

# Expository Thoughts On Matthew - Matthew

## 11:16-24

by J.C. Ryle

### Transcript

These sayings of the Lord Jesus were called forth by the state of the Jewish nation when he was upon earth. But they speak loudly to us also, as well as to the Jews. They throw great light on some parts of the natural man's character; they teach us the perilous state of many immortal souls in the present day. The first part of these verses shows us the unreasonableness of many unconverted men in the things of religion. The Jews, in our Lord's time, found fault with every teacher whom God sent among them. First came John the Baptist preaching repentance: an austere man, a man who withdrew himself from society and lived an ascetic life. Did this satisfy the Jews? No! They found fault and said, "He has a devil." Then came Jesus the Son of God preaching the Gospel: living as other men lived, and practicing none of John the Baptist's peculiar austerities. And did this satisfy the Jews? No! They found fault again, and said, "Behold a man gluttonous and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." In short, they were as perverse and hard to please as wayward children. It is a mournful fact, that there are always thousands of professing Christians just as unreasonable as these Jews. They are equally perverse, and equally hard to please; whatever we teach and preach they find fault; whatever be our manner of life, they are dissatisfied. Do we tell them of salvation by grace, and justification by faith? At once they cry out against our doctrine as licentious and Antinomian. Do we tell them of the holiness which the Gospel requires? At once they exclaim that we are too strict, and precise and righteous over much. Are we cheerful? They accuse us of levity. Are we grave? They call us gloomy and sour. Do we keep aloof from balls and races and plays? They denounce us as puritanical, exclusive and narrow-minded. Do we eat and drink and dress like other people, and attend to our worldly callings, and go into society? They sneeringly insinuate that they see no difference between us and those who make no religious profession at all, and that we are not better than other men. What is all this but the conduct of the Jews over again? "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented." He who spake these words knew the hearts of men! The plain truth is that true believers must not expect unconverted men to be satisfied either with their faith or their practice. If they do, they expect what they will not find. They must make up their minds to hear objections, cavils and excuses, however holy their own lives may be. Well says Quesnel, "Whatever measures good men take, they will never escape the censures of the world. The best way is not to be concerned at them." After all, what saith the Scripture? "The carnal mind is enmity against God" "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (Rom. 8:7; 1 Corinthians ). This is the explanation of the whole matter. The second part of these verses shows us the exceeding wickedness of willful impenitence. Our Lord declares that it will be more

bearable for Tyre Sidon and Sodom on the day of judgment than for those towns where people had heard his sermons, and seen his miracles, but had not repented. There is something very solemn in this saying. Let us look at it well. Let us think for a moment what dark, idolatrous, immoral, profligate places Tyre and Sidon must have been. Let us call to mind the unspeakable wickedness of Sodom. Let us remember that the cities named by our Lord "Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum" were probably no worse than other Jewish towns, and, at all events, were far better and more moral than Tyre, Sidon and Sodom. And then let us observe that the people of Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum are to be in the lowest hell because they heard the Gospel and yet did not repent, because they had great religious advantages and did not use them. How awful this sounds! Surely these words ought to make the ears of everyone tingle, who hears the Gospel regularly, and yet remains unconverted. How great is the guilt of such a man before God! How great is the danger in which he daily stands! Moral, and decent and respectable as his life may be, he is actually more guilty than an idolatrous Tyrian or Sidonian, or a miserable inhabitant of Sodom! They had no spiritual light: he has, and neglects it. They heard no Gospel: he hears, but does not obey it. Their hearts might have been softened if they had enjoyed his privileges: Tyre and Sidon would have repented. Sodom would have remained until this day. His heart under the full blaze of the Gospel remains hard and unmoved. There is but one painful conclusion to be drawn: his guilt will be found greater than theirs at the last day. Most true is the remark of an English bishop, among all the aggravations of our sins, there is none more heinous than the frequent hearing of our duty. May we all think often about Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum! Let us settle it in our minds that it will never do to be content with merely hearing and liking the Gospel. We must go further than this, we must actually repent and be converted. (Acts ). We must actually lay hold on Christ, and become one with him. Till then we are in awful danger. It will prove more tolerable to have lived in Tyre, Sidon and Sodom than to have heard the Gospel in England and at last die unconverted.

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