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PREACHING THE KINGDOM

– *MATT. 9:35 TO 10:15.* – *SEPTEMBER 8.* –

Text: "He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me." – Matt. 10:40.

WE HAVE MORE about the Kingdom in the study appointed for today. Not only did Jesus preach the Kingdom, as our lesson says, but realizing that the Harvest work of the Jewish Age was great, He sent forth His twelve Apostles two and two – to preach what? Hark! He said, "As you go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

As the Savior cast out devils and healed the sick, not with the view of doing a restitution work and general healing, but to allow the people to hear the Message which He preached, and to illustrate the healing and restoring work which His Kingdom will do in its appointed time, so also He gave the same power to His Apostles, for the reason that He gave them the same Message of the Kingdom to proclaim.

He told them that the Harvest was plenteous and that the laborers were few, and intimated that it was their privilege to note this fact and to be all the more energetic because of the great "field" and the few to reap it; but in the meantime to "pray the Lord of the Harvest to send forth more laborers." That is to say, He wished them to feel a measure of responsibility in the work, even though He Himself was the Lord of that Harvest, and even though He was the responsible One. So the Master would have every one of us feel a deep interest in the [R5076 : page 247] Harvest work now in process, in the end of this Age, and similarly to pray to Him for more laborers, in the similar proclamation, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

These messengers of the Kingdom were not to go to the Gentiles, but merely to "the lost sheep of the House of Israel," said our Lord. Why? Did He not love the Gentiles? Was the Lord Jesus prejudiced so

that He cared only for His own nationality? No; the answer is a different one. God's Covenant promised the blessed privilege of the Messiahship to Abraham's Seed. Jesus was the Seed of Abraham in particular and the Messiah. But God had another feature in mind in connection with that Messiahship, of which Abraham did not know; namely, that He would have associated with Messiah in the Kingdom others who would share His glory, honor and immortality. This blessed privilege, which Abraham could not have fully understood, God nevertheless fulfilled to Abraham's children, as fully as though He had particularly stipulated it in the promise. God would keep the very spirit of His engagement as well as its letter. Hence, no favor could go to the Gentiles until after natural Israel had received the opportunity and used it as far as they would.

HARVESTING THEN AND NOW

Another reason why the blessing should not have been given to the Gentiles was that it was to be a harvesting work, and not plowing, harrowing, nor sowing, which had not been done with the Gentiles, but only with the Jews. It was appropriate, therefore, that the Harvest, which belonged to the Jews, should be confined to them. What was done for the Gentiles was the seed-sowing, as represented in the parable of the Wheat and Tares.

But now we are in the Harvest of the Gospel Age. It is not the Jews that are being harvested now, nor the heathen, nor the world in general. The reaping is to be done amongst those who have received the seed-sowing – the reaping work belongs to Christendom – to whatever part of mankind the Gospel Message has been made known and wherever received and professed. This, therefore, is an intimation to us that the Lord would now have the harvesting done chiefly amongst those who profess to be His people, nominal Spiritual Israel. The Trumpet is to be blown in Zion, to awaken those who are at ease in Zion.

Jesus specially instructed the reapers of that Harvest that they should go forth fully trusting to Divine providence. They were not

commissioned to beg nor to take up collections, so far as the records show. They assumed therefore that they were merely to accept what might be voluntarily tendered. If they were not hospitably received they were to consider it the Lord's will that they should go elsewhere. They were sent to search out the worthy ones; they should keep this in mind. In going from house to house, a prayer should be in their hearts, if not upon their lips, that if there were worthy ones there the peace of God, and their peace, might be there. If not, they were to take their blessing with them to bestow it upon those more worthy, as they should find them. "Whoever will not receive you and hear your words, when you depart out of that house," or out of that city, "shake off the dust from your feet."

"MORE TOLERABLE FOR SODOM"

Jesus declared that in the Day of Judgment it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for the city refusing to receive His representatives. What does that mean – "*more tolerable*"? It implies that the treatment will be tolerable in any event. But why more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah and others in the Day of Judgment?

It was Jesus' declaration that, aside from a saintly few who received His Message gladly, the remainder of the people of that time were more hardened and more blameworthy in God's sight than were the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, whose sin was of a different kind. Let us notice that feature. The sins of Sodom were certainly grievous in the sight of God and all good people. But, think of it! the sin of carelessness in respect to the glorious Message of the Kingdom is in God's sight an indication of a still meaner condition of heart, of a still more wicked person, one of whom there is less hope of an eventual salvation.

The Sodomites mentioned by Jesus were not so illuminated as those living in His day, yet He declares, "Fire rained down from heaven and destroyed them all." (Luke 17:29.) And that took place nearly twenty-five centuries before Jesus' birth, yet He declares that those

Sodomites [R5076 : page 248] had not up to that time been judged – their judgment was still future; and, "In the Day of Judgment, it will be more tolerable" for them than for the people of Bethsaida and Chorazin. Sodom sinned grievously, but they had little light, practically no knowledge of God.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

But why should the Sodomites have a Day of Judgment at all? Were they not judged, condemned and destroyed? Oh, yes; but *then*, all men, Adam and all of his race, were judged and condemned. Those Sodomites were condemned to death before they were born, as are all of Adam's children – born in sin, "shapen in iniquity." The death penalty which came upon Adam reached to them as it has reached to us. The only thing that came upon the Sodomites specially, in addition to what comes upon all mankind, was that they died violent deaths, probably accompanied by great sufferings.

In this blotting out as a Divine punishment, the Apostle tells us, they were made an example of the ultimate doom that will come upon all who reject God's grace and die the Second Death. (2 Pet. 2:6.) However, the Sodomites and all of Adam's posterity are included in the Redemption work of Jesus. Hence they are no more dead than Abraham, but merely sleeping with their fathers, as Abraham sleeps with his fathers, waiting the glorious morning, when the Redeemer of Adam and his race shall take to Himself His great power, shall establish His Kingdom, bind Satan, glorify His Church, and begin His work of blessing the world.

The world's blessing will consist of an awakening from the tomb, and there will be an opportunity to the Sodomites, as well as the people in Jesus' day, to rise out of their sinful and fallen condition, and, if they will, to return to full harmony with God and have everlasting life. In that glorious Judgment Day of a thousand years (2 Pet. 3:7,8) the Sodomites will find it easier to make progress than will those who repudiated the message of Jesus and the Apostles. However fallen and

degraded the Sodomites were in some respects, their hearts and consciences were less seared than those who refused God's Message.

