

THE GOSPEL CALL AND ITS RESPONSIBILITIES

BIBLE TEXT : Matthew 11:20-30

LESSON 82 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28)

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Matthew 11:20-30 (KJV)

²⁰ Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

²¹ Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

²² But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

²³ And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

²⁴ But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

²⁵ At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

²⁶ Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.

²⁷ All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*.

²⁸ Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Condemned for Their Deeds

The judgments of God are just as sure as His mercies. God pronounced doom on those who had seen His mighty works and had heard His words but did not repent. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Even after Jesus spoke a warning, we do not read of a great revival as there was in Nineveh. Jonah had cried against that city because of its wickedness, as God told him to do. The people sought God and repented. It was more than just in words, for we read that God saw their works and spared them.

Jesus mentioned three cities especially in which He had worked wonders. He reproved these cities for not repenting; even more than reproving, He said, "Woe unto thee." So complete was His judgment upon these cities that today their exact location is uncertain, other than a general location on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Chorazin is not mentioned elsewhere. In Bethsaida had been the homes of Peter, Andrew, and Philip. How glad we are that some people of that city believed Jesus, repented, and were saved, for Jesus condemned those who lived there when He condemned the cities. The people were to be destroyed, not just the cities. He said that in the day of judgment it would be more endurable for the people of Sidon and Tyre, ancient cities against whom the prophets had spoken, than for the people of these cities.

Judgment

Sidon. and Tyre had been important for their commerce and their wealth, but sin brought the judgment of God, and they lost their glory.

They not only lost their wealth and influence in the world, but history tells us that these cities were the victims of their enemies to such an extent that even today they have not recovered their prosperity.

Thus they have suffered much for their sins, but the final judgment has not yet been given: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, ... And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: . and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Revelation 20:11-15).

As sinful and wicked as Sidon and Tyre were, Jesus said that they would have repented if they had seen the mighty works that Jesus did in Chorazin and Bethsaida. They would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. This expression is used much in the Bible. It was often an outward sign of deep repentance and forsaking of sin. Today we repent with bitter tears and godly sorrow. Repentance is confessing our sins and turning our backs upon them. Anything else is not true repentance.

Light or Darkness

Jesus had made His home at Capernaum. We read in the fourth chapter of Matthew that Jesus left Nazareth and dwelt in

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

³⁰ For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.

Capernaum to fulfill the prophecy: "The people which sat in darkness saw great light." Jesus gave the people a chance to be saved. He worked many miracles, taught the Word, and warned them, but they chose their own way which led to destruction. They could have received the light but they preferred the darkness.

Capernaum had much prosperity, and the greatest privileges; but oh, the doom that awaited her! Jesus said that Sodom would have remained if it had had the privileges of Capernaum. Sodom was that wicked city in which Lot dwelt — the city which for its great iniquity was destroyed by fire and brimstone sent by God.

In Jude we read that the people of Sodom were set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Now if it will be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment, what will it be for Capernaum!

Doers, Not Hearers Only

Just as Sodom is set forth as an example, so these cities are warnings for us. Many people sit in the meetings, receive light from the Word of God, hear the testimonies, read Gospel literature, but still walk in darkness. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

Many people hear the Word of God but are not doing it. Some are just "putting off" their day of salvation. Others try to justify themselves, thinking that they are "not so bad." We will not be judged by what we think is right, but by the Word of God. "He that judgeth me is the Lord" (I Corinthians 4:4). It may be that the things they have omitted or failed to do will keep them out of Heaven. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37). "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:20). "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). These are only some of the instructions given in the Bible. If one would fail to do these things, he could not expect to enjoy the blessings of God's children. Some may think that God will make an allowance for them, but there is nothing in the Word upon which to base such an opinion. "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34).

It is a serious thing to have the light of the Gospel and not walk in it. This lesson is given to show man his responsibility to God for the Gospel call. It is for the Christian as well as for the sinner, for we are accountable not only for ourselves but for others, too. Jesus, in giving the Sermon on the Mount, said, "Ye are the light of the world" and "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Every child of God must walk in the light as it is given to him. As he receives more light, he walks in it, and thus grows spiritually, just as a child grows naturally. A baby could see the milk, handle it and even carry it around, but unless he drinks it and digests it, the milk will do him no good. But as a baby takes the milk and makes it a part of himself, he begins to grow, and finally the baby can eat other foods, too. So it is with a babe in Christ: as he receives the Word of God and makes its teachings a part of his life, he will grow until he becomes more useful to the Gospel. God will teach and show His children precious promises in the Bible; He will give them an understanding of the Word that puzzles the learned people of the world. -

An Invitation

As Jesus spoke these warnings, He gave a world-wide call: "Come unto me." It was, and still is, to the "whosoever will." His invitation is different from those of the earth, which do not include everyone. In order to join the army of our country, a young man must be a certain age and a certain height. Some schools require the pupils to have certain grades before they can enroll. Many times, whether one becomes a member of a club or not depends on such things as health, race, size, money, education, talent, skill, work, experience, and other things. But none of these things are considered when one becomes a member of the body of Christ.

Not all people work, so far as this world is concerned, but this is speaking of spiritual things. Those who are not saved are toiling under a burden of sin, but through Christ there is peace and rest to the soul.

Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you." A yoke could be called a harness. It is the connecting piece which usually binds together two animals; but in this case, a Christian is yoked together with Jesus. The yoke is a mark or a sign of service. It shows that he is no longer a servant of mammon but a servant of Christ. He is yoked together with Him, working for Him. We are told that a yoke makes it easier to pull or carry a great burden. As two stand side by side, the yoke is put across their shoulders, and together they move the load. Perhaps you have tried to carry a bundle in your arms, only to find your arms ached and you soon had to put it down. But when that same bundle was put upon your shoulders, it was much easier to carry. Or maybe you have tried to pull a coaster wagon with a heavy load. Then a rope was put on the wagon and across your shoulders and chest. As you leaned against it your weight could move a bigger load than just pulling with your arms. In the same manner, Jesus gives to a Christian a yoke to ease his burden. He will find that Christ not only carries the heavier part, but makes His yoke easy and His burden light.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why did Jesus upbraid these cities?
- 2 Name some persons in the Bible who repented in sackcloth and ashes.
- 3 Why did God destroy Sodom? How?
- 4 Who are babes in Christ? How do they grow?
- 5 What man in the Old Testament is a good example of being meek?
- 6 How can one find rest for his soul?