual perception—the blessing of illuminated understanding that parables both reveal and conceal (13:10-16).

Historical Context

Written around AD 60-70, Matthew's Gospel addresses Jewish Christians who needed to see Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. The 'prophets and righteous men' includes figures like Abraham (John 8:56), Moses (Hebrews 11:26), David (Acts 2:30-31), Isaiah, Daniel—all who foresaw Messiah from afar without experiencing His earthly ministry.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What spiritual privileges do you take for granted that previous generations longed to experience?
2. How should knowing the prophets 'desired to see' what you have in Scripture change how you read the Bible?
3. What does it mean to truly 'see' and 'hear' Christ—beyond physical presence to spiritual understanding?

Interlinear Text

ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πολλοὶ προφῆται καὶ
verily For I say unto you That many prophets and
G281 G1063 G3004 G5213 G3754 G4183 G4396 G2532

δίκαιοι ἐπεθύμησαν εἶδον· ἃ βλέπετε καὶ οὐκ
righteous men have desired have those things which ye see and not
G1342 G1937 G1492 G3739 G991 G2532 G3756

εἶδον· καὶ ἤκουσαν ἃ ἤκουσαν καὶ οὐκ
have and have those things which have and not
G1492 G2532 G191 G3739 G191 G2532 G3756

ἤκουσαν
have
G191

Additional Cross-References

John 8:56 (Parallel theme): Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

Hebrews 11:13 (Parallel theme): These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Luke 10:24 (Prophecy): For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

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