

MORE TOLERABLE FOR SODOM
- MATTHEW 11:20-30. - APRIL 24. -

Golden Text: – "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." – V. 28.

IN the cities of Capernaum, "his own city," Bethsaida, and Chorazin, situated on the Sea of Galilee, the majority of our Lord's notable miracles were performed. Nevertheless, even in these cities, the majority rejected his Messiahship. Today's study tells how the Great Teacher arraigned the people of those cities for their unbelief, declaring that if the mighty works done in them had been done in the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon they would have repented. Hence it will be more tolerable for the people of those cities than for the people of Capernaum in the Day of Judgment.

We must rid our minds of the old and fallacious thought that the Day of Judgment will be a period of twenty-four hours. We must see that from God's standpoint a day simply signifies a period or an epoch; as, for instance, a twenty-four hour day, a forty-year day in the wilderness, and the thousand-year day of Christ, the Millennium. The latter is the day referred to in our text as the Day of Judgment. Only a few of mankind have their Day of Judgment or trial now. These few are specially blessed with eyes of understanding to see and with ears of understanding to appreciate the special privileges of this present time. The great mass of mankind are thoroughly blind and deaf to the spiritual things connected with the present calling and election of the Church.

Respecting these the Master thanked the Father, "Because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, [R4599 : page 133] Father;

for so it seemed good in thy sight." (Vs. 25,26.) The Great Teacher did not mean that he was glad, thankful, that his message was hidden from the majority, that they might slide down into eternal torture in darkness. Oh, no! Surely not! He did mean that he appreciated the Father's wisdom in not allowing any but those of proper condition of heart to see and clearly understand the present call of the Church. For the uncontrite of heart to see, to understand, would mean two things: –

(1) They would oppose God's Plan the more;

(2) They would come under greater responsibility themselves.

Hence we with the Master may be glad of the wisdom displayed in the Divine arrangement of hiding certain features of the great Plan of the Ages from all except the "very elect." "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear (reverence) him and he will show them his Covenant." – Psa. 25:14.

"Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven (highly exalted in privilege and opportunity), shalt be brought down to hell (to hades, to the grave, to destruction); for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day." (V. 23.) The reason is clear. The people of Capernaum were evidently harder-hearted than the people of Sodom and, from the Lord's standpoint, were more blameworthy. What shall we say, then, of our day of still greater privilege in many respects – Bibles in every home, preaching in every city, education in every family? What might not the Lord reasonably expect of us?

MORE TOLERABLE FOR SODOM

We have already referred to a Day of Judgment as the thousand-year day of Christ's Millennial Kingdom, when the

people of Capernaum with those of Tyre and Sidon and Sodom and Gomorrah and all the other cities and nations, except the elect Church of this age, will be placed on trial – for life everlasting or death everlasting.

According to our Lord's words present knowledge, great or small, brings its proportion of responsibility. The greater the favor of God enjoyed now, the greater will be our responsibility then. Evidently this means surprises for the world. Not only the Sodomites, but many of the heathen who have thus far enjoyed little or nothing of God's grace, will be in a more favorable condition as respects the prospects of the future than some who are now richly favored but are neglecting their privileges. Our Lord intimates that the Judgment or trial of the Millennium will be tolerable, not intolerable, for the people of Capernaum and more tolerable for the people of Sodom. How much more reasonable this is than the unscriptural nonsense that was once taught us by our well-meaning, deluded forefathers, who made the various sectarian creeds that are now causing trouble, and who then burned each other at the stake because of differences of opinion respecting these creeds and claimed that in so doing they were copying God, who was torturing the people of Tyre and Sidon and Capernaum and Sodom and hundreds of millions of others, heathen and civilized!

How seriously we have all misunderstood and misrepresented the Gospel message! Let us turn to the prophecy referred to by our Lord and note this. In Ezekiel's prophecy, 16:49-61, the Lord rehearsed in advance the greater wickedness of Israel than of her neighboring sister peoples, Samaria and Sodom, and tells that nevertheless he will restore all three of them, bringing them again from the tomb and establishing his Covenant with them through Messiah in the Millennial Age. Let us remember, too, that our Lord made this promise of restitution (Acts 3:19-21) through the very Sodomites who were destroyed

by fire which came down from heaven. (Luke 7:29,30.) They were temporarily destroyed by fire as an example or illustration of the absolute annihilation, destruction, which ultimately will come upon all willful sinners, the Second Death. But before any will be thus cut off from all hope he must be brought to a clear knowledge of the Truth and have a full trial in the great and glorious day of Judgment, which St. Paul tells us God has provided and in which the saints of this age, the Bride of Christ, with her Lord, will share in the work of judging.

The Father hath delivered all of his great work into the hands of the Lord Jesus, and only by knowing him can we know the Father in the proper sense, in the intimate sense, because the Son, as the Great Teacher, reveals the Father to all who are pupils in his School.

Our study closes with our Lord's invitation to those who now have the hearing ear and seeing eye of obedient faith. To these, life's experiences, sin's burdens, and general unrest are preparations for the Divine message, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest." Those invited must expect to be servants and to wear the "yoke" of obedience to the Divine will – the yoke of Christ, the service of Christ. To be successful they must learn of him, walk in his steps. They must be meek and lowly in heart. Such, and such only, will find his yoke an easy one and his burden a light one – much lighter than the yoke and burden of sin. Only such will find rest unto their souls now and be prepared to enter into the heavenly rest as "joint-heirs" with Christ in his heavenly Kingdom, which is shortly to bless and judge the world.

=====