

Judgment Day

II Chronicles 36:11-21, Trinity Sunday XXIV

November 22, 2009

Beloved of the Lord.....In Noah's day, what ran through the minds of the people as it rained day after day after day? As the water rose higher and higher, didn't the memory of Noah's words grow louder and louder? Noah did say a great flood was coming. Noah did say God was angry with our sins and we should turn away from our sins to God's promise of the Savior. Noah did say we should believe in the Seed of the Woman. Every day as those waters rose higher and higher, rest assured the knowledge of God's judgment against their sin, the truth of Noah's words grew louder and louder. Near the end of those forty days, what was it like for every frantic soul to compete with the masses for higher ground, only to be pushed into the water by someone stronger? What was it like for the final few, the last one, the strongest of the strong to realize God's judgment against their sin was stronger?

Judgment Day is indeed coming for all of us. We can either hear God's call to repentance and believe the remission of sins through the blood of the Lamb, or like Zedekiah we can stubbornly refuse to turn in faith to Christ Jesus our Lord. God then is good and not evil to warn us of that Day yet to come, "for the Lord is not willing that any perish, but that all should come to repentance." But beloved of the Lord, you who have repented of your sins and arrayed yourselves in the garment of faith, you need not fear that day but can indeed look forward to it! For on that glorious and blessed day you know by faith your good and gracious King will judge you not by the law, but by the Gospel, for "the just shall live by faith". Indeed when the trumpets sounds and He appears with all his holy angels, when He sits the throne of Judgment, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This is why we then say "Even so come Lord Jesus."

How sad then to see in our lesson today poor rebellious Zedekiah and the Babylonian captivity. Like so many kings before him, Zedekiah did not humble himself and repent of his wicked deeds before Jeremiah who sought only his salvation. Whereas Nebuchadnezzar had him take an oath that he would be loyal, Zedekiah broke his word and rebelled against the "powers that be", making a deal with Pharaoh. "He stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel." This means he kept

himself from turning to God in repentance and faith though God through the Word was earnestly trying to turn him. He was as the Jews to whom Jesus said, "ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." When God repeatedly comes to man in the Word time and again urging sinners to repent, to receive by faith God's generous offer to forgive, when men refuse to turn, stubbornly resisting every effort by God to convince them of His grace and mercy.....sooner or later God says "Enough is enough! Since you have rejected My free gift of My Son who came only to save you, I leave you to your own destruction and the hardening of your own heart." Thus our lesson today is we don't dare harden our hearts against the Holy Spirit, but rather turn to Him in faith and readily receive His gracious offer of forgiveness for all sins through Christ. To repent is to turn from our sins to the love of the Father. No good father ever turns away a son who is sorry for his sins. How much more our heavenly Father who sent His heavenly Son who took and made our sins His own through His atonement on the cross. No matter how great our sin then, let us not be afraid to turn to the love of our heavenly Father whose arms through Christ are yet open. Jesus said "He that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Had Zedekiah done this, his soul would've been spared from the upcoming destruction, but sadly he did not. God's judgment was Judah's destruction and 70 years of captivity. God "brought upon them the King of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: He gave them all into his hand." War and the overthrow of a nation is often God's punishment for the sins of a nation. Couldn't God do the same to our nation today for its sins of abortion, adultery, pre-marital sex, false prophets, homosexuality and pornography? Is there anyone so arrogant as to say our sins do not deserve the same punishment as Zedekiah or the people in Noah's day? Indeed there is no mercy in God's law but only wrath and judgment against man's sin. It doesn't matter if a sinner is a young man or woman in the prime of life, or old and frail near death. God's law condemns all sinners to hell for "the wages of sin is death." As for Zedekiah who had refused to confess his sin to God and turn in faith, after he was captured "They slew the [four] sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon." All this happened to Zedekiah because he was not sorry for his sins and refused to repent.

We might wonder why God would give us such terrible details in the Bible, but these things “are written for our leaning.” As a good King, God tells us about Zedekiah’s punishment that we might be spared a far worse punishment on Judgment Day. In other words, God tells us about hell only so He through Christ can save and deliver us to heaven. Jerusalem’s overthrow, the universal Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, are all types of Judgment Day. It will come suddenly and unexpected as a thief in the night. The only way we can escape His wrath against our sin is by putting our trust in Christ who made our sins His own. We look unto Jesus, “the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross” for our sake, for our salvation. Through the preaching of God’s Word, Jesus yet calls sinners to repentance by the Gospel, declaring unto us that heaven is yet open to sinners through His blood and it is closed only to those who in unbelief refuse to believe in the Son. “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.”

They wail, there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, because He was their own Savior as He told them, yet they refused to believe. Thus when Judgment Day comes Revelation says, “The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” In the end it matters not if one was a powerful king, president, or rich man, nor does it matter if one was poor and broke all his life. The poor and the rich are cast into hell together for the same unbelief of heart concerning the Son. On the other hand those who were poor in spirit, sorry for their sins, yet rich in God’s grace by His forgiveness, such will shine and sing as the angels in heaven and there are no tears in heaven but only bliss and joy. On the Day of Judgment then, what separates one man from the other, is simply whether they lived in the faith of Jesus Christ, or lived in unbelief as if that Day would never come.

Why hasn’t this Day come yet? While there will always be scoffers who in the Last Days will say He’s never coming, the only reason He hasn’t come yet is because He truly is longsuffering! The end will not come until His Gospel Word reaches the very last soul, the very last sheep who through the Word becomes

“found”. Then when the very last sheep enters the fold and is converted “then shall the end come!” Thus Peter explains, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Can’t we see God’s infinite mercy in this? Thus it is not that He will not come, only that He will not come until that last and final soul is saved! How good God is to hold back the damn of His burning against this wicked world of unbelief for the sake of that one final man, woman or child, that lost sheep who will in the final hour finally be found, saved, and delivered. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost....Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.”

Won’t we then rejoice with Jesus, dear lost sheep that was found? Won’t we then through all eternity rest safe and sound in the arms of our Good Shepherd, our Heavenly King? “Who then shall separate us from the love of God? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us!” Let us then happily forsake the love of this world that will one day melt in fervent heat, much as that earthly Temple which was destroyed by fire. Though we but earthly temples in this world, we are by faith members of an imperishable heavenly temple, the Body of Christ. There is a New Jerusalem, that City of God above us. While God’s judgment in the Law against our sin is indeed strong, Jesus is the Almighty Son of God far stronger than the power of sin. Though our sins would’ve pushed us off into the abyss of hell, by making our sins His own Christ through the cross plunged Himself into the abyss that He might save and deliver us to heaven. Since He rose again the third day, we know His blood is stronger than our sin, and through His blood we are declared clean even whiter than snow! This is why all who believe in Him will one day hear Him say, “Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” This is likewise why we say, “Even so come Lord Jesus.” Come quickly. Amen.