

# Matthew 11:25-27

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*Jesus prays to His Father in Heaven, revealing His relationship to God as His Son. And as the Son's identity is revealed by the Father upon those whom He chooses, so is the Father known only by those the Son wills to reveal.*

This event is unparalleled in the other gospel accounts.

Matthew informs his readers that *at that time* in which *Jesus* affirmed John's ministry and rebuked the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, He *said* the following prayer.

This is the second recorded prayer by *Jesus* that Matthew chronicles. The first was the model prayer *Jesus* taught His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:9-13).

*Jesus* began His prayer with a *praise* and an acknowledgement of who God is. *I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth.* *Jesus* speaks directly to His *Father*, which once again reveals the intimacy between them. *Jesus* acknowledges that His *Father* is *Lord of heaven and earth*. The opening of His prayer establishes the true perspective of who is in charge—His *Father*. His *Father* is the sovereign Lord over all things in *heaven and on earth*. It is noteworthy that *Jesus* (who is God) would begin with this recognition. It is the same perspective we ought to have as we live and go to our *Father* in prayer.

*Jesus* praised His *Father* that in His sovereignty He has *hidden these things from the wise and intelligent* and has *revealed them to infants*. What is *Jesus* referring to? What has His *Father* *hidden*? What has He *revealed*? Who are *the wise and intelligent*? And who are the *infants*?

The *these things* mainly refers to the identities of John as the Messianic forerunner, and *Jesus* as the Messiah. We can surmise this because those were *the things* *Jesus* had been talking about immediately after John's disciples inquired if *Jesus* was the "Expected One" (Matthew 11:3).

To be *wise and intelligent* means to be have maturity and understanding. *The wise and intelligent* not only know things, they have the capacity to better search and seek out the truth if they remain humble. In this case, *the wise and the intelligent* likely refers to those in power and authority, particularly cultural and religious authority. Namely, the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees. If anyone should have been able to recognize that John was the forerunner to the Messiah and that *Jesus* was the Messiah, it should have been *the wise* because they were extremely knowledgeable of the scriptures. And yet, for all their wisdom and great intelligence, they were unable to see *these* truths because the *Father* had *hidden these things from* them.

Why did the *Father* hide *these things from* them? We can glean a likely answer from things *Jesus* says to *wise and intelligent* scribes and Pharisees when He interacts with them at other moments.

*Jesus* says of them that they are of self-righteous hypocrites (Matthew 15:7), devourers of widows' houses (Matthew 23:14) blind guides (Matthew 23:16), manipulators of the law (Matthew 23:16-22), neglectors of justice, mercy and faithfulness (Matthew 23:23, whitewashed tombs (Matthew 23:27), and a brood of vipers (Matthew 23:33).

The *Father* had hidden *these things* about the identities of John and *Jesus* because *the wise and intelligent* did not obey God. They had chosen a perspective that did not enable them to see. Even though they knew the scriptures, they did not obey them. Instead, they abused their wisdom and intelligence to coerce and manipulate others for personal gain. Instead of loving their neighbor as God commanded them, they abused their authority to exploit.

And while the identities of John and *Jesus* remained *hidden from the wise and intelligent* the *Father* had *revealed them to infants*. An infant has no wisdom or intelligence. *Infants* are unable to read or make complex logical reasonings. In this context the infants that contrast the wise and intelligent included the ordinary folk; the uneducated, the oppressed, and weary masses who first flocked to John and later to *Jesus*. It also may have included the social outcasts, such as prostitutes, tax collectors, and other sinners. These *infants* had a better sense of who John and *Jesus* were than the educated scribes and Pharisees.

It is as *Jesus*'s disciple, John, describes in the prologue of his Gospel account.

“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”

(John 1:10-12)

*Jesus* continues the prayer recorded in Matthew, saying *Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight*. He affirms that it was right for His *Father* to hide His identity from those *intelligent and wise* who knew the scriptures and abused them and for His *Father* to *reveal* His identity to the *infants* that *the wise* preyed upon.

*Jesus* then seems to end His prayer and change who He is addressing. Instead of talking to His *Father* in front of the crowds, He switches to speaking to the crowds about the relationship He enjoys with His *Father*. As He speaks, *Jesus* gives us a glimpse into the mystery of God, as Trinity.

*All things have been handed over to Me by My Father*. As His *Father* is *Lord of heaven and earth*, He has given *Jesus* *all things*. *Jesus* says that He has been granted authority of *all things* by His *Father*. He will make a similar claim in Matthew 28:18 when He said, “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me*” at the beginning of what is commonly known as the “Great Commission.”

In making this assertion *Jesus* was claiming to have equal authority with (and from) God *the Father*. *Jesus* was explicitly claiming to be God. It is at once a bold claim – for it would have been blasphemous if it were false; and it is a humble claim—for He is saying that the source of

His authority *over all things* has *been* derived and *handed over* to Him by *the Father*. Jesus declared here that *all things* have been *handed over* to Him, even though other passages indicate that Jesus was granted the glory and honor of reigning over the earth as its human king due to His fulfillment of obedience to the will of God, even to dying upon the cross. Since Jesus has not yet fully obeyed, then why did He say that all things are already handed to Him?

We can look at the instance of Abraham to answer this. Abraham was given an unconditional grant of land as a reward for obedience in Genesis 15. Yet Abraham was told that his descendants would not possess that land for over 400 years. The biblical pattern is that God grants inheritance as a reward, but it is up to the grantee to possess that inheritance through obedience. So in this section, Jesus has been granted authority over *all things*. After He was resurrected, and had fully obeyed His Father, the power and authority was granted to Him in heaven, as He sat down on the throne of His Father (Philippians 2:5-10; Revelation 3:21). At the second coming, Jesus will reign physically upon the earth, and physically rule over the earth with as a human, earthly authority.

*Jesus* then described how *the Father* and *the Son* are known. *The Father* and *the Son* are roles within the Three-in-One Godhead. *And no one knows the Son except the Father*. *Jesus* does not literally state “I am *the Son*” in this particular passage, but based on the fact that He has just been talking directly to *the Lord of heaven and earth* as a *Father*, and as a *Son* would speak with His *Father* it is a natural to suppose that *Jesus* is strongly inferring that He is *the Son*. And He did just refer to Himself as “the *Son of Man*” (Matthew 11:19).

*No one knows the Son except the Father*. The eternal relationship within the Godhead, though alluded to throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, has been shrouded in mystery. No one at this point (not even the Jews) really knows about the Trinity. In that sense *no one knows the Son* because *no one knows* that God is *the Father* and God is *the Son*. As the Apostle John records, *Jesus* said “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30).

But *Jesus* was talking about more than mere theology. He is talking about relationships. And the relationship He describes is the relationship between Himself as *the Son* and *the Father*. But just as importantly, He describes the tragic lack of relationship between man with God as both *Son* and *Father*.

Matthew uses the Greek word “epiginosko” translated as *knows* to capture *Jesus*’s meaning. There are two basic Greek terms for “know” that are commonly found in the New Testament: “oida,” which describes a conceptual understanding; and “ginosko,” which describes a familiarity and the kind of knowledge that comes from an intimate personal relationship or experience with someone. Matthew adds the prefix “epi” to “ginosko” as a way to emphasize the depth or quality of fellowship *Jesus* has with His Father. *Jesus* is not talking about a someone’s conceptual or philosophic knowledge of *the Son* and *the Father*. He is talking about an intimate personal familiarity and fellowship between He and His Father.

Man was made to “epiginosko” God. We were created to partner with God, to work with Him, to be familiar with Him, and to enjoy Him (Genesis 2:15, Psalm 8:3-8; 100:3). But because of sin

and separation (called death) that it brings between man and God, *no one knows* God (Genesis 2:15; 3:17-19).

As things stand, *No one knows* God except for God Himself. *No one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son. The Father testifies of the Son and the Son testifies of the Father* (John 8:18). And *no one* is able to come to God except through His Son, *Jesus* (John 14:6). It is impossible to know *the Father* apart from *the Son* and it is impossible to know *the Son* apart from *the Father*. Knowing God is a “Both/And” proposition.

But this “epiginosko” relationship was meant to be shared. And God still shares Himself with *anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him*. Man cannot come to God on his own. If man is to come to God at all, God must first *reveal* Himself to man. And that is exactly who *Jesus* is: “The Word made flesh” (John 1:1; 1:14) and “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). *Jesus* is God revealed as man. Jesus is the door through which humanity can reach God. It is sometimes said that there are many mountains to God. This passage makes clear that there are no mountains to God. That is why God came to earth. It is through Jesus we come to God. We come into relationship with God as His child through belief (John 3:14-16) and we come into intimate fellowship with God through choosing the mindset that Jesus chose, which leads to radical obedience (Philippians 2:5-10).

In a broad sense *the Son* of God came to earth so that man can be reunited with and *know* God. And the way we are able to *know* God is by faith: first, by believing that *Jesus* is God’s *Son* (John 3:14-16; 20:31a); and second, by following *Jesus* by faith throughout the circumstances and trials we encounter in life, that we might have “life in His name” through a walk of faith (John 20:31b).

This opportunity to *know* God is universally available to whosoever believes (John 3:16). *Anyone* can do this. God is not preventing people from coming to Him. The Apostle Peter asserted that God desires all to come to Him, and has prolonged His coming to give more people the opportunity to come to Him.

“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.”  
(2 Peter 3:9)

But even as this Matthew passage demonstrates God’s availability and openness to man, there is also an element of exclusivity within it as well. *The Son* only reveals *the Father* to those *whom He wills* or chooses. The term for *wills* is “Boulomai.” It means “to will deliberately, have a purpose, be minded of; willing as an affection, to desire.” “Boulomai” does not depict an abstract, unnamed desire, but rather describes a conscious choice. There is a clear intent on *the Son* about *to whom* He reveals *the Father*.

The question then is *to whom* does *the Son* will to reveal *the Father*? Who is the *anyone*? Specifically, it is *anyone* who believes that *Jesus* is *the Son*. There is a symmetry within Jesus’s thought which began with the reference to *the Father* hiding the identity of His *Son* from *the*

*wise and intelligent. And anyone who does not believe the Son will not be able to know the Father. If we reject the Son, then the Son will reject us from knowing the Father.*

We see here a paradoxical reality, that God is sovereign over all things, yet has given humans a genuine choice, and desires all to choose to come to Him. All founding truths are paradoxical in nature. For example, the axiomatic foundational truth of Relativism is “Everything is relative.” This is however a paradoxical statement, since the axiom “Everything is relative” is, itself, an absolute statement. The existence of this statement proves that everything is not relative. The paradoxical axiom of scripture can be thought of as the opening statement of the Bible “In the beginning God”—or a similar statement where God states His name to Moses as “I AM that I AM” (Exodus 3:14).

This is paradoxical, because God is before the beginning. But it is answered by the reality that God is existence itself. In the case of Relativism, its founding paradox is a contradiction, because it is a human formulation. In the case of the Bible, these truths about God are rooted in the transcendent nature of God. They are paradoxical to us, but must be true in order for life to make sense. We should then not be surprised that when we are provided a peek into the intimate conversation between the members of the Trinity we then hear things that are beyond our ability to comprehend.

In Romans, Paul asserts God’s sovereignty as well as man’s freedom to make choices in chapters 9-11, which leads him to this exclamatory statement:

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.” (Romans 11:33-35)

### **Biblical Text**

**11:25-27 At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.**