

Article of the Month
August, 2017

— ***The Sin of Sodom*** —

If we were to ask nearly anyone what Sodom's sins were, we would almost certainly hear about its sexual promiscuity and deviances. In fact, that was a large problem for the inhabitants of that city. This is so much the case that one of the words for sexual deviancy is "sodomy" — named after the city where such things were prevalent.

BUT:

We are often too fast to accept the normal viewpoints of things. While the Bible certainly mentions Sodom's sexual deviances, it is much more explicit in its condemnation of Sodom. When the Lord looked at Sodom, His stated objections to it were quite different from the reputation we normally associate with the residents of Sodom. Note the words of condemnation from God for Sodom (found in Ezekiel 16:49):

*Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom:
She...had arrogance, abundant food, and
careless ease, **but she did not help the poor
and needy.***

This puts Sodom in a very different light. It also makes us reflect on our own society.

"EASIER" FOR SODOM

While Sodom had moral problems, and while they "did not help the poor and needy," Jesus points out that in the end, things will GO BETTER for Sodom than for some of the cities of Israel to whom he witnessed at his first advent. Note his words in Matthew 24:20-24:

*Then he began to reproach the cities in which most
of his miracles were done, because they did not repent.*

*"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if
the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which
occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in
sackcloth and ashes.*

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“Nevertheless I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.

“And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall be brought down to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day.

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

What stunning words are these! Sodom did not believe in God. Capernaum did. Sodom had no relationship with God. Capernaum did; it was in covenant relationship with God. And there is no clue that Capernaum was immoral or that it failed to take care of its poor and needy.

The passage shows clearly that God values RESPONSIBILITY **when we possess light**. Capernaum was enlightened under the Law. Sodom was not. Capernaum saw miracles. Sodom did not. Capernaum’s responsibilities before God were far greater than were Sodom’s. When the judgments of the Millennial Age are in full operation, things will be harder for the Jews of Capernaum than they will be for the deviants of Sodom. We have Jesus’ word for it!

If we are among the informed, we are under far greater judgment responsibilities than those placed on the ignorant — even the deviants — of this world.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

When Jesus refers to the Judgment Day in the above passage, he is referring to a long period of time — “The Thousand Years” referred to in Revelation during which he will restore mankind to perfection and favor with God (Revelation 20:4; II Peter 3:7, 8). This is NOT the traditional ineffectual and absurd rushing of mankind through a 24-hour period when sentence is proclaimed for “heaven” or “hell.” THIS Biblical judgment day takes centuries, and its objective is to judge what mankind WILL DO once he has been brought back from the tomb, has been taught the benefits of righteousness and perfection, and has been given the physical and mental abilities which will allow him to be ABLE to obey and prosper — AND LIVE FOREVER. It will be a period of CHANGE within each individual human being. Thus Jesus can say that it **will be more tolerable** for Sodom than for Capernaum. Capernaum will need to overcome the hard-hearted selfishness and blindness that they had developed pridefully under the Law. Sodom will only have to marvel at the “miracles” of the Kingdom, and they will fall more easily into compliance.

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The important thing to realize here is that judgment will be based on what people DO THEN rather than what they have done in this previous lifetime. On the surface, Sodom was a more corrupt society than Capernaum and, seemingly, should have a HARSHER judgment. But this is only the case if judgment were to be based on THIS LIFE. It isn't! It is to be based on what men's works WILL BE during the Millennial reign of Christ. Poor Capernaum, on the other hand, had, in this life, developed a character — an inner hardness — which will make it more difficult for them to grow in righteousness in the new order of things. This concept changes the traditional views on who gets what kind of judgment! The “bad” people of this life may, indeed, find their judgment-growth process EASIER in the next life than the seemingly “good” people of this life.

“HEAVEN AND HELL”

The passage in Matthew mentions both “heaven” and “hades” when addressing Capernaum. “And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you?” By these words Jesus was telling that city that it could not be trusted to be put in a leadership position. It had corrupted its character to the point where it was unusable to God. The meaning is two-fold: (1) Israel was the first to be offered a place in the Gospel-Age calling into the “Body of Christ.” That calling was “to the Jew FIRST.” If Jews at the first advent had the correct faith needed (some of them *did*), they would have been transferred from Moses (the Law Covenant) into Christ. As it is written, “He came to his own, and his own received him not. But to as many as *did* receive him gave he the power to become the sons of God.” (John 1:11, 12) That, of course, would have given them a spiritual or heavenly resurrection ultimately. They *would have been* (if faithful) “exalted to heaven” as a part of the spiritual “Body of Christ.” But Capernaum, by Jesus' words, was excluded from the opportunity. (2) There is a secondary meaning behind the word “heaven.” It represents a power of religious dominance. Since Israel is to be a blessing nation in the Kingdom, the faithful of that nation will, indeed, be in a position of religious influence for all the world of mankind — thus a kind of “heaven-oriented” power. But Capernaum is likely excluded from this honor also. It was simply wiped off the map — much as Sodom had been — but not in so dramatic a fashion as was Sodom's experience. But the fact is, as Jesus had promised, “You shall be brought down to **“hades.”** *Hades is the condition of oblivion.* When Capernaum disappeared, it was just as gone as was Sodom. It does not exist to this day. The *residents* of Sodom and of Capernaum *will return* in the awakening of the dead. But the cities themselves ceased from functioning. Here is why:

God destroyed both cities, **not** in anger, nor in retribution, nor in punishment, but in kindness to them. He realized that letting them continue in their relentless Godless courses would only further harden their characters and make it more difficult for them to reform in the Kingdom “Judgment Day.” He did them both a favor. Continuation of those societies would have caused new generations in them to develop even more tragically the fatal traits that marked their ancestors. The end of the cities slowed down the development of the abominable character traits.

SUMMARY

While the future judgment for eternal life will be based on what mankind does then, the ease of going through that judgment process will be affected by how we have or have not corrupted our character traits DURING THIS LIFE. The more we let ourselves violate what we know to be “right,” the more problems we will have in reforming during the Kingdom.

It is clear from Ezekiel’s words regarding Sodom’s condemnation that, above all, in this life, God values our helping of the less-privileged; and He hates our letting them suffer. Letting them suffer, the Scriptures point out, is *worse* for our characters than the many immoralities of Sodom.
