

CHRIST ... and the tale of two cities

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(Mark 6: 7-12)

The synagogue was in an uproar ; the citizens of Nazareth were angry! It was disgraceful that their one-time carpenter should have defiled the holy place with his abominable utterances. He had a swollen head-he was an arrogant young fool-he was a disgrace to his parents and the community in general. He should have been thrown over the precipice, but perhaps it was providential that he had escaped. The good name of Israel might have been stained with murder. Good riddance to him! And outside the city of sin, the Lord Jesus sorrowfully looked back at His old home, and sighed. " And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two. . . . " They were ready to depart when He reminded them of two cities.

The City of Disgusting Passion

Lot sat in the gateway of the ancient city, and watched the approach of two strangers. Where would they spend the night? They were in danger, but were unaware of the perils of entering Sodom. He would offer them shelter. " Gentlemen, follow me quickly, or else-Ah, we are too late. That devilish mob saw us. Excuse me, I'll be back in a moment." And he closed the door behind him. Poor man, he has gone to turn wolves from their victims. The angels opened the door to pull him to safety. He was rather startled, but outside, the lewd cries of filthy men echoed through the night. Hell was abroad! Those beastly men were a blot on God's fair world. " Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." When the disciples shuddered, the Saviour reminded them of the other place-

The City of Dignified Pride

" Can you see it, children? It has elaborate, ornate synagogues, and the elders are men of standing. They fast twice in the week, and give tithes of all they possess. They are dignified, and true to the traditions of the fathers. Yet, watch them now, as two preachers begin to speak in the market place. They frown. 'What is this? Repent! Good gracious! Are those itinerant evangelists telling us to repent? Disgraceful! We are children of Abraham. Hidden sin in our hearts! Such unwarranted interference and cheek. Preacher, mind your own business, and repent of your own wickedness. And leave our city ; we don't want your noise nor your religion.' " Jesus paused to ask, "Can you see those two cities? Now listen again, 'And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.'"

(i) The Day of Judgment-how sure

Unless there be a day of final reckoning, this statement of Christ is utterly misleading. This part of His teaching coincides with His other messages. He believed that ultimately all men will stand before God, to account for the things done in this world. He believed, too, that men could be lost ; and it was to save such people He came into the world.

(ii) The Decision of the judge - how surprising

Why should Sodom have a better chance than the city

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of a later date? Sodom had no Gospel, no preachers to
warn of the consequences of sin, no church where services
were held. Sodom had never heard of the Lord Jesus, and
had never witnessed His amazing miracles. The other city
had heard of Christ, had met His ambassadors, had seen the
miracles of redeeming grace-and had no excuse for ignor-
ance. God can only judge a man according to the light which
he possesses.

(iii) The Desires of Jesus - how sincere
" And they went out, and preached that men should repent.
And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many
that were sick, and healed them." The Lord Jesus desired to
save men. He wanted them to hear the way of truth, and be
unashamed before the throne of God. Have I heard the
Gospel? Have I ever been challenged with the importance
of deciding for Christ? Have I been reared in a godly home
and a Christian Church? Could it be possible that in the day
of judgment it will be more tolerable for untutored, black
heathen, than it will be for me?

When I soar to worlds unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment throne
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

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