
THE UNDOING OF IGNORANCE

THE EARLIER MEETINGS that Christian and Hopeful had with this one Ignorance from the country of Conceit was typical of the many other encounters they shared. Although Ignorance was found on the Way, he loitered behind not wishing to maintain any kind of ongoing fellowship. Moreover, he claimed to have strong assurance of his right to enter the City, but sadly this hope was based on his own good works.

Now Christian and Hopeful find themselves at the end of their journey. They have crossed the River of Death and have been admitted into the presence of the King. Looking back, the Dreamer sees that Ignorance has also crossed the River of Death, and unlike Christian, he passes over with very little difficulty. His boatman is named Vain-Hope.

Is it possible for an unregenerate man to face death without fear and with a vain confidence? Bunyan would answer unequivocally, "Yes!" Is it possible that a man can live a moral, well-ordered life in obedience to the commandments of God, sensitive to the needs of others and pass through both life and death, all the while carrying in his bosom a false hope of entering into eternal glory? The Puritan John Owen said, "There are many who go down into the pit in peace."

It is interesting that Ignorance comes to the gates of the City, looks at the writing above and then begins to knock. The writing is from Revelation 22:14, "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter

in through the gates into the city." Surely these words would qualify him to enter. Notice what Ignorance answers when he is finally asked, "Whence come you and what would you have?" He claims to have eaten and drunk in the presence of the King and heard His teaching. The writer must be alluding to the multitudes who sit and take communion at church and regularly hear sound preaching from week to week. There is even an acquaintance with Jesus. Alas, Ignorance could not produce a certificate and thus was denied entry and was carried off. The sobering words of Bunyan end this allegory. "Then I saw there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven."

The parable in Matthew 22 gives us a biblical account similar to the presumption of Ignorance. A man comes right into the wedding without a garment, obviously presuming that he will be welcomed and accepted as the rest. One would think that a little tolerance would be allowed; however, the king directs his servants to cast the man out of the fellowship into outer darkness.

Can we see past parable and allegory and come to grips with the core of the issue? *None* of my righteousness matters when it comes to entry into the Celestial City. The hymn writer puts it well:

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness,
My only hope, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.
