
THE FOLLY OF FORGETTING GOD
LUKE 12:1-59

Jesus made this great evangelistic appeal before a multitude of many thousand. In His sermon He challenged people to make a decision and take a stand with Him. Many forget about God because of fear of men, greed, worry, laziness and unfaithfulness. "What do you think of Christ?" was the burning issue of that day as it is in our day. Jesus answered some of the hindrances and excuses that people use to explain their failure to prepare to meet their God.

The material in this chapter fits logically together as a whole and is in harmony with the historical setting pictured by Luke. Yet some are of the opinion that the chapter contains Luke's collection of teachings which Jesus gave on various occasions. Parts of the chapter are found in the same or similar form in other places in the Gospels — Matthew 5:25-26; 6:19-21,25-34; 10:26-36; 16:2-3; 24:43-51. No doubt Jesus repeated many of His teachings in the same or similar words on many occasions. Luke left the impression that Jesus spoke these words on the same occasion. (See Geldenhuys, pp. 350-351.)

Hypocrisy and the Fear of Men — Luke 12:1-12

The fear of men causes some people to pretend to be good, when in

reality they have forgotten pleasing God because they are more interested in pleasing men.

12 In the meantime, when so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they trod upon one another, he began to say to his disciples first, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ²Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ³Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

“⁴I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. ⁵But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear him! ⁶Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

“⁸And I tell you, every one who acknowledges me before men, the Son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; ⁹but he who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. ¹⁰And every one who speaks a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. ¹¹And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious how or what you are to answer or what you are to say; ¹²for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

12:1-3. *In the meantime* states a close connection with the previous circumstances, rather than indicating time. Literally the *many thousands* is ten thousand, but it often means a large crowd. Jesus wanted the crowd to hear His words but He addressed the disciples first. *Leaven* was yeast which penetrated and permeated the lump of dough. Jesus warned His followers to avoid the corrupting influence of the Pharisees, which He identified as hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy is saying and pretending one is holy while his behavior contradicts his words. Nothing is so exhausting and destructive to self-respect as insincerity. How sad when people are more interested in impressing men than they are to honor God!

Hypocrisy is a foolish policy because nothing is hid from God. We cannot fool God. The truth will be fully disclosed by God in the final judgment. The hypocrite will be stripped of his masks and pretense.

Plummer said, "Hypocrisy is useless, for one day there will be a merciless exposure. It is not only wicked, but senseless" (p. 318). Important announcements were sometimes made from housetops so all could hear.

12:4-7. Seth Wilson said in a class lecture one day, "When you take away the fear of God from men they will show what kind of cruel animals they can be." Recent preachers and teachers have stressed the love of God more than the wrath of God. It has been unpopular to stress the need to fear God. This de-emphasis on fearing God has contributed to the psychological maladjustment of many Christians. Having no fear of a righteous God they cover an ungodly lifestyle with a hypocritical facade. Our generation needs to be taught that, "The fear of the *Lord* is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10, NASB). Paul said, "Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God" (II Cor. 7:1). Read these scriptures which teach the fear a Christian is to have: Luke 23:40; Acts 10:35; Romans 3:18; 11:20; 13:7; Ephesians 5:21,24,33; 6:5-9; Philippians 2:12; I Timothy 5:20; Hebrews 4:1; I Peter 1:17; 2:17; 3:15; Revelation 11:18; 14:7; 19:5.

We must have a clear understanding of reality. The fear of men must not be our primary motivation. Such fear leads to hypocrisy and phony religion (John 12:42; Gal. 2:12). Men can only end one's earthly life. They can not destroy one's eternal spirit. It is far more important that we fear, respect, honor and seek to please God rather than man.

The clean and right fear of God is not the terror that a girl feels when she is walking down a street at night and feels a rough hand grab her shoulder. It is not a terror fearing that a cruel God hates us and seeks to do us harm. The fear of God recognizes that God is the sovereign God of this universe and our lives. He is in charge. We need to honor Him and love Him as Father who cares about what is best for us. Those who have accepted His plan of salvation have a profound respect for Him and know they rest in His saving grace.

God is to be feared and respected because He is the judge of the eternal destinies of men. Satan does not send people to hell. He will spend eternity there and take as many with him as he can. We are not to fear Satan but to resist him (James 4:7; I Pet. 5:9). We are to fear God who is in charge of eternity. The word *hell* indicates the eternal punishment which awaits those who reject God.

God is the most important being in the universe, yet every person among the more than five billion on the earth is precious in His eyes.

God does not overlook the death of a single insignificant bird like a sparrow. He certainly does not overlook a single human being. Even though the numbers of hairs on a person's head changes greatly every day, God knows the exact count. He cares about even this detail. Each person is of infinite worth to God. If we remember Whose we are it will make a difference in how we live. Self-esteem and self-worth do not come from self-love. They came from knowing we are created by God, loved by God, redeemed by God, and made into a new creature for service and fellowship with Him. It is only when we know these things that we can truly know who we are and then live the only life worth living.

12:8-12. *Acknowledge or confess* means to agree. Confessing Christ means to agree with and accept the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah and the Son of God. It expresses one's trust, commitment and allegiance to Him. Confession includes but is not limited to confession before baptism. (Acts 8:39, KJV, is not in the earliest manuscripts, but apparently was a practice of the early church.) It is a daily responsibility for the believer to express his faith in Christ (Matt. 10:32-33; Luke 9:26; Acts 4:17-20; 5:27-29). A believer who confesses Christ regardless of the consequences will have the eternal victory, Christ's approval of him as His disciple before the Father.

Our eternal destiny is tied to our attitude toward Jesus. One denies Christ by disowning Him by stating unbelief in His claims and disavowing that he is a follower in Jesus. Those also deny Jesus who claim they can revise His teaching in the light of modern thinking, for example explaining away His miracles and His deity. We must not let the fear of men or the wisdom of this world lead us to deny our Lord.

It was no small thing to speak against Jesus when He lived on earth, although it may be forgiven when one comes to faith in Him through the fuller revelation of Him in the ministry of the Holy Spirit (I Pet. 1:12). But if one rejects the revelation of the gospel given through the Holy Spirit he has turned his back on the last hope. Sometimes the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is called "The Unpardonable Sin." It is better understood as "The Sin That Will Not Be Forgiven." It is not God's ability to forgive that is at issue, but rather the person's ability to believe and repent. Read also Matthew 10:31-32; Mark 3:28-30.

Jesus here spoke about the attitude of heart and life that rejects the revelation given through the Holy Spirit because of a deliberate preference of darkness to light. Plummer stated, "Grace, like bodily food, may be rejected until the power to receive it perishes" (p. 320).

Read Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:26-31; I John 5:16. The person described in Luke 12:10 is the person who can no longer believe and repent, and consequently he will not be forgiven.

Some hold that in Luke 12:11-12 Jesus promises Holy Spirit assistance to believers in general. From this context and the parallel passages, a better view is that Jesus here promised Holy Spirit inspiration to the apostles (Matt. 10:19-20; Mark 13:11-13; Luke 21:12-15; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:8-13). When the apostles declared the gospel message they were guided by the Holy Spirit so that they stated the truth that God wanted stated. The Holy Spirit guided them not only before human authorities but also in their preaching and in the writing of the Gospels. The message of the apostles carried the authority of God because it was God's Word given to them by the Holy Spirit. It is a message we can trust because it was God-given.

The Parable of the Rich Fool — Luke 12:13-21

God has said greed and covetousness is wrong! Many times God severely disciplined and punished persons for greed. Achan and his family were stoned because he saved treasure for himself that God said to destroy (Josh. 7:1-21). David's coveting of Bathsheba brought much death and trouble (II Sam. 11:2-5). Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, coveted and took garments from Naaman, which Elisha had refused. He was punished with leprosy (II Kgs. 5:20-27). Ananias and Sapphira lied to Peter when they said they gave to the church all the money from a field they sold. Both were stricken dead (Acts 5:1-11).

Jesus said, "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). *Mammon* is an Aramaic word for riches. In explaining the Parable of the Sower, Jesus warned that the "cares of this life, deceitfulness of riches, and lust for other things" can choke faith and the Word of God out of people's lives (Mark 4:19). Thieves or the greedy will not inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:10). Paul said we must "put to death" "covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col. 3:5). "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered from the faith and pierced their heart with many pangs" (I Tim. 6:9-10). An elder is not to be a "lover of money" (I Tim. 3:3). Elders or deacons are not to be "greedy for gain" (Titus 1:7; I Tim. 3:8). Christians are instructed not to keep company with a Christian who persists in greed (I Cor. 5:11).

¹³One of the multitude said to him, "Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me." ¹⁴But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?" ¹⁵And he said to them, "Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." ¹⁶And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; ¹⁷and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' ¹⁸And he said, 'I will do this; I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.' ²⁰But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

12:13-14. Jesus faced a problem common to speakers — a person in His audience was not listening to Him. Jesus had just stressed the folly of worry and the value of each person before God. A man in the crowd could think only about his inheritance. He seemed to request a decision against his brother and in his favor. This man was convinced he was being cheated. He may have been a younger brother upset because his older brother got twice as much (Deut. 21:15-17). Plummer observed:

We are not told whether the man was making an unjust claim on his brother or not; probably not; but he was certainly making an unjust claim on Jesus, whose work did not include settling disputes about property. The man grasped at any means of obtaining what he desired, invading Christ's time (p. 322).

Jesus refused the request. The form of address, "Man," was "far from cordial." As Morris said, "He came to bring men to God, not to bring property to men" (p. 212). His priority was to minister to spiritual needs. Jesus refrained from invading the responsibilities of established authorities.

12:15. Jesus used this interruption as an occasion to teach true values concerning material things. Though Jesus did not grant his request, He did minister to the man's real need. "His real problem was not for help to gain a bigger inheritance, but to overcome selfishness and materialism" (Foster, p. 190). "Jesus, knowing what is at the root of the brother's unreasonable request takes the opportunity of warn-

ing the whole multitude against this prevalent and subtle sin" (Plummer, p. 323).

Jesus issued a serious warning to "Guard yourselves" (TEV) against covetousness or greed. Greed desires to have more and more and more for oneself. It is subtle and deceptive, therefore most do not recognize it as a sin.

Greed desires the possessions belonging to one's neighbors. It is preoccupied with material things without regard to spiritual values. It is right before God to work for a living to provide for one's family. It is wrong when we allow this desire to earn money to become dominant, crowding God and ethics out. The love of money is "the root of all evils" (I Tim. 6:10).

Greed is idolatry (Col. 3:5). Seth Wilson observed, "A covetous man is an idolator simply because he loves, trusts and serves money more than he does God; he transfers to riches the love, desire, joy, trust, and the labor that he ought to have toward God, and makes money his god" (p. 282). We are guilty of this sin when we think more about getting money than about pleasing God, when we are more interested in earthly possessions than in growth in God's righteousness, when our thoughts, words and actions are all directed to pleasing ourselves rather than serving Christ and others.

12:16-19. Earthly goods are not the essentials of life. The real essentials are the things that keep the soul and God together (Wilson, p. 279). Real meaning in life is found in relationships, not in things. To live for material things is to miss out on what really matters in life.

Jesus often used a parable to answer a question and to emphasize His point. Someone has called this "The Successful Farmer Who Was a Failure." The farmer is not criticized for gaining his wealth unjustly nor for being rich. Several godly men in the Bible were rich — Abraham (Gen. 13:2), Solomon (I Kgs. 3:10-13), Job (Job 42:12). Being rich or being poor in itself does not make one righteous. Whether rich or poor the godly man has the right view of money and material things.

Selfishness was this rich man's fatal flaw. He used eight *I*'s and four *my*'s (in the Greek text). (Compare I Sam. 25:11.) He wanted to enjoy his wealth. The rich fool did not really know himself because he thought life consisted of creature comforts. He had no concern for the needs of others. His preoccupation with himself cheated him of the fulfillment that comes from generously giving to others. He did not see beyond himself. He did not take into account the reality of the spiritual world. He did not thank or glorify God.

12:20-21. The man was a fool because he felt no need of God. He foolishly thought that the future of his body and soul was in his own hands. This construction of the verb was commonly used by the rabbis to express an action of God. "God requires your soul." "Man whose life hangs by a thread and who may be called upon at any time to give account of himself is a fool if he relies on material things" (Morris, p. 213). The order of the original text is significant — "the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" (ASV). The rhetorical question emphasized the folly of being preoccupied with material things in this life because when one dies he loses all control over these things. Honestly facing death helps us put earthly things in proper perspective.

Those who greedily get all the material things they can for themselves are in the same category with the rich fool. Though they may be rich in money and material things they are bankrupt in the things that really matter. "Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psa. 37:4).

A Warning Against Worry — Luke 12:22-34

Greed and worry betray a lack of trust in God. The Hebrew writer said, "Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, 'I will never fail you nor forsake you' " (Heb. 13:5).

²²And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor about your body, what you shall put on. ²³For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit to his span of life? ²⁶If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? ²⁷Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸But if God so clothes the grass which is alive in the field today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O men of little faith! ²⁹And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind. ³⁰For all the nations of the world seek these things; and your Father knows that you need them.

³¹Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well.

³²“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions, and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

12:22-26. He spoke this teaching directly to the disciples. *Thought* (KJV) in the 17th century meant anxiety or worry. Believers are not to worry about food and clothing. Worry about these indicates a lack of trust in the God who provides them. Jesus here did not forbid reasonable forethought for providing for physical needs (I Thess. 4:11-12; Eph. 4:28; I Tim. 5:8).

Ravens, largest of the crow family, are scavenger birds. They do not have the responsibilities of farming yet God provides for their food. If God cares for even these unclean birds (Lev. 11:13-19), how much more does He care for His children!

The word translated *span of life* can refer to age (John 9:21) or to stature (Luke 19:3). Worry does not add a half-step to one’s life or add 18 inches to one’s height. Since human effort can not accomplish such a small thing, one should trust the God who can take care of all of our needs. We are subject to our Creator.

12:27-28. *Lilies* may be a general term referring to all the beautiful flowers gracing the landscape. *Consider* calls for giving close and careful attention. The flowers “do not manufacture cloth as men do, but God clothes them with a beauty that even Solomon’s gorgeous robes could not match If God does all this for the flowers that disappear so quickly, *how much more* will He clothe His people?” (Morris, pp. 214-215). The short life of the flower reminds us that our stay in this world is also short.

Because trees were few in Palestine, grass was often used as fuel. An outdoor oven would be heated by burning grass inside. When the oven was hot, bread was placed inside for baking. Jesus used these illustrations from their daily life to teach the brevity of our lives and our dependence upon God.

12:29-31. Followers of Christ are not to set their hearts on food or clothing. These are not the most important things in life, yet many make it their priority to seek these and other material things.

The Christian is not to be of double mind, wasting energies worrying. Worry is a wrong focus. It is wrong to let what might happen tomorrow tear you apart today. It is useless to be overly concerned

about that which you can do nothing. Those who trust God know they do not have to be anxious about their material needs because they trust in the providential care of a God who knows what they need.

Believers continue to make it their number one priority to submit to the rule of God in their hearts and lives. Those who honor God by consistently putting Christ first in their lives will find their lives enriched spiritually and their needs for food and clothing will also be met (Matt. 6:31-33; Mark 10:29-30; Luke 22:35).

When you give yourself to obeying the will of God you invest in the eternal treasures and you will also find your needs met in the best life in this world.

12:32-34. The tender designation, *little flock*, is found only here in the New Testament. The Good Shepherd genuinely cares about His followers (John 10:13-15). Those who continually seek the kingdom have it given them as a gift. When we are discouraged we need to find reassurance in this promise of Christ.

Christians in the early church did not sell all their possessions (Acts 12:12). Morris observed, "Jesus is not excluding private property; but He is emphasizing that true believers must not be dominated by their possessions. Trust in riches prevents trust in God" (p. 216).

Material blessings are not to be grasped with greed but are to be used in an unselfish spirit of giving (I Cor. 16:2-3; II Cor. 8:19; Gal. 6:10; Eph. 4:28).

The real riches in life are not temporal. They are forever. Hendriksen said, "Heavenly treasures are moth-proof and burglar-proof" (p. 671). We must heed the warning not to forget God because of a focus on money (Luke 3:22; 6:30; 7:5; 11:41; 14:13-14; 16:9; 18:22; 19:8). God has built into the fabric of reality His approval of generous givers and His condemnation of the greedy. It is true as someone stated, "What we go after here will determine where we go hereafter."

Be Watchful and Be Faithful — Luke 12:35-48

The things of this world are temporary but the coming of the Son of man is certain. Rather than being diverted by worldly things, we must be loyal to Christ looking forward to His coming by a daily faithfulness.

³⁵"Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, ³⁶and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage

feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks. ³⁷Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those servants! ³⁹But know this, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰You also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an unexpected hour."

⁴¹Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" ⁴²And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? ⁴³Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. ⁴⁴Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁵But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, ⁴⁶the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him, and put him with the unfaithful. ⁴⁷And that servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating. ⁴⁸But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating. Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more."

12:35-37. An emphasis is placed on *you* be ready. When one needed to be prepared for quick movement, the long flowing garment needed to be gathered up under the belt. The lamp was a pan of oil with a wick in it. Jesus pictured servants awaiting the return of the master who had been attending a wedding. They needed to be ready at all times so that when he did return they would be prepared to serve Him. In response to the faithfulness of the servants the master will honor and serve them.

12:38-40. It is important that Christ's followers be ready whenever He returns. Plummer stated, "The first watch is not mentioned, because then the wedding feast was going on. These are probably the two last of the *three* Jewish watches (Jdgs. 7:19), not the two middle watches of the Roman *four* (Mark 13:35; Acts 12:4)" (p. 331). The prepared person will receive the blessing when our Lord returns (I Thess. 5:1-10; Rev. 3:21).

The home owner could have prevented the robbery if he had known when the thief was coming. The image of the coming of a thief is frequently used to illustrate unannounced and unexpected events (Matt. 24:40-44; I Thess. 5:2; II Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3; 16:15).

Jesus did not announce the exact time of His second coming. He said, "But of that day and hour no one knows not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only" (Matt. 24:36). Do not believe those who claim to know the date of the second coming. According to Jesus these persons are mistaken. Rather than listen to the date-setters, we need to listen to Jesus and be ready for His return at all times.

12:41-44. The promise of blessings and the parable about readiness prompted Peter to ask Jesus if these words were limited to the apostles or if they applied to others as well. Jesus did not directly answer his question. He responded with a question and another parable. The steward was a capable slave who was the manager of the household. His responsibilities included seeing that all had needed food available to them. While the owner was away for a period of time, a wise and faithful steward would not grow lazy and irresponsible. When the owner returns unexpectedly he will find the steward faithfully doing his job.

12:45-48. But a steward may not fulfill his trust. While the owner prolonged his absence, the steward misused his authority by mistreating the servants under him and getting drunk. The owner returned unannounced and unexpected. He punished the unfaithful steward.

Deliberate disobedience will be severely punished. Those who have not had as much privilege or opportunity as others will not experience the same degree of torment. Some mistakenly argue that if one remains ignorant of God, then he can not be held accountable. Deliberate ignorance does not leave one guiltless (Rom. 1:18-32; 2:14-16). The elaborate doctrine of many degrees of punishment in hell is based more on Dante's *Inferno*, than on the Bible. The Bible does deal with the subject (Matt. 10:15; 11:22-24; Luke 10:12-14; 23:34; Acts 3:17; I Tim. 1:13). Those who have misused great opportunities, privileges and responsibilities, will experience greater spiritual torment than those who have not had such privilege.

A spiritual leader can be a wise and faithful steward or an unfaithful one. Religious leaders who live as if they are not accountable to God will bring terrible punishment upon themselves. What a horrible abuse of the trust given by God!

Decide Now! — Luke 12:49-59

In this sermon Jesus has shown the folly of forgetting about God. In His conclusion He drives home the necessity of making a decision about Him.

⁴⁹“I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! ⁵⁰I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished! ⁵¹Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division; ⁵²for henceforth in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three; ⁵³they 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 her mother-in-law.”

⁵⁴He also said to the multitudes, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, ‘A shower is coming’; and so it happens. ⁵⁵And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat’; and it happens. ⁵⁶You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky; but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

⁵⁷“And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? ⁵⁸As 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. ⁵⁹I tell you, you will never get out till you have paid the very last copper.”

12:49-50. Fire not only destroys but it also refines. *Fire* here seems to represent division or judgment. Jesus is a burning and divisive issue. You can not escape Him. His role as Savior could not be accomplished except through His suffering and death. He is ready for His saving work to be done.

He changed from the image of fire to the image of baptism. Christ would be immersed and engulfed by His sufferings ending in His death (Mark 10:38-39). With deep emotion Jesus expressed His anguish of soul, longing that His redemptive work could be accomplished. “What constraint I am under until the ordeal is over!” (NEB).

12:51-53. The Jews expected the Messiah to bring a reign of peace. Jesus came to bring a spiritual peace, but it was not a peace at any price. It was not to be a total absence of conflict or opposition. Jesus

answered His own question about His bringing peace with an emphatic, "No." He did not want to leave a false impression that following Him meant the absence of difficulties. Many hated and opposed Jesus. We must choose for or against Jesus. Choosing to follow Him would at times include being hated and opposed (John 15:18-19). Just before His death Jesus told the apostles, "The hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do this because they have not known the Father, nor me" (John 16:2-3).

Truth divides. Those who accept are opposed by those who reject. The truth of a holy God makes powerful criticisms of sinful men. Those who reject this truth become defensive. The cross helps us understand the radical demands Jesus made of His disciples (Luke 9:23; 14:27). The division often occurs in families.

12:54-56. Jesus addressed the crowd. He said they can read the signs that forecast the weather. The cloud in the west brings rain from the Mediterranean Sea. The south wind brings scorching heat from the desert. Jesus called them hypocrites. They were able to think intelligently about something superficial such as the weather, but on something as significant as salvation they did not think clearly. It was because of their spiritual blindness and unbelief that they refused to accept the miraculous evidences that established Jesus' messiahship and deity. Arndt said, "They were unable to see the true character of the times because they did not want to see it" (p. 325).

12:57-59. Jesus appealed to them to make right judgments concerning their decision about their relationship with God. He wanted each individual to make his peace with God. In legal disputes it is better to settle "out of court" than to persist in a hopeless case. We need to settle our account with God and accept His grace while the opportunity is available. It is urgent that we decide for God now because we could never on our own pay the debt for our sins.

When we have made our decision for Christ we need to daily renew our focus and commitment to Him. It is terrible folly to forget God.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Present a case for the view that the teaching in Luke 12 was given in one teaching session.
2. What is hypocrisy? Why is it harmful?
3. What does it mean to fear God?

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4. What illustrations did Jesus give to teach the value God places on each individual?
5. Explain confessing Christ.
6. Discuss the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.
7. What did Jesus promise the Holy Spirit would do for the apostles?
8. What are the results of greed?
9. What was the real problem of the man who interrupted Jesus' teaching?
10. What was the rich farmer's fatal flaw?
11. Define worry.
12. Identify ravens and lilies.
13. What does the grass being burned in the oven illustrate?
14. What should be the number one priority for the Christian?
15. Does Jesus expect us to sell all our possessions? Why?
16. Contrast real riches with earthly riches.
17. What did Jesus mean by "gird himself" in 12:37?
18. How is the coming of a thief like the second coming of Jesus?
19. What is the lesson of the Parable of the Stewards?
20. What did Jesus mean when He said He brought division?
21. Jesus contrasted their ability to forecast the weather with their inability to do what?