

Matthew 11:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

Analysis

'But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.' Jesus repeats the judgment pattern but now specifically names Sodom as facing more tolerable punishment than Capernaum. 'Day of judgment' (ἡμέρα κρίσεως/hēmera kriseōs) refers to final judgment when all humanity stands before God (Matthew 25:31-46, Revelation 20:11-15). Reformed theology affirms this final assize where every person gives account. The phrase 'more tolerable' confirms gradation in eternal punishment—while all unforgiven sin merits eternal separation from God, the degree of suffering varies according to knowledge rejected and sins committed (Luke 12:47-48, Romans 2:12). Sodom's sins were grievous, yet they sinned in ignorance of Christ. Capernaum witnessed incarnate God performing miracles, teaching truth, offering salvation—yet refused. Greater privilege equals greater responsibility. This verse destroys all presumption on religious heritage or exposure to gospel apart from genuine conversion.

Historical Context

Sodom's destruction (Genesis 19) became paradigmatic for divine judgment throughout Scripture (Isaiah 1:9, 13:19, Jeremiah 50:40, Amos 4:11, 2 Peter 2:6, Jude 7). Jews considered Sodom's judgment final and complete—utterly destroyed by fire and brimstone. Yet Jesus says Sodom will face less severe judgment than Galilean cities that rejected Him. This comparison would have shocked His audience: Sodom was the ultimate example of wickedness and judgment;

Capernaum was respectable Jewish city. Jesus reversed the valuation: religious respectability that rejects Christ merits worse judgment than pagan wickedness that never knew Him. This prophetic word proved accurate: Capernaum vanished from history; Sodom's ruins remain identified. More importantly, the principle holds: cultures with Christian heritage that apostatize face severer judgment than never-evangelized regions. This explains intensity of judgment pronounced on Christendom's apostasy throughout church history—God holds those who knew truth accountable for rejecting it.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's comparison of Capernaum with Sodom challenge assumptions about which sins are worst?
2. What does this teach about the special accountability of those raised in Christian families or societies?
3. How should awareness of degrees of judgment affect evangelism in both reached and unreached areas?

Interlinear Text

πλὴν	λέγω	ὕμῖν	ὅτι	γῇ	Σοδόμων	ἀνεκτότερον
But	I say	unto you	That	for the land	of Sodom	more tolerable
G4133	G3004	G5213	G3754	G1093	G4670	G414
ἔσται	ἐν	ἡμέρᾳ	κρίσεως	ἢ	σοί	
it shall be	in	the day	of judgment	than	for thee	
G2071	G1722	G2250	G2920	G2228	G4671	

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 10:15 (Judgment): Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Matthew 11:22 (Judgment): But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

Lamentations 4:6 (Parallel theme): For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her.