

RECEPTION VERSUS REJECTION

God's people are responsible for relaying the message, but what people do with it is on them! Jesus sent out his disciples on a specialized ministry with this instruction.

Matthew 10:12–13 (NKJV)

12 And when you go into a household, greet it.

13 If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.

The greeting here was essentially the traditional Jewish “Shalom” greeting meaning “Peace”. Luke 10:5 gives the actual words as being “Peace to this house”. Shalom has a deep meaning of total well-being. It is the idea of everything as being well or as it ought to be. This was a peace blessing to be pronounced upon the household. Perhaps it was similar to the priestly blessing found in Numbers 6.

Numbers 6:24–26 (NKJV)

24 “The Lord bless you and keep you;

25 The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you;

26 The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.” ’

This peace greeting was very fitting in view of their “kingdom ministry” because PEACE is associated with the coming of the Messianic Age (cf. Isa. 9:6-7; 52:7; Micah 5:5; Nah. 1:15; Zech. 9:10).

Isaiah 52:7 (NKJV)

7 How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good things, Who proclaims salvation, Who says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”

If the household ended up rejecting the gospel of the kingdom then they would be seen as unworthy of such a blessing.

“It is not that such a household would have a blessing and then lose it, but that the offer of peace was never received and is therefore withdrawn. The greatest blessing of God is worthless for a person who will not accept it. God's gospel is offered to all the world, and it has power to save all the world, but it is powerless to save or help even a single person who will not have Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (cf. Jn. 5:40).” – **John MacArthur**

Matthew 10:14 (NKJV)

14 And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet.

For those who refused to receive or hear the “kingdom message” the apostles were to shake the dust off their feet as they were leaving. The symbolism involved here was very clear to the Jews.

A pious Jew upon returning home from Gentile territory would at the border shake the pagan dust off his clothes and sandals before stepping foot into the holy land. It symbolized two things: 1) It symbolized disassociating oneself from the godless and that you had nothing to do with them or they with you. As such it was a sign of contempt. 2) It symbolized God’s judgment upon those rejecting God’s message (cf. Acts 13:46, 50-51).

Matthew 10:15 (NKJV)

15 Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!

This is really strong! “Assuredly” makes a pronounced emphasis. The “kingdom sign” miracles were such strong evidence that not only was there no excuse, but there was a much greater level of accountability. To whom much light is given, there is much accountability (cf. Lk. 12:48).

Recall back in Genesis 18-19 that in the days of Abraham God wiped Sodom and Gomorrah off the face of the earth by sending consuming fire and brimstone upon them (cf. Gen. 18:23 – 19:28).

Genesis 13:13 (NKJV)

13 But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord.

Genesis 18:20 (NKJV)

20 And the Lord said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave,

It is hard to imagine a greater description of evil than what is given in the inspired Scripture of Sodom and Gomorrah. However, Christ said that those rejecting the kingdom message accompanied by kingdom signs were even more sinful and even more accountable.

This shows us just how horrific and flagrant was Israel’s SIN of rejecting their Messiah!

The judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah was great and it is intended by God to be an enduring example of judgment upon those who in rebellion live ungodly. Sodom had no excuse! They were responsible for the light given to them. Genesis 13:13 says they were “exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD.” Their problem was with the LORD!

2 Peter 2:6 (NKJV)

6 and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, **making them an example** to those who afterward would live ungodly;

Jude 7 (NKJV)

7 as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, **are set forth as an example**, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Jesus repeatedly made this point that those who rejected the kingdom sign miracle evidence were especially accountable.

Matthew 11:23–24 (NKJV)

23 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the **mighty works** which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24 But I say to you that it shall be **more tolerable for the land of Sodom** in the day of judgment than for you.”

To whom much light is given much is required. Sodom was responsible for the moral light given to them and in their rebellion were **set forth as an example**, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. And Jesus said those rejecting the kingdom sign miracles in combination with the kingdom proclamation of the apostles were even more accountable because they had even greater light.

Just think how accountable people are for rejecting the light of the Word of God today. They have the light of creation; they have the light of conscience; they have the light of the OT and what God did to Sodom; they have the light of the NT Scriptures involving the ministry of Christ and the apostles. No wonder the Bible warns about how grave it is to reject the BRIGHT LIGHT of the gospel of Christ.

“Jesus was not speaking of those who are slow to understand or believe but of those who, after hearing a clear testimony of the gospel and seeing dramatic and irrefutable signs of confirmation, continue to resist and oppose.” – **John MacArthur**

Both Hebrews 6 and Hebrews 10 give ominous warning concerning those who reject the privileged light of enlightenment that comes with clearly interacting with the things of God (cf. 2 Thess. 1:8-9; Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-29; 2 Pet. 2:20-21).

The phrase “***more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment***” indicates there will be differing degrees of eternal torment corresponding to the degree of sinfulness in a person.

Revelation 20:12–15 (NKJV)

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the **dead were judged according to their works**, by the things which were written in the books.

13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they **were judged, each one according to his works**.

14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

The kingdom ministry of Christ and of His apostles comes with the greatest level of accountability. The problem was not a lack of evidence. The problem was rebel hearts that rejected the obvious evidence. And those rebel hearts are fully accountable for the GREAT LIGHT that was presented to them.

“God utterly destroyed those two ancient cities with brimstone and fire because of their wickedness (Gen. 19:24)...But men and women who are contemptuous of the gracious, saving gospel of Jesus Christ face an even worse fate in the day of judgment (cf. Matt. 24:50-51; 25:14-46; 2 Thess. 1:5-10).” – **John MacArthur**

One of the things that stands out in this text is that these people were **responsible right there and then** for the decision they were making. Right then and there, if they did not RECEIVE the messengers of Christ, they

shook the dust off from their feet against them. Right then and there it was determined they were more accountable than Sodom and Gomorrah.

Hebrews 2:3 says, “***how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?***” And the answer is we won’t escape!

2 Corinthians 6:1–2 (NKJV)

1 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

2 For He says: “In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.