

MORE LIGHT – MORE ACCOUNTABILITY!

(Matt. 11:23-24)

If people just saw more miracles, they would believe – right? NOT NECESSARILY! Where Jesus did MOST of His miracles, the response was minimal! Note the severe rebuke of Jesus!

Matthew 11:23 (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.

Capernaum was the “adopted” hometown of Jesus where He put His ministry base of operations after He was rejected in His hometown of Nazareth (cf. Matt. 4:13; 9:1). Thus, Capernaum had a great amount of privileged light.

Galilee, where Capernaum was situated, was called “Galilee of the Gentiles,” and here is what the Scripture prophetically said about it.

Isaiah 9:1–2 (NKJV)

1 Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed, As when at first He lightly esteemed The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, And afterward more heavily oppressed her, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, **In Galilee of the Gentiles.**

2 The people who walked in darkness Have **seen a great light**; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them **a light has shined.**

This was the light of the Messiah – and no one in Galilee saw this light more brightly than Capernaum – the hometown of Jesus. Many great miracles were performed there as recorded in the gospels (cf. Mt. 8:5-17; 9:2-8, 18-33; Mk. 1:23-28; Jn. 4:46-54).

But Capernaum (generally) had a PRIDE problem. They were too proud to repent. And right here is a common problem. Pride gets in the way of repentance. Repentance and pride are mutually exclusive. True repentance involves humbling yourself before the truth of God.

Jesus said that though they were exalted to heaven (in their own estimation), yet they would be brought down to Hades. Hades is the realm of the dead corresponding to the Hebrew word “sheol” in the OT. And when referring to the lost, it refers to the realm of the damned. Many believe that

the language here alludes to Isaiah 14:15 and the fall of Satan from heaven because of his exalted pride.

Isaiah 14:14–15 (NKJV)

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'

15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.

Capernaum had a devil-like ego, but coming to Christ requires an attitude of humility. Capernaum's exalted ego was going to be brought down to the realm of the damned in Hades.

And then Jesus said, "***if the mighty works which were done in you [Capernaum] had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.***" For the pious Jews so full of religious pride this was the ultimate insult. After all they considered themselves the favored – uniquely blessed and special people of God. And they considered Sodom the worst of the worst in terms of the depth of degradation.

What they failed to realize is that the fuller revelation given in the personalized ministry of the Messiah made them more culpable than the greater sinners in Sodom. That is really saying something.

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**,

The record of Scripture is that Sodom was about as BAD as you can get (cf. Ezek. 16:48). It was proverbial for perverse wickedness! It is infamous in history. It became typical for extreme evil and judgment. When God judged Sodom, it was wiped off the face of the earth to such an extreme that for years people have wondered exactly where it was located. And God intends for the judgment of Sodom to be a lasting warning and lesson for the whole world.

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.

Thus, Sodom is set forth as an enduring example of the destructive judgment of God that is beyond remedy! Not only were they SUDDENLY destroyed physically, but is also set forth as an example of those who suffer the vengeance of eternal hell fire.

As BAD as the wickedness of Sodom was, yet before God the wickedness of rejecting Christ's personal ministry by those who saw it up close and personal is shown to be even WORSE! This was an even greater sin against the Lord. The condemnation here is not for great moral degradation, not for great immorality, not for violence and vice, but simply for not accepting the GREAT REVELATION given in the personal ministry of Jesus Christ.

"Curiously, there is no record that the people of that city ever mocked or ridiculed Jesus, ran Him out of town, or threatened His life. Yet the sin of that city – indifference to Christ – was worse than Sodom's gross wickedness (cf. 10:15)." – **John MacArthur**

Matthew 11:24 (NKJV)

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."

For any Jew with any sense of spirituality at all, this had to be shocking. More tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for God's chosen people. That is shocking! And it just goes to show you the value that God puts on the truth of His Son, and what most offends Him is the rejection of Jesus the Messiah! This is the GREATEST of all sin!

And don't think that because we don't live in the time of Christ's earthly ministry that we are somehow less accountable for the sin of indifference to the truth of Christ. You see, God had a record of Christ's life and ministry written down under inspiration, for which we are totally accountable as we

are made aware of it. There is no getting around it. Those who have access to this GREAT LIGHT have great accountability! (cf. Jn. 12:48)

“It behooves us to remember that our nation has been given more light than that which was given to Capernaum! We live on this side of the cross. We have a completed New Testament. The Holy Spirit has come. Pentecost has come. The church has been born. In “Capernaum’s day the Lord’s mighty works were largely in the sphere of the physical, but in our land spiritual miracles take place every day.” - **John Phillips**

“All three Galilean cities, in spite of their greater “light,” rejected the Messiah, and are today in ruins.” – **The Bible Knowledge Commentary**

Hebrews 10 presents a very comparable sin today by those who have come to the knowledge of the truth but refuse to accept it.

Hebrews 10:26 (NKJV)

26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

Hebrews 10:29 (NKJV)

29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

To willfully reject the KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH is a most serious thing! It was in Jesus' day, and it is today. We can talk all day about the grievous sins of society such as adultery, abortion, and homosexuality, but you want to know what is even more offensive to God? That is being a nice moral or religious person who, in reality, is indifferent to the truth of Christ. That is even more offensive to God. Great light brings with it great accountability!

There were many small towns and villages in Galilee during the time of Christ, but it is believed that there were 4 prominent cities in Galilee: namely Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and Tiberias. Interestingly, Jesus pronounced “woe” against the first three, but not the city of Tiberias.

“What has been the result? The destruction of Chorazin and Bethsaida is so complete that their exact sites are unknown. The location of Capernaum is not positive. Tiberias still stands. This remarkable fulfillment of prophecy is one more evidence of the Savior’s omniscience and the Bible’s inspiration.” – ***William MacDonald***

When we were in Israel, one of my favorite places was the city of Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee. I still remember the sea gulls flying over the sea and the warm, refreshing air. It was a beautiful sight looking out over the Sea of Galilee.

What a lesson: Great privilege – great revelation – great light – result in great accountability. What Jesus said proves true - even historically. The “Woe” of Christ always proves true!

If you know the truth, you are accountable for it! And the more truth you know, the more accountable you are. God demands a proper response. A saving faith response that involves true repentance. God demands a HEART response that receives Christ for Who He is as Lord and Savior!

What is your response?