

## "MORE TOLERABLE FOR SODOM IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT."

– FEB. 27. – MATT. 11:20-30. –

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." – Matt. 11:28.

OUR LORD'S many miracles in Capernaum and vicinity during the period of his residence there had apparently but slight effect upon the masses of the people – those who heard him gladly, and who heartily espoused his cause, were comparatively few. But the upbraiding mentioned in this lesson was not in the form of a tirade of scolding and abuse: it was a simple statement of facts respecting their indifference to the privileges and opportunities which God had presented to them, and the sure punishment which lay before them in consequence. The punishment would not be merely for their lack of interest in the Kingdom promised, for that was a favor, and the rejection of a favor need not of itself imply vengeance against the indifferent on the part of the one whose favors were declined: but their rejection implied more than this, for altho still professing to desire the Kingdom, they were evidently unready to receive it on the only conditions on which God was pleased to offer it; and this inability indicated a condition of heart seriously out of harmony with God – a wicked, sinful condition: hence, the offer of the Kingdom and their inability to receive it on God's terms proved that they were so sinful, so alienated from God, that very evidently they would be worthy of serious punishment, not for rejecting the favor of the Kingdom, but for the sinful conditions which hindered their acceptance of it.

By way of illustrating the degree of their hardness of heart, our Lord compared them with people of other cities, which they themselves recognized as very wicked, and whose overthrow was recognized as a divine judgment because of that wickedness. The comparison was much to the disadvantage of the Jews, and was

calculated to arouse their fears that, after all, the boastings of their religious classes of their holiness and piety, were probably only empty hypocrisies when judged by the Lord's standard – love for truth and righteousness. Our Lord began by comparing Chorazin and Bethsaida, cities of Israel, with Tyre and Sidon, two Gentile cities on the Mediterranean seacoast. He assured his hearers that even less teaching and miracles performed in the Gentile cities would have led their people to repentance, whereas, the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida gave no sign that they could be brought to repentance by any amount of teaching and miracles. Divine judgment would, therefore, rest most heavily upon those who had enjoyed the greater privileges, and who, because of *hardness of heart*, had failed to utilize them.

Then, coming to Capernaum, the city which he had made his home, and which had thus been specially favored – "exalted unto heaven" in the matter of privileges and opportunities – he declares that it shall be brought down to hades, – to death, the grave. The reason for this is stated, namely, – the mighty works should have led to repentance, would have led to repentance, had not the people been very perverse at heart. To convince them of their deplorable condition, our Lord compares them to the people of Sodom, and assures them that they are far worse than were the people of Sodom, whom they despised, and whom God judged to be unworthy to further enjoy the present life, raining down upon them destruction, fire and brimstone. Our Lord's assurance that the Sodomites, if blessed with similar opportunities to those granted to the people of Capernaum, would have repented and would not have been destroyed, naturally leads us to inquire, Why this partiality on God's part? why withhold from Sodom privileges and opportunities which would have led to its repentance, and why grant these privileges and opportunities to a people so unworthy of them as those of Capernaum proved themselves to be?

These questions are unanswerable from the standpoint of all the popular theologies of to-day – orthodox and heterodox. They are explainable only from the standpoint of the Bible and its plan of the

ages rightly understood. From this quarter we see that the Sodomites were not really on trial for eternal life in their day. They merely enjoyed an experience with the evil side of existence, but making so poor a use of it as they did, they were cut off from their privileges as a type, example, or illustration of the fact that those who willingly do wickedness shall ultimately be cut off from all of God's favors and blessings. However, the Sodomites only enjoyed and lost the remnant of Adamic life, already forfeited. Like others, they were born under condemnation of death: they never enjoyed any of the blessings or opportunities which Christ's death as a great "ransom for all" has secured for all mankind – namely, a hope of a future life and an opportunity or [R2267 : page 60] trial for its attainment. The sin of Capernaum, therefore, was not only a sin against a greater light, but since it was Christ the true light himself who was making the offer to them, their rejection of him much more resembled the condition of wicked rebellion against God that would lead to the second death, than did the conduct of the Sodomites.

But the people of Chorazin, while greatly privileged above others, had not yet enjoyed all the privileges and opportunities which God designs shall be given. Their misuse of their opportunities brought against them our Lord's censure and his declaration of the destruction of their city, as a judgment against them, just as Sodom had been destroyed as a sentence against it. Nevertheless, our Lord intimates clearly and distinctly another trial still future, for the people of Capernaum as well as for the people of Sodom – a future "day of judgment" or trial.

Verse 24. In the future judgment, our Lord declares that the Sodomites will have a better standing and be more likely to pass satisfactorily the divine inspection, than the Capernaumites. That judgment day, as we have elsewhere seen,\* will be the Millennial day or age, in which all the families of the earth will be judged (tried for eternal life) by the Christ, Head and body, the "little flock," the Kingdom class. Our Lord who will be the Head Judge at that time has

already declared in these words that the trial will not be intolerable for the Capernaumites, but will be "*more tolerable*" for the Sodomites, in that they had evidenced already that, notwithstanding their wickedness, they were not so hard-hearted, so calloused against divine grace.

[\\*MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. I., Chap. 8.](#)

This reference to the Sodomites shows conclusively the divine purpose, as elsewhere plainly stated, namely, that all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth – to be judged, to be tried, whether or not they will accept the grace of God in Christ Jesus, or reject it. This is the inevitable conclusion, because, as our Lord declares, as it is recorded in Genesis, none of the Sodomites escaped the destruction, "It rained down fire from heaven and *destroyed them all;*" hence, if they are to stand up in judgment with the people of Chorazin, and be found in a more tolerable condition than they, it must be as a result of an awakening of the dead, the very result which the Scriptures inform us has been assured by our Redeemer's sacrifice for all. In this connection note also [Ezek. 16:48-55,60-63.](#)

### **IT WAS HIDDEN FROM THEM.**

Why did not the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum believe on the Lord Jesus? Why did not his teachings and miracles convince them? The Apostle Paul answers the question, saying, "The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not" ([2 Cor. 4:4](#)), and our Lord Jesus' words are in harmony with this, for, after upbraiding the people as above, he rendered thanks to God nevertheless, that his gospel was hidden from many, the wise and the prudent and the self-satisfied, and revealed unto "babes" – the honest-hearted, the unsophisticated. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

To the majority of people, misunderstanding the divine plan of the ages, our Lord's prayer here recorded must seem strange indeed. They cannot see how or why he should thank God that some could not and did not receive his message. It is utterly impossible to harmonize such a statement with the common, but unscriptural, false views, that the blinded people of Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, Tyre, Sidon and Sodom, had gone or were going straight to a place of eternal torment. Had such been the case, our Lord could never have said, I thank thee, Father, that thou hast hidden these things from them: rather he would have entreated the Father for the opening of the eyes of their blinded understandings, for the immediate binding of Satan that he should blind and deceive the people no more: and he would have been excusable for making frantic efforts in harmony with such a prayer; just as some to-day are entirely excusable for the frantic and unscriptural efforts which they make in their endeavor to have the blinded minds of to-day recognize our Master.

But all such efforts and prayers would be vain, because God has a definitely fixed plan, respecting this great work which he is accomplishing amongst men. In accordance with that plan, the present time is merely for the selection of the Kingdom class: and because the wise and prudent and self-satisfied of the present time, are not the class which the Lord wishes for his Kingdom, therefore Satan is permitted to blind them to the truth, because of their unfitness for it. But God is finding the very class which he desires to find, meek and poor in spirit, to be heirs with Christ in the Kingdom; and these, "babes" so far as human craft and policy are concerned, are kept from the Adversary's [R2268 : page 60] blinding influences, and on the contrary have the truth revealed to them; – "They shall all be taught of God."

Our Lord did not want to receive any except those whom the Father drew to him, "No man cometh unto me except the Father which sent me draw him, and whosoever cometh unto me [drawn by the Father] I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:44.) This is the sense

of verse 27. "All [that come unto me] are given to me by my Father, and no one can recognize the Son except by the [aid of the] Father, neither recognizes **[R2268 : page 61]** any man the Father, except by the [aid of the] Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him."

The class that the Father and the Son unitedly are seeking during this Gospel age, are a class who feel oppressed of the Devil, oppressed by sin, and who desire the great Deliverer and his salvation. Such "babes," and from the human standpoint foolish, are invited to accept Jesus; to believe in him as their Redeemer, and to follow in his footsteps as their guide: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." The rest and peace which the Lord gives are not entirely, nor sometimes at all, physical rest and earthly peace. This, he himself declares, saying, "My peace I give unto you, *not as the world giveth.*" The peace which our Lord gives is a rest of heart, a trust, a confidence – based not upon things that are seen, which are temporal, transitory, unreliable, but based upon things that are not seen, the eternal things which can be grasped only with the arms of faith and seen only with the eye of faith; but here is rest and here is peace, such as the poor troubled world knows not of, and cannot understand. "Godliness with contentment is great gain."

Our Lord calls us to freedom from sin, and from Satan, the great task-master; and the Apostle urges us to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ makes free" indeed; and yet it is a great mistake that some make, to suppose that there are no restraints or limitations upon the "new creatures in Christ Jesus:" our Redeemer has a yoke and a burden for all who become his followers. (Verses 29,30.) The yoke, however, is easy for those whom it *fits*; and with that yoke the burden is light. The yoke is a self-imposed one, very different, therefore, from the yoke of Satan, which is fastened upon his slaves, the galling yoke of sin, attached to which is a heavy penalty or burden, – sorrow, death. Those who accept Christ and whom he sets free from Satan's yoke are invited to "take" the yoke of Christ and to put it upon themselves. This means *consecration*, the binding of ourselves, our time, our influence,

means, opportunities, all, to the Lord's service. The burden it brings might be esteemed a heavy one by some: it is esteemed very heavy by the world who know not of the counterbalancing peace and joy and blessing. Our burden means, sometimes, the loss of all earthly things which we have held most sacred and most dear; yet even such a burden is light by reason of the joy and peace of the Lord counterbalancing it. As the Apostle Paul expressed it, we may well count all our losses, all our crosses, our burdens, as light afflictions, because of the excellency of the knowledge of divine favors and blessings which we have received through Christ Jesus our Lord. Yea, we count all things that we have sacrificed for the Lord and his cause but as loss and dross that we may win Christ and joint-heirship with him in his Kingdom.

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