

## 9. JESUS' EXCLUSIVE FIRST MOVE

### Matthew 11v27

We have already begun to look at the first part of this great text. **All things have been committed to me by my Father. No-one knows the Son except the Father, and no-one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.**

Today we come to the final part of this text and the question of who makes the first move in our salvation.

Davey Falcus' amazing story has just been published, called 'Gangland to God.' It is the story of the transformation of a local man whose life was utterly drenched in violence, theft and addiction. When he was as low as it is possible to get Jesus stepped in, revealed Himself to Davey and turned his life around, so that today he preaches the good news of Jesus around the world. But Davey begins the story back when he was only ten and a strange dream prepared him for what was to come. Jesus, even then, was knocking on Davey's door.

So today, in our text, we look at one of the most astonishing and exclusive claims of Jesus. *No-one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.* Jesus declares that He is the only one who can introduce us to God. In doing so He uses two important expressions. First He speaks of "choosing", and then He speaks of "revelation". In other words, He takes the initiative in our salvation. This causes us to dip a toe into the great Biblical doctrine of electing grace.

### 1. Jesus Chooses

**No-one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.**

Jesus claims to *choose* who will know the Father. The word in the text (*'boulomai'*) puts the emphasis on Christ's 'will'. The word means 'to have a purpose', or 'to will deliberately'. There is a note of delight here. It may be translated "*No-one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son is pleased to reveal Him.*" It is Jesus' delight to reveal the Father to whomever He wills.

If you know your Bible then you will not find this language strange. The earliest books and chapters are full of this kind of talk. God chose one man, Abraham. God chose Isaac, and Jacob and through him God chose a whole people, Israel. It was not that these people were special, but that God freely set His love on them. Deuteronomy 7v6 -8: *'For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you.'* God has always chosen His people.

Now Jesus, God the Son, has come. His first choices were from Israel – the apostles; but His commission to them was to go and make disciples from every people-group. He is now choosing people from every tribe, language, and culture to know the Father.

For many of us, the idea of being chosen takes a while to sink in. Charles Spurgeon was the mightiest preacher of his generation. In his autobiography he remembers the moment, as a young man, when it dawned on him that Christ had been the one who had chosen him, before ever he had chosen Christ. *“When I was coming to Christ, I thought I was doing it all myself, and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me. I do not think the young convert is at first aware of this. .. One week night, when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the preacher’s sermon. The thought struck me, “How did you come to be a Christian?” I sought the Lord. “But how did you come to seek the Lord?” The truth flashed across my mind in a moment – I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to make me seek Him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked, “How came I to pray?” I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. “How came I to read the Scriptures?” I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that He was the Author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me, and from that doctrine, I have not departed to this day, and I desire to make this my constant confession. “I ascribe my change wholly to God.”* (Charles H. Spurgeon. *Autobiography*. Banner of Truth Trust.)

We are chosen! If this is not mystery enough, look at [Ephesians 1v4](#) which explains that this choice is not some spur of the moment decision on God’s part. It is rooted in the eternal purpose of God. *“For he chose us in him (Christ) before the creation of the world”*: Here the verb ‘to choose’ (*‘exelexato’*) means to “select or “pick out” of a group. We find the same word used in Luke 6v13 of Jesus choosing the twelve and in John 15v16: *“You did not choose me, but I chose you.”*

*‘He chose us in him before the creation of the world’*: The object of this selection is said to be “us”! Before creation, in eternity, God chose us in Christ. Even though the world had not been made, man had not fallen, the redeeming work of Christ on the cross had not taken place, and you and I had not been born, we were chosen in Christ.

Don't be surprised if you cannot comprehend this! It would be astonishing if you didn't have questions about it. This truth is a great mystery. We simply must accept that there are some things beyond our limited reason, and which we will never understand fully in this life. Rather than agonise over it - much better to enjoy the mystery and use it as fuel for worship.

## 2. Jesus Reveals

**No-one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.**

Jesus now adds that He must first bring revelation to those He chooses to know the Father. Knowing God is not the fruit of naked reason or philosophy nor of mystical enlightenment. It is not even the outcome of persistent searching - even though seeking God is often involved. **Reveal** here (*'apokalupto'*) means *to disclose, to lay open what has been veiled or covered up*. Jesus says this is something we cannot do ourselves. We cannot unveil God ourselves! Jesus says He is the only one able to do this for us.

Revelation highlights a vital difference between basic Christian belief and Islam. For Muslims the radical "otherness" of God prevents a personal understanding of him and allows only knowledge of his will. One Muslim scholar puts it like this: *"He (Allah) does not reveal himself to anyone in any way. God reveals only his will."* But Jesus claims to reveal the Father Himself! He is God the Son who knows and is known by the Father. Therefore He is able to reveal Him. **No-one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.**

Sometimes we read the most extraordinary stories of Jesus bringing revelation. e.g. Bilquis Sheikh who came to faith in Christ from a Muslim background in Pakistan. Her book called *'I Dared to Call Him Father,'* (Kingsway Publications. 1978) tells the remarkable story of how Jesus opened her eyes.

Jesus has a multitude of ways of bringing revelation. Over recent weeks Liz and I have been in India. We met one couple in Mumbai who work among AIDS and HIV sufferers, showing God's compassion and sharing the good news of Jesus. Of the 52 people they have cared for, 22 have already died; yet 15 of these came to faith in Christ before they died, (14 of them were Hindus). One of these men had rung them saying he had woken at 7.0 am that day to find a man in white at the foot of his bed who simply said "I love you", and then he disappeared. The man knew it had been Jesus. Days later he died, having had a revelation of the love of Christ.

There are so many stories like these. But at the heart of every story is the gospel. Jesus chooses to reveal the Father through demonstrations of His love and the preaching of the cross and the resurrection and the call to repent and believe. Romans 10.13-15: *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"*

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So, Jesus chooses and reveals. But as we close we need to ask: "Who does He choose to reveal the Father to?" And what is the basis for His choice? Is it a random business? Is it based on favouritism?

There is a clue in the previous two verses of this chapter. **vv 25,26** *“At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.”* Do you see it? God chooses the least likely candidates. You might think that the rich, the famous, the intellectual giants, and the powerful would be prime candidates. Not at all! This is God’s topsy-turvy Kingdom. He turns the world’s ways on their head. God chose the weakest and most insignificant people in choosing Israel! Jesus chose a motley crew in the twelve apostles! So He chooses the most unlikely people now.

We see exactly this in 1 Corinthians 1v26-31. The apostle Paul writes: *‘Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are, so that no-one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”‘*

You and I know the Father because Jesus chose us to know Him. But it is not because of anything attractive or worthwhile in us. On the contrary it is because we are foolish, powerless, puny, ordinary, weak, lowly, laughable. In fact we are *‘the things that are not’* i.e. non-entities!

Notice the Scripture says *“not many”* wise, influential and of noble birth. That means there are some! But each one will still come like a little child. (Matthew 18v3; Mark 10v17-27) There is no room for pride and posturing.

No wonder Jesus issues this invitation: **Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.** (Matth.11v28) Those who are chosen are still invited. But this is an invitation to unlikely candidates: the weary and burdened, the vulnerable, the desperate, the humble. *“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”.* (Matthew 5v3) If you are here this morning feeling just like this, and aware of your need of Christ for the very first time, then perhaps He is knocking on your door.

One of the most famous Pre-Raphaelite paintings is “The Light of the World” by Holman Hunt. His painting is based on Rev.3v20, and Jesus’ words *“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”* Hunt painted several versions of this picture, but when one of them was cleaned these words were found written in the artist’s hand on the reverse of the canvas: *“Forgive me Jesus, for keeping you waiting so long.”*

**John Wilthew . March 2007.**