

# ***IMPENDING JUDGMENT:***

## ***JESUS' BAPTISM BY FIRE***

### **LUKE 12:49-13:9**

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In our passage this morning from Luke 12:49-13:9, Jesus interprets in advance the significance and meaning of the death he will experience in Jerusalem (as John the Baptist has already done, Luke 3:16-18).

In the cross of Jesus Christ we see the wrath and judgment of God revealed clearly as the eschatological wrath of God is manifested and intrudes on this earth in the death of God's Eternal Son.

This baptism of fire redeems and unites, but it also divides. All people are called to repent in light of this fiery manifestation of God's just wrath revealed in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.

As Jesus approaches Jerusalem and the Kingdom continues to be manifested in His Person and Work, so the opposition intensifies as Jesus addresses Israel (and the crowds) with the prophetic woes of judgment that will surely come upon all unbelievers if they do not repent.

Now is the time to seek repentance and turn to Jesus Christ for hope and salvation (2 Cor. 6:2); the impending judgment is near and some will be saved and some destroyed!

As Jesus has preached to the disciples and crowds about living their lives in light of the end (see last two sermons on Luke 12:22-34 and 12:35-48), so now he also informs them that the judgment of the end is present now in that it is intruding presently through Jesus' preaching and Kingdom revelation.

***There is impending judgment for Jesus;  
there is impending judgment for the whole world!***

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 12:49-50:** "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! <sup>50</sup> I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!"

#### **I. Casting Fire on the Earth (12:49-50)**

##### **a. Fire on the earth (v. 49)**

There is great urgency in Jesus' speaking here (v. 49). When Jesus speaks of casting fire on the earth, he is speaking of the Judgment Day that the prophets spoke concerning when Messiah appeared.

Jesus says clearly here that part of his Divine Messianic Mission is to "cast fire on the earth" (v. 49a), and he eagerly anticipates the day it will be kindled (v. 49b).

Earlier in Luke's Gospel, John the Baptist preached this way:

**Luke 3:9, 16-18:** <sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 3:9** Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and *thrown into the fire.*"

...John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.*"<sup>17</sup> His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."<sup>18</sup> So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people.

Jesus will cast fire on the earth; the Great Day of Judgment *has come* in Jesus and has not been fully realized yet (cf. Luke 4:17ff).

Yet Jesus must undergo judgment on behalf of his people BEFORE the Judgment Day of God will manifest itself fully. However, we should understand that in Jesus' judgment we do indeed see the eschatological intrusion of God's wrath against sin in His baptism of fire (or the "cup" he must drink, cf. Matt. 20:22; Mark 10:38-39; 14:36).

*Jesus the Baptizer with fire would first be Jesus the Baptized with fire!*

Fire in the Old Covenant was symbolic of God's wrath and fiery judgment:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Jeremiah 43:12** I shall kindle a fire in the temples of the gods of Egypt, and he shall burn them and carry them away captive. And he shall clean the land of Egypt as a shepherd cleans his cloak of vermin, and he shall go away from there in peace.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Ezekiel 15:7** And I will set my face against them. Though they escape from the fire, the fire shall yet consume them, and you will know that I am the LORD, when I set my face against them.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Zechariah 13:9** And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my

name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"

<sup>ESV</sup> **Malachi 3:2** But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.<sup>3</sup> He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD.

Fire in the Old Covenant and throughout Scripture can destroy but it can also ***purify and refine***. The fire that Jesus will cast upon the earth will consume unbelievers who have opposed him and purify and refine those who are united to him by faith.

We see this partially fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost where Jesus after his death, resurrection and ascension-glory-enthronement pours out his all-consuming Spirit-Fire upon those who believe.

If you recall, the people had tongues of fire over their heads that did not consume them. Rather, the Spirit-Fire sent on Pentecost was to refine and purify the “sons of Levi” by faith in Jesus Christ.

#### **b. Jesus' Baptism of Fire (v. 50)**

Jesus is in great distress (v. 50b) until His baptism is accomplished; Jesus must undergo a baptism-crisis into which he must pass through in order to accomplish his Divine Messianic Mission.

One author wrote that for Jesus “the prospect of His sufferings was a perpetual Gethsemane for him” (quoted in Geldenhuys, pg. 367).

We see this distressful struggle elsewhere in John's Gospel as Jesus came to the “hour” to experience his awful baptism of fire:

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 12:27** *"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.*

The baptism by fire that Jesus must experience should be linked to the cup that Jesus speaks of later: the cup of God's wrath that he must drink down to the dregs for sinful humanity:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 22:42** *saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."*

Jesus is God, but he is also truly man (in hypostatic union with deity). Therefore, for Jesus to think about his suffering brings great distress or anguish to his soul- -although he willingly continues toward this death and

willingly obeys the Father as he has covenanted with Him to do (cf. Heb. 13:20-21).

Jesus realizes that his clear revelation and the teaching about the Kingdom of God present in himself will continue to create hostile opposition and end up being the reason why he is killed when he shall undergo this baptism of God's fiery wrath.

## **i. Symbol**

### **1. Old Testament Meaning of Baptism- Judgment and Salvation**

- a. Judgment: Exodus from Egypt, Egyptians are drowned in the Red Sea (Exodus 15).**
- b. Salvation: Israel is saved because they are baptized into Moses (1 Cor. 10:4ff) as their representative and they pass through the judgment waters safely.**

### **2. Sign of the Offering that was licked up by God's fiery wrath**

### **3. Ancient Near Eastern Light on Baptism**

A baptism in the ancient Near East was a crisis that a person would be subjected to that included water or the passing through of water. In the ancient Near East waters would be used as a crisis where a person would either pass through the judgment waters and be "saved" (or vindicated) or be "consumed" by them (and be judged).

The term was also used in referring to the total destruction of a city (i.e. "the city was baptized" by fire).

## **ii. Reality- the Cross**

**The reality Jesus speaks of here is the cross he must bear as the representative sin-bearer of the world!**

We should be reminded that Jesus had already undergone John's baptism (Luke 3:20-21) as representative of his people (although he did not need repentance), but this baptism (also a representative one), is a *baptism of judgment*.

Jesus' Messianic Mission cannot be accomplished until Jesus first undergoes God's divine judgment upon sin. Jesus as our representative who has been baptized by John, who has received the Holy Spirit from the Father, **must undergo a baptism by fire on behalf of his people in order to be vindicated-resurrected for his people.**

Jesus is about to face a crisis where he must pass through a baptism as His people's representative that will either prove he is righteous through God's vindication, or that he is unrighteous because he remains dead upon the cross.

In the Book of Acts, Dr. Luke describes this victory for Jesus as our representative, as he endures the baptismal crisis-judgment and is raised from the dead for our vindication.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 10:39-43:** And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. *They put him to death by hanging him on a tree,<sup>40</sup> but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear,<sup>41</sup> not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.<sup>42</sup> And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.<sup>43</sup> To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."*

**It is important to understand the one mission of Jesus Christ of Nazareth with different phases to the mission. Jesus was baptized by John; Jesus was baptized by the Spirit of God from heaven so that he might be equipped to accomplish his mission; Jesus was baptized with fire upon the cross; Jesus was fully baptized by the Spirit of God in his glory-enthronement as he was glorified and became the "Life-Giving Spirit" (cf. 1 Cor. 15:45); Jesus poured out his Spirit-Fire upon his people.**

### **1. What is the meaning of "vicarious atonement"?**

It is important to understand in this context that people are either identified with Christ vicariously in his baptism of God's wrath upon the cross or the wrath of God abides upon them (cf. John 3:18, 36).

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 3:18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 3:36** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Vicarious means “in the place of another”. Jesus was baptized with God’s wrath in our stead, in our place, so that we might be redeemed and God’s justice would be satisfied for our sins.

The ground of our redemption is found in Christ’s vicarious atonement on our behalf, where God’s wrath against sinners is satisfied and reconciliation is accomplished by his obedience and perfect sacrifice.

- a. **Isaiah 53:10-** “Crush” [Hebrew: דִּקְקָה *dikka*]; translated as “he will cleanse” in the LXX [from Greek verb: καθαρίζω meaning “cleanse, make clean, purify”].
- b. **Purification-** This means that the vicarious atonement, or the purpose of God’s “crushing” His own Son is so that in Him we might be purified and cleansed! We are made holy in Him.
- c. **Cleansing-** Our sins are cleansed (as David prayed in Psalm 51- We are “white as snow”).
- d. **Jesus’ distress (12:50b)-** “It is finished” [τετέλεσται [UBS] τελέω finish, complete, end; fulfill, carry out, accomplish].

*Jesus time upon the cross ends Jesus’ time of distress and suffering as he gives up his spirit to the care of His Father.*

**Because Jesus was baptized on behalf of his people upon the cross, the Apostle Paul can use this language to refer to the fact that God’s people in Christ Jesus have truly died, been buried under God’s wrathful judgment, and raised to a new life in Him:**

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 6:3-5:** Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

**“Were you there?” Jesus’ judgment and baptism on the cross was our judgment and baptism on the cross of Christ; Jesus’ salvation through the baptism of God’s wrath is our salvation through baptism the baptism of God’s wrath!**

## 2. What is propitiation? (Rom. 3:23-26)

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 3:23-26:** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> **whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.** This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. <sup>26</sup> It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 John 4:10** In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Propitiation means satisfaction or appeasement and it is related to substitutionary vicarious atonement in that God put forth Jesus as a propitiation for his people because of His love for them in Him.

Our sins have infinitely displeased God and we have stored up much wrath against us; Christ is put forward by God (Rom. 3:25) as a substitute for us as he is baptized by God’s wrath *in our place or stead.*

### iii. Salvation

The salvation that Jesus declares and experiences upon the cross will cause the rising and falling of many in Israel. Jesus’ salvation

message of the Kingdom Gospel actually divides as well as brings peace or *shalom* with God for those who believe.

And this is why Jesus goes on to point out to the people that they should NOT be surprised by the division that he has purposed to bring to the earth!

## II. “Peace on Earth...Good will to men?” (12:51-53)

<sup>51</sup> Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. <sup>52</sup> For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. <sup>53</sup> They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

### a. Why not peace on earth? (v. 51; cf. Luke 2:7ff)

And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

- i. **The peace is extended to those on whom his favor rests (Luke 2:14). Those on whom His favor rests were those God provided a substitutionary sacrifice for them in the Person of Jesus Christ.**
- ii. **The peace is a peace or *shalom* with God in reconciliation (Rom. 5:1-11).**
- iii. **The eschatological judgment day wrath of God intrudes upon the present as men either receive or reject Jesus Christ and His Kingdom, dividing families as a result.**

### b. Why division? (vv. 52-53)

- i. **Although Jesus unites a new family in Him through peace (Eph. 2:11-20), his mission was to divide humanity into those who were part of this present age and those who are by faith part of the new creation and the age to come.**
- ii. **Jesus unites a new family who are members of His Kingdom and brings peace that was once a wall of separation and division between Jews and Gentiles- -now all are children in**



**Jesus Christ through faith, whether Jew or Gentile, slave or free, and male or female (cf. Gal. 3:26-29).**

**This division that Jesus was sent to bring was prophesied by Simeon even before Jesus began his ministry, while he was just an infant baby:**

**Luke 2:29-35:** “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;<sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation<sup>31</sup> that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,<sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”<sup>33</sup> And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him.<sup>34</sup> And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, *“Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed<sup>35</sup> (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”*

- iii. **Faith in Jesus naturally divides those within a family who are believing or unbelieving (as in Israel: True Israel and False Israel- see Rom. 9:1-6- “For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel”).**

<sup>ESV</sup> **Ephesians 2:14-16:** For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility<sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,<sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Jesus is alluding to the Prophecy of Micah in chapter 7:5-7:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Micah 7:5-7:** Put no trust in a neighbor; have no confidence in a friend; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your arms;<sup>6</sup> *for the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.*<sup>7</sup> But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.

The basic unit of all social groups is the family. Even before the government or the church in the world, there was the family. Yet the cross of Christ divides those within this basic social group because one has either been identified with Jesus or they have not; one either is for him, or against him.

Professor Bock quotes another New Testament scholar who wrote: “Those who would reduce Jesus to a sentimental savior of a doting God have not come to terms with the depth of divine passion, of the wrath and love of God which is revealed in Jesus’ word, will, and obedience even unto death” (pg. 1196).

Illustration: As the written Word of God is as a two-edged sword that divides, so the Incarnate Word of God is as a two-edged sword that divides. One either believes or rejects the King and the Kingdom (cf. Heb. 4:12; John 1:1ff).

**c. How will this division adversely affect Kingdom Disciples?**

- i. Illustrations and Realities**
- ii. How the people of God are unified as a “countercultural-counterfamily” in this present age**

**III. Signs on Earth- “Eschatological Rumbings” (12:54-58)**

<sup>54</sup> He also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming.' And so it happens. <sup>55</sup> And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat,' and it happens. <sup>56</sup> You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time? <sup>57</sup> "And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? <sup>58</sup> As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. <sup>59</sup> I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny."

**a. Weather Signs (Natural-General Revelation) (vv. 54-55).**

In Palestine, a cloud from the west simply meant that moisture was coming in from the Mediterranean Sea and everyone knew that this meant that rain was coming (1 Kings 18:44-45). The southwesterly wind would come from the Negev desert and bring heat that would be so scorching that it would cause plants to wilt (Described as “a furnace blast of desert air that can raise the temperature thirty degrees in an hour”- *Luke*, NICNT, pg. 511).

One can interpret the significance of a cloud and what that means, one can even interpret the significance of southwesterly hot winds and what that means, *but they cannot interpret the significance of Christ and His Kingdom present in their midst* (cf. Luke 10:9, 11; 11:20).

**b. “Interpreting the present time” in light of God’s clear revelation (vv. 56-57).**

Jesus calls the people hypocrites (v. 56) because they can tell the weather, that is they can predict it, ***but they cannot interpret the clear teaching and signs that the Kingdom is present in him that Jesus has made known to them.*** Jesus is saying that the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy has already worked its way through the whole batch of Israelite dough (Luke 12:1):

"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, ***which is hypocrisy.***

Like the weather tells us something of what is about to happen, so Jesus' preaching and his miracles tell us something of what is about to happen with regard to ***the eschatological crisis of God's Judgment on the horizon.***

Jesus has shown all the people clearly that he is indeed the long-anticipated Messiah-King of God's long-awaited Kingdom spoken of in Moses, the Prophets and the Writings of the Old Covenant (cf. Luke 24:25-27, 44ff).

#### **c. "Settling matters" with God in light of the End (vv. 58-59)**

The context is clear that Jesus is speaking of God's accusation against unbelieving Israel, and ***by implication all who do not believe in Jesus.*** The urgency and stress of Jesus in the present context is that people might recognize by faith the clear signs of impending judgment that is upon the world because of the presence of the Kingdom in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In light of this, Jesus is saying that all must repent and settle matters with God before he requires their full payment for their debt of sin.

Only a propitiation put forward by God in the perfect atonement of his Son upon the cross can pay the full debt we owe to God for our sins. Look to the cross and see your sins paid for in full by the baptism of Jesus upon the cross; look to the cross and know that in Him you suffered under the wrath of God as he vicariously represented you:

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Corinthians 5:20-21:** Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

#### **IV. "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (13:1-5)**

As Jesus has an impending judgment that he must face, a baptism by fire, where he will take the Father's wrath for the sins of his people, so there is also an impending judgment on those in Israel who are presently rejecting him and who will continue to reject him.

The final and perfect sacrifice is being made by Christ Jesus and once Christ makes this sacrifice, there will be no longer any need for the blood of bulls and goats (see Hebrews 10). ***To reject Christ is to reject His perfect obedience and sacrifice offered by God for repentant sinners!***

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 13:1** There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. <sup>2</sup> And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? <sup>3</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. <sup>4</sup> Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

**a. "Sinners all!" (cf. Rom. 3:9-23)**

In light of all that Jesus has said, and in light of all that Jesus has revealed all must repent ***no matter who you are!*** This is what John the Baptist said earlier to the Israelite teachers:

**Luke 3:7-9:** He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup> ***Bear fruits in keeping with repentance.*** And do not begin to say to yourselves, ***'We have Abraham as our father.'*** For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. <sup>9</sup> Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

**b. Importance of repentance in light of the Kingdom**

In light of the reality of the Kingdom making itself fully disclosed and revealed in Jesus Christ, ***all men are to repent and seek to enter with all their strength and power.***

In light of this Kingdom reality realized in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, all men must realize that they will perish if they do not have Christ as their salvation and protection.

In Jesus' day, as in our own, some people believed that when "bad things" happened to people it was because of God's judgment on sin (Job 4:7; 8:4; 22:5; cf. John 9:1-3). The thinking of the time was that disaster only befalls those who deserve it.

Jesus clears up this wrong thinking and says that with the manifestation of God's just wrath that will be revealed on the cross of Christ, all must recognize themselves as guilty and in need of repentance and mercy found in Christ alone.

***Being killed while worshipping (13:1) or experiencing a terrible death in the fall of a tower (13:4) is nothing compared to the terrible impending judgment on sinners who refuse to seek Christ for refuge and help.***

When people observe the terrible reality of death, they are not to think about how the people who suffered must have some how deserved it more than they did. Rather, ***they are to realize that death is imminent for all and the judgment of God that follows our death if we do not know the Lord Jesus Christ- -therefore we can only be prepared through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!***

Professor Bock wrote: “The issue is not when death will happen or why, but avoiding a terminal fate with even greater consequences. Only repentance will prevent the death that lasts” (pg. 1206).

New Testament interpreter T. W. Manson commented on 13:1-5: “The fate of these people is a reminder not of their sins—they were neither better nor worse than many others—but of the urgency of the Gospel. Had they only known what was astir, been warned that Pilate was in a black mood or that the building was dangerous, they might have saved their lives. But there was no one there to warn them, and they perished. So this generation, says Jesus in effect, is walking—politically and religiously—straight for disaster. But the warning has been given, first by John the Baptist and now by Jesus. It is a warning to change direction before it is too late” (*Gospel of Luke*, pg. 565).

**c. What is real and genuine repentance? (What does it look like?)**

## **V. Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (13:6-9)**

<sup>6</sup> And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup> And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' <sup>8</sup> And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. <sup>9</sup> Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

**Jesus is using language and an illustration from the Prophet Jeremiah:**

<sup>ESV</sup> **Jeremiah 12:15-17:** And after I have plucked them up, I will again have compassion on them, and I will bring them again each to his heritage and each to his land. <sup>16</sup> And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, 'As the LORD lives,' even as they taught my people to swear by Baal, then they shall be built up in the midst of my people. <sup>17</sup> ***But if any nation will not listen, then I will utterly pluck it up and destroy it, declares the LORD.***"

## a. Imagery of the fig tree in the vineyard

<sup>ESV</sup> **Jeremiah 24:1-10:** After Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken into exile from Jerusalem Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, together with the officials of Judah, the craftsmen, and the metal workers, and had brought them to Babylon, the LORD showed me this vision: behold, two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the LORD. <sup>2</sup> One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, but the other basket had very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten. <sup>3</sup> And the LORD said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" I said, "Figs, the good figs very good, and the bad figs very bad, so bad that they cannot be eaten." <sup>4</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>5</sup> "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. <sup>6</sup> I will set my eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not uproot them. <sup>7</sup> I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart. <sup>8</sup> "But thus says the LORD: Like the bad figs that are so bad they cannot be eaten, so will I treat Zedekiah the king of Judah, his officials, the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who dwell in the land of Egypt. <sup>9</sup> I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a reproach, a byword, a taunt, and a curse in all the places where I shall drive them. <sup>10</sup> And I will send sword, famine, and pestilence upon them, until they shall be utterly destroyed from the land that I gave to them and their fathers."

## b. Barren Israel

Although God showed his favor to Israel, many did not believe and so there was no fruit. As John the Baptist had said recorded earlier in Dr. Luke's gospel:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 3:7-9:** He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" <sup>8</sup> ***Bear fruits in keeping with repentance.*** And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. <sup>9</sup> Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

Although there was still a remnant in Israel represented now by the Kingdom Disciples because God did not allow the gates of hell to prevail against His people, nevertheless many who had received God's special revelation through

Moses, the Prophets and the Writings did not recognize, and in fact rejected God's Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ:

The Apostle Paul speaks of the privileges that God's fig tree had in the Old Covenant in Romans 9:1-6:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 9:1-6:** I am speaking the truth in Christ- I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit- <sup>2</sup> that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. <sup>3</sup> For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. <sup>4</sup> They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. <sup>5</sup> To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. <sup>6</sup> But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel...

Yet the Apostle John records for us the sad reality:

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 1:11-13:** He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

National Israel as a people represented by their Teachers of the Sanhedrin (rather than by Jesus) rejected and killed Messiah (Acts 7:51-53). Eventually within the time of that generation, God sent the Roman forces between 66-70 AD to put an end to their national existence as God's visible people and church, and their Temple was laid waste and permanently destroyed because the glory of God and His worship from now on would be found in Christ alone.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 21:18-19:** In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. <sup>19</sup> And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once.

As Dr. Luke's second volume sadly ends:

**Acts 28:25-31:** "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: <sup>26</sup> "Go to this people, and say, You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. <sup>27</sup> For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' <sup>28</sup> *Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to*

*the Gentiles; they will listen.*"<sup>29</sup> <sup>30</sup> He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him,<sup>31</sup> *proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.*

Israel never repented...(but Romans 10:14-11:32?!).

**c. Hope for those Jews and Gentiles who repent (v. 9); cf. 2 Peter 3:9ff**

- i.** As we learned in the last sermon, we should notice that Jesus speaks of the fruit that would be evident by one's true faith as a disciple of the Kingdom.
- ii.** As the prophets of the Old Covenant, Jesus ends his message with hope for those who "turn" or repent of their sins turning to God for healing and salvation.
- iii.** Jesus challenges his listeners not to delay repentance but to live fruitful lives by faith, as God, who mercifully holds back judgment at the present time, will not spare those who refuse to orient their heart and life around God's purposes (quoted in Beale and Carson, pg. 333).

In our passage, Jesus teaches us that there is impending judgment for him on the cross as he will undergo a baptism by fire as he reaches Jerusalem (cf. Luke 9:21ff).

Jesus also teaches that this impending judgment is for all! One is either represented by Jesus upon the cross or the wrath of God abides upon them (John 3:36).

In light of this impending judgment, we must all repent of our sins and turn to Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Only in Christ can we escape the fire and wrath that is to come. Only in Christ can we find salvation and hope and a forgiveness of our sins. Only in Christ can we find the satisfaction for our sins in his once and for all vicarious sacrifice and propitiation for sinners.

Any other person would have NOT have survived this baptism of God's wrath- -only Jesus could have survived it as the God-man! No other person would have been vindicated, but rather they would have been condemned by God for their sins.

Jesus underwent this baptismal crisis undergoing God's wrath for all those who believe- - In Him is hope and the forgiveness of sins! Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near!



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