

Luke 12D

- Today our study in Luke brings us to the conclusion of the first half of the gospel
 - Chapter 12 has been a chapter rich in exhortation
 - It began with Jesus warning the disciples to beware the hypocrisy of the Pharisees
 - Because God knows everything and those who fear men more than God and behave accordingly will one day give an account for that foolish decision
 - And Jesus warned the disciples that they would face persecution from these false men
 - But they should not fear, for God will care for them until they have accomplished what God has ordained
 - Then the chapter took a turn toward a discussion of wealth, and specifically on how our misplaced desires for wealth become an obstacle to serving God
 - Then the teaching turned again toward differences in how servants – believers in others words – are evaluated in their service to the Lord
 - That the more we understand about God’s plan for our lives and His will for us, the more responsibility we bear for what we do in response
 - Now this week we conclude the chapter with another turn into a new discussion
 - Doesn’t this seem to be a strange mix of commentary from Jesus
 - What’s the thread tying it all together? Is there one?
 - Well, we’ll look at that today as we conclude Chap 12

[Luke 12:49](#) ¶ “I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!

[Luke 12:50](#) “But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!

- Jesus was teaching on our responsibility to serve faithfully as men and women in ministry
 - Then He abruptly begins to speak about casting fire on earth and a distressing baptism
 - Verse 50 reminds me of my baptism in January in Colorado in a light snow fall
 - As we waited to get into the water, we were huddled under blankets shivering and then we stepped into the slightly warm hot tub only to have to get out and walk through the cold air to the house
 - Standing there freezing I could have repeated verse 50
 - But Jesus isn't referring to His water baptism here
- But actually this transition makes good sense because of what He was teaching in the earlier verses
 - Jesus taught about a master who was to return
 - And as we said last week, the disciples probably had no idea that the master leaving was a picture of Jesus' death and eventual return
 - So in these verse Jesus takes the opportunity to give an extended discussion about His purpose on Earth
- In verse 49, Jesus says He came to cast fire on earth, but the fire is not yet kindled
 - First, the statement implies the fact that the final step to Jesus' ministry could not happen in the disciples' day
 - Jesus has all authority and judgment given Him by the Father
 - And He will exercise that authority by bringing fire to destroy the earth and replace it with a new world absent sin
 - But As Jesus said those words to the disciples, He said the fire had not yet been kindled
 - In other words, the day for the destruction of the earth has not yet come

[John 12:47](#) “If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not **come to judge** the world, but to save the world.

- In fact, in verse 50, Jesus makes clear that He is not looking forward to the baptism He must undergo during this first coming – meaning His death on the cross of course
- Jesus didn’t come the first time for judgment, but rather to save the world from sin
 - As obvious as this fact may be to us today, Jesus’ words gives us an chance to examine for a moment Christ’s purpose in two comings
 - Specifically, why didn’t Jesus come the first time to save men and to judge – why didn’t He do both at the same coming
 - Why did Jesus have to leave the earth and then promise to return another time
- First, we need to acknowledge it is a conscience effort on God’s part to wait
 - Scripture tells us that Jesus Himself is currently upholding the world and everything in it by His power while He waits

[Heb. 1:3](#) And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and **upholds** all things by the word of His power.

- Were Jesus to cease holding the world together, it would cease to exist
 - It is the supreme demonstration of God’s grace, mercy and long suffering nature that He would continue to uphold a world so full of sin and hatred toward God
 - At any point, on the Father’s direction, Jesus could remove His upholding power and the world and all that is in it would be cast into the judgment which God’s holy justice demands
- Yet He continues to maintain this evil and unbelieving world
 - And He does so as grace toward us
 - Peter puts it this way:

[2Pet. 3:7](#) But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

[2Pet. 3:8](#) ¶ But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

[2Pet. 3:9](#) The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

[2Pet. 3:10](#) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

- This world we're told is being reserved (saved like a treasure) or kept (tereo - guarded) by God for a specific day in the future when it will undergo judgment
 - It requires an active effort by God to even allow the earth to remain in the meantime
 - But one day God will cease to uphold this world, and Jesus will judge it
 - As believers, we will escape that judgment – in fact we will participate with him in judging unbelievers

[1Cor. 6:2](#) Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent *to constitute* the smallest law courts?

[1Cor. 6:3](#) Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?

- Those who are unbelievers, on the other hand, will be the recipients of that judgment
- Peter says that while we wait for that day, the day when the fire will be kindled that
 - Some in the last days we will interpret the long wait for His return as a reason for doubt concerning whether He will ever return
 - So Peter reminds us that the wait required for Jesus' return is not a matter of slowness
 - It's not that God is a procrastinator
 - Jesus hasn't forgot to return or changed His mind
 - No, the day for judgment is still just as sure today as it was yesterday
 - So what possible reason does God have for not sending Jesus to return to us right now? Or for that matter, on any day in the past 2,000 years?
 - Why hasn't He already come back?

- Peter tells us why in verse 9
 - God's delay is grace toward men
 - And specifically, His delay is grace toward those throughout history who are to receive the gift of faith and come to believe
 - Remember, before you and I could believe in Jesus, we had to be born and grow up
 - And before we could be born, our parents had to be born, and our grandparents before them, and so on all the way back to the day of Christ
- Scripture tells us that God's plan for each us began long before we were born
 - In the eternal counsel of His will, He determined the day of our birth and the day of our death
 - But obviously, God's plan requires that He wait for the natural course of history to play out
 - For the birth process to produce the lives of billions of people over thousands of generations
 - Meanwhile, God must hold back Jesus' to return until all those He had purposed be born, repent and believe in Jesus
 - So as Peter teaches, God is not slow about His promises, but rather He is patient wishing that none would perish
 - God is patient toward us, his children, not wanting any of us to miss out on the chance to be born and to believe
 - So God continues to wait while time passes and His plan for believers plays out over the course of history
 - Allowing those who would be His children to be born, come to repentance and believe
 - But knowing this, we must remember that other side of this coin is equally clear
 - On the day when that last man or woman appointed believes, Jesus' waiting will be over and His return will happen

- And as Peter said, the judgment will follow, complete with fire for the earth
 - And as Jesus says in the gospel of Luke, He wishes that the fire had already been kindled
- Then Jesus discourse seems to take yet another turn in moving onto another topic, one of division

[Luke 12:51](#) “Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division;

[Luke 12:52](#) for from now on five *members* in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three.

[Luke 12:53](#) “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.”

- If we pay close attention, we can see how this comment fits with the prior one
 - To those who were thinking that Jesus would only come once and then stay, their assumption was that the Messiah’s coming was specifically to set up the kingdom of God on earth
 - So if Jesus was the Messiah, then peace would reign
 - The kingdom would be established
 - The people of Israel would be united under their king
 - But Jesus says if you think I came to grant peace, forget it
 - That’s not going to be the result of this visit
 - On the contrary, my visit to the earth this time will produce division
- Jesus gives examples
 - From now on, families will seek division over the name of Jesus
 - In a home of 5 there will be 2 on one side and three on the other or three on the one side and two on the other
 - The divisions will run deep

- Different family members aligned against one another, splitting families
 - This, Jesus says, will be the state of life from now on
- Jesus' meaning should be fairly clear to anyone who's been following our teaching through Luke so far
 - The person and work of Jesus produces, requires division
 - You simply can't be on the fence when it comes to assessing who Jesus was and what He did when He died
 - On the one hand, you believe He was who He said He was
 - God in the flesh, the one who made everything in the universe
 - The One with the power to judge everything
 - And when He died, His death on the cross was a perfect payment for our sins before God the Father
 - Believe in Him and be saved from your sins
 - Or believe anything else about Jesus and remain dead in your sin one day to be judged for your sin
 - It's an all or nothing issue
 - And there is no third position
- Did you notice that the example of the family included 5 family members
 - And yet the division was 3 vs 2 or 2 vs 3
 - There was no third group
 - This is a division on the basis of a yes or no question
 - Do you believe in Jesus
 - And this question is so important that it transcends all earthly relationships and bonds
 - That's a measure of the importance of this ministry Jesus was handing to the disciples

- So important that even family relationships must take a back seat
- But if we study this carefully, we also note that Jesus isn't saying that we should forget about our obligations to our parents or children
 - Some would misuse these verse to claim that we can abandon unbelieving family members
 - Some cults use verses like this one that way
 - But the issue here is simply the fact of division on the basis of who Jesus is
 - And that division will stand in the way of true peace
 - Rather, there will be disagreements and friction and even hatred over what people believe concerning Jesus
 - But this fact doesn't change our obligations to one another, especially those obligations found in scripture
 - We simply can't let those obligations cause us to step back from our belief in Jesus, even when that belief causes friction or division in our families
- Finally, Jesus turns to his finally topic in this discourse

[Luke 12:54](#) ¶ 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.

[Luke 12:55](#) "And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, 'It will be a hot day,' and it turns out *that way*.

[Luke 12:56](#) "You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?

[Luke 12:57](#) ¶ "And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right?

[Luke 12:58](#) "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.

[Luke 12:59](#) "I say to you, you will not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent."

- This interesting commentary again hinges on the previous line of discussion
 - Jesus just finished saying that His appearance has the effect of bringing division on the basis of what we believe

- And before that he was telling the crowd that His appearing means that a fiery judgment of the earth is coming soon
 - So what will the crowd makes of these signs?
- So with that, Jesus decides it to place this crowd on the spot
 - He wants to force them to decide how they are going to view Him and His ministry
 - We've seen this before in other places, where Jesus places the crowd, or an individual or the Pharisees on the spot concerning His identity
 - Jesus point is that it's not the hard for them to know that He is the Messiah, if they are only willing to believe the obvious signs
 - Jesus makes his point with the comparison to predicting the weather
 - Jesus says you have become pretty good at predicting the weather
 - You see certain patterns developing in the sky, and you say it's going to rain or that it's going to be a hot day
 - And though you have the ability to understand signs for something as unpredictable and unimportant as weather, but you understand the circumstances of the present time?
- Then Jesus calls them hypocrites
 - This is a hard word
 - It would have been better if Jesus had said you morons
 - Or maybe you blind and deaf
 - No, He says they are hypocrites
 - Remember what a hypocrite was?
 - Someone who pretends to be someone they are not

- They were pretending to be people who couldn't discern the signs of the day
 - They were pretending to be ignorant of Jesus' claims to be the Messiah
 - They were pretending to be unaware of the importance to receive Him
 - It was as if they could just pretend to be undecided and they wouldn't be held accountable for their mistake
- It's like the claim of ignorance a driver might make to the policemen when they get pulled over for speeding
 - They didn't know that the speed limit in the neighborhood was only 30 and not the 60 mph they were traveling
 - But the signs were there, the speed limit signs were up
- And when the driver says they didn't see the signs, the policeman smiles and writes the ticket anyway
- Likewise, ignorance will not be an excuse for this generation standing with Jesus and the disciples, because the signs were everywhere
 - And Jesus, who knew their hearts, says that they are hypocrites for claiming to not be able to decide who Jesus was
 - He had just finished teaching on the division His ministry would produce, which by itself implies we all have a choice to make when it comes to the man Jesus
 - Jesus looked squarely at the crowd and said that you can't hide behind your supposed ignorance
 - Either believe or face judgment
 - The problem wasn't in their ability to understand the signs
 - It was in their unwillingness to accept and act upon what they saw
- And just in case any in the crowd were fooling themselves regarding the reality of that judgment,
 - Jesus reminds them of how when they are being called before an earthly judge, they are motivated to make peace with their enemy

- This is just good sense
 - As they make their way to the judge, they know they are guilty
 - They know that they broke the law and their accuser is going to succeed in making a case against them
 - If they continue in their defiance and opposition to their accuser, they will not succeed in fooling the judge
 - They are going to be found guilty and they are going to pay for their mistake to the full extent of the law
 - And knowing this, the accused is very motivated to escape out from under the penalty of the law
 - So the accused is going to try to negotiate a settlement with the accuser before they reach the judge
 - If they can settle their dispute, then the judge will never need to render judgment
- So Jesus reminds the crowd of this common sense thinking so they might have reason to consider their present circumstances
 - Jesus just taught them that He would be their judge one day
 - And they are the guilty ones, guilty in their sin
 - And Jesus will judge that sin one day, provided they haven't settled their debt beforehand
 - So knowing the signs and realizing who Jesus is, he asks them to apply common sense
 - Settle your debt with me before I return as your judge
 - Otherwise, you will pay the price of your sin, every cent
 - And the price of sin against the living God is an eternal death
 - The problem isn't
 - One of the problems for this crowd and perhaps for us today is that we forget that judgment is sure and unavoidable

- For that guilty man in Jesus' example, he felt the pressure of the coming judgment, because with each step toward the judge, he was one step closer to receiving his penalty
- The thing for us to remember is that for an unbeliever, their walk through this life is very much the same
 - Each day brings them one day closer to their judgment
 - A judgment that is sure and firm
- But today, they may not realize that they are headed in that direction, so the sense of urgency is not there
 - But it's our responsibility to help bring that sense of urgency and show them the signs
 - Just as Christ does to this crowd in His day
- So how do we put this chapter together
 - Simply put, it's a chapter on discipleship for the apostles, and therefore it's a chapter on discipleship for us as well
 - Jesus began teaching we should be transparent in who we are because God knows everything and will reveal everything in a coming day
 - Therefore, fear God and not men
 - And our fear of God will lead us to serve Him and confess Him before men, testifying to Him
 - And as you turn your back on the world to serve Him, do not fear or worry over your earthly needs
 - And don't become greedy for money, which is itself a sign of fear rather than trust in God
 - At all times, be ready for Jesus return
 - Meanwhile, serve the body of believers faithfully, according to what you've been given
 - For there is a judgment coming, when you will be evaluated for what you've done

- And ultimately, the unbelievers will be judged, though they are not without the signs to know the truth
- As we suspend our study of Luke for a time, I invite you to consider and meditate over the points I just listed
- Over Chap 12 of Luke
 - As a disciple, as one called to follow Jesus and represent Him to this lost and dying world
 - Can we honestly say we measure up to these expectations?
 - When someone says good discipleship is praying, studying the Bible, going to church, serving others
 - True, but what about the things Jesus told his disciples here?