

WISE MEN VERSUS BABES

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"AT THAT TIME, JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID, I THANK THEE, O FATHER, LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, BECAUSE THOU HAS HID THESE THINGS FROM THE WISE AND PRUDENT AND HAST REVEALED THEM UNTO BABES" - Matthew 11:25.

Let us note the setting of our text and recall the circumstances that led the Lord to so speak. It was "at that time," which words mark it as a distinct period. There are three special reasons that led to the ascription of praise.

First. John's doubt of Jesus' Messiahship, as we read ... "Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" Jesus gently answered them by pointing to His credentials... "The blind received their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them" Matthew 11:2, 3, 5.

Second. The shallow, heartless, petulant criticism of Him by the people. Jesus said, "But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented"- Matthew 11:16, 17. They wanted dance music at one moment, and then they wanted the serious sad sort. They wanted funeral tones. The Lord tells them that John came austere and funereal, judging in no uncertain manner. He was the personification of the law; but they did not like him. They said he had a demon. Then Jesus came radiant as the morning, the personification of grace, eating and drinking, sanctifying their everyday life unto holiness; but they objected to Him. They characterized Him as "gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." There was simply no way of pleasing them.

Third. There were the unrepentant cities ... Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum ... where many of His mighty miracles were wrought. They remained unmoved and rebellious, even after such proofs of His Deity and Messiahship were given them. They destroyed themselves by their unbelief, calling down upon themselves the anathema of God. It was at that very season when all these annoying, perplexing, yea, harassing incidents transpired, that Jesus uttered these words, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" - Matthew 11:25.

These words have a finality about them that cannot be mistaken. They speak of mercy dammed up. God had been showing grace, proving the authority and Deity of His Son; but the great ones, men as well as cities, were rejecting Him. Their rebellious hearts were closed to all the signs and wonders of Jehovah; therefore, He was closing up His stream of mercy toward the great, the wise, and the prudent. He was binding up His paps of compassion and

who would accept His grace. There is no arbitrary law about the matter, except the law of cause and effect. The wise did not want the revelation; therefore, the "babes," those who did desire the light, are blessed and receive the illumination. Jesus thanked the Father that this was the program. It was the Father's will in the which He ever acquiesced. If some did not desire to know the precious things which He came to reveal, far be it from the Father to insist upon such revelation. Rather, He will hide these things from them. Poor rich people! Poor wise folk! How much they lose by not being simple and childlike; in other words, "babes."

Consider our text further. What are these hidden things? There must have been many a precious truth to which Jesus herein alluded. We might enumerate a few of them. The forgiveness of sins is one. "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins" - Matt. 9:6. Another is the sonship of believers. "Now are we the sons of God" - I John 3:2. Then there is the hidden truth of eternal life. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" - John 17:3.

O sad, sad words of tongue and pen... These things were hidden from wise men. They were not arbitrarily hidden, but necessarily hidden. Men must realize their need of God and His revelation, or they will never get them. Those wise folk did not know their great need of God and His grace.

Matthew 11:27 expresses the great fact which leads to revelation ... "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Herein is the mystery of the revelation that was hidden. Those wise folk did not know the Son. The Father had not given them the revelation. In like manner, they did not know the Father. Only the Son had this knowledge. He alone could reveal Him to others. Men are dependent upon Christ to know the Father ... and vice versa. They are dependent upon the Father to know the Son. Peter received this revelation when he uttered these striking words of Christ ... "Thou art the Christ, the Son, of the living God." He was one of those babes. Jesus answered the striking witness of Him by saying, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven" - Matt. 16:16, 17. Glorious revelation!

Consider more on this line of the mystery of this matter of revelation. In our text we read that the Father hides these things from the one class, the wise; and reveals them to another, the babes. Here we have two extremes of character in the human family; and the law of revelation acts toward them in two opposite ways. The one it treats with purposeful concealment. It hides things from the wise, the self-sufficient mind. How does it treat the other sort, the childlike mind? It operates in the opposite manner ... "Thou ... hast revealed them unto babes."

These two extremes met there at that time and were expressed by the Scribes and Pharisees on the one side, and the fishermen on the other side. Why are these things so? Why must they be hidden to the one and revealed to the other? Because the one

imagines that the precious things contained in revelation are foolishness to him. He thinks that what he cannot discover by his own search is not worth knowing. He is

wise in natural things; but, in spiritual matters, he is utterly void of understanding. The natural man understands nothing of the things of God. He cannot search them out though he may discover mammoth things in the natural world, even as he has done. This is one of the great basic facts of Christianity. It is the spiritual things that baffle the wise and perplex their understanding.

Bare unsanctified reason cannot shine in the realm of the Spirit. The natural man is helpless before the Truth, though he may be mighty in the realm of the mind. He may be an adept in chemistry and astronomy, skillful in physical science, philosophy, and the arts; but be ignorant of God and spiritual matters. When he turns his superb and keenly trained faculties upon the spiritual things .. the Fatherhood of God, the eternal Sonship of Christ, the virgin birth, the resurrection of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, the prodigal come home, the peace that passeth understanding, the hope that maketh not ashamed ... he is up before a stone wall. His knowledge and ability cannot help him. His brain may storm the citadel and swagger and threaten; but harder than flint, and higher than the walls of Jericho or those of the city of Tyre, more invulnerable than the gates of babylon and the eternal hills is the knowledge of the things of God. They are higher and more impassable to the natural man than all the above mentioned invincible things. "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" and honored the weak and unwise?

There is a story, most illustrative of this fact, of Prime Minister Pitt of England who achieved distinction in statesmanship at the early age of twenty four years. At the time of life when other young fellows were trying to raise a mustache, Pitt was endeavoring to raise England to the greatest place of statesmanship in the world. He was the one man that Napoleon feared and admired. The story goes that Pitt attended a religious gathering with a Christian friend. The subject of the sermon, "The Agency of the Holy Spirit in the Hearts of believers," was not understood by him. He addressed his friend upon leaving the place, saying, "I could not understand that sermon. Do you suppose anybody did?" The friend answered, --yes, there were some plain women and some children who understood every word of it and received it with joy." It is ever thus, as Jesus said, He has hidden "These things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes." Paul declares that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" - I Cor. 2:14. A man will not receive that which he honestly believes to be foolish. He has no desire to examine or search out spiritual things. Their value is absolutely hidden from him.

Someone may inquire, "What is the reason that God hides these precious things from the great?" The answer is that God is sovereign in this matter. His salvation is revealed. It is Divine. If men could search these things out by themselves, they would be independent of God. That, the Creator will not allow. The creature place must be maintained if they would be enlightened and blessed by the Lord. The humble get the true riches.

Consequently, then, it is the second class ... the babes ... to whom God is partial. But

there is a reason for this, as we have already surmised. The revelation is given to the weak, the little children who call upon the Lord for His revelation. They know they cannot find out anything otherwise. The Lord is here contrasting His own unlearned disciples with the learned, conceited, self-righteous Pharisees and Sadducees. John, Peter and James were unlearned fishermen. They were no highly educated theologues, no D.D.s, no reverends; but, rather otherwise, the humble children of men. But that very deficiency, far from being a hindrance, was a positive help in receiving the glorious new revelation. They had little to unlearn, were trustful, teachable, unhampered by possessions ... either material or religious; therefore, they were grateful and willing to take all that the Lord desired to give. They were some of the babes. Once the Lord asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called to Him a little child and set him in the midst of them and said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" - Matt. 18:14.

The babes become the spiritual giants of the race; not in point of intellect, but in that which is greater ... faith. When we study stones and such like marvels of nature, what a dry and dusty thing that is, though our teacher may be a mastermind in his line. How far different is it when we listen to one of these "babes" or children discuss some of the truth of the Living Stone or something relating to the living stones; and, oh, what a difference as we get the revelation. There is nothing dry or dusty about these things. And it is glorious all along this pathway. We thus attain perfection in the spiritual. Pride closes up the mind to God's things. Men become blind or partially blind to the heavenly vision. The trustful childlike mind is open to all the seraphic winds of truth that blow, listening always for the heavenly whisper even like a little child trying to learn the alphabet. The master is spelling out the words for all those who want to learn. This is not mock humility. It is the only method by which the human spirit can attain to supreme spiritual power. God must reveal His things, and He will only do so to the little child. Let us be little before the Lord. "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" - Matt. 23:12