**The Fire of Christ**

*Luke 12:49-53*

**Introduction**

1. The text is both difficult, and perhaps troubling at first glance.
2. What does the Prince of Peace mean when He speaks about the purpose of His coming to bring fire upon the earth?
3. The Fire of Division
4. The Text in Context
   1. Simeon on Christ – **Luke 2:34-35** – fall and rising, sign spoken against, thoughts of hearts revealed.
      1. Jesus would have a dividing effect on the people.
   2. Can be seen in context:
      1. **11:53-54** – rejection by scribes and Pharisees.
      2. **12:1** – to disciples: beware of their leaven.
      3. **12:1, 13, 22, 41, 54** – great crowd, addressing primarily disciples, but some who are not His followers are listening, and manifesting divided interest.
         1. **(v. 13)** – The man is not inclined to the spiritual but comes to Jesus for the physical.
         2. **(vv. 22, 31-34)** – to disciples: don’t worry about the physical but seek the spiritual treasure.
         3. **(vv. 54-56)** – in contrast to disciples, many are not discerning the time in what they observe of Jesus – **cf. 11:20** – the kingdom of God has come upon you.
      4. **12:49-53** – a fire of division is kindled at the cross, and already manifesting.
         1. **(vv. 49, 51)** – where ***“fire”*** describes the opposite of ***“peace,” “division”*** further describes the ***“fire.”***
            1. “Fire, here, is the emblem of discord and contention, and consequently of calamities.” (Albert Barnes)
         2. **(v. 50)** – the kindling – His death – baptism of suffering (**cf. Mark 10:33-34, 38** – response to James and John)
            1. Cause of division – **1 Corinthians 1:22-24** – offense – ***“a sign which will be spoken against” (Luke 2:34).***
         3. **(vv. 52-53)** – division even in intimate circles **(cf. 9:59-62**)
5. Christ Divides
   1. The nature of such division – **1 Corinthians 11:19** – a must, to distinguish the approved from unapproved.
      1. ***“and how I wish it were already kindled!” (Luke 12:49)*** – this is something the Lord desires, not as though division were good, but inevitable, and results in a necessary distinction.
      2. It makes apparent those who accept truth, and those who reject it – **1 John 2:18-23** – the departure from the truth manifests that they are not of the faithful.
   2. The dividing phenomena includes the positive effect – **Ephesians 5:8-14** – division through dissociation, but exposure of darkness to come to the light.
   3. Thus, the dividing effect of the cross brings clarity – **2 Timothy 2:19**
      1. **Luke 11:23** – there is no neutral ground.
6. The Fire of Trials
7. The Text in Context
   1. Fire often stands for trial throughout scripture.
   2. Division leads to trial, and is a trial itself:
      1. **12:1** – beware of hypocrisy of the Pharisees – leaven (**cf. Matthew 16:12** – doctrine; even their doctrine breeds hypocrisy – **11:42**)
         1. Avoiding hypocrisy would mean also avoiding their doctrine and standing opposed to them.
      2. Encouragement not to fear – **12:4-5** – because you put yourself in the midst of trial with that separation.
         1. **12:11-12** – they’ll bring you before rulers.
8. Following Christ Brings Trials
   1. Christ is to undergo the greatest trial soon – **Luke 12:50**
   2. Christ calls us to follow Him through this fire of trial – **Luke 9:21-26**
   3. This fire benefits us – **Mark 9:49-50**
      1. Context – **(vv. 42-48)** – warning of offenses and avoiding them at all costs lest you suffer the fire of hell.
      2. **(vv. 49-50)** – seasoned disciples will not cause offense, but will promote peace, and season others.
         1. **(v. 49)** – the fire of trial will lead to being salted.
         2. Trial proves and purifies.
   4. **1 Peter 1:6-9; 4:12-16** – these fiery trials help us prove our faith and bring us into closer fellowship with the Lord.
   5. **1 Thessalonians 3:3-4** – should not be shaken by them, they are appointed, should be strengthened.
   6. Saved through fire – **1 Corinthians 3:15**
9. The Fire of Judgment
10. The Text in Context
    1. Context is sandwiched with judgment:
       1. **11:47-51** – blood of the prophets murdered to be required of that generation.
       2. **12:57-13:5** – make yourself right with God before it’s too late; repent or perish.
    2. Rightly directed fear – **12:4-5** – God will cast into hell, so fear Him instead. (Live with future judgment in your mind)
       1. Confess, or be denied – **12:8-9**
    3. Your soul will be required of you – **12:20**
    4. Jesus will return, so be ready – **12:35-40** – servants waiting for master to come back from wedding (ready are blessed, **v. 37**); thief breaking in.
    5. Judgment will come to disciples – **12:41-48** – judgment commensurate with responsibilities enjoined upon them. (Stewards – found doing master’s will; found in varying degrees of disobedience).
       1. ***“appoint him his portion with the unbelievers” (v. 46)***.
       2. **Hebrews 10:26-31** – the Lord will judge His people.
    6. **12:49** – directly following warning of judgment, then followed by acknowledgment of the difficulty in following Jesus – division.
       1. Avoiding the fire requires separation – **cf. Numbers 16:20-21, 26** (Rebellion of Korah, Dathan, Abiram)
       2. His death kindled the fire of judgment – **vv. 49-50; John 12:31-33; 16:8-11** (of the world, and Satan)
11. Christ Will Come in Judgment
    1. Mercy, salvation, peace, etc. – **Luke 1:50, 68-70; 2:13-14, 30-32; 4:18-19; 19:9-10**
       1. NOTE: Not here for judgment in first advent – **Luke 9:54-56**
    2. Judgment – **Luke 1:51-53** (Mary’s song); **3:7-9, 15-17** (John the Baptizer about Jesus); **6:24-26** (Woes following beatitudes); **10:12-16** (cities that rejected Christ); **13:34-35** (destruction of Jerusalem – **ch. 21**)
    3. Christ came for sin first, and then He will come for salvation and judgment – **Hebrews 9:27-28**
    4. We must all appear, so we must all be ready – **2 Corinthians 5:9-11**

**Conclusion**

1. Jesus is the fulness of the Godhead bodily (**cf. Colossians 2:9**); He is the brightness of God’s glory, and the very image of His person (**cf. Hebrews 1:3**).
2. While Jesus came to save mankind, it was not without conditions. He is mercy, but also truth and justice.
3. What Jesus did in coming to this earth completely changed the course of human history – such a dramatic ministry did cause and continues to cause great and conflicting results.
4. Jesus brought division, and still does; He offers peace, but through the fire of trials; His return will be in judgment, foreshadowed by all the judgments in time, and the warnings of His revelation.