

Not Peace, But Division

Luke 12: 49-53

DIG: Of what **fire** is Jesus speaking? What **baptism**? What **division**? How does Jesus bring **division**? Who prophesied of this when Christ was a baby? When? Where? How does this relate to Luke 12:31-34? How do you reconcile this with the fact that He brings **peace**? How might these verses indicate how the crowd has "misread" Messiah?

REFLECT: What has Yeshua brought to your family and friends: **division** or **peace**? How have you personally suffered as a result of your faith in Messiah? Have you been divorced? Have you been ostracized from your family? Have you lost friends over your faith? Have you lost a job or been persecuted at work? How did you handle it? Do you think God's name was glorified through your actions, or dragged through the mud?

Jesus further clarifies the nature of His messianic mission and warns His inner circle of apostles what to expect. Messiah explains to them that His teaching inevitably provokes opposition and that divisions will come. There were some who would believe in Him and some who would reject Him. This was not unexpected.

Christ emphasizes the fact that He came **to bring** the refining **fire** of holiness **on the earth** (Luke 12:49a). **Fire** is in the emphatic position in the Greek text; literally, *fire I have come to bring*. **The fire** of a burning, purifying, life-giving message, **the fire** of an unquenchable zeal in the hearts of His talmidim and other disciples, **the fire of the Ruach HaKodesh**, and the ultimate **fire** of judgment against sin **on the earth** (Isaiah 66:24; Malachi 3:2-3; First Corinthians 3:13-15; Revelation 19:20, 20:14-15).¹⁰⁴⁵ All judgment was committed into His hands. **And the Father has given Him authority to judge because He is the Son of Man** (John 5:27).

And how I wish that fire of the Holy Spirit was already ignited (Luke 12:49b)! The grammatical construction for a contrary-to-fact condition indicates that Yeshua longed for the completion of His mission, which was incomplete at that time. As Simeon had predicted years earlier (see **Au - Jesus Presented at the Temple**), the Son of Righteousness was destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Isra'el, and to be a sign that will be spoken against (Luke 2:34). In the same way, the Second Coming will bring a reward for the faithful but also judgment for the unrepentant (see my commentary on **Revelation Fo - The Great White Throne Judgment**).

But I have a baptism to undergo (Luke 12:50a). The key for understanding this metaphor is found in a parallel passage in **Mark 10:38-39**, where **the cup** Jesus was to drink refers to **His** zeal to complete **His** mission and death: **Can you drink the cup I drink of and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?** This **baptism** involved **Yeshua's** total identification with sinful mankind in which **He** bears our sins and our punishment. **We** all, like sheep, went astray; **we** turned, each one, to their own way; yet **ADONAI** laid on **Him** the guilt of us all. Thus, **He** becomes a sacrifice for our sins, giving up **His** very life and immersing **Himself** into death, paying the death penalty we owe for our sins **Like a lamb to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:6-7 CJB).**¹⁰⁴⁶

I have a terrible baptism of suffering ahead of me, and I AM under a heavy burden until it is accomplished (Luke 12:50b NLT)! The Lord's commitment to **God's** will was total. **He** completely obsessed to complete **His** **baptism**, even though it meant **suffering** death in Jerusalem (**Luke 13:32-33**). The **Son of Righteousness** longed for **His** **baptism** despite what it entailed because only through its completion would **the fire** burst into flames. **Messiah's** death is seen here not as a tragedy or a terrible twist of fate but as the fulfillment of the divine plan.

Some might conclude that because **Christ** did not unite the nation of Isra'el, **He** was not the **Messiah**. But the Lord's answer would be: **Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.** **Yeshua** is not to rule in glory at **His** First Coming; **He** is not at that time to fulfill the Messianic prophecies of world peace: **They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore (Isaiah 2:4).** For this reason, **He** will **bring division**. Families, both Jewish and Gentile, have been **divided** and loyalties broken because of our **Savior**. Jewish believers are still ostracized from their families and friends if they believe **Yeshua** is **Messiah**. But to be **His** disciple we must count the costs.

Some will acknowledge **Him** as **Meshiach**, while others will not, so that **families** will be split down the middle over this issue (**Matthew 10:34-39**). **From now on** means that the **division** did not start after **Jesus'** death and resurrection but had already begun, **there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three.** Then **Yeshua** quotes from **Micah 7:6**, and gives specific examples of the coming division: **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 (Luke 12:51-53).** There before the apostles was a period of work, waiting and trial. **The Master** would prepare them for it.

Fire and **division**. Two powerful images packed into one brief passage of Scripture. Sometimes, it can be difficult not to question **God's** compassion when **He** speaks to us through such dark images. Our **Father** clearly has an abundance of peace and unity to bring into our lives, but even as we stand firm in our faith, there are times when we may encounter strife and disagreement - even within our own **families**.

One day when **Messiah** preached a sermon on the mountainside (see **Da - The Sermon on the Mount**), **Yeshua** told **His** disciples to **seek first the Kingdom of God**, and the "the rest" **will be given to you as well (Matthew 6:33)**. But "the rest" is not always a life without problems. Given the state of our world, it is unrealistic to expect a totally carefree existence. What is it, then, that **will be given to us as well**? It is the promise made in **Hebrews 12**, a life of discipline and grace in **Jesus Christ**. No matter what our situation, we can trust that **Jesus** is always with us, helping us to work through the difficulties we face in this world: **Don't let your hearts be troubled . . . I have told you this so that you may have peace in Me. Here on this earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world (John 14:1 and 16:33 NLT)**.

When **He** spoke of the fire that **He** wished were already burning **Jesus** was talking of **the Holy Spirit** who was to come after **Him** to fill the heart of every believer. The divisions **He** spoke of referred to people or ideologies opposing **ADONAI**, and how that which opposed **God** will be separated from **His** Kingdom. The message of faith challenges people and their relationships, even the strongest bonds of love found in our **families**.

In the face of these challenges, how should we respond to those who may not agree with the Word of **God**? We should never be reluctant to speak the truth of the Gospel. We are called to be unafraid of the Lord's purifying, unquenchable **fire**. Let us eagerly embrace **His** Word as well as the dividing sword of **the Ruach HaKodesh** as **He** moves swiftly to separate **the wheat from the chaff (Luke 3:17)**.

Lord Jesus, we dedicate ourselves to You right now. No matter what the cost, we want to follow Your way, not the way of this world. Amen. He is worthy.¹⁰⁴⁷