

INTRODUCTION

Over the past twenty years, America has experienced an explosion of technological advances. We are living in the information age. Some claim that the Internet and the personal computer have had as much impact on information as Gutenberg's printing press, radio and television. However, I came across something funny the other day that demonstrates the computer age has passed by some folks in the country. An old farmer who had never been near a computer was asked to define some common computer terms. Maybe you'll get a chuckle out of these:

Country Computer Terms

- Download—Getting the farwood off the truck
- Mega Hertz—When you drop a piece of farwood on your toe
- Floppy Disk—What you get in your back from carrying too much farwood
- Log On—Putting another piece of farwood on the far
- Boot Up—How I climb up onto my John Deere
- Screen—What you shut when them black flies are flyin'
- Byte—What them dang flies do
- Chip—Munchies to snack on while watchin' TV
- Micro Chip—What's left in the bottom of the munchies bag
- Modem—What I did to my hay fields
- Lap Top—Where the kitty sleeps
- Software—Them plastic forks and knives
- Random Access Memory—What I get when my wife asks me what I paid for my new rifle!

Most of us have computers and we are part of the new information highway carrying ideas and information around the world. But while we are seeing a technological surge in America, we are suffering from a spiritual and moral meltdown. In Luke 10, we will see God not only holds individuals accountable, but He holds communities and nations accountable.

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was to go.

In the first verses of chapter 9, Jesus sent out the twelve, so we see He is expanding His group of disciples. He gives the 72 the identical instructions He gave the twelve, so we'll skip this passage. If you are interested, go back and get the message, "Packing light for the Journey of Life" I preached on June 17, 2001. Skip down to verse 8

(Luke 10:8-16) "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.' But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: the kingdom of God is near.' I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

Woe to you Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgement than for you. And you Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths.

He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

The first thing Jesus presents in this passage is a:

I. CONDEMNATION OF COMMUNITIES

For years I thought the only judgement that would ever come from God would be the judgement of individuals. Consider two important truths about God’s judgement.

1. God judges people-groups on their collective response to accepting the Kingdom of God

These seventy-two disciples were to announce, “The Kingdom of God is near.” That meant Jesus was near, because He is the King of the Kingdom. If a city rejected Jesus, they were also rejecting the moral demands of the Kingdom of God. God doesn’t judge a community or nation spiritually, because a city or a country doesn’t really have a soul. But God does judge communities and countries according to our moral response to His demands.

In our passage Jesus mentions three cities in Galilee by name, Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, and He compares their moral condition to three ancient evil cities, Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon. He says it will be “more tolerable” for Sodom than for Korazin and Bethsaida. Wait, doesn’t God judge all people and all nations equally? No. Don’t we think God practices equal justice for all? Understand:

2. God judges on the basis of how much truth one has been given

That’s true of individuals and it is true of nations. Jesus observed if those wicked cities had been exposed to the truth He gave to those three Galilean communities, they would have repented. I don’t say many profound things, so when I do, I have to warn you I’m about to say something profound so pay attention: **GOD NOT ONLY KNOWS WHO REPENTS—HE KNOWS WHO WOULD HAVE REPENTED HAD THEY BEEN GIVEN THE TRUTH.** God has the ability to know all contingencies, we don’t.

Have you ever played the “What If” game? When something happens we often look back and say, “What if?” And we then try to predict the new outcome. “What if” I left home ten seconds earlier, I wouldn’t have been broadsided by that truck? Are you certain? “What if” I only called the doctor when I first felt the lump? “What if” I hadn’t said those terrible words to my spouse? “What if” I hadn’t committed that sin? On and on we go. We torture ourselves with the “What If” game. But, to be honest, we *don’t know* what would have happened. Only God can play the “What If” game. “What if” Jesus visited Tyre and Sidon and performed miracles there?

What would have happened? They would have repented. Stop playing the “What If” game, because only God is qualified to play it.

Jesus visited Korazin, and Bethsaida, He even selected Capernaum as the base of His earthly ministry! Tyre and Sidon were twin Phoenician cities on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. They were the center of the wicked Baal cult in which children were sacrificed and sexual perversion was a part of their worship. In Ezekiel 28, Satan himself is called the “Kind of Tyre.” What if Jesus had visited those cities? They would have repented in sackcloth and ashes!

Today all six of these cities lie in ruins. I have visited the ruins of Korazin and Bethsaida, and when I take a group to Israel we spend some time at Capernaum. At one time it was a thriving community ideally located on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and surrounded by fertile farmland. Many cities from the time of Jesus have remained in existence all these centuries. Tiberius is thriving, Nazareth is a boomtown. Even the little village called Magdala, where Mary Magdalene lived is still right where it was during the time of Jesus. What happened to Capernaum? Several years ago, as we were standing on the ruins of Capernaum, sitting in the very synagogue where Jesus taught and healed, our Jewish guide made an interesting statement. He said Jewish archaeologists are baffled *why* Capernaum became a ghost town and a wasteland. After he finished, I took my Bible and told our group I know exactly why Capernaum is nothing but a pile of rocks today. And I read Matthew 11:23-24: “And you Capernaum [America?], will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

What does it mean when God says it will be more tolerable? Are there levels of punishment in hell? I used to enjoy reading the *Far Side* cartoons by Gary Larson. In one cartoon he depicts one compartment of hell reserved for ax murderers and another, a less comfortable one, for people who drove too slow in the fast lane. Is that what Jesus is saying? In his medieval epic *Inferno*, Dante depicted descending circles in hell, each more horrible. Dante consigned the worst sinners to the lowest levels. But I don’t think that’s what Jesus meant here.

You see, God’s judgement on cities, communities and nations is not that He sends them to hell; they just become a barren wasteland, they become ruins. That’s the danger America faces today. America makes Sodom look good because we have so much more truth. Sodom had no churches: There are over 450,000 churches in America. Sodom had no Bibles: Most of us have three or four. Anyone in America who wants a Bible can have one. Sodom had no preachers: We have over a million “vocational ministers” in America. Sodom never heard the gospel: America has over 600 Christian radio stations, dozens of Christian television networks broadcasting the gospel 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We are even more accountable than Capernaum because we stand on this side of the resurrection of Jesus

We read in Genesis 19 that God decided to destroy Sodom because of its moral condition. Sexual perversion and wickedness was rampant. Abraham bargained with God and asked, “If I can find 50 righteous men in Sodom will you withhold judgement?” God agreed. Abraham couldn’t find fifty righteous men, so he lowered his demand to forty-five, forty, then to thirty, then to twenty, and finally to ten—and God agreed. Before you start thinking God is some angry tyrant who is

just waiting to crush people like a bug, remember He is slow to anger and willing to show mercy. But Abraham couldn't even find ten righteous men in Sodom. When the two angels went to warn Lot and his family to flee, they appeared as two young men. A mob of men in Sodom demanded Lot send the two angels out so that they could have sexual relations with them. Thus for many years, *sodomy*, was the term used to describe homosexual behavior. But it was such an ugly word our culture has replaced it with a word used to describe a cheerful person, “gay.”

At one time most of the states had laws against sodomy. Today, 25 state legislatures have repealed the sodomy laws, while in 8 states, the most recent being Texas, the courts have ruled sodomy laws unconstitutional. Now, only twelve states and Puerto Rico currently have laws prohibiting sodomy and these laws are seldom enforced.

America has become the reincarnation of Sodom. In fact, in my attempt to do some Internet research I made the mistake of putting the word “sodomy” in my search engine and I was led to some of the most horrible, vile web sites imaginable—and I couldn't close them. They kept automatically opening other sites. I finally had to turn my computer off.

America makes Sodom look good because it was only one city and we are fifty states. The moral climate of Sodom made God sick so He destroyed it with fire and brimstone. Today, archaeologists have discovered the ancient ruins of a city near the southern tip of the Dead Sea, and the most amazing thing about this discovery was the unearthing of a massive burial site bearing evidence of 500,000 corpses.

How do you think God must feel when He sees America's moral climate? We sing “America the Beautiful,” and from our amber waves of grain, and our perfect mountains' majesty above the fruited plain, our natural landscape is lovely. But we are living in a moral wasteland. Some of Mel Gibson's earliest movies were the Mad Max movies. They depicted a time in the future after a nuclear holocaust—the land is barren and cities lie in ruin. There have been lots of Hollywood movies portraying the future of earth as a barren desert due to atomic war. I believe if you could look at America today through the eyes of a Holy God you would see a moral landscape that is barren and frightening. I don't think America is going to be destroyed by some attack from another nation; we are being destroyed from within by moral decay. Our collective wickedness is like an insidious cancer choking the life out of our national conscience. What kind of moral landscape will exist for our children and grandchildren?

I agree with *The Boston Herald* syndicated columnist Don Feder who writes:

“The first act of the United States Congress was to authorize the printing of 20,000 Bibles for the Indians. Further, when our first President, under the new Constitution, received the request of both Houses of Congress concerning a national declaration of a public day of Thanksgiving and Prayer, George Washington issued a National Thanksgiving Proclamation without any apparent concern that he might be mixing government and religion. The men who founded our country clearly wedded it to Christian principles. By today's standards, the founding fathers were the religious right.”

It wasn't too many years ago Kate Smith sang a song that was actually a prayer “God Bless America.” It was a popular song in which people asked God to stand beside us and guide us through the night with a light from above. Today, God is hardly acknowledged in public, and if someone tried to sing that song at a public event today, the ACLU would sue them for praying in public! How can God continue to bless us and stand beside us when we continue to become more and more wicked?

God is calling us to call America back to His Word and to the moral principles that made our nation great. And until you become alarmed at the moral landscape, you won't do a thing. Some of you think, “Oh, I'm saved. I've got my salvation, and I've got my group of Christian friends here at my church. I'm okay, I can just last it out until I die or until Jesus comes.” Just remember, God judges nations on our moral response to the Kingdom—and we are part of this nation! Let's call our nation back to God!

These are harsh words of Jesus. “Woe to you Korazin, Woe to you Bethsaida, Woe to you Capernaum, Woe to you America.” And if we stopped here, you would leave with a terrible feeling of hopelessness and despair. That's why you always need to keep reading. Let's look at verse 17, because immediately after these harsh, judgmental words of Jesus, He gives us some very simple

II. REASONS TO REJOICE

(Luke 10:17-24) The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”

He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

Then, he turned to his disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see and did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

I love that phrase in verse 21 that says Jesus was “full of joy in the Holy Spirit.” It's a very intense verb literally meaning Jesus was leaping with joy. He was full and overflowing with joy. He was thrilled. He was delighted. True joy is produced in your personality when you are being filled with the Holy Spirit. Let's look at four reasons Jesus gives us to rejoice.

1. Satan has fallen! (vs. 18)

Jesus has seen things we haven't seen and He can see things in the spiritual realm we can't see. When did Satan fall? I believe Jesus was referring to the past exclusion of Satan from his standing in heaven. At one time Lucifer was a shining angel but he tried to exalt himself and become God. God kicked him out from heaven and Satan fell like a bolt of lightning crashes to the earth: it was quick. Jesus said, “I saw that.” It was like Jesus saying, “Before Abraham was, I am.” Jesus also saw Satan fall when the seventy-two disciples went out preaching, healing and casting out demons. We speak of the fall of the Third Reich when Hitler and the Nazis were defeated. Every time a disciple of Jesus claims our authority over Satan and his demons we are participating in the fall of Satan. The devil is a wicked liar. He is shrewd and cunning. But in Jesus we have much more authority than he does. Be on guard against the devil but don't be afraid of him because he is a fallen foe! Martin Luther once became so irate with the devil he literally threw his inkbottle across his study and it splattered on the wall. He later came to see the devil is not as powerful as he thought. I love the third verse of his great hymn:

And tho' this world with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.
(Martin Luther, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*)

That one little word is Jesus. In Jesus we have authority over the devil! That's a cause for rejoicing! Hallelujah!

2. God's servants are protected! (vs. 19)

Jesus said His disciples would have the authority to trample on snakes and scorpions. As you know some sincere but misdirected Christians in East Tennessee and Kentucky have taken this to mean that as a show of their faith, they should handle snakes. I don't think that's what Jesus was talking about at all here. The word He used was “trample,” which means to walk over and to crush them. In Genesis 3, God predicted the seed of woman would crush the head of the serpent (Satan). It's not our power, but God's. That's why Paul wrote, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” (Romans 16:20)

I have never met a snake I liked. Most of us have an inbred fear of snakes and scorpions. Jesus was saying when you are on mission for Him you don't have to fear those things that usually make us afraid because He will protect us. If you are God's servant, doing God's work, you will be protected until God is finished with you. It doesn't mean you are to be foolhardy and take unreasonable risks, but He will protect you. When Paul was shipwrecked on the island of Malta,

preaching to the people, a poisonous snake slithered out of the firewood and bit him. The islanders recognized the venomous kind of snake and expected Paul to die. He just shook it off into the fire and kept on preaching! God doesn't say you will be immune from bad things, He just promises you'll survive the dangerous experiences. One of my favorite promises of God is found in Isaiah 43:1-3,

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.”

That's another reason to rejoice! Hallelujah!

3. Our names “stand written” in God's Book of Life! (vs. 20)

The disciples were ecstatic because the demons were subject to them in Jesus' name. He told them there is a better reason to rejoice: their names are written down in heaven. Casting out demons is not proof of salvation; even Judas cast out demons. The only sure proof of salvation is whether your name is written down in God's book. The Greek verb is in the perfect passive indicative, doesn't that excite you? That means the names aren't *being* written, or *will be* written. They stand *already* written—in a state of completion. It's the word *engrapho*, we translate it “engraved.” If you know Jesus, your name is engraved in God's Book of Life! It's God's family album and only His children's names are written down there.

Is your name written in the Book of Life? You can't find this book in any bookstore. There is only one copy in heaven. There will be terrible consequences if you die and your name is not written there. In Revelation 20 we read about God's final judgement against sinners. The Bible says, “If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire ... the lake of fire is the second death.” (Revelation 20: 14-15)

Physical death is only the first death; eternal death in hell is the second death. You must be born again in order to avoid the second death. You've heard me say it before, but if you're born twice, you'll only die once—but if you're only born once, you'll die twice.

Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life? If it is, you need to be rejoicing! Now you may be saying, “Nobody can know for *certain* if your name is in the Book of Life.” Oh, yes you can. In I John 5:13, the Bible says, “I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may *know* that you have eternal life.” Are you saved? I *hope* so isn't good enough. I *think* so isn't good enough. Can you say, “I *know* I'm saved?”

While some of you intellectual types are sitting there disagreeing with me, let's look at the final reason to rejoice.

4. God reveals truth to simple people! (vs. 21)

In verse 21, Jesus was overflowing with joy when He said, “I praise you Father ... because you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned, and revealed them to little children.” You may wonder why God would do something like that. I love the reason. Jesus said in verse 22, “Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.” God does it because it simply gives Him pleasure! Maybe you never thought God could even experience pleasure but He does. He enjoys confounding those who think they are so smart and have it all figured out. He enjoys revealing Himself to little children and to those who will receive Him as a child.

I heard about a college professor who had a flat tire as he was driving his car by a mental institution. An inmate in the asylum was sitting on the other side of the fence observing as the professor got out to change the tire and jack up the car and remove the lug nuts. The professor put the lug nuts into the hubcap, but as he was putting on the spare tire, he stepped on the hubcap and spilled the lug nuts. He watched in horror as the lug nuts all fell into the drain opening in the curb. The professor said, “What am I going to do now? I can’t drive my car without lug nuts on one tire.” The inmate in the asylum said, “Why don’t you remove one lug nut from the remaining three tires and use them to secure the spare? It will be good enough to get you to where you can get some more lug nuts.” The professor did just that, and right before he left he said, “Man, that was a good idea. What are you doing in a place like that?” The inmate said, “I may be crazy—but I’m not stupid!”

People today try to make religion and Christianity and theology complex—and God takes pleasure in simplicity. I have said many times, my goal as a preacher is to preach on the level of a 12-year-old child, because if a twelve year old can understand me, then probably some of you PhD’s can too.

I have a little sign in my study where I prepare my messages. It reads: “Idiosyncratically eccentric phraseology promulgates excessive obfuscation.” In other words, it means, “Hard words confuse people.”

Preston McGee shared with me something his 7-year-old daughter, Abby, wrote in her journal a few months ago when we had Share the Joy Sunday. She was reflecting on that Sunday, which was the second Sunday in our new building when we received almost \$3 million in gifts and commitments. She wrote:

“This has been a wonderful day because it is like so wonderful for us because the offering we gave to the church was awesome. I just love church because Brother David is the best pastor I think because he helps kids understand the word of God. The best part is because he loves the Bible. I’m glad too because it’s fun to go to church. I love the way David O. Dykes preaches to us.”

When I read that I said, “I thank you Father that you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned and has revealed it to little children.”

Adults try to put the Gospel into a test tube and analyze it and Jesus said, “It’s like being born again.” The reason some of you have not yet given your life to Christ is that it sounds too simple to be true. Remember, you must become as a little child to enter the Kingdom of God.

So, let's heed the words of Jesus. Will you ask God to burden your heart for the moral condition of our community and our country? Will you be a part of calling American back to God? Will you begin to rejoice, even though things seem dark? Will you come today and put your faith and trust in Christ? Don't wait. Today is the best time to be saved that you'll even have.

OUTLINE

I. CONDEMNATION OF COMMUNITIES

God judges:

1. People-groups on their collective response to accepting the Kingdom of God
2. On the basis of how much truth one has been given

“And you Capernaum ... [America?], will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgement than for you.” *Matthew 11:23-24*

II. REASONS TO REJOICE

1. Satan has fallen! (vs. 18)
2. God’s servants are protected! (vs. 19)

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.” *Isaiah 43:1-3*

3. Our names “stand written” in God’s Book of Life! (vs. 20)

“If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire ... the lake of fire is the second death.” *Revelation 20:14-15*

4. God reveals truth to simple people! (vs. 21)



DISCLAIMER: These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. There is no legal copyright on this material. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material to stimulate your own Spirit-driven imagination. Additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners. You have my full permission to use any of this material as long as you cite the source for any substantial amount used in your message.

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”*** This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes