The Men of Nineveh Will Judge You

By Charles Reed

"If you do not bear fruit, you will be cut down and thrown into the fire." John 15:6, Luke 13:9, Isaiah 5:5, Matthew 3:10

ND while the crowds were thickly gathered together, he began to say, "This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation. The queen of the south will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it on a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light. The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light. -- Luke 11

Christ's discourse in these verses shows two things:—I. What is the *sign* we may *expect* from God for the *confirmation* of our *faith*. The great and most convincing proof of Christ's being sent of God, and which they were yet to wait for, after the many signs that had been given them, was the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Here is, 1. A reproof to the people for demanding other signs than what had already been given them in great plenty: *The people were gathered thickly together* (v. 29), a vast crowd of them, expecting not so much to have their consciences informed by the doctrine of Christ as to have their curiosity gratified by his miracles. Christ knew what brought such a multitude together; they came *seeking a*

sign, they came to gaze, to have something to talk of when they went home; and it is an *evil generation* which nothing will awaken and convince, no, not the most sensible demonstrations of divine power and goodness.

He made a promise that yet there should be *one sign* more given them, different from any that had yet been given them, even the *sign of Jonah the prophet*, which in Matthew is explained as meaning the *resurrection of Christ*. As Jonah being cast into the sea, and lying there three days, and then coming up alive and preaching repentance to the Ninevites, was a sign to them, upon which they turned from their evil way, so shall the death and resurrection of Christ, and the preaching of his gospel immediately after to the Gentile world, be the last warning to the Jewish nation. If they be provoked to a *holy jealousy* by this, well and good; but, if this do not work upon them, let them look for nothing but utter ruin: *The Son of Man shall be a sign to this generation* (v. 30), a sign speaking to them, though a sign spoken against by them.

He gave a warning to them to improve this sign; for it was at their peril if they did not. (1.) The queen of Sheba would rise up in judgment against them, and condemn their unbelief, v. 31. She was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, and yet so readily gave credit to the report she heard of the glories of a king of Israel, that, notwithstanding the prejudices we are apt to conceive against foreigners, she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear his wisdom, not only to satisfy her curiosity, but to inform her mind, especially in the knowledge of the true God and his worship, which is upon record, to her honour; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here, more of wisdom and more heavenly divine doctrine than ever was in all Solomon's words or writings; and yet these unfortunate Jews will give no manner of regard to what Christ says to them, though he be in the midst of them. (2.) The Ninevites would rise up in judgment against them, and condemn their impenitence (v. 32): They repented at the preaching of Jonah; but here is preaching which far exceeds that of Jonah, is more powerful and awakening, and threatens a more severe ruin than that of Nineveh, and yet none are startled by it, to turn from their evil way, as the Ninevites did.

What is the *sign* that God *expects* from us for the *evidencing* of our faith? It is the serious practice of that religion which we profess to believe, and a readiness to entertain all divine truths, when brought to us in their proper evidence. Now observe, 1. They had *the light* with all the advantage they could desire. For God, having *lighted the candle* of the gos-

pel, did not put it in a *secret place*, or *under a bushel;* Christ did not preach in corners. The apostles were ordered to preach the gospel to every creature; and both Christ and his priests, Wisdom and her maidens, cry in the *chief places of concourse*, v. 33. It is a great privilege that the light of the gospel is put on a *candlestick*, so that all that come in may *see it*, and may *see by it* where they are and whither they are going, and what is the true, and sure, and only way to happiness.

Having the light, their concern was to have the sight, or else to what purpose had they the light? Be the *object* ever so *clear*, if the *organ* be not right, we are never the better: The light of the body is the eye (v. 34), that receives the light of the candle when it is brought into the room. So the light of the soul is the understanding and judgment, and its power of discerning between good and evil, truth and falsehood. Now, according as this is, so the light of divine revelation is to us, and our benefit by it; it is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. (1.) If this eye of the soul be single, if it see clear, see things as they are, and judge impartially concerning them, if it aim at truth only, and seek it for its own sake, and have not any sinister purposes or intentions, the whole body, that is, the whole soul, is *full of light*, it receives and entertains the gospel, which will bring along with it into the soul both knowledge and joy. This denotes the same thing with that of the good ground, receiving the word and understanding it. If our understanding admits the gospel in its full light, it fills the soul, and it has enough to fill it. And if the soul be thus filled with the light of the gospel, having no part dark,—if all its powers and faculties be subjected to the government and influence of the gospel, and none left unsanctified, then the whole soul shall be full of light, full of holiness and comfort. It was darkness itself, but now light in the Lord, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light, v. 36. Note, The gospel will come into those souls whose doors and windows are thrown open to receive it; and where it comes it will bring light with it. But, (2.) If the eye of the soul be evil,—if the judgment be bribed and biassed by the corrupt and vicious dispositions of the mind, by pride and envy, by the love of the world and sensual pleasures,-if the understanding be prejudiced against divine truths, and resolved not to admit them, though brought with ever so convincing an evidence,—it is no wonder that the whole body, the whole soul, should be full of darkness, v. 34. How can they have instruction, information, direction, or comfort, from the gospel, that wilfully shut their eves against it? and what hope is there of such? what remedy for them? The inference hence therefore is, Take heed that the light which is in thee be not darkness, v. 35. Take heed that the eye of the mind be not blinded

by partiality, and prejudice, and sinful aims. Be sincere in your enquiries after truth, and ready to receive it in the light, and love, and power of it; and not as the men of *this generation* to whom Christ preached, who never sincerely *desired* to know God's will, nor *proposed* to do it, and therefore no wonder that they *walked on in darkness*, wandered *endlessly*, and perished *eternally*.

IN THE book of Chronicles it is written: Zedekiah was 21 years old Lawhen he began to reign, and reigned 11 years in Jerusalem. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord. And moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord that he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending, because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he 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. And they burnt the house of God, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And them that escaped from the sword, he carried away to Babylon, where they were slaves to him and his sons, until the reign of the kingdom of Persia. (2 Chronicles 36)

In this passage it is related that the people of those times mocked the messengers of God, despised his words, and misused his prophets. In our times God has not sent a a prophet, but the Queen of prophets, who at Fatima and Garabandal gave all Catholics most clear warnings of what was going to happen to the world if people do not change. How many have paid attention to what she said? How many have changed? The entire church has been given advice and warning. We now have the opportunity of choosing between life and death, good and evil, destruction or life. What kind of decision are we going to make? If people make foolish decisions, can they complain afterwards if a misfortune occurs?

The supernatural events of Garabandal, like the dancing of the sun at Fatima, are meant to demonstrate the Almighty's power and authority over the physical world, as well as to provide proof to unbelieving minds and

hearts. Beyond the purely physical and scientific meaning of these events, however, is the simple truth that following God Almighty and serving his divine will transcends the mere physical and rational chains of this material world. Simply put, with God, anything is possible and without him, any evil is possible, even the annihilation of entire nations, as Our Lady predicted at Fatima in July 1917.

In June of 1962 the girls at Garabandal were shown a vision of hell and its torments and the coming chastisement, that caused them to scream in fear and anxiety. The people were so affected by these events, that most of them went to confession afterward.

Just as at Fatima, Our Lady does not spare these innocent children from a vision of hell. We know that Our Lady and Our Lord would never harm innocent children. Sometimes instilling fear of evil and its consequences has its place. Our Lady mentioned the "road to perdition," whose ending is eternal torment, and hopes that we will turn to God with all our hearts, before it is too late.

Conchita noted that priests should warn their flocks of the existence of purgatory and hell. The popular notion that all will be saved is a lie.

In the last message in 1965, the Mother of God said: "Before, the cup was filling up. Now it is flowing over. ... You should turn the wrath of God away from yourselves by your efforts. ... I love you very much and do not want your condemnation...." She spoke about the wrath of God and about condemnation. She disclosed and affirmed the existed of wrath and damnation, for a most serious reason. She knows about the terrible loss of souls. How many souls will be lost forever, with no hope of escape, and how terrible will be the judgment, when there is no longer any time to change.

Even some of our own relatives might be condemned. How would you feel if you saw one of your relatives tormented forever, without hope of relief, and you could do nothing to help them?

Like 13. There were present at that season some who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you,

no; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

To the story of the Galileans who perished, Christ added an instance of people's being taken away by sudden death. It is not long since *the tower of Siloam fell*, and there were eighteen persons killed and buried in the ruins of it. This tower adjoined to the *pool of Siloam*, which was the same with the pool of Bethesda, and it belonged to those *porches* which were by the *pool*, in which the *sick and diseased* lay, that *waited for the stirring* of the water (Jn. 5:3), and they who were killed were some of them, or some of those who in this pool used to purify themselves for the temple-service. Whoever they were, it was a sad story; yet such melancholy accidents we often hear of: for *as the birds are caught in a snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them*, Eccl. 9:12. Towers, that were built for safety, often prove men's destruction.

He cautioned his hearers not to make an ill use of these and similar events, nor take occasion thence to censure great sufferers, as if they were therefore to be accounted great sinners: Suppose ye that these Galileans, who were slain as they were sacrificing, were sinners above all the Galileans. because they suffered such things? I tell you no, v. 2, 3. Perhaps they that told him the story of the Galileans were Jews, and were glad of anything that furnished them with matter of reflection upon the Galileans, and therefore Christ retorted upon them the story of the *men of Jerusalem*. that came to an untimely end; for, with what measure of that kind we mete, it shall be measured to us again. "Now suppose ye that those eighteen who met with their death from the tower of Siloam, while perhaps they were expecting their cure from the pool of Siloam, were debtors to divine justice above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem? I tell you no." We must abide by this rule, that we cannot judge of men's sins by their sufferings in this world; for many are thrown into the furnace as gold to be purified, not as dross and chaff to be consumed. We must therefore not be harsh in our censures of those that are afflicted more than their neighbours, as Job's friends were in their censures of him, lest we condemn the generation of the righteous, Ps. 72:14. If we will be judging, we have enough to do to judge ourselves; nor indeed can we know love or hatred by all that is before us, because all things come alike to all, Eccl. 9:1, 2. Let us, in our censures of others, do as we would be done by; for as we do we shall be done by: Judge not, that ye be not judged, Mt. 7:1.

On these stories he founded a call to repentance, adding to each of them this awakening word, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*, v. 3-5. (1.) This intimates that we all deserve to *perish* as much as *they did*, and

had we been dealt with according to our mistakes, according to the iniquity of our holy things, our blood would have long ago been mixed with our sacrifices by the justice of God. It must moderate our censure, not only that we are *transgressors*, but that we are as great *transgressors* as they, and that we have as many mistakes to repent of, as they had to suffer for. [To transgress: to go beyond the bounds of, to step out of line] (2.) Therefore we are all concerned to *repent*, to be sorry for what we have done wrong, and to do so no more. The judgments of God upon others, are loud calls to us to repent. See how Christ improved every thing for the pressing of that great duty which he came not only to gain room for, and give hopes to, but to enjoin upon us—and that is, to repent. (3.) Repentance is the way to escape perishing, and it is a sure way: so iniquity shall not be your ruin, but upon no other terms. (4.) If we repent not, we shall certainly perish, as others have done before us. Some lay an emphasis upon the word *likewise*, and apply it to the destruction that was coming upon the people of the Jews, and particularly upon Jerusalem, who were destroyed by the Romans at the time of their passover, and so, like the Galileans, they had their blood mingled with their sacrifices; and many of them, both in Jerusalem and in other places, were destroyed by the fall of walls and buildings which were battered down about their ears, as those that died by the fall of the tower of Siloam. But certainly it looks further; except we repent, we shall perish eternally, as they perished out of this world. The same Jesus that calls us to repent because the kingdom of heaven is at hand, bids us repent because otherwise we shall perish. He has set before us life and death, good and evil, and put us to the choice. (5.) The perishing of those in their impenitence who have been most harsh and severe in judging others, will be in a particular manner aggravated.

Like 13. He also spoke this parable. A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it, and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground? But he answered and said to him, Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.

This parable is intended to enforce that word of warning immediately going before, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish; except you be reformed, you will be ruined, as the barren tree, except it bring forth fruit, will be cut down."

This parable primarily refers to the nation and people of the Jews. God

chose them for his own, made them a people near to him, gave them advantages for knowing and serving him above any other people, and expected answerable returns of duty and obedience from them, which, turning to his praise and honour, he would have accounted fruit: but they disappointed his expectations: they did not do their duty; they were a reproach instead of being a credit to their profession. Upon this, he justly determined to abandon them, and cut them off, to deprive them of their privileges, to unchurch and unpeople them; but, upon Christ's intercession, as of old upon that of Moses, he graciously gave them further time and further mercy; tried them, as it were, another year, by sending his apostles among them, to call them to repentance, and in Christ's name to offer them pardon, upon repentance. Some of them were wrought upon to repent, and bring forth fruit, and with them all was well; but the body of the nation continued impenitent and unfruitful, and ruin without remedy came upon them. About forty years after, they were cut down, and cast into the fire, as John Baptist had told them (Mt. 3:10), which saying of his this parable enlarges upon.

Yet it has, without doubt, a further reference, and is designed for the awakening of all that enjoy the means of grace, and the privileges of the visible church, to see to it that the temper of their minds and the tenor of their lives be answerable to their professions and opportunities, for that is the *fruit* required. Now observe here:

The advantages which this fig-tree had. It was *planted in a vineyard*, in better soil, and where it had more care taken of it and more pains taken with it, than other fig-trees had, that commonly grew, not in *vineyards* (Those are for vines), but by the *way-side*, Mt. 21:19. This fig-tree belonged to a *certain man*, that owned it, and was at expense upon it. Note: The Catholic Church is *his vineyard*, distinguished from the common, and fenced about, Isa. 5:1, 2. We are *fig-trees planted* in this vineyard by our baptism; we have a place and a name in the visible church, and this is our privilege and happiness. It is a distinguishing favour: "He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and his judgment to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them." (Psalm 147:20)

Observe the owner's expectation from it: *He came, and sought fruit thereon,* and he had reason to expect it. He did not *send,* but came himself, intimating his desire to find fruit. Christ came into this world, *came to his own,* to the Jews, seeking fruit. Note: The God of heaven requires and expects *fruit* from those that have a place in his vineyard. He has *his eye*

upon those that *enjoy* the gospel, to see whether they *live* up to it; he seeks evidences of their getting good by the means of grace they enjoy. *Leaves* will not serve, crying, *Lord*, *Lord*; *blossoms* will not serve, beginning well and promising fair; there must be *fruit*. Our thoughts, words, and actions must be according to the gospel, according to the light, according to love.

Behold the disappointment of his expectation: *He found none*, none at all, not one fig. It is sad to think how many enjoy the privileges of belonging to the true Church, being a part of the body of Christ, and yet do nothing at all to the honour of God, nor to answer the end of his entrusting them with those privileges; and it is a disappointment to him and a grief to the Spirit of his grace.

He here complains of it to the dresser of the vineyard: I come, *seeking fruit,* but am disappointed—*I find none,* looking for grapes, but behold *wild grapes.* He is grieved with such a generation.

He aggravates it, with two considerations:-[1.] That he had waited long, and yet was disappointed. As he was not *high* in his expectations, he only expected fruit, not *much* fruit, so he was not *hasty, he came three years,* year after year: applying it to the Jews, he came one space of time before the captivity, another after that, and another in the preaching of John Baptist and of Christ himself; or it may allude to the three years of Christ's public ministry, which were now expiring. In general, it teaches us that the patience of God is stretched out to long-suffering with many that enjoy the gospel, and do not bring forth the fruits of it; and this patience is wretchedly abused, which provokes God to so much the greater severity. How many times three years has God come to many of us, seeking fruit. but has *found none*, or next to none, or worse than none! [2.] This fig-tree did not only not bring forth fruit, but it caused hurt; it cumbered the ground; it took up the room of a fruitful tree, and was injurious to all about it. Note: Those who do not do good commonly do hurt by the influence of their bad example; they grieve and discourage those that are good; they harden and encourage those that are bad. And the mischief is the greater, and the ground the more cumbered, if it be a high, large, spreading tree, and if it be an old tree of long standing.

See the doom passed upon it; *Cut it down*. He says this to the *dresser of the vineyard*, to Christ, to whom all judgment is committed, to the priests who are in his name to declare this doom. Note: No other can be expected concerning barren trees, than that they should be *cut down*. As the unfruitful vineyard is dismantled, and thrown open to the common (Isa. 5:5, 6), so the unfruitful trees in the vineyard are cast out of it, and wither. "If

anyone does not abide in me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered, and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned." John 15:6. It is cut down by the judgments of God, especially spiritual judgments, such as those on the Jews that believed not, Isa. 6:9, 10. It is cut down by death, and cast into the fire of hell; and with good reason, for *why cumbers it the ground?* What reason is there why it should have a place in the vineyard to no purpose?

Behold the dresser's intercession for it. Christ is the great Intercessor; he ever lives, interceding. Priests are intercessors; they that *dress* the vineyard should *intercede* for it; those who *preach to* the flock should *pray for the flock*, for they must give themselves to the *word of God* and to *prayer*. Now observe:

What it is he prays for, and that is a reprieve: Lord, let it alone this year also. He does not pray, "Lord, let it never be cut down," but, "Lord, not now. Lord, do not remove the dresser, do not withhold the dew, do not pluck up the tree." Note, [1.] It is desirable to have a barren tree reprieved. Some have not yet grace to repent, yet it is a mercy to them to have space to repent, as it was to the Jews to have 40 years allowed them to make their peace with God, before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in the year 70. [2.] We owe it to Christ, the great Intercessor, that barren trees are not cut down immediately: had it not been for his interposition, the whole world had been cut down, upon the sin of Adam; but he said, Lord, let it alone; and it is he that upholds all things. [3.] We are encouraged to pray to God for the merciful reprieve of barren fig-trees: "Lord, let them alone; continue them yet awhile in their probation; bear with them a little longer, and wait to be gracious." Thus must we stand in the gap, to turn away wrath. [4.] Reprieves of mercy are but for a time; Let it alone this year also, a short time, but a sufficient time to make trial. When God has borne long, we may hope he will bear yet a little longer, but we cannot expect he should bear always. [5.] Reprieves may be obtained by the prayers of others for us, but not pardons; there must be our own faith, our own repentance, and our own prayers, otherwise there is no pardon.

How he promises to improve this reprieve, if it be obtained: *Till I shall dig about it, and fertilize it,* Note, [1.] In general, our prayers must always be seconded with our endeavours. The dresser seems to say, "Lord, it may be I have been wanting in that which is my part; but let it alone this year, and I will do more than I have done towards its fruitfulness." Thus in all our prayers we must request God's grace, with a humble resolution to do our

duty, else we mock God, and show that we do not rightly value the mercies we pray for. [2.] In particular, when we pray to God for grace for ourselves or others, we must follow our prayers with diligence in the use of the *means of grace*. The dresser of the vineyard engages to do *his* part, and therein teaches priests and faithful to do *theirs*. He will *dig about* the tree and will *fertilize* it. Unfruitful Catholics must be *awakened* by the terrors of the divine judgments, which *break up the fallow ground*, and then encouraged by the promises of the gospel, which are warming and fattening, as manure to the tree. Both methods must be tried; the one prepares for the other, and all little enough.

Observe upon what foot he leaves the matter: "Let us try it, and try what we can do with it one year more, and, if it bear fruit, well, v. 9. It is possible, nay, there is hope, that yet it may be fruitful." In this hope the owner will have patience with it, and the dresser will take pains with it, and, if it should have the desired success, both will be pleased that it was not cut down. The word well is not in the original, but the expression is abrupt: If it bear fruit!—supply it how you please, so as to express how wonderfully well-pleased both the owner and dresser will be. If it bear fruit, there will be cause of rejoicing: we have what we would have. But it cannot be better expressed than as we do: well. Note: Unfruitful professors of religion, if after long unfruitfulness they will repent, and amend, and bring forth fruit, shall find *all is well*. God will be *pleased*, for he will be *praised*; priests' hands will be strengthened, and such penitents will be their joy now and their crown shortly. Nay, there will be joy in heaven for it; the ground will be no longer cumbered, but improved, the vineyard beautified, and the good trees in it made better. As for the tree itself, it is well for it; it shall not only not be cut down, but it shall receive blessing from God (Heb. 6:7); it shall be *purged*, and *shall bring forth more fruit*, for the Father is its husbandman (Jn. 15:2); and it shall at last be transplanted from the vineyard on earth to the paradise above.

But he adds, *If not, then after that thou shalt cut it down*. Observe here, [1.] That, though God bear long, he will not bear always with unfruitful professors; his patience will have an end, and, if it be abused, will give way to that wrath which will have no end. Barren trees will certainly be *cut down* at last, and *cast into the fire*. [2.] The longer God has *waited*, and the more cost he has been at upon them, the greater will their destruction be: to be cut down *after that*, after all these expectations from it, these debates concerning it, this concern for it, will be sad indeed, and will aggravate the condemnation. [3.] Cutting down, though it is work that shall be done, is work that God does not take pleasure in: for observe here, the

owner said to the dresser, "Do thou *cut it down*, for it cumbereth the ground." "No," said the dresser, "if it must be done at last, *thou shalt cut it down;* let not my hand be upon it." [4.] Those that now intercede for barren trees, and take pains with them, if they persist in their unfruitfulness, will be even content to see them cut down, and will not have one word more to say for them. Their best friends will acquiesce in, nay, they will approve and applaud, the righteous judgment of God, in the day of the manifestation of it:

THEY sang the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee: for thy judgments are made manifest." (Apocalypse 15:3)

[About the destruction of Babylon] – "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets. For God hath judged your judgment on her." [Babylon]. Apocalypse 18:20

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