

affective and cognitive *set* the consequences of which involve the cessation of communication, thoroughgoing avoidance, and emotional alienation the one from the other. The state of personal estrangement, in short, involves a spiritual *inability* for mutual understanding and fellowship. That is what I think 'spiritual deadness' in trespasses and sins is most like. There is the huge difference, of course, that it is Adam's race that is estranged from God; it is not like billions of marriages gone bad with one divorce as an occurrence in each life. Adamic estrangement is a condition *we are born to*, and that is why we all must be born again."

"But how does the Matthew passage relate to that?" asked Charlie. "The natural man, as the Apostle Paul makes clear, cannot respond to the Gospel by his own cognitive resources. It's doubtful anyway that Jesus means that Korazin's, Bethsaida's, and Capernaum's refusal to repent was a refusal of the Gospel. Isn't the repentance at issue in Matthew 11:20-24 just a Ninevite repentance? Simply a turning from previous wickedness, but not necessarily *to* a saving relationship with Israel's covenant God?"

"Let me take the second question first," said Harold. "Is the repentance merely Ninevite? I don't know, partly because I'm not sure we can ever know what the Ninevite repentance really consisted in, but what we do know is that in the synagogue in Capernaum Jesus proclaimed that *he* was the Bread of Life, that *his* flesh and blood were essential to his listeners' salvation, and that anyone believing in *him* would have everlasting life (Jn 6:24-59). It is reasonable to think that Capernaum's failure to repent involved the refusal of a considerable Gospel content in addition to the failure to be impressed by Jesus's miracles. I think it's also reasonable to think that Jesus intended a like exposure to *himself* in both word and miraculous deed in the hypothetical revelation to the ancient cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom. But again, I don't know how to be certain of this. My central point, however, doesn't depend on settling the issue whether or not Capernaum's failure to repent was a failure to do what the population of Nineveh did when Jonah preached there. Suffice it to say that it was the *Son of God* whom Jesus's contemporaries refused. The people, moreover, were *Jews*—the recipients and stewards of a unique two thousand year legacy of revelation from the one true God. All things considered, there is certainly a huge contrast between Jesus's extended ministry in Capernaum and Jonah's brief message to pagan Nineveh.