

## Q. Does Matthew 23:37 say that Jesus wanted to save all Jerusalem but Jerusalem refused?

A. In Matthew 23:37 Jesus says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Many think this is saying that God wanted to give grace to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but they refused it. But a careful examination of what Jesus said shows that this is not the case.

Notice that Jesus addresses Jerusalem, saying that He would "have gathered thy children" and "ye would not." He does not say, I would have gathered you and ye would not. He also does not say, I would have gathered thy children and they would not. He says, I would have gathered thy children and ye would not. In other words, Jerusalem was attempting to hinder Christ's gathering what Jesus called its children. More plainly, Christ's preaching and healing ministry attracted great multitudes. Among these multitudes, there were people who, like children, were humble and who listened to and believed what He said (see Matthew 18:3-4; Luke 18:17). They wanted to come to Jesus. But the civil and religious leaders of Jerusalem, whom Jesus simply referred to as Jerusalem, were attempting to hinder this.

This verse does not say that the people were resisting God's grace or even that the leaders actually succeeded in hindering the people from receiving God's grace. It does not concern grace but only Christ's external ministry. It merely says that Christ in His ministry was calling His elect people to Himself as a hen gathers her chicks, but the leaders were attempting to prevent this. It does not say that the authorities in Jerusalem were thwarting God's will by their action, which was one of the things God used to condemn them according to His will. Nevertheless, despite the attempt by the leaders to stop Jesus' ministry, all of God's elect whom God wanted to hear and believe did hear and believe and were saved. Additionally, this Scripture perhaps shows Jesus' human disappointment in the leaders and His sorrow over their impending doom (verse 38; notice Luke 19:37-44).