

## Message #65

## Luke 12:49-53

Years ago, when I taught at the Grand Rapids School of the Bible and Music, I was assigned to teach the gospel of Luke and we came to this text. After the lecture, a young man told me his testimony. He came to faith in Jesus Christ and then in church one Sunday night he heard a message that focused on being willing to do what God wanted him to do and he decided he wanted to get a theological education with the goal of some future ministry. He went home excited to tell his father and mother. Now his father was a very successful businessman and very wealthy. He told his son that he would completely pay his son's college education. When his son told him that he wanted to go to GRSBM to study the Bible, he changed his mind. He informed his son that he was willing to send him to any college in the United States and that he would foot the bill, but he said if you go to a "Bible School," I will not give you one dime. His father said I do not want my son to be some "preacher boy." Well the young man telling me this story said that he told his father that he truly believed this is what God wanted him to do and he was going to do it. That young man turned his back on the wishes of his family and he came to school. He got a part-time job and he worked his way through school. That young man learned a very basic Biblical lesson: **if you follow Jesus Christ and if you purpose to do the will of God, you may find that you are totally alienated from even your own mother and father.**

Back in 1982, in a church near Ann Arbor, Michigan, a woman, who had become a Christian, was given an ultimatum by her husband. Either she stop her focus on Jesus Christ and stop going to church and continue to follow his godless lifestyle or he was leaving. This wife refused to follow his godless ways and this wife saw her husband walk right out the door, simply because she loved Jesus Christ and went to church. That dear woman learned a lesson: **if you love Jesus Christ and the word of God, you may end up totally alienated from your own mate.**

When a person believes in Jesus Christ, things change and they aren't the same. **A personal relationship with Jesus Christ will at times cause conflict and alienation in relationships.** **First** of all, a relationship with Jesus Christ will cause a conflict in yourself. But **second**, a relationship with Jesus Christ will at times cause a conflict with others.

When you are in a right relationship with God, things become new. You don't think the same old way. You don't talk the same old way. You don't behave in the same old way.

If you purpose to obey the word of God, there will be times you will discover that you are very much alone. You will be viewed as an outsider and you will not be accepted by the majority. You will discover you at times don't fit in with the rest at school, on the job, on the team, even at times in the family.

This problem is not a new problem. This was a major problem for Jesus Christ, Himself and it will be for His people. What Jesus wanted His disciples to realize and what He taught here was this:

**THE WORK THAT JESUS CHRIST CAME TO ACCOMPLISH THE FIRST TIME HE CAME TO THIS EARTH MEANS THAT THOSE WHO DO HAVE A REAL RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM WILL BE SHARPLY DIVIDED FROM THOSE WHO DON'T.**

Jesus Christ causes warfare. Jesus Christ causes conflict. Jesus Christ causes alienation. Jesus Christ is God and when you put God physically on this earth, in this sinful world with all the people who are sinful, you will discover a major hostile battle taking place between Him and them.

Do not miss what is said here. **A commitment to Jesus Christ and the word of God will divide families, nationalities, countries and communities.** A commitment to Jesus Christ and the word of God can even divide a church. Those who love the Lord and the word will at times find themselves at odds with just about everything and everyone.

If you go to most churches and you want to be seriously taught the Word of God in a reverent atmosphere and you express that, you will soon learn you don't fit in with the majority. In fact, the majority will tell you go somewhere else.

This is a very powerful text and in it Jesus Christ presents three reasons why He came to this earth. We learn a great deal about Him and His ministry and the entire program of God:

**EARTH APPEARANCE REASON #1** – Jesus Christ came to this earth to judge. **12:49**

In this verse, Christ specifically says that one of His purposes for coming was to “cast fire upon the earth.” **This type of language is found many times in the Bible in both the O.T. and the N.T. and in each case it is a reference to a consuming and devouring judgment (Is. 66:15-16; Joel 2:30; Amos 1:7, 10-14; 2:2, 5; Mal. 3:2, 5; II Thess. 1:7-8; II Pet. 3:10, 12; Rev. 1:14-15; 19:11-15).** There is no doubt by using this language that Jesus Christ wanted all people to realize that He was the judge and ultimately He will judge.

Now one reason why He wanted people to realize this was because at this point He did not appear to be the judge. He appeared to be meek and mild, loving and kind. He is travelling around Palestine performing miracles and teaching. He is certainly not sitting on some throne demanding accountability at that point. **But He wanted the people to realize, I am the judge and one day I am going to judge.**

**In fact, the verb “I have come” is what we would call a cumulative aorist, meaning Christ is thinking about His entire scope of ministry, both His first coming and His second coming.** He was obviously fed up with the apathy and lack of commitment and He wanted all people to realize I am the one who will someday bring ferocious judgment to this earth.

He was getting so fed up with what He was seeing that He said, “I wish it were already kindled.” What He means is I wish the plan right now was to bring forth the full flame of the judgment of God.

What that would mean for Christ is that He would have the work of the cross behind Him. But at this point in time that cross was still before Him. But He wanted all to know that I am the judge and the judgment is simmering. It is just that I must go to the cross so I can save sinners.

The judgment of God is simmering right now and make no mistake about this fact, Jesus Christ will return and He will ferociously judge. Just because people in His day and in our day think they are getting away with sin because they are loved by God regardless, they are not. Jesus Christ is the judge and He will judge.

William Van Doren, a Biblical linguist of the 1800’s, said fire does three things according to the Bible:

- 1) It warms that which is cold.
- 2) It purifies that which is unclean.
- 3) It consumes that which is evil.

When we follow the Lord and obey the word, we will be warmed to the things of God; we will be purified from that which is unclean and we will be purged from that which is evil.

Most places today don’t want to think in terms of Christ being the judge. They want to make Him to be a Person who likes them no matter what. Make no mistake about this point, Jesus Christ is the judge and one day He will judge. Every knee shall bow before Him.

## **EARTH APPEARANCE REASON #2 – Jesus Christ came to this earth to suffer. 12:50**

Notice the adversative conjunction that begins **verse 50**, “but” (δε). **This is critical because this explains why Jesus Christ has not judged yet. In sharp contrast to the fact that He has come to cast fire on this earth is the reality that before He does, He must complete a mission.**

The mission is described by Him saying, “I have a baptism to undergo” first. Now the baptism has nothing to do with water. **Before Jesus can bring the fiery wrath of God, He must take upon Himself the wrath of God.** In other words, He must identify with sinners and take on the wrath of God, which will then enable Him to save sinners or pour out wrath on sinners. **His sacrifice will be the only means of escaping the fiery wrath of God and if one does not believe in Him, he will suffer the wrath of God.**

The word “baptism” is one that means to dip in dye or to sink a ship or to immerse something (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 75). The specific baptism to which Christ is referring is His own suffering and death, which would completely identify Him with the wrath of God. He was about to be completely submerged and immersed into brutal suffering and death that would take upon Himself the wrath of God.

Now the thought of this baptism “distressed” Christ. That word “distress” (συνεχω) is one that means He was constrained and hemmed in on every side by the thought of the cross and the suffering that was before Him (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 428).

No matter where Jesus went, no matter what Jesus did, He was always thinking about that cross. He was the judge, but He knew before He would judge, He had to suffer.

He knew what would happen and He would be distressed until it was completed. One of the most distressful things about this is that He knew He would face the abandonment of the Father. That moment occurred when He cried out “My God, My God, Why have you forsaken Me?”

The only hope one has to extinguish the flames of God’s wrath is to accept Jesus Christ. It is His work on that cross that enables one to escape the fiery flames of the wrath of God.

**EARTH APPEARANCE REASON #3** – Jesus Christ came to this earth to divide. **12:51-53**

It is clear that the key word of these verses is the word “divide.” It occurs three times in three verses. It is the Greek word (διαιρεζω) which speaks of a very emphatic and sharp division and separation (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 109).

What Christ says here is that I came this first time not to bring peace to this world, but to be a great dividing line.

Now most Jews in our day and most in Christ’s day are looking for a “shalom utopia.” In fact, one of the reasons they have rejected Jesus Christ as Messiah is because He did not wipe out Israel’s enemies and bring peace to Israel and honor them as the great nation of God.

Jews think and stress that their Messiah is coming to bring peace. In fact, **verse 51** gives us a clear glimpse of how most Jews thought. They thought Jesus Christ came to promote peace.

There are many passages that speak of the fact that Jesus Christ will come and He will eventually bring peace to this earth (Ps. 72:1-7; Is. 11:1-12; Luke 2:14; John 14:27). These passages clearly predict that one day the Messiah will bring peace to the world.

However, what was neglected and what is always neglected is the whole truth and the whole counsel of God’s word. There is a great chasm between God and sinful man. The vast majority of people are not at peace with God, but they are an enemy of God and the only way this relationship may be reconciled is through Jesus Christ and His suffering cross work.

In some respects, Jesus Christ did come the first time to bring peace. His sacrificial work on the cross made it possible for sinful man to be in a peace relationship with God (Rom. 5:1). But when Jesus Christ as God came into this world, literally all hell broke loose.

At the end of **verse 51**, Jesus says very emphatically, “I say to you I came to bring division.” That word means Jesus is saying I came to divide and separate. I came to make people right with God and that will divide and separate the people from those who aren’t right with God.

In **verses 52 and 53**, Jesus Christ makes it clear just how divisive a relationship with Him can be. A relationship with Him can split homes (**12:52**) and split families (**12:53**).

In case anyone misses the point, Jesus specifies the point:

- 1) A relationship with Me will put a divide between a father and son.
- 2) A relationship with Me will put a divide between a mother and daughter.
- 3) A relationship with Me will put a divide between in-laws.

These were the closest of family ties.

A commitment to Jesus Christ at this time meant that you could:

- 1) Lose your life.
- 2) Lose your family.
- 3) Lose your friends.
- 4) Lose your religion.
- 5) Lose your government.
- 6) Lose your job.
- 7) Lose your reputation.

One of the reasons Rome cited for their slaughter of Christians was that their religion was a religion that divided families.

Of course what is not stated is the reason for the division. The reason is because one is in a right relationship with God and most aren’t.

A couple of weeks ago, I received an email along with the testimony of a Jewish attorney in Florida who follows our ministry. When he came to faith in Jesus Christ, he lost his best Jewish friend and it even put a great divide between his Jewish father and mother. Here is part of what he wrote:

“I wish I could say everything has always been wonderful (*since he believed on Jesus Christ*), but as it says in Acts 14:22, ‘We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.’ But as Jesus said in John 16:33, ‘I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.’”