

A CHOICE THAT DIVIDES

Luke 12:49-53

"Decision—what a person makes when he can't find anyone to serve on a committee."

There's one DECISION we have to make:

Jesus' coming obligates us to make a choice to accept or reject Him that separates people and serves as the basis for judgment.

Movement afoot to unite all religious people in one big happy family.

The trend takes different forms in different circles.

Ecumenical—to get together and work for social reform with all religious

Conservative—unite with all who use Jesus' name,
whatever they believe about Him.

Those who make "picayunish" distinctions are "intolerant and bigoted."

Our Lord told us the decision to follow Him won't bring peace;
it will bring separation and division

—even conflict within the same family.

We live in "a free country!" —Individual freedom promoted and respected.

But where there's freedom, there's responsibility.

Jesus is the center of controversy. You have to make a choice.

Even separates moms and dads from children—everyone must decide!

We want to hear a message about peace on earth.

We want to hear about a happy home with loving kids!

The old proverb is true:

*"Raise up a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he shall not depart from it."*

But the choice is an individual one.

You can't make it for your child.

Each person has to make his/her own decision

Jesus is the center of separation

—families will be divided because of Him.

What subjects are no longer allowed at your family table, or family reunions?

Jesus says *He will be one of them!*

Israel's rejection of Messiah and its implications are presented as Jesus travels toward Jerusalem (9:51-19:27).

Instruction in view of rejection 12:1-19:27

Proper conduct for His followers 12:1-48

Jesus describes the perspective and conduct which should characterize His disciples, in light of the rejection

Distinguishing consequences of alternatives 12:49-13:9

Jesus' teaching about His return (35-48) introduces the personal crises He precipitates.

The decision to reject or accept Jesus produces distinct consequences (12:49-13:9).

THREE CONSEQUENCES OF REJECTION PROMISED 12:49-53

Jesus' coming obligates all men to make a choice to accept or reject Him.

Decision distinguishes those who make opposite decisions —basis of judgment

THE PROMISE OF FIRE 12:49 *Of what fire is Jesus speaking?*

Three ways to view it:

(1) FIRE IS A SYMBOL OF JUDGMENT [Sometimes]

Our Lord's coming involves judgment;

He wants to get on with it.

Jesus came to bring salvation, He also brought judgment (Jn. 9:39)

All judgment was placed in His hands by the Father (Jn. 5:27)

The role of Judge: He came to bring fire on the earth (12:49)

We can't eliminate judgment from His message

(2) FIRE IS A PURIFYING AGENT

Fire has a purifying effect.

Both ideas may be involved, as in John's ministry (3:9, 16-17).

This *may* be merely a consequence of judgment.

Another aspect to the fire Christ came to cast on earth that only Spurgeon seems to have picked up:

fire judges and purifies, but in forest fires,

(3) FIRE SPREADS—rapidly, aggressively, unhaltingly

Jesus may not be focusing on judgment

but on the advance of the gospel.

Before that could happen, something else had to happen.

He had to be identified with (or immersed in) something else.

Yosemite—Glacier Point—the Fire Fall—*"LET THE FIRE FALL!"*

Before the fire could fall some other things had to happen

A proper place to protect the forest

A fire built and maintained all afternoon

The ritualistic cry from Camp Curry below

The final cry: "Let the fire fall!"

Before the fire could fall, something else had to happen:

THE PROMISE OF A BAPTISM 12:50

What baptism? Identification with what?

Jesus had to identify with us and our sin

He had to be "immersed" in suffering and death (**Mk. 10:38-39**)

It can be applied to a person submerged in a grim, terrible experience

Hendriksen: "Jesus is going to be "overwhelmed" by agony.

He will be plunged into the flood of horrible distress."

"I have an immersion to go through and I am distressed by it."

"I have to go through a terrible experience"

THE PROMISE OF DIVISION 12:51-53

How does the crowd misread Jesus?

They thought Messiah would give peace—In reality He's dividing them.

O.T. prophecy, N.T. teaching, and Jesus' own words (**Lk. 2:14**) affirm He came to bring peace, but not the way they think, nor on their timetable

If they trust Him, there will be peace; but they spurn Him.

He's never deluded—He came to be rejected and die (**Lk. 2:34-35**)

War and confusion prevail instead of peace

The peace He brought is not international, political peace for Israel.

Nor is it religious peace—"one big happy family."

His peace is for those who trust Him. For the rest, judgment.

O.T. hebraisms use absolute contrast to focus on a distinction, to emphasize one aspect of truth

(e.g., "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated;"

"I hate your sacrifices," or, "I want mercy instead of sacrifice").

Jesus does give peace to those who trust Him.

But often our confession of faith becomes a declaration of war among friends and family—

Jesus is a cause of division (Jn. 7:12, 43; 9:16; 10:19)

It was God's purpose to make a distinction.

That distinction separates, and even alienates, believers from unbelievers. (1 Jn. 3:10-15; Lk. 2:34-35).

A man lived on border separating North and South during the Civil War. He didn't want to take sides, so he wore a Confederate jacket and Union pants. But he ran into trouble:

Union soldiers shot at his jacket and Confederates shot him in the pants.

We can't sit on the fence. We have to make a choice—a commitment

Families are divided and loyalties broken. (Cf. 14:26)

The idea was unbelievable. It will actually go this far!

Even families will turn on each other.

That's how bad things got in Micah's day:

Wording from **Micah 7:6**: ungodliness left each one fending for himself; even family loyalty is dead.

The only one to be trusted is Yahweh.

Now the ungodly want nothing to do with God nor His Son;

family loyalty for those who follow Him is dead.

They've turned against them.

The answer is to trust God and the One He sent.

In the following verses Micah indicates that his enemies mock him because he chooses to rely on Yahweh.

Choosing to follow Yahweh and trusting the One He sent

brings contempt and scorn on His followers, even from family.

Throughout church history families have been torn in two on account of loyalty to Christ.

He separates those who trust Him from those who don't.

Jewish believers (and others) are still ostracized from families and friends.

Some of the LDS people in SLC know about it—they know how bitter the opposition can get; even in your own family. It cost some to follow Jesus. Members of your family call you a fanatic or a fool, or consider you a heretic. Yet, you remain faithful and trust Him to bring others. Some have seen that happen.

Young people, take warning! Families are divided against one another over Jesus. Be sure that when you select a mate you take this into account. Families are divided by what they do about Jesus!

Counseling I face—Some people sitting here can tell us about it!

Some conclude that because He didn't unite the nation, He isn't Messiah.

Jesus came to "call out" a new people for Himself—that involved division.

He calls them to follow Him, to separate from those who reject Him.

When He comes again, Messiah will bring peace on earth.

This time He came to be rejected; to die; to separate those who trust Him and those who reject Him.

Is it picayunish to insist on the distinction and division caused by the Gospel?

Should we insist on maintaining the distinction?

Is Christianity intolerant and divisive?

Spurgeon: "Of all things under heaven, the most intolerant is the gospel of Jesus Christ. "What," say you, "intolerant"? Ay, say I, intolerant.

The gospel enables us to proclaim liberty of conscience to all men; the gospel wields no temporal sword, it asks for no cannon balls to open the gates of a nation for its ministry; the true gospel prepares no dungeon, and no rack, it asks not Peter's sword to cut off Malchus' ear; but while it gives enfranchisement from all bondage, it demands obedience to itself. Within its own realm its power is absolute; its arguments cut and kill error; its teachings lay low every proud hope, and expose every false way.

The gospel is merciful to the sinner, but merciless to sin.

It will not endure evil, but wars against it to overturn it, and to set up a throne for Him whose right it is to reign.

The gospel of Jesus Christ will never join hands with infidelity It cannot be at peace with error. False religions can lie down side by side with one another, for they are equally a lie, and there is a brotherhood between them, but the true religion will never rest until all superstitions are utterly exterminated and until the banner of the King eternal, immortal, invisible shall wave"

What has Christ brought to your family/friends, division or peace? Why? How can you tell if it's your faith that strains the relationship, or the way you express it?

Or some other cause?

After all the bad news, I have some good news.

God wants to end the division; to reconcile your family; to bring you back together again.

But He's the center of the controversy.

If you continue to reject His Son, the war rages on.

The family united in Christ, where all live to please the Savior and draw closer to one another and to Him, is of all families most blessed.

One in Christ, living to please Him,

they can be one and enjoy peace now, in their own home.

There is another lesson: The issue emphasized in this passage is *an issue of choice*: **WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH JESUS?** Each one has to choose!

Parents, you can't make the choice for your children!

You can raise them properly by seeing that they hear about Jesus, see your love for Him, and see your example.

You can pray for them—that they'll make the right choice—to follow Him

But you can't make the choice for your child.

They must make the choice.

YOUR CHILDREN HAVE TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISION!

Children, you can't rely on parents' faith. They can't get you into heaven.

ONLY YOU CAN MAKE THE DECISION THAT LEADS TO ETERNAL LIFE.

YOU HAVE TO TRUST CHRIST YOURSELF!

How about you?

Have you found peace that passes understanding?

What are YOU going to do about it?