

*20Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. 21“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. 22“Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. 23“And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. 24“Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.”*

*25At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. 26“Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. 27“All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.*

*28“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. 30“For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

Last week we posed the question: What would happen if in the ancient world, a powerful ruler sent a small army of emissary's to widen and repair the highway he is to travel on, clean up and prepare the city he is going to, prepare the people of the city to properly receive him, and the day arrives, no one bothers to show up. No honor is given. There's no indication that anyone cares in the least about this king. In fact some people taunt him and speak dishonorably to him when he arrives.

We can imagine the answer in our minds. That king would send a great army and he would level that city to the ground with it's inhabitants in it.

Let me remind you of just who we're dealing with here. This isn't just any King that the people of Israel have spurned. I want to read to you

the entire 40th chapter of the book of Isaiah, written almost 750 years before Jesus came to Jerusalem. Don't turn there, just relax, and listen. This is about the King who is coming, and about His herald who precedes Him:

Isaiah 40:1 - 31

*1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.*

*2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.*

*3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

*4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:*

*5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.*

*6 The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:*

*7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.*

*8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.*

*9 O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!*

*10 Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.*

*11He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.*

*12Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?*

*13Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?*

*14With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?*

*15Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.*

*16And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.*

*17All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.*

*18To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?*

*19The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains.*

*20He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved.*

*21Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you*

*from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?*

*22It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:*

*23That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.*

*24Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.*

*25To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.*

*26Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.*

*27Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?*

*28Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.*

*29He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.*

*30Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:*

*31But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*

That is the king that the people snubbed. That is the king that no one received.

When you add in the scope of the miracles performed, it becomes almost unfathomable that these things happened.

The miracles put this rejection over the top. It's almost like some kind of magic is taking place for the evidence to have piled up this high and still be missed. Ignored. Rejected.

And that is what this passage is about. Evidence and response. The miracles are the deal breaker.

For lack of a better illustration, it's like the evidence if there were no miracles is as high as the empire state building, but if you add in the miracles, it's more like mount everest. The evidence is overwhelming and Israel is willfully underwhelmed. It doesn't add up. At all. The math doesn't work.

John breaks the cycle of 400 years of prophetic silence, heaven opens and the Spirit descends on Jesus, the Father's voice is heard announcing the Son of God, the Holy One of Israel.

Then Jesus launches into preaching with authority no one has heard or seen before, and miracles. Power over death. Power over sin. Power over demons. Power to give sight to the blind and to heal every disease. More power to do miracles in days than all the other prophets of Israel had done in 20 centuries.

The authority to reign of God is at hand. The Kingdom has arrived. The King is in town. His people don't want Him.

After He finishes telling the folks around Him about John's credentials and greatness, He launches into a judgement fit for a people who snub their king. Frightening! Woe! Terror!

We don't say woe any more. It's a good word and it combines elements

of all of the negative words you can think of. Heaviness. Sorrow. Torment. Terror. Woe.

*20Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent.*

Then He . . . This is a time marker. It refers us back to the previous events. The herald of the King ignored; imprisoned; soon murdered. These are the things that bring about this dialogue.

John was the real deal. So is Jesus. But the nation has rejected them by way of largely just yawning and ignoring them both.

John is too austere. Jesus is too happy. These excuses are phony and shallow. The people of Israel simply can't be bothered.

These events combined with the miracles that precede them bring us to this word "then".

He's going to pronounce woe's on some cities based on two things. miracles and a lack of belief. Overwhelming evidence which results in willful disbelief.

Willful disbelief. When you measure the amount of evidence, you have to work at disbelieving. People want their sin, Not this King, so that's what we have. Willful disbelief.

*21 "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. 22 "Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.*

This is a shock! Judgement for pagans and infidels less than judgement for the people of Israel?? That goes against everything their false religion had taught them to believe. It's a total shock value statement! And it's true! The wicked gentiles will have a more tolerable judgment than these cities of Israel.

Notice that judgement is incremental. There are levels of judgement. It isn't all meted out the same. There is greater and lesser according to what Jesus indicates here.

And the factor that determines the level of judgement is directly related to the amount of evidence spurned.

Tyre and Sidon were notoriously wicked. Never-the-less, their judgement will be less severe than Bethsaida and Chorazin because those 2 cities had the benefit of Jesus presence and teaching and miracles and they still rejected Him. Greater evidence available and rejected = greater judgement.

It's all about the miracles. *He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done*

Miracles have had one purpose during the entire duration of God's dealing with men. They are signs that attest to the reality that God is in your midst doing something. Believe the person who is doing them. Listen to them. Do what they say. REal miracles. Not the stuff we have today.

There is one notable exception. During the end times, God is going to send a delusion, accompanied with miracles, so that the Christ rejectors will believe and follow and obey the Anti-Christ.

So the purpose is the same. But God will use them as a judgement, causing delusion. Right now though, Jesus is pronouncing woes on the cities that should have been brought to repentance and belief because of the massive evidence of the miracles.

23“*And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day.* 24“*Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.*”

Sodom and Gomorrah were singularly wicked places. The men of Sodom were trying to rape the angels that God sent to warn Lot! The 2 names became a by-word for wickedness. We have no other case where God sent fire from heaven to consume a city. That wicked.

But Jesus says; *if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day*

Capernaum's wickedness just surpassed Sodom's. Why? Because of the amount and depth of the evidence because of the miracles that Jesus did there, that they spurned and ignored.

What about us? He hasn't done any miracles in Tonopah for the unbelievers here. What about America?

He doesn't keep on doing miracles forever. The miracles were done to establish once and forever that His words are valid and true. I would refer you back to Isaiah 40. It isn't the miracles that last forever, it's the Word of God that does. But the miracles establish the Words.

They were witnessed by hundreds. Sometimes thousands. Written down by reliable witnesses. The end result is that we're not accountable for the miracles that Bethsaida got to witness. We're accountable for ALL of them that are recorded.

If Bethsaida and Chorazin squandered their evidence in willful disbelief and received these woes - easier for Sodom - what about America who has squandered them all!

You can walk into Larry Whitney's book store and buy a Bible for 50 cents and read about all of the miracles. Every account of the miracles that God wanted included in His book, is available. Almost for free. That means we are responsible for squandering greater evidence than these places Jesus is pronouncing the woes on.

The book is available. Basically free. The Holy Bible is ubiquitous in America. The evidence is there.



My mom used to tell us kids; "Ignorance is no excuse for the law." IOW the policemand stops you and says you were speeding and you tell him, I didn't know there was a speed limit - that doesn't buy you anything.

The fact that Bibles are pervasive and very nearly free means you are responsible to know what God said. Standing at the judgement day and saying, I didn't know Jesus did miracles is not going to help you.

America is responsible for squandering more evidence than the places Jesus is pronouncing the judgements on. The miracles are in the book. The book is available to anyone.

It was the translations for the first time of this book into the common languages that lifted Europe out of the dark ages in the 15th century.

They read it and believed it. Entire cultures changed. Then came the reformation - because of the book. Then the Puritans. Then the great revivals and the great missionary eras of the 1700's - the 1800's. People read this book. They witnessed the evidence and the miracles of Jesus, and they believed it.

You know what killed it? Modern higher learning. The miracles have to go. Satan pushed back, and where did he aim his attack - at the miracles.

That was our downfall. Here we are in 2015. The evidence that Jesus is God, supported by the works He did - rendered invalid - from inside the church. The walls came down. The world ignores a Jesus who is impotent. Powerless. No miracles. Just a very nice man. A great teacher. OK, if it makes you feel better we'll go one better. HE was a prophet. Big deal.

NO! Listen to Him speak from these pages. The miracles are real. The people who ignore them and remain in their sin - do it willfully - ignoring the evidence - by choice.

Those who do that are subject to greater judgement in proportion to

greater evidence spurned and ignored. In America we have ALL the miracles - at our fingertips - available at little or no cost - and we will be held to a higher judgement than Capernaum and Sodom and Gomorrah. Our sin is greater because our available evidence is greater.

I mentioned early on that it seems almost unfathomable that people do not believe, considering the extent of the miracles. He speaks to the wind and it ceases. He says shhhh. Peace, be still, and a 100 year storm event, a mega storm becomes a glassine lake. He walks to them on the water.

This stuff is real. It isn't storybook fables. It isn't Spiderman. Reliable witnesses, hundreds of them, witnessed these things and wrote them down. It's almost like a miracle that people didn't believe!

And now Jesus is going to say some things that are shocking. The reason Israel didn't believe is because Sovereign God hid these things from their hearts.

*25At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. 26"Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. 27"All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.*

This is just loaded with information that modern christians do not like to hear.

First of all, the jews did not refer to God as "Father" even corporately, let alone singularly. Abraham was their 'father'. Jesus praying to God and calling Him 'Father' would be like blasphemy in their ears.

His "Father" is Lord of heaven and earth. Supreme above all things. Sovereign over all things. And then He let's us in on a secret.

God has hidden the truth about Jesus to some folks, and He has revealed

the truth about Jesus to some others. And there is a reason God has done that which is causal.

The reason God hides the truth from some and reveals it to others is because it made Him happy to do that. See it there.

*25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. 26 "Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.*

It pleased God to hide the obvious from some and reveal it to others. That is called sovereignty. In our fallen condition we start out hating that. It's as natural as everything else that's killing us. But as we mature and as we become more intimate with God our saviour, we change. We begin to love His sovereignty.

Stuart Townend is writing hymns of substance. Uncommon in the second decade of the 21st century. He's written a hymn that speaks to our topic this morning. It's called "the Perfect Wisdom of our God"

*The perfect wisdom of our God,  
Revealed in all the universe:  
All things created by His hand,  
And held together at His command.  
He knows the mysteries of the seas,  
The secrets of the stars are His;  
He guides the planets on their way,  
And turns the earth through another day.*

*The matchless wisdom of His ways  
That mark the path of righteousness  
His word a lamp unto my feet  
His Spirit teaching and guiding me  
And O the mystery of the cross  
That God should suffer for the lost  
So that the fool might shame the wise  
And all the glory might go to Christ!*

*O grant me wisdom from above,  
To pray for peace and cling to love,  
And teach me humbly to receive  
The sun and rain of Your sovereignty.  
Each strand of sorrow has a place  
Within this tapestry of grace;  
So through the trials I choose to say:  
"Your perfect will in Your perfect way."*

There is further delineation here. There are types here. Different types of people. Some that have truth revealed to them, and some that have the truth hidden from them. It's worth doing some word studies here. We want to understand why it pleased God to grant understanding to some and restrict understanding from others.

*You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants*

The wise; *sophos*. We get our word sophisticated. Uppity because of knowledge. At a higher level than us normal folk.

The intelligent; *sunetos*. The idea here is that these folks have combined what they know to form what we call these days, a "world view". They have synthesized their knowledge and become convinced in their own wisdom. Their minds are made up. They've got it all figured out. And they're proud about it.

The infants; *nēpiois*. These are folks who receive the information with an open heart and open mind. They're just like the little ones Pam used to teach in pre-school. They want to learn. They believe what you tell them. They don't have any pride hang ups. They are hungry to learn.

I'm thinking there were some sharp guys standing around there that day. You don't get to be one of the 70, one of the Sanhedrin, ruling in Israel, because you're stupid. These folks that are rejecting Jesus are sharp! Smart people. Too smart for their own good.

I hope it's obvious to you that Jesus is employing some humor here. Some satire. He is being facetious. Like when He said, the *well don't need a physician, but the sick*. Satire, right, because we're born sick with Adam's nature.

If they were truly wise and intelligent they would realize God is standing in their midst. As it is, they are too smart for God. Too smart to listen to and take counsel from the creator of the universe. Both words have a root in pride. Something to do with being proud. The wise and intelligent who don't need God.

Babies, on the other hand, and here we're picturing toddlers, are completely dependent on their parents and completely trust in their parents love and good will for them.

The wise don't "need" God. The babes, are dependent on and fully trusting in their heavenly father. So God sovereignly hides His Son from the proud but reveals Him to the simple.

So, what comes first here, the chicken or the egg. Did the pride act to set God's sovereignty in motion? Or did His sovereignty set the pride in motion. It's like asking did gravity make things fall to earth. Or do things fall to earth because of gravity. Where did the failure to believe originate? With sovereign God, or with proud men?

Notice this isn't about level of sinfulness. The chief of sinners was selected and many of us would say to him, move over buddy. You may have been chief, but I passed you up. This isn't about sin. It's about belief.

This is the classic question about free will and Sovereignty. Guess what. I'm smart enough to know my brain isn't wired to figure it out. I can't unscrew the inscrutable. Is God sending men to hell, or are men sending themselves to hell?

Listen to what Jesus says next in this prayer to His Father.

Vs. 27 "*All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no*

*one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.*

Sounds like the free will question just leaned towards Jesus. Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. He is Sovereign God over this planet.

No one enters into a living relationship with God, unless Jesus wills it to happen. John 14:6 is famously unpopular these days but it fits here perfectly. *I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father, but, by me.*

Jesus sovereignly holds the keys to the Kingdom of God. He says who comes in, and who does not.

So, now we're all theologians and we understand sovereign election. The elect are those who are chosen from the foundation of the world. Jesus gives the thumbs up, thumbs down about who the Father either reveals or hides the Kingdom of God to. It's all up to Jesus. Sovereign election.

But, He's not quite finished with these folks. After His prayer, thanking His father for blinding the wise and illuminating the babes he still has something to say to the folks who are listening, we would hope, dumbfounded by this man who speaks to His Father who is God.

He's taught us about election. About how the choice and the will is God's, not men's. And then He says; Anybody who wants to, can come. Anybody at all. Come unto me.

*28“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. 30 “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

Isn't it like He's saying, don't worry about sovereign election and will, just come. Come unto me.

I'm only going to spend a minute or two here. We're out of time, and my plan is to double dip. I want to begin with this invitation next week, and thereby get to immerse us in it twice.

He says He is gentle and humble in heart. He owns the keys of sovereign election. He decides by His pleasure who will spend eternity in heaven. But, He is humble about that. Anyone can come. COME! Come to the waters and drink!

If you're weary because this world is crushing you. If you're crushed under the burden of sin. If you're worn out trying to be good enough for God, Come to Jesus.

The rest here is a dual rest. You will find rest and freedom from your load of sin. Now. Right now. You will have peace with God. And it will seem so wonderful you would do anything, pay any price to have that peace and release from your sin.

He'll give you the Holy Spirit to dwell with you and in you. You will belong to Him. But even all of that; is just the down payment. We will rest in His arms for eternity.

Don't worry about trying to understand election and free will and choice. Just come. Jesus will have you.