

'Luke' - Extra Teaching Points #23

Luke 12:49-59 (NASB95)

Luke 12:49-53

"I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!"⁵⁰ "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!"⁵¹ "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division;⁵² for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three."⁵³ "They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

Q: In [verse 49](#), what does Jesus mean when He says, "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!"?

- It seems to be linked with the baptism Jesus is anticipating in [verse 50](#).
 - The baptism would be His suffering ([Mark 10:38-40](#)).
- Scholars don't agree on what this fire is.
 - Some see this as a reference to the tongues of fire on Pentecost ([Acts 2:1-4](#)), **spreading the gospel like fire to all the nations**.
 - Some think this is what John prophesied Jesus would do in [Matt 3:11](#), when John said Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.
 - On this view, we might understand Jesus to be saying there is a blaze or fire of revival coming, and He was eager to see it start; but He would have to go through a baptism before He could start it.
 - However, when John said Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire, ([Matt 3:11](#) *In context, John was talking about the ax at the root of the tree, ready to cut down fruitless trees and throw them into the fire*), it seems most likely he was saying Jesus was going to bring the Holy Spirit for those who accepted Him, and **fiery judgment for those who rejected Him**.
 - John was saying they were living in the days when God was separating those in Israel who were the remnant and would be preserved, from those who had abandoned God and would be destroyed.
 - On this view, Jesus would be saying that He was there to set fire to faithless Israel; to end that age and begin the new one.
 - Israel was destroyed beyond recognition by the Romans in 70AD, and biblical Judaism was ended with the destruction of the temple and priesthood.
- **When considering these points, then comparing this [Luke 12:49-53](#) passage with a very similar passage in [Matt 10:34-36](#) where Jesus said He came to bring a sword, it seems more likely that Jesus is talking about bringing judgment when He says He came to cast fire on the earth.**
 - In [Matt 10:34-36](#), Jesus quotes [Micah 7:6](#).
 - Micah's prophecies were about judgment coming to Israel.

Luke 12:54-56

*"And He was also saying to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming,' and so it turns out."⁵⁵ "And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, 'It will be a hot day,' and it turns out that way."⁵⁶ "You hypocrites! **You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?***

Jesus seems to be continuing His discussion of judgment that is coming on Israel.

Q: Why does Jesus challenge their ability to analyze the time they were living in?

- [Matt 16:1-4](#) is very similar.
 - *“The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. ² But He replied to them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ ³ “And in the morning, ‘There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ **Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?** ⁴ “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah.” And He left them and went away.”*
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- The prophets had warned this time was coming; the Pharisees and Sadducees should have been able to see the storm was coming!
 - Jesus was saying the signs were obvious, but they weren’t paying attention to them.

Luke 12:57-59

*“And why do you not even **on your own initiative judge what is right?** ⁵⁸ “For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on your way there make an effort to settle with him, so that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. ⁵⁹ **“I say to you, you will not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent.”***

Jesus is still on the subject of impending judgment (that came in 70AD), and recognizing the times they were living in.

Q: Why would Jesus talk about lawsuits in the middle of warning them about judgment coming on Israel, and how does this apply to us?

- Since we know that God’s judgment is coming, why not do what is right without being forced to?
- Jesus also teaches this in [Matt 5:25-26](#).

Q: What does verse 59 mean?

- Catholics use this verse to teach their doctrine of Purgatory, but that doesn’t seem to be what Jesus is talking about.
- God, at times, freed His servants who were wrongly imprisoned ([Acts 5:19-20; 16:26-28](#)); but if we are jailed for doing wrong, God’s not going to get us out!
 - That’s why it is so important for us to take the initiative to judge what is right, and settle with our opponents... before the dispute even makes it to court.

Follow Up Assignment

Q: How do you feel about God’s judgment?

- Is it something you are looking forward to... or something you are afraid of?

Q: Jesus wanted the people of His day to understand the times they were living in.

- Why was that so important for them?
- How important is it that we understand the times we are living in?
- What are the times we are living in?

Q: Is there something you need to make right on your own initiative... without being forced?